Wednesday, 16 October 1985

The SPEAKER (the Hon. C. T. Edmunds) took the chair at 11.4 a.m. and read the prayer.

ABSENCE OF MINISTER

The SPEAKER—Order! I advise the House that the Minister for Sport and Recreation will be absent from the House this week.

BROADCASTING OF PROCEEDINGS

The SPEAKER—Order! I also advise the House that I have given approval for the broadcasting of question time by television and radio.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr KENNEDT (Leader of the Opposition)—I seek leave to make a personal explanation in reference to an article published in today's issue of the Bulletin magazine.

The SPEAKER—Order! Leave is not required.

Mr KENNEDT—I wish to repeat what I have said many times before, that the Liberal Party, under my leadership, will not block Supply. My definition of Supply includes the Appropriation Bills.

I make it clear to the House and to the public that there was not and never has been a scheme with the former Governor to oust the current Government. That is a fiction of which Jeffrey Archer would be proud.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION CONCESSIONS

Mr KENNEDT (Leader of the Opposition)—Now that the Premier has confessed that he took a perk on Pan American World Airways Inc. five months ago, and having been found out in this double standard, and is belatedly prepared to pay up, when will the accommodation costs for himself and his wife for the two free nights at the five-star William Penn Hotel in Pittsburgh be repaid? Further, will the Premier confirm that the Pan Am flight and the accommodation at the William Penn Hotel are the only perks he accepted on his overseas visit in May?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—It should be understood what the trip was about so far as my visit was concerned. It was a completely upfront public visit to a range of places which was apparent to everybody. The press releases made it perfectly clear what the trip was about.

If the Opposition is not satisfied with the standards the Government has set in regard to travel and other things, let it say what its standards are.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr CAIN—We do not know what they are. If the Opposition wants to make an issue about my requirements for standards, I shall dig out all the files on all trips that all Liberal Ministers had three years ago and let the public make a judgment as to whether it is desirable to have standards and require their observation or to behave as did the previous Government. That is the test.
It is all very well for the Leader of the Opposition to make a personal explanation about these matters but he should listen to what people are saying and what they have said about what he told them on the question of Supply as well. We have certain standards and we are pleased and proud to observe those standards and we will go on doing that.

If the Opposition likes, I shall get out all the files for all previous Liberal Ministers and show them how they behaved on previous trips so that the people can make a comparison. My visit was a public visit on behalf of the State; it was not a private visit. It was open; it was not covert.

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS (Leader of the National Party)—I intend to ask a question of the Premier and I hope I can get an answer and not a Ministerial statement.

The SPEAKER—Will the honourable member ask the question?

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS—I refer to the Premier’s statement that he will repay the cost of the upgrading from business class to first class on his trip to America for him and his wife and that he intends to repay the difference between the two fares. Can the Premier give a definite assurance that he will be paying this out of his own pocket and not out of Government expenditure?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—This is rich coming from the Leader of the National Party.

Honourable members interjecting.

I cannot think of what the Leader of the National Party has contributed to this place in the past twenty years. He is the greatest non-event this place has seen.

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS (Leader of the National Party)—I regret that I have to revert to raising a point of order every day, but I ask you, Mr Speaker—and you invariably take note of what I ask—to direct the Premier to answer the question. He tries out the same thing every day; he is asked a question and he talks about something else.

The Premier has been asked a simple question, and he refuses to answer it. I ask you, Sir, to put him back on the track again.

The SPEAKER—Order! I do not uphold the point of order. I advise the House that the procedure of the House during questions without notice has not changed during the period that I have been in this place.

If a Minister wishes to reply to a question without notice in any way that he sees fit, or not to reply, that is his responsibility. If the Premier is intending to debate the question, I shall prevent him from doing so.

Mr CAIN (Premier)—What I suggest I should do—after I obtain all the files regarding former Ministers of the Liberal Government—is to obtain the file on the Leader of the National Party to see who is at the trough all the while, who is concerned about one thing only; the perks and lurks.

I explained the circumstances of the visit and the trip; I explained the circumstances of what occurred when the suggestion was made to me—when I was late leaving this place because of the milk strike and had a 16-hour flight ahead of me—that I should travel first class. I left the arrangements to the officer of my department who was with me; I left the matter for him to determine. He is the person who made the decision and the arrangements; and I have left with the department the payment of the fare in accordance with those arrangements, and that is what will be done.

PRIVATE BUSINESS INVESTMENT

Mr MICALLEF (Springvale)—Can the Premier provide the House with details of the private business investment forecasts for the year and their effect on employment?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I am pleased to be able to report to the House that private business investment has made a significant contribution to the improved economic
situation in the last financial year, 1984-85, and that has occurred against a background that shows steady improvement. An increase of about 12 per cent in real terms, or 20 per cent in actual terms, is expected.

Manufacturing investment in plant and machinery is particularly strong, and most of it is being resourced from within the State, which is very gratifying.

Another matter that should be mentioned is that, in addition, a recent Australian Chamber of Manufactures Pulse Survey of September has confirmed that the benefits of the devaluation are flowing through to Victorian industry. The firms surveyed pointed to an increase in investment in the current quarter of 28 per cent from 22 per cent in the last quarter. Private business investment in Victoria is expected to double that of the rest of Australia. Those are figures of which all honourable members can be very proud. The economy is looking well; it is progressing best in this State, and this Government is determined to do all it can and take all the initiatives that are necessary and desirable to ensure that improvement continues.

As the Treasurer has said, the Government has tabled the Budget to meet this mood. This increased confidence in the withdrawal, holding back and steadying of injection of funds in the public sector is consequent upon improved investment confidence in the private sector, and augers well for this State's economic future.

TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION CONCESSIONS

Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—I refer the Premier to his belated repayment of the perk on Pan American airlines and ask him whether he gave Sir Brian Murray the same opportunity of paying retrospectively for his overseas flight at the time the Premier demanded the Governor's dismissal.

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I, with some feeling, last night expressed my concern at the determination of the Leader of the Opposition to continue to use the issue of the resignation of the Governor for political purposes. I cannot recall any member of this House being prepared to denigrate the office in the way that the Leader of the Opposition seems determined to do. That determination is despite the repeated requests that have been made to the Leader of the Opposition, both publicly and otherwise, but he seems utterly determined to do all he can to try to ensure that this matter remains one of controversy. I can only presume he is trying to make a hero of himself in some way that he thinks will shore up the flagging support in his own party. It is a desperation exercise. Every member on the Opposition benches knows it is a desperation exercise. His days are numbered and that is what it is all about.

I have tried to keep this matter in perspective and to ensure that the office of Governor is not damaged. The Leader of the Opposition is determined to do otherwise.

Last night during the debate on the motion for the adjournment of the sitting I made very clear what the position was so far as the Leader of the Opposition is concerned. I do not want to repeat that again but if the Leader of the Opposition insists on continuing to endeavour to introduce this matter into public debate day after day I can only say to him that he will continue to denigrate the office of Governor. The Leader of the Opposition knows that every one of those six persons who were present at those discussions last Thursday week desired that that should not be the case.

My Ministerial statement made clear the circumstances. I have also made clear, under pressure that I regret having to bow to certain other matters that were the subject of understandings that were dependent upon certain contingencies. I do not know where the Leader of the Opposition intends this matter to finish. If he wants to go on harming the office of Governor, so be it. I believe my Ministerial statement indicated what the position was. The Leader of the Opposition knows what the position is and I believe the House knows what the position is. I shall be making a second-reading speech in respect of the Constitution (Governor's Salary and Pension) Bill later today.
FARMERS FACING BANKRUPTCY

Mr HANN (Rodney)—I direct a question to the Minister representing the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs and ask: Is the Minister aware that thousands of Victorian farmers are currently facing bankruptcy because of exorbitant interest rates, rising costs and low commodity prices?

If the Minister is aware of this situation and the fact that it is nearly as serious as the depression in the late 1920s and early 1930s, can he advise the House what action the Government proposes to take to alleviate this very serious situation?

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—I am certainly aware that 1984-85 was a very difficult year for the agricultural industry in this State, as it was across the nation. The evidence that is available suggests that in 1984-85 Victoria fared worse than the rest of the nation in production. The expectation is that although there is likely to be some slight improvement during 1985-86, of course the situation will still be relatively difficult. The Government has endeavoured to keep charges to a minimum in this area and that is why freight rate increases are less than the inflation rate and why increases have not taken place for a relatively long time.

The Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs has been developing policies that especially assist farmers. For example, in the dairy industry he had done so in co-operation with the Commonwealth Government and he will continue to do so. However, if the honourable member requires information on Government policies in this area, I shall certainly take up the matter with the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mrs TONER (Greensborough)—Will the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs advise the House of youth employment in Victoria and the continuing effects of the Government's programs and policies in this area?

Mr CRABB (Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs)—I thank the honourable member for her question and for her continuing interest in the young unemployed of this State. I am pleased to inform honourable members that the employment statistics released last week show that Victoria again has the lowest unemployment rate of any Australian State. Additionally, the rate of improvement in the employment picture in this State is far better than any other State, especially among teenagers where over the past twelve months full-time employment has risen by 4 per cent, which is more than twice the increase in the rest of Australia.

The number of unemployed teenagers—those looking for full-time work—has dropped markedly over the past two months from 30,000 to 24,000. Again, this represents a significant change in the position.

A special element of those figures is that there was a record intake of apprentices last year; it was the highest intake ever in the history of the State. On the figures for the first few months of this financial year, it will be a bigger record again this year.

I am pleased to say the 1400 work study positions have been advertised and applicants are now applying for those jobs at the rate of two applicants for each of the jobs. I am pleased to note that again Victoria has led the way in introducing a new concept of traineeship which will soon be applying in all other States under the Commonwealth Government's traineeship scheme.

It is interesting that young women are applying for traineeships in some cases in higher numbers than young men. There is a ratio of 60 to 40. The jobs are spread through all regions of Victoria and through a range of occupations in the public sector.

When the Labor Government came to office, its predecessors had left Victoria in the depths of depression. Indeed, Victoria had dragged the rest of Australia into recession.
Under three years of the John Cain Labor Government, we have led Australia into recovery.

CONSULTANTS’ REPORTS ON PUBLIC OPINION

Mr RICHARDSON (Forest Hill)—Why has the Premier refused to release publicly the five consultants’ reports on public opinion about the Government that he commissioned prior to the State election at a cost to the taxpayer of approximately $280,000? Is it because their release would reveal that they should have been paid for by the Australian Labor Party?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—If the honourable member is referring to matters raised in a publication today, I can tell him that those matters relate to a Cabinet approved program in respect of an attitude monitoring survey as to public perceptions of services delivered by Government agencies. Mr Irving Saulwick is a consultant to advise on the appropriate persons and bodies to be engaged on a public attitude survey to ensure that the best delivery of services to the public is obtained and that the public is aware of Government services.

I do not find anything wrong with a Government that seeks to improve customer-client relationships. I should have thought that was something the Opposition would understand.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr CAIN—The Government is concerned about saving resources and ensuring that the public is aware of what Government services are available. The Government must know about the response of the public to the provision of those services.

A wide range of firms have been used, including Reark Research and Australian Sales Research Bureau, a subsidiary of the Roy Morgan Research Centre Pty Ltd, together with Australian National Opinion Polls—ANOP—to which reference was made. Mr Saulwick advised the Government on the most appropriate firm to determine what information the Government desired. This may seem strange to the Opposition, which was prepared to continue delivering services that the public did not want, need or understand.

I should have thought it was well understood that Governments and large and small commercial organizations frequently undertake surveys to obtain information on the reception, the suitability and the appropriateness of their programs. The Government has that responsibility because it is spending public money.

TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION CONCESSIONS

Dr COGHILL (Werribee)—Can the Premier inform the House whether other travel offers were made by the Alcoa company in relation to his visit to the United States of America earlier this year?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—There appears to have been a selective leaking or offer of information on the actual position. I visited Pittsburgh as the official guest of Alcoa and I was accommodated at an hotel owned by Alcoa. Other offers of hospitality which were not directly connected with my business in Pittsburgh were also made by Alcoa, including an offer of a flight to the company’s plant in New York and accommodation at a New York hotel also owned by the company.

I accepted the hospitality in Pittsburgh and rejected the other offers, acting on what I regard as the proper advice given to me. My action in accepting the hospitality in Pittsburgh was in accordance with what I believe, and was informed, are accepted international and commercial practices. There is nothing unusual about those practices.

An important point should again be made: the Opposition is concerned about the standards of the Government when it has no standards of its own. An attempt has been made to suggest, impliedly or implicitly, that there is some relation between what I...
undertook on behalf of the State and what the former Governor undertook on a private trip. I was not in a situation where it could be suggested by anybody, even the Leader of the Opposition, venal as he is, that there was any personal gain on my part. If the Alcoa company had not paid for or provided the hospitality, the State would have paid for it. That was not the case so far as the former Governor was concerned.

Mr STOCKDALE (Brighton)—I refer the Premier to the admission in published records that the Honourable J. L. Dixon and the Honourable M. J. Arnold from another place and the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs received significant contributions, in cash or kind, when making overseas trips. In light of the Premier's precedent for the repayment of perks, I ask the Premier whether he has instructed all three to repay.

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I thought I made it clear yesterday.

Mr Ross-Edwards—You said you didn’t know!

Mr CAIN—I do not have anything to say about what private members do. The honourable members have put on the record, as they are required to do—and that is the extent of your research—exactly what they did, as have others. I think it is about time the Opposition got out of the gutter and understood what is acceptable.

I reiterate that if they wish all the files to be put on the table so that we can see just who has been into the perks business—and who grabs every dollar every time there is an opportunity—let us do it. Let us see it all and let the public make its own judgment. This Government has higher standards of propriety than any other Government in Australia. We will not be ashamed to put on the table the files that show what we do and what you do! Let the public make its judgment about what it prefers. Does it prefer a Government that lays down standards and is concerned about propriety or does it want a Government that is into sleaze and everything else that goes with it? Tell us what you did! I shall get the files out, if you want them. You make the choice!

Mr WHITING (Mildura)—Mr Speaker, I raise a point of order. No doubt, Sir, you are aware of the provisions of Standing Order No. 127, which concerns the debating of questions. However, you may have overlooked a ruling you made on 2 October 1984, which is recorded at page 682 of Hansard.

In that ruling you cited part of an opinion from May to the effect that, when answering questions, Ministers should confine themselves to the points contained in the questions. You then went on to quote the wording of Standing Order No. 127. I suggest to you, Sir, that the Premier is now debating the question and is out of order.

Mr CAIN (Premier)—On the point of order, Sir, I am not debating the issue. I was asked a question about standards of propriety and the conduct of members on the Government benches. My response is to say, "If you want to examine standards on this side, I shall examine standards on the other side." I intend to put to you that I have every right to answer the question in that way and I intend to do so.

The SPEAKER—Order! I uphold the point of order and call on the Premier to respond to the question.

Mr CAIN (Premier)—My response is to say that I am prepared to examine the standards of conduct of members of the Government party if the opposition parties will examine theirs as well. Let them say what they are alleging; let them say what trips they have had; we will examine them and apply the same standards to all their trips, if that is what they want.

**HOUSE BUILDERS' LIABILITY**

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley)—I refer the Minister for Consumer Affairs to the difficulties being experienced by some people in having defects in home building corrected through the house builders' liability provisions and the commitment of the Government,
prior to coming into office more than three years ago, to take action in this matter. Will the Minister indicate what action he and the Government have taken to assist in the correction of faults in defective homes that are built throughout this State?

Mr SPYKER (Minister for Consumer Affairs)—I advise the honourable member for Murray Valley that the whole area of house builders' liability is under review. That work was commenced by my predecessor, the former Minister for Local Government, Mr Wilkes, who is now Minister for Housing. As the honourable member is aware, the function of house builders' liability was transferred from local government to consumer affairs.

I hope to introduce proposed legislation in the autumn sessional period to deal with the problems outlined. Serious problems are being experienced with restumping, recladding, renovation and repairs, and many consumers have had their fingers burnt. I am sure the honourable member will agree that the House Builders' Liability Fund has been an outstanding success in dealing with the problems that have existed in the new home industry and the renovation industry. The renovation industry is a multi-million dollar industry itself. The Government wants to ensure that the problems that have arisen will be resolved. A discussion paper will be issued shortly. If the honourable member for Murray Valley wishes to have any input into the proposed legislation, I shall be happy to talk to him about it.

ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS ORDERS

Mr CAIN (Premier)—By leave, I move:

That there be presented to this House a copy of Administrative Arrangements Orders Nos 35, 36 and 37 of 1985.

The motion was agreed to.

Mr CAIN (Premier) presented the orders in compliance with the foregoing order.

It was ordered that the orders be laid on the table.

PAPER

The following paper, pursuant to the direction of an Act of Parliament, was laid on the table by the Clerk:


POLICE REGULATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

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

That I have leave to bring in a Bill to amend the Police Regulation Act 1958, the Magistrates' Courts Act 1971 and the Ombudsman Act 1973, and for other purposes.

Mr McNAMARA (Benalla)—I ask the Minister whether he can give the House a brief explanation of the proposed legislation.

Mr MATHEWS (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (By leave)—The proposed legislation has two principal purposes: firstly, to give effect to the Government's response to the internal disciplinary recommendations of the special report issued by the committee of inquiry of the Victoria Police; secondly, the establishment of a police public complaints authority.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.
GROUNDWATER (BORDER AGREEMENT) BILL

Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Water Resources) moved for leave to bring in a Bill to approve and provide for carrying out an agreement for the management of groundwater adjacent to the border of South Australia and Victoria, to amend the Groundwater Act 1969, to repeal the Groundwater (Reserves) Act 1984 and for other purposes.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

MOTOR CAR (FURTHER AMENDMENT) BILL

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport) moved for leave to bring in a Bill to amend the Motor Car Act 1958 with respect to speed trials, breath analysis, registration fees and fines, and for other purposes.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

SALE OF LAND (ALLOTMENTS) BILL

Mr SIMMONDS (Minister for Local Government) moved for leave to bring in a Bill to amend the Sale of Land Act 1962 with respect to the preselling of allotments of land and to amend the Strata Titles Act 1967, the Transfer of Land Act 1958, the Local Government Act 1958, and the Building Control Act 1981 and for other purposes.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS (COMPLEMENTARY INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SYSTEM) BILL

The debate (adjourned from October 2) on the motion of Mr Crabb (Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

Mr GUDE (Hawthorn)—The Bill seeks to develop a more effective liaison between Victorian and Commonwealth industrial relations jurisdictions. This concept was first raised in 1979, when the honourable member for Balwyn was Minister responsible for industrial relations, at a conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers of labour. The merging of the Federal and State systems has long been a standing commitment and goal of the Liberal Party.

Given the present level of industrial turmoil in Victoria it is appropriate that Parliament should now be debating this legislative measure. Further, I add that it is also trade union rights week—no doubt, that adds a further dimension to the importance of the Bill. The number of disputes occurring at present should lend themselves to the use of some of the powers contained in this measure. Proposed section 46c provides for joint proceedings to be held by the Industrial Relations Commission of Victoria or by the Conciliation and Arbitration Board and the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission if the president of the Victorian commission considers it appropriate. Two other proposed sections are relevant to the disputes that are currently prevalent in Victoria.

Proposed section 46d provides that a member of the Industrial Relations Commission of Victoria may exercise powers under the Federal Act or any other Commonwealth Act as may be prescribed. A number of industrial disputes that are prevalent in Victoria at present are matters that fall within the Federal jurisdiction.
Proposed section 46E provides for an industrial matter which is before the Victorian commission or a conciliation and arbitration board to be referred to a member of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission if, in the opinion of the president of the Victorian commission, it is appropriate provided that the dispute is before a conciliation and arbitration board, which consents to the matter being so referred.

That is a reasonable provision because it takes account of people who have an active interest and involvement in the conciliation boards in Victoria. In this respect, any award, decision, order or determination made by a member of the Federal commission shall be deemed to be made under the State Act.

I now refer to some recent industrial disputes that may be affected by the proposed legislation. A great deal of concern has been expressed both in Parliament and in the community with respect to the industrial action taken by the Royal Australian Nursing Federation in Victorian hospitals. The $21 million offer made by the Government has incurred the interest of the Full Bench of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission because of the flow-on implications. The dispute has brought Victoria's once great health care system to its knees. Morale amongst the medical and nursing profession is at an all time low.

I do not intend to either debate or canvass the merits of that dispute or the Government's offer, other than to use it as an example. However, I would be derelict in my duty to the community were I not to express grave concern at the Government's handling of the dispute to date.

I refer also to the industrial action taken by the teaching profession, which has now flowed to primary, secondary and technical schools. Teacher strikes are planned for Tuesday and Wednesday of next week. It was only yesterday in the House when the Minister for Education highlighted the advantageous position teachers enjoy compared with other teachers in other States of the Commonwealth. The Bill, when passed, will allow for a comparative study to be made between various States of the Commonwealth in so far as wages and conditions are concerned.

One need look no further than the Latrobe Valley for an example of yet another dispute in another Government instrumentality. The dispute involves the standing down of two recalcitrant workers. The Opposition would support the decision taken by the State Electricity Commission in that situation. The opportunity for Federal and State award interplay, which could have been applied to this issue, is referred to in the Bill.

Another issue of concern in the community at present is the Caltex oil industry dispute. The passing of the Bill could bring about an avenue for resolution of that dispute. The dispute was caused by the dismissal of a driver for alleged wilful misconduct. One wonders how a decision will be taken by a Federal commissioner presiding over a State dispute, especially one that involves the oil industry.

I believe similar legislation in New South Wales specifically excludes the oil industry.

Another dispute which has national implications and which will have an effect in the State but will provide the opportunity for the State and Commonwealth commissions to work together to bring about a resolution involves the Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union. That union is preparing to take action in the killing season as a direct retaliation to fines imposed in the Federal jurisdiction as a consequence of its activities in the Mudginberri contract wages dispute.

It seems appropriate that this Bill is being discussed just prior to the arrival of members of the Royal Family and at the time of a dispute, which is causing grave concern, involving theatrical unions and the cancellation of the "Next Wave" concert. Blind workers are also claiming past national wage rises.
For people in this State who are affected by Federal awards, the Bill gives an opportunity for greater interplay between the State and Federal systems and this can only be of assistance.

I wish to examine other matters which are a little closer to home. The Builders Labourers Federation is involved in an ongoing dispute with the Public Works Department over work at Pentridge Prison, “J” division, as well as other areas of State projects.

In the past 24 hours the Builders Labourers Federation has successfully negotiated a 35-hour week for workers on the Jack Chia project in the Prahran area. That is a matter of concern. I was not a member of Parliament last year when legislation was enacted in this Parliament to enable the development of that project. It included the necessary planning and approvals and covered the total cost of the project. One can only query what impact the 35-hour week decision will have, be it a sweetheart deal or otherwise, on that project. Added to that is the turmoil that has been created as a direct result of the Norm Gallagher threats since his release from gaol.

The Bill places a great deal of authority and responsibility on the President of the Industrial Relations Commission of Victoria. He will need to exercise his power with enormous care and diplomacy. Victoria is fortunate to have a man in that position who is so well versed in both State and Federal jurisdictions. Prior to his appointment, Mr K. D. Marshall was Industrial Registrar of the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission.

Mr Marshall gave me helpful advice in the late 1960s when I commenced my career as an employer advocate in the Federal jurisdiction. Some twenty years later, in my capacity as Director of the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce, I sought recognition for that organization under the State Industrial Relations Act and it was the same gentleman who was able to provide assistance and advice.

As Parliament is in the process of pursuing legislation that will bring about improved interaction between the State and Commonwealth, we are indeed fortunate to have a man with experience at a high level in both jurisdictions.

The present Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs needs to exercise much restraint. We know he has excellent good humour. We hope he exercises that in association with restraint because it is important that the independence of the system is maintained. The significance of that independence will have real relevance and meaning when the two jurisdictions are brought closer together.

I raise this point because there is growing concern, especially on the enterprise side of politics and in the market-place, about the influence of Governments in the industrial relations tribunal area. We need look no further than the attempt by the Federal Government to manipulate the current national wage decision by a so-called accord deal with the Australian Council of Trade Unions. The accord is an agreement between the two arms of the one body, the Australian Labor Party and its industrial arm, the Australian Council of Trade Unions. The Opposition calls for the responsible use of Ministerial and presidential powers under the Bill.

Finally, I shall refer to the eminent role played by Victoria in the lead-up to the introduction of the proposed legislation. I have already acknowledged the honourable member for Balwyn as the Minister responsible in 1979 and I acknowledge the role of successive Labor Party Ministers, including the present embattled Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs. However, it is curious that Victoria, as the industrial relations headquarters of Australia, has located in the State the headquarters of the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, the Australian Council of Trade Unions, the Confederation of Australian Industry and most of Australia’s major employer groups such as the Australian Chamber of Manufactures, the Employers’ Federation and the Master Builders’ Association, to name but three, but is the last of all States to introduce complementary legislation.
The Opposition does not oppose the Bill, but it will watch its progress with interest and care. The impact of a good and effective system of industrial relations cannot be stressed too highly. The Bill is a small step in the right direction and the Opposition wishes it well and will watch its development closely as time passes.

Mr McNAMARA (Benalla)—The Bill attempts to improve liaison and co-operation in the industrial relations area. The honourable member for Hawthorn mentioned that this week is trade union rights week—I presume that is a 52-week celebration! That appears to be the situation since the Labor Party took office a little more than three and a half years ago. The State Government is in a similar situation to that of the Federal Government where the trade union movement is running roughshod over the rights of the general community. Too often the rights of individuals are completely overrun by the Government's wish to ensure that unions have their way. Dollar Sweets Co. Pty Ltd and many other companies are prime examples of that.

This issue was first raised in 1979 at a meeting of labour Ministers from all States and the Commonwealth. As the honourable member for Hawthorn mentioned, the honourable member for Balwyn was the Victorian Minister, and he had some part in bringing this matter to a head. It is interesting to note that that meeting was followed in 1982 by a Premiers Conference where the issue was discussed. There appears to be general agreement among all States and the Commonwealth Government that the proposed legislation is long overdue.

It is also interesting to note that the first State to proclaim the legislation was Queensland. In April 1984 the Queensland Government led all the States and the Commonwealth Government in proclaiming the legislation. That reinforces the widely held belief about the firm and thorough manner in which the Queensland Government handles industrial relations. It has a real and genuine concern for the wishes of the community it represents, which is not always the case in many areas of State and Commonwealth jurisdictions. I pay tribute to Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen on his innovative move in leading the proclamation of this legislation in Australia.

The Bill covers four main issues: firstly, it enables the conduct of joint proceedings of the Industrial Relations Commission of Victoria and the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission; secondly, it facilitates the operation of section 44B of the Commonwealth Act dealing with the reference of industrial disputes within the jurisdiction of “Local Industrial Boards”—when constituted by a State industrial authority—by permitting them to exercise Federal conciliation and arbitration jurisdiction; thirdly, it enables members of the Commonwealth commission to exercise, by agreement, State jurisdiction where requested by the president of the Victorian commission; and, fourthly, it provides for conference between State and Federal tribunals to ensure co-ordination between awards.

The Bill attempts to remove some of the problems and inflexibilities that existed in industrial disputes which have involved both State and Commonwealth jurisdictions. It will try to ensure that the tribunals in the various jurisdictions bring together the parties involved in the disputes in an attempt to resolve them. I am a little concerned that some tribunals in both State and Federal spheres may take a more sycophantic line towards the grasping, avaricious motives of some of the unions. I stress the word “some” because, on the whole, most unions are aware of the present economic climate, but there are still the rebels and the outcasts—for example, members of the Builders Labourers Federation who will not stand back when trying to ensure that they receive more than their fair share.

If such a sycophantic tribunal exists, it is hoped that it does not take advantage of the ability to exercise both State and Federal jurisdictions. The Minister should monitor this aspect of the proposed legislation. That is the only problem I envisage in the measure. The National Party supports the proposed legislation because it will streamline the resolution of industrial disputes, so long as there is consistency between State and Federal jurisdictions.
Dr Wells (Dromana)—I support this Bill. It is overdue. Victoria is the last State in Australia to introduce this type of measure. One must be opposed to anything that might lead to unilateral or compulsory action; there does not appear to be any room for that in this Bill. In reality, where we have both State and Federal jurisdictions, there should be co-operation between the two.

It is appropriate that a law should be introduced into the State to provide for one side voluntarily to seek support and co-operation from the other level of jurisdiction. There is no doubt that, on occasions in the past, the industrial, commercial and social scene in this country—and in Victoria particularly—has been retarded and damaged by an incapacity to move quickly to bring about negotiations at the two levels or to introduce comparable decisions.

As the previous speaker stated, on occasion a union will try to move from the State jurisdiction to the Federal jurisdiction to obtain what it wishes, regardless of what is fair and realistic.

Therefore, I welcome the proposed legislation as a means of introducing machinery which may develop as we gain experience and which will make possible rational and expeditious settlement of disputes which often should not have arisen in the first place.

Today illustrations of possible situations have been quoted where this machinery measure may be useful. I shall mention only two. The first situation has been given much publicity in recent times and is a classic illustration of where the proposed legislation might have brought an earlier solution to the problem. I refer honourable members to the question of the deregistration of the Builders Labourers Federation. At present we are awaiting a decision from the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission as to whether the federation contravened agreed conditions.

The State has set in motion legislation that is dependent upon the Federal Parliament introducing legislation which in turn, is dependent upon the decision of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. The cost to the community of the unreasonable and selfish actions of this union has been high. If this Bill had been introduced earlier it might have expedited this issue, and that would have been of tremendous service to the State and the nation. The sooner the issue is resolved and the sooner a supportive decision is handed down by the commission to enable the Federal Government to proceed with deregistration of the Builders Labourers Federation—and in due course, therefore, for the Victorian Government to proceed with that matter—the better it will be for the community.

It seems inconceivable that the leader of the federation in Victoria can say that the State will pay for what happened to him by being sent to gaol. He threatened that the State would pay commercially and at the level of the union. He has thumbed his nose at our State before, and seemingly he has got away with it. It is hoped that that attitude will cease and that, in future, the machinery proposed in the Bill will make it more difficult for such selfish and unreasonable situations to develop.

The second illustration of where the proposed machinery may be useful is of prime importance. It is the current dispute involving the Royal Australian Nursing Federation, in particular the Victorian branch. It has already been said that the industry is national and that the profession is national. What happens in Victoria must have some influence on what will happen elsewhere in the nation.

In the past Victoria has been disturbed by what has happened in other States because of the flow-on potential. Where historical precedents have been established elsewhere, and unreasonably so, other States are naturally concerned and are observing what is happening in the so-called nurses dispute in Victoria. The dispute is of such importance that I shall briefly canvass its magnitude and point out how urgent it is that something be done and that in future, we have machinery with which to deal with the problem.

I have not heard anyone in our community say that the claims by the nurses nor their stance over the past decade has been unreasonable. It is clear that the nursing profession,
together with several other professions in our community, has stood above the simple rule of personal gain. For years nurses have been long suffering about their conditions and have not prosecuted their entitlements as vigorously as they might have done; they have always considered that they had a higher responsibility to the community to the care of those who were ill or injured. The first strike undertaken by nurses in this State occurred not long ago. The nurses agreed not to seek any further review of their work value conditions or services for five years. For a long time they were subject only to the occasional consumer price index increase in their salaries.

For those historic reasons the current situation faced by nurses is difficult for them, for Victoria and for the whole of Australia. Nurses' conditions have fallen behind. The prices and incomes accord of the Federal Government may prevent adequate changes. That may well be a good illustration of the ineffectuality of the accord.

The health care situation in this State can simply be summed up by saying that it is in tatters. On 1 September the Minister for Health provided figures which showed that 26,500 people were awaiting elective surgery in Victorian public hospitals. With the industrial disputation in the public hospital system since that date, undoubtedly that figure will be higher and will escalate at an increasingly rapid rate.

It is abundantly clear that for a long period now, certainly right throughout the tenure of the current Government's term of office, nurses have been voting in the most effective way possible—with their feet. They have been leaving their profession and one could not question the commitment of the average nurse to her or his profession and higher calling, as they see it.

Sad though it may be, the most effective way for a person to vote against a system is to leave it and that is what nurses have been doing in very large numbers and it is for that reason that our hospital system is now in tatters.

Admittedly, better management by the Government, could have averted some of this strife. There is certainly no question that this Government is not greatly blessed with managerial skills when it comes to personal relationships. At the broad level of conditions within their profession nurses have said, "Enough is enough", and they have gone elsewhere.

It is interesting that they have done this because they have shown the validity of their claims by successfully moving into all sorts of other areas. They have moved into managerial positions, they have started up businesses, they have undertaken all sorts of creative and technical jobs out in the community. Nurses' training, their skills, the nature of their work, and its technical, and at times heavy manual, requirements are not appreciated. The responsibility that they have carried for the lives of patients in our hospitals has not been recognized.

If honourable members are not familiar with the extent of the skills to which I have referred, I would urge them to spend some time in hospitals, familiarizing themselves with the medical scene. It is a basic part of our society. It is really not possible to ignore their claims when one knows what goes on in health care. Nursing is certainly one of the most challenging, difficult and demanding jobs in our society and, I think, it is one of the most unsung.

If one simply examines the question of injury to nurses, male or female, brought about by their having to lift patients, one finds that the level of injuries is excessively high compared with the level involved in other activities in our community.

It is a practical problem to know what should be done in a situation that deserves such major attention, yet something must be done—as has been demonstrated by the extreme conditions in which we find ourselves today, with our health care system breaking down. Anything that can be done through industrial negotiations and discussions at a State or Federal level to assist with this matter is long overdue.
I shall turn briefly to what the Government has proposed because I believe that deserves attention at all levels, especially this week, in trying to avert the strike. If any past experiences of this type of situation could be found elsewhere within our Federal system that could help in this situation, it would be welcome at this time.

It is to be regretted that the Minister for Health has now proposed a system that aims to and certainly will divide nurses. The higher levels of nursing in Victoria are rewarded financially, based upon the extent of responsibility of the individual nurse. This responsibility is basically measured by the number of beds for which the supervisory nurse is responsible. Historically, increases in salary for nurses during the first five years after graduation have been paid on the basis of the number of years since graduation, regardless of the public hospital in Victoria in which they have worked.

The current proposal is that nurses will be divided into three categories, and one might almost call them first-class, second-class and third-class nurses because in the largest hospitals—and on the figures that the Minister has largely advertised there are only five of them in this State—nurses will be paid a certain level of income for every year in the first five years after graduation. In the second grade they will be paid less, and that will apply in many major hospitals in Melbourne. In the third grade they will be paid less again, and the last two grades include all hospitals in country areas.

Let this Government not come back to this House and say, in future times, that it was not warned of what would happen. If it manages to force through the three levels of salaries for nurses who are doing the same job across the State, it will see country hospitals in Victoria denuded of staff. It will see them closed for lack of staff.

Mr POPE (Monbulk)—On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, the Bill before the House is the Industrial Relations (Complementary Industrial Relations System) Bill. The honourable member is straying somewhat from the Bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fogarty)—Order! The honourable member for Dromana has strayed a little in the last few minutes. Having been informed of that fact, he will now return to the Bill.

Dr WELLS (Dromana)—Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I certainly accept your comments. I am trying to stay on the topic all the way through my speech, and the Bill refers to industrial relations and to negotiations between parties. It refers to the removing of obstructions that may occur between the two major levels of the jurisdiction and the point I was making is that what happens to the nursing federation in Victoria will certainly be of national importance. I was attempting to establish that fact. It is a matter of major importance and I was not glossing over it, for that reason.

Mr Maclellan—The Federal Bench of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission said that.

Dr WELLS—Indeed, as the honourable member for Berwick has just mentioned, the Federal Bench said that very thing just recently. Splitting the nurses into three classes of citizens is totally unacceptable and the Minister must think again before adopting that course.

I shall comment briefly on two other aspects. In terms of the proposal to say nothing definitive, to give no commitment about staffing levels in hospitals and the nurses’ real concerns about the level of health care and the adequacy of funds for health care in hospitals, the current protests of the nurses are justified.

It all comes down to industrial relations at the Federal level. Finally, there is the question of the amount of money being offered to the nurses. Some will say it is too little, and there is certainly a valid case for the Minister to re-examine the proposal to phase in these increases over three years. That is a little bit like saying, “Have it now and keep it later”. The other point about the amount of money is that what happens to nurses in Victoria will undoubtedly be of national importance; and the Bill, when it is passed and
becomes an Act of Victoria, will make it possible to move more expeditiously on any claim for Federal or State consideration of flow-on or other conditions.

I am not suggesting that the conditions in other States do not also need upgrading. I know they do. I am talking about machinery that will make it possible for hospitals in other States to avoid suffering what we have had to put up with in Victoria because of inefficient industrial relations.

One can see from what occurred in the metal trades industries a few years ago, the effects of flow-on across the nation, and we must recognize with this problem that what happens at the State level can have major repercussions at the Federal level. It should not be necessary for the Opposition to make great play about the inefficiency of the Government in industrial relations vis-à-vis the nursing situation in Victoria.

The Opposition, of course, must do that, because it is its responsibility, but the people of Victoria can make their own judgment. The nurses are voting with their feet; it is one of the most committed and critical professions, and they are leaving in droves. If the Government does not act quickly it will, indeed, be its Achilles heel, because what happens in Victoria affects nurses and people throughout the country. The community has had to stomach the actions of the Builders Labourers Federation over the years and other matters to which the shadow Minister for Industrial Relations referred.

I welcome the Bill and support its wise and careful use to bring about more efficient, more sensitive, more democratic and more effective industrial relations in the State.

Mr MACLELLAN (Berwick)—The Opposition support for the Bill should not cloud the fact that Victoria has for years been at the forefront of States in agreeing that there ought to be a national approach to industrial relations.

Sir John Moore initiated these questions and we should pay tribute to him for his attitude and the work that he carried out in initiating discussions regarding the complementary working of State and Federal jurisdictions in industrial relations. Victoria, under Sir Rupert Hamer, was the first State to indicate its willingness to move in the direction of co-ordination and of a joint approach to industrial relations. It is ironic, of course, that Victoria, having led the way under a Liberal Government in supporting the view that State jurisdiction should be made complementary with the Commonwealth, is now the last State to be dealing with proposed legislation to achieve that result.

The proposed legislation is welcome, as is the co-operation and co-ordination between State and Federal jurisdiction. Of course, it has to be said that Federal awards cover a far larger section of the workforce in Victoria than in any other State. That results from a number of factors. It is a result, primarily, of the push by industrial organizations in Victoria to achieve Federal awards and to make Victoria, over many years, the battleground in which to initiate new claims and, having established those new claims, seek to have them entrenched in a Federal award which will cover the whole of Australia for the various areas of work. However, the political parties across the nation have to make some fundamental decisions and, indeed, Governments across the nation have to make fundamental decisions.

It is a matter of controversy between the Federal Liberal Party and the Labor Party as to whether the role of these industrial tribunals is to set minimum standards and to leave employers and employer groups free to negotiate beyond those minimum standards. The Government's view and the view of the accord is that there should be no dealing outside the national accord. In other words, there should be a prohibition on an employer making an additional payment to any worker over and above cost of living rises unless it meets a very strict and narrow guideline. That is the situation under the accord.

Surely it should be common ground between Governments and Oppositions across Australia, on the need to deal with the post-accord situation. The work force will not tolerate having only cost-of-living increases for ever after as if some medieval system has been fixed with everybody in his place in society and no particular group making a claim.
Indeed, the experience under the accord is that there has been a drift in various directions, whether it is superannuation claims, shorter working hour claims, school allowance claims or the sorts of claims mentioned by the honourable member for Dromana with the nursing claims, and whether Governments, industrial organizations and employers have sought to move outside the narrow restrictions of the accord to solve industrial disputation.

Despite the commitment of the Australian Council of Trade Unions on behalf of the whole of the trade union movement to honour the accord, to make no other claims and that no claims outside the award will be granted by the jurisdiction, the Minister owes it to the Parliament to explain what is going to be the post-accord situation. Does the Labor Party accept that industrial tribunals fix the minimum standards that must be met and that it is open to employees and employers to go beyond those minimum standards or not? That is a critical question in this nation for the next twenty years. It has been illustrated brilliantly by Mr Jack Chia, in the development in South Yarra, where an agreement has been made on a 35-hour week for the builders labourers.

Norm Gallagher, no sooner wins his appeal before the Full Supreme Court, than he faces the media, Bill Hartley, all the other adoring people, as well as the very dedicated members of the Builders Labourers Federation, and announces that his workers will have a 35-hour week. That is what he said and he said it to the whole world. He has already achieved it on the first site. Inevitably that claim will move from site to site, from job to job and then it will spread to other sections of the community.

Governments can talk about the accord, about signed documentation stating no other claims, it can talk about a whole range of things, but the reality is that the Government and employers and price payers, whether they are the people who buy the goods in the shops, people who pay the price of taxis or trams, people who pay their taxes—it does not matter—will pay the price of shorter working weeks. It is the ordinary working person who pays the price for these things and the community has to know from the Minister and the Government what is going to be the situation when the accord is finally concluded.

We are in the post-accord situation. How will this Bill operate when we get to the post-accord situation? The Minister has not addressed that question, certainly not in his second-reading speech. If Victoria is to be in the forefront of leading Australia to a sensible industrial relations policy and a sensible industrial relations administration, it had better get its thinking straight about how it is going to deal with that situation.

The community cannot trade on the fact that for ever the most law-abiding, the most decent, responsible unions will honour the accord while the rogues will challenge it and while the outlaws—if I can put it that way in view of recent legislation passed by this Government—will achieve reduced working weeks, increased pay, whether the accord allows it or not. That is the situation we face today. If it starts with one project in South Yarra it will not be long before it is at the Museum station or the Flagstaff station; it will not be long before it is on the hospital project. It will not be long before it is down in the Latrobe Valley, the electorate of the honourable member for Morwell.

The claim for a 35-hour week, instead of being the surprise, will be the common claim as it flows from job to job and from site to site. Either the Government is serious about the accord and about no other claims and is going to quash that 35-hour week agreement in relation to that site, and that is what the accord needs—it needs that sort of discipline, back-up—or it is going to step back and say: “well everybody knows the builders labourers wave the Eureka flag and are different and we have all got to be understanding. Sure, they may get the 35-hour week, but we will make sure it does not flow to clerks, shop assistants or anyone else.”

The Government has already been distinguished by its willingness to negotiate behind the scenes without public knowledge on the issue of reduced working hours. This was done in the transport area and promptly thereafter there was a transport crisis because of a shortage of guards and drivers causing train cancellations.
The Government has reduced the working hours for nurses and there is now this marvellous hospital crisis. Because of reduced working hours there is now a situation in which there is a need for more nurses and therefore the waiting lists for elective surgery are lengthening. There has been a reduction in working hours on the site of the South Yarra project of Jack Chia. The Parliament deserves to be informed by the Minister whether the Government will do anything about this situation or whether it will simply go on sitting, hoping and praying that it does not flow-on to anywhere else.

Mr POPE (Monbulk)—On a point of order, the Bill is quite specific. It is the Industrial Relations (Complementary Industrial Relations System) Bill. We have heard rhetoric from various speakers on the Opposition benches about the industrial relations scene in Victoria and we are now hearing that from the honourable member for Berwick who is certainly not speaking on the Bill and I draw the attention of the House to that fact.

Mr PERRIN (Bulleen)—On the point of order, it is the second time that the honourable member for Monbulk has raised the issue. On the health dispute in this State, all speeches from this side of the House have been relevant to the debate on the Bill on the basis that there are two types of awards for nursing; one is a Federal award and the other is a State award. The Federal award covers nurses in repatriation hospitals and the State awards cover the present nursing dispute. The Bill will impact on both of those awards. I again point out that honourable members on this side of the House especially have spoken on matters that are relevant to the Bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! I do not uphold the point of order raised by the honourable member for Monbulk. I accept that the Bill can provide the basis for a debate on industrial relations and the industrial scene, but in canvassing the issue honourable members should not be too wide in their remarks; they must come back to the Bill.

Mr MACLELLAN (Berwick)—I welcome your advice, Mr Acting Speaker, and the interjection of the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs that suggested that I might be allowed to make a passing reference. I assure that House that the 35-hour week claim on one site will not be a passing thing except in the sense that it will pass from one site to another and from one job to another. Once the Builders Labourers Federation achieves a 35-hour week on one site it will set a new bench-mark, and under the proposed legislation it is likely to flow-on to every State and Federal award situation. That is the reality that honourable members should accept.

Admittedly, it has traditionally been the oil industry that has caused the difficulty with the storemen and packers' union and the transport workers who have said that they would shut off petrol unless they were given a 35-hour week, superannuation, more money and so forth. They were the catalysts for setting new claims, which used quickly to flow on to the Latrobe Valley in which the State Electricity Commission was the battleground.

We have all known the Builders Labourers Federation has managed to get these extraordinary situations in shopping centres and major building projects where there was not a great risk of flow-on, but we are now in the accord in which the unions have entered into a written undertaking to make no further claims. The Minister should inform the House whether under the accord it is right for a 35-hour week to be provided by employers on various sites around the State and whether he is inviting Mr Herscu and Mr Grollo and all the other major developers including Mr Jennings and the project builders to provide a 35-hour week and whether that is acceptable to the Government under the accord.

Does the Bill suggest that we should hop into a 35-hour week together or whether under the accord there is a standard fixed that allows for no other claims whether they be for superannuation, cash payments, tool allowances, and so forth, in whatever disguise. The Government is in the awkward position; it cannot say too much about Mr Norm Gallagher's claim for a 35-hour week because it has given shorter working hours in many places such as the Public Service.
“Ask and thou shalt receive” has been the industrial relations policy of the Government for three and a half years. It is difficult to wean the workers away from merely having to claim and then getting money for better working conditions, more overtime and so forth under the Government. It is difficult to explain to workers that under the Bill we are inviting the State and Federal jurisdictions to prevent this happening in the future. The Minister owes the Parliament an explanation of what is to be the situation with a 35-hour week and other claims that might flow-on from that and that might be made under the proposed legislation.

What will be the operation of the proposed legislation in the post-accord situation when we are no longer working under the accord and when the trade union movement is released from its undertakings presently given to the Arbitration Commission that there will be no claims other than for cost-of-living rises? The Government must answer that in an explanation of the Bill.

The Bill is no less welcome as a positive step towards a co-ordinated and integrated industrial relations problem-solving system in Australia. Personally I could think of suggestions that would take it even further in which Victoria merely became a good employer and the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission of the Federal system was invited to take over the whole range of industrial operations in Victoria rather than maintaining the present structure. That is the direction in which it will go and I see that as inevitable and, in the circumstances of Australia in the 1980s, it is not only inevitable but also it is probably desirable. I would have to examine the details but in the broad approach that would be desirable and, apart from the classical Public Service role of the State, industrial relations dispute settling procedures should all be under the aegis of the Federal Government.

However, we still must deal with the basic problem of what we are to do about the Norm Gallaghers and the 35-hour week claim in Victoria. What are we to do about the Jack Chia project which says, “You can have what you ask for”, and it builds without disruption until the next one, the next one and the next one is knocked off—and that is under the accord? How will Victorians live with the Bill in the post-accord situation?

The House deserves an answer to those questions and I hope the Minister, who is a competent Minister and one who I know would be willing to share with the House the information he has, will willingly stand up at the conclusion of the debate to give full and frank advice on his thinking as to the direction in which Victoria and Australia will be heading in industrial relations terms over the next few years, both as to the immediate aims and those in the post-accord situation.

Mr STOCKDALE (Brighton)—This is an important Bill because it impacts upon the state of industrial relations which is a major issue of public policy. It is especially important that we are debating the matter in the Victorian Parliament because Victoria has perhaps the greatest interest of any of the States in a closer integration between the Federal system and the State system of industrial regulation. Victoria has by far the highest incidence of workers covered by Federal awards. There is a higher proportion of workers in Victoria covered by Federal awards than in any other State.

Unfortunately, the situation frequently occurs in a workplace where some of the workers employed by a particular employer are covered by Federal awards whilst others are covered by State awards. It is important that honourable members realize that that is the situation where this Bill is most relevant.

Victoria also has a number of State awards that apply in industries where there is no significant intrusion of Federal awards, and it is important that the principles that underlie the Bill militate against there being an intrusion of the Federal system directly into the award-making and dispute-settling processes in those industries.

The object is to minimize the number of competing interests in an industrial relations situation, among unions, employers and also tribunals. However, one must recognize the

...
need for greater flexibility to deal with the institutional aggravation of the underlying causes of industrial conflict by removing the possibility of what I will call "jurisdiction hopping", where one side or the other—and it is not confined to only one side in the industrial relations equation—will seek to take advantage of difficulties in processing industrial disputes that arise from an intermingling of jurisdictions.

I do not oppose the proposed legislation. I look forward to seeing how it operates in practice. I also look forward to a further development in the already close relationship that has developed between industrial tribunals in Victoria and at the national level.

It is particularly significant that honourable members are debating this matter at this time, because Victoria is headed towards a serious industrial relations situation, and that arises for two main reasons: firstly, the failure of the industrial relations policies of the Labor Party based on the prices and wages accord; and, secondly, the "fix-it" wheeling and dealing style of industrial relations practice that the present Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs has developed in this State. There is every indication, to the great detriment of the Victorian economy, that that process is beginning to break down and that, following the debacle of the past four years, the chickens are coming home to roost.

I refer to an article that appeared in the Age newspaper yesterday which listed the names and included photographs of some of the staff of the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs.

Mr Crabb interjected.

Mr STOCKDALE—I am not attacking anyone. The backgrounds of the Minister's staff are included, and those backgrounds, as stated, are entirely representative of the edifice created by the Minister under the auspices of the industrial relations task force of Victoria. It is interesting that, with only one exception, each of the people who are mentioned in that article—and some seven persons were mentioned—have a background in the union movement. The simple reality is that the industrial relations area in Victoria, in so far as the interests of Victorians are concerned, has been handed over to the trade union movement.

The situation exists where, unofficially, the Bills that are brought into Parliament are drafted in concert with the Victorian Trades Hall Council and union officials, as was the case with the Occupational Health and Safety Bill and the Accident Compensation Bill. Both Bills were drafted in a situation where the trade union movement was given a power of veto even over the fine detail of the terms of those measures. Not only is that operating, informally, through the power of veto of unions over the terms of the legislation, but also the actual day-to-day conduct of industrial relations in this State, on behalf of the people of this State, is being put into the hands of union officials.

Indeed, in the course of recruitment of staff, not only for the department itself, but also for statutory authorities, unspoken criteria of union affiliation have been used in the selection of people to represent the employer interests in Victoria. That, in itself, is cause for concern.

At both the anecdotal evidence level and the level of statistical indicators, Victoria's industrial relations situation is headed for bad times. Other honourable members have dealt with a number of recent disputes that have occurred in the public sector, and I will simply list a number of disputes that have arisen in the public sector where this Government has not been able to demonstrate that any benefit exists for the Victorian community in the so-called special relationship between the Labor Party Government and the union movement.

There have been a series of disputes in the public transport network; that occurred before the Nunawading by-election, at a time when I am sure the Minister would not have liked the occurrence of industrial disputes that stopped public transport in this State. Strikes by transport unions led to the cessation of public transport. There were also
disputes about the duties of guards; bans on the underground rail loop; and a serious dispute arising over the two-man crewing issue.

The hospitals are in a crisis situation, as other honourable members have already said. Reference has been made to the nurses' dispute, but honourable members should not forget the over-all context. It should also be remarked that even resident medical officers have been driven to taking industrial action over disputes between themselves and the hospital administration, which was acting on behalf of the Government. There have also been recent disputes involving the Hospital Employees Federation where, again, the Government's special relationship with the union did not confer any benefit on the Victorian community.

The response of the Government, as it always has been in these sorts of situations, is to throw money at the problem and hope that simply spending the taxpayers' money will solve it. There is no attempt to manage industrial relations; there is nothing other than a fix-it deal between union officials, representing the Government on the one hand and representing the workers involved on the other.

There has also been the debacle of the teacher strikes, and there are currently disputes between the Government and the unions in the education system, which are to the detriment of the students in Victorian schools. It is particularly harmful to students at the higher level of education who are approaching end-of-year assessments, the results of which could affect their futures. This situation is not acceptable to the Australian and Victorian communities.

It is not just a matter of the cataclysmic series of disputes that have taken place in the public sector; as other speakers have indicated, the private sector is also affected by industrial conflict, the incompetence of this Government in dealing with that conflict and the Government's lack of preparedness to even tackle issues, like the Dollar Sweets dispute. It is not enough to just regulate the infrastructure under which disputes are dealt with.

It is interesting that honourable members have heard nothing from the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs about the recent statistics on the number of working days lost as a result of industrial disputation. I remember some months ago, when there seemed to be a trend towards the reduction of industrial disputation in Victoria and Australia, and the Minister had Dorothy Dix questions asked of him. He raced straight up to the table and began telling honourable members about the successful record in Victoria and what the statistics showed.

It is interesting that honourable members have not heard from the Minister on that matter since the statistics for June were released. Could the explanation be that not only is there an adverse trend, not only is the incidence of industrial disputes increasing, but also, Victoria is doing substantially worse than the other States? Could that possibly explain the Minister's reticence in coming forward and explaining the situation to the people of Victoria?

I have before me the figures on the number of working days lost, expressed in thousands, for the twelve months ended June. One can compare the statistics for the twelve months ended June 1984 with those for the twelve months ended June 1985. For the twelve months ended June 1984, the figure for Australia was 1,279,600 working days lost as a result of industrial disputation. In the twelve months ended June 1985, working days lost for Australia as a whole as a result of industrial disputes increased to 1,304,200, an increase of 1.9 per cent.

In Victoria, for the twelve months ended June 1984, 213,300 working days were lost and in the twelve months to the end of June 1985, 225,000 working days were lost, an increase of 5.5 per cent. Therefore, in the same period there was a national increase of 1.9 per cent in working days lost due to industrial disputes and in Victoria an increase of 5.5
per cent—nearly three times as high a rate of increase in Victoria as for the whole of Australia.

Perhaps that explains why the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs sits dumb struck at the moment and does not rush to the table to explain to honourable members the glorious record of the Labor Government in this area of responsibility.

The reforms encompassed in this measure are desperately needed in Victoria to increase the accountability of the Government in the Federal jurisdiction, to reduce its ability, to shelter within the task force and the "fix it" method of industrial relations that has prevailed over the past four years.

I was grateful for the ruling given by the Acting Speaker with respect to the industrial relations environment in Victoria because it relates particularly to the Builders Labourers Federation and the shonky legislation that was introduced as a device to help the Government in the Nunawading Province by-election. That issue clearly demonstrates a need for a closer relationship between the Federal and State jurisdictions and illustrates the lack of preparedness of the Victorian Government to take advantage of the resources it already has available.

The Victorian Government has had the opportunity of acting in both jurisdictions. Why does it decline to do so? The Government introduced a phoney Bill, which provided that the Government could not act to deregister the BLF until the Federal Government deregistered that union in the Federal jurisdiction. Victoria is legally bound by Federal awards by which the BLF is bound and is a party to disputes in which that federation is involved. Victoria has been an applicant under the Federal Act for the deregistration of the Builders Labourers Federation.

When the most recent application for deregistration was introduced in 1981 the sovereign State of Victoria was an applicant for deregistration. One of the first actions of this Government when it came to office was to withdraw from those proceedings, thereby abandoning its responsibilities to control the Builders Labourers Federation. The precondition to effective action against the BLF was the removal of its privileged position under Federal law, so that it could be dealt with in the Federal jurisdiction and the State jurisdiction. The Government withdrew from the action that was to bring about that precondition.

When the Bill was introduced, the Government said nothing about plans to act in the Federal jurisdiction to institute proceedings to deregister the BLF, just as another Government had done in 1981. There is a real question about the extent to which this Government is committed to a closer dovetailing of relationships between the Federal and State industrial systems. The glowing illustration that this measure does not represent a proper commitment to the establishment of an appropriate legal framework or to industrial relations management in the interests of the Victorian community is the track record of the Government in its relationship with the BLF.

If we could rely upon the Government to establish a proper industrial relations framework and to manage industrial relations in the interests of the Victorian community, the Government would not simply be introducing this Bill; it would have begun proceedings to deregister the BLF at Federal level. I welcome the proposed legislation but there is a question mark about the Government's preparedness to act in the interests of all Victorians.

Mr PERRIN (Bulleen)—I join in this debate as a practitioner in the industrial relations field for many years. I place on record the appreciation of honourable members on this side of the House for the initial work done on the proposed legislation in the late 1970s by the honourable member for Balwyn, which has led to the introduction of this proposed legislation.

It is with deep regret that I note Victoria is the last State to enact this type of legislation; that every State in the Commonwealth, including Queensland, enacted similar legislation eighteen months before Victoria. Obviously Queensland has a much higher respect for
industrial relations because in April last year that State, as a matter or urgency and principle, introduced legislation complementary to the proposed legislation.

I remind honourable members of one salient point, that is, under the Australian Constitution industrial relations is a State matter. The Australian Constitution makes it very clear that only where disputes transgress borders of various States can a dispute be heard by the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. That point appears to have been missed in this debate because industrial relations is a very important part of the operation of any State and constitutionally a State is legally bound to provide a proper industrial relations environment.

When one examines how the Federal system and the State system has grown up, it is apparent that the State system has responsibility for industrial relations. Many bogus disputes have arisen because of a supposed crossing of boundaries and these disputes have been heard in the Federal jurisdiction rather than in the State jurisdiction. There would not be many enterprises in this State that would not operate under both State and Federal awards. That should be considered during the course of this debate because this measure allows for interaction between those two systems.

I have not yet given my support to the Bill. It is the type of Bill that this Parliament should debate. The dual system that operates in this country operates very much to the detriment of the business community and even the unions, because businesses have to cope with two industrial relations systems—one under the Federal jurisdiction and one under the State jurisdiction. Demarcation disputes that arise from State and Federal awards usually result in some type of industrial action—probably a strike. Those disputes may be able to be handled in a more expeditious manner under the proposed legislation. That must be seen as an improvement on the present system. The Opposition welcomes the proposed legislation.

It is of enormous concern to me that a high level of industrial disputes relate to demarcation, where one union is registered under a Federal award and another union is registered under a State award and a dispute arises about who does what. The Bill will enable the President of the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission to hear submissions on industrial relations.

The sitting was suspended at 1 p.m. until 2.3 p.m.

Mr PERRIN—Before the suspension of the sitting I made clear the point that, under the Australian Constitution, industrial relations is a State issue. The Bill regulates the two industrial relations systems that have grown up in this country. We have a Federal and State industrial system and the Bill will enable an interchange of senior office bearers—the Chairman of the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission and the Chairman of the Victorian Industrial Relations Commission—to hear joint submissions on industrial relations.

The most valuable function of the Bill for the people of Victoria and Australia concerns demarcation disputes. If one examines the demarcation disputes that have cropped up already throughout the country, one clearly sees that where a conflict arises with employees employed under Federal and State awards, the two commissions need to be able to establish a joint relationship. The Bill will enable that to take place.

Nothing could be a greater illustration of the difficulties with demarcation disputes than the recent strikes in the health field. One has only to examine the history of the nurses' dispute and the happenings earlier this year, when the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital nurses, who are covered by a Federal award, went on strike on the basis that their conditions under that award were not as good as the State award conditions, to realize that, the Bill will help to overcome such difficulties.

In the nursing field two groups of workers who are covered by two different awards are performing exactly the same job. Nurses at the Repatriation Hospital in Heidelberg work under a Federal award while at the Austin Hospital, just down the road, a different set of
award conditions applies to State registered nurses. Therefore, within a mile of each other, two institutions provide identical care and two groups of nurses operate under two different awards. If one remembers what occurred in the initial dispute in the Federal scene, one realizes that a joint meeting of the commissions would be of some benefit.

I believe, in time, conditions in the nursing field will come closer together. Since that dispute, further disputes have occurred in the health field. I remind honourable members that about a month ago a dispute occurred between the Hospital Employees Federation and the nursing unions. The dispute was entirely a demarcation dispute. The unions sought a delineation between the duties of nurses and the duties of other hospital employees.

The Government supposedly solved that problem by throwing money at it. This gave the impression that the dispute had been resolved. However, honourable members know full well that—and this will be proved on Thursday—the dispute has not been resolved and there are further matters of concern for nurses.

There is a crying need for demarcation disputes to be examined. The public is not interested in whether nurses operate in the Federal or State sphere; it is interested in the provision of services. The public is not interested in whether members of the Hospital Employees Federation are employed under a Federal or a State award or whether nurses are employed under a Federal or a State award; it is interested in nursing services being provided to critically ill patients.

Clearly, the Bill will have an impact on demarcation disputes. It will be interesting to ascertain whether those disputes will be placed before the joint commission. That is the type of approach that should be adopted because the current weakness in the industrial relations system is that the only way in which demarcation disputes seem to be resolved or brought to a head is by one or other of the parties going on strike. If the Bill does nothing else, it should produce solutions that, I hope, will be of benefit to all Victorians.

The Builders Labourers Federation will be affected by the proposed legislation. The builders' award is a State award, yet the Builders Labourers Federation—the union—is registered at both State and Federal levels.

The Builders Labourers Federation has used its industrial muscle to create adverse conditions in the building industry. Work bans have been placed on Government sites, TAFE colleges and other educational facilities throughout Victoria, on building projects in "J" division at Pentridge Prison, at No. 1 Treasury Place and at 369 Flinders Street, Melbourne. Until the Bill is passed, no mechanism will be available for these disputes to be brought to a head quickly and for this rogue union to be brought into line.

If one examines the industrial relations scene over the past few years, one can ascertain a trend whereby more and more awards are being transferred from State to Federal jurisdiction. I am concerned about that trend because I believe many of those awards should remain in the State system.

In the past, oil workers have been more than happy to create a bogus interstate dispute to ensure that the Federal Conciliation and Arbitration Commission had jurisdiction and could provide an award for employees from various States. If the trend continues, many more Victorian workers will be covered by Federal awards.

Another illustration involves discussions occurring between the State teachers' unions. A proposal has been put that the three State registered unions—the Victorian Teachers Union, the Victorian Secondary Teachers Association and the Technical Teachers Union of Victoria—should join together to form the Australian Teachers' Federation. This would be a federally registered organization and would seek Federal awards for its members.

Once a Federal award is implemented, control of teaching unions will be outside the power of the State Government. Victorian teachers will be awarded conditions based on conditions in some other State, and claim after claim will be raised as to which Government has jurisdiction.
More flexibility in the industrial relations scene is required. From time to time I have raised in this place the Federal accord between the Federal Labor Government and the Australian Council of Trade Unions. The accord is a fixed and inflexible document and has an impact on Victoria. It is, unfortunately, one-sided because it allows unions to have rights over other employees and employers in the work force. One has only to consider the "industrial relations club" to recognize that that situation will continue for some time. The accord is a social document and relates to matters far above and beyond wage conditions and associated issues pertaining to the industrial relations sphere. The accord is binding on Victoria.

I believe the offer made to the Victorian branch of the Royal Australian Nursing Federation is outside the wage fixing principles, as set down by the Full Bench of the Arbitration Commission.

The Opposition welcomes the measure. It is a small step in the direction that proposed legislation of this type should take to ensure a co-ordinated industrial relations system between State and Federal Governments. If measures such as this had been introduced in the past, Victoria would not be experiencing the madness that is now apparent whereby State awards are used to provide a flow-on of wages and conditions to employees covered by Federal awards, and Federal awards are used to provide a flow-on of wages and conditions to employees under Victorian awards. Now one has only to establish a case and the benefits will automatically flow on. The principles of a Federal case involving job protection will soon flow on to various State awards.

The State Government has a constitutional obligation to provide good industrial relations. The Federal Government does not have that obligation, so I hope many more industrial relations measures will be introduced in this Parliament. The Cain Government must take a much higher level of responsibility to ensure that it does not always give in to unions to resolve disputes.

Over a long period I have observed how the Industrial Relations Task Force has operated. Whenever it makes a decision, which it does in secret, it always seems to be in favour of unions and not employers.

I congratulate the honourable member for Balwyn for his original proposal of the Bill in 1979. It is a disgrace for Victoria to be the last State in Australia to introduce such a measure; the Queensland Government introduced a similar Bill eighteen months ago. The delay in introducing the proposed legislation is indicative of the industrial relations climate and of the attitude to industrial relations matters by the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs and the Government.

Mr TANNER (Caulfield)—The Bill will establish a complementary industrial relations system in Victoria. The measure had its genesis in a meeting held in 1979 between Commonwealth and State Ministers responsible for labour and industrial affairs.

As the honourable member for Bulleen indicated, the Bill is particularly relevant to the Victorian industrial relations scene because of the large number of employees in Victoria covered by Federal industrial awards and Federal jurisdiction. Approximately 66 per cent of Victorian employees covered by industrial awards come under Commonwealth jurisdiction compared with only 16 per cent in Western Australia. The Bill should be of more benefit to Victoria than any other State. It is a pity the Victorian Government has given it such a low priority and that this State is the last in Australia to introduce such a measure.

The Opposition does not oppose the passage of the Bill. Nevertheless, I shall voice some areas of apprehension on behalf of the Victorian community about future actions the Government may take in this area. I remind the Minister about the apprehensions voiced by the Opposition in the previous Parliament, and I ask him to bear in mind the concerns I shall express. The Opposition would be concerned if the Bill were followed by further proposed legislation that would remove the ban on preference for trade unionists that is
contained in current legislation. Such a ban does not exist in Commonwealth legislation but it exists in Victorian legislation.

I am aware that the Government, through the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs, has previously attempted to remove those bans. Although the Opposition will not oppose the Bill, it will be concerned if the proposed legislation is seized upon by the Government and the Minister as a step towards achieving the further aim of the Government that has been previously stated. It may be assumed from the Opposition's support of the legislation that the Opposition is in favour of a more centralized industrial relations system in this nation, but that is not the case. The Leader and the Deputy Leader of the Federal Opposition have clearly pointed out that the position of the Liberal Party is to encourage and support decentralized industrial relations, if that is what the parties to such an agreement wish.

Although the proposed legislation is putting in place a complementary or more centralized industrial relations system where that is advantageous, the reality is that it should be used only in circumstances where it will achieve better industrial relations or peace in the workplace. The Victorian Opposition supports the case that has been put at the Federal level by the Liberal Party in which a decentralized system should be supported if parties to an agreement wish to have a more decentralized system.

I shall comment on the actions that have been taken by the Government in recent years, indicating its general philosophy towards industrial relations. In particular I refer to an attempt by the Government in its early days to grant preference to members of the Municipal Officers Association.

The Government would be under a misapprehension if it believed the Opposition would allow it to introduce further measures on industrial relations to build on the proposed legislation to allow favouritism to be granted to trade unionists in an effort to promote trade unionism in Victoria in the future. The Opposition supports the concept of trade unionism and believes trade unions have an important role to play in protecting and enhancing the welfare of Victorian employees. Nevertheless, it cannot accept that trade unions have an inalienable right over the rest of the community through extension of their power over other points of view. As the honourable member for Hawthorn pointed out, equality before the law is the principle followed at all times by the Liberal Party on all legislation, particularly industrial relations legislation.

As honourable members are aware, the Labor Party grew out of the trade union movement; it is a creature of the trade union movement. It is pleasing to note that this Bill did not have its genesis in the trade union movement. It is probably the first industrial relations measure introduced by this Government that did not originate in the Trades Hall Council. On that score the Government and the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs deserve belated congratulations—belated because the introduction of the Bill itself to Parliament was belated. Victoria is the last State in Australia in which a measure of this kind has been introduced.

I agree with what the Minister said in his second-reading speech; that it is the hope of all involved that the Bill will resolve some industrial relations disputes. However, it is disappointing that it has taken so long for the Bill to appear in Parliament. Perhaps it is because the Government has given a higher priority to other industrial relations measures. The Minister is aware of the priorities the Government has given to legislation concerning notification to employees of the likelihood of the termination of their employment, measures to control the introduction of technology and, as I have previously pointed out, the attempt by the Government to remove from industrial relations legislation the ban on preference being granted to trade unionists. Therefore, it is pleasing to debate this Bill.

In allowing the proposed legislation an unimpeded passage, the Opposition hopes the measure will resolve some industrial disputes in the economy. Despite the fact that the proposed legislation favours a centralized industrial relations system in Victoria and Australia, the Opposition wholeheartedly supports a decentralized system in which it
would be advantageous for the parties to a dispute to resolve it voluntarily. The Opposition does not want the type of situation that occurred in the Mudginberri dispute to occur. The parties involved in that dispute wanted to have their own local agreement, yet the Australian trade union movement moved against them because the employees involved had the temerity to want to sort out their own agreement between the employers and themselves.

The proposed legislation will benefit the industrial relations scene in Victoria. As I have pointed out, a large number of employees come under the Federal awards, but 34 per cent of employees still come under State awards.

Ms SIBREE (Kew)—I am pleased to contribute to the debate as industrial relations is a matter about which all members of Parliament should be concerned; none of us should be prevented from talking about it. This small Bill will go a long way towards improving industrial relations. As other honourable members have pointed out, it has taken the Government a considerable time to pass legislation that other States have already passed. I direct to the attention of the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs a concern that has been expressed to me in the past few days on what appears to be a lack of understanding in dealing with industrial disputes that at present do not seem capable of being solved.

If the Bill is passed here and in another place, it may equip the Minister with more armour to solve some of the disputes. We are not talking purely about strikes. The Minister is extremely keen to refer to the excellent record of the Government in industrial relations disputes and to point out that the number of days lost through industrial disputes has decreased. That is always the case in times of high unemployment.

Some of the huge costs of industrial disputes have not been highlighted. There are hidden costs of disruption, secondary boycotts and delays in the delivery of equipment because of the attitudes of certain unions to a workplace or an employer or because of sympathy for other members of the union or workers in other parts of the workplace. The Minister does not talk about those sorts of disruption to industrial harmony. They represent the dollar figures that eat into the pockets of people in manufacturing and small business.

In considering industrial relations one must not be hoodwinked into believing that all that is involved is days lost as a result of strikes; that is only one significant but small part of the whole industrial relations area, particularly in considering the costs to employers.

In the context of having the Bill passed in this House and the other place so that it is soon in operation in Victoria, I direct the attention of the Minister to many representations I have received in the past few days about the cancellation of the “New Wave” concert.

It is scandalous that hundreds of young people under 25 years of age who specifically put together a special concert to mark International Youth Year—an event which both the Federal and State Labor Party Governments have stated is important—and who have been practising and rehearsing for this event and giving of their time freely, have been hurt by this incident.

The SPEAKER—Order! The debate has stretched itself considerably during the course that it has been running and, although it may amuse the Liberal Party Whip, I do not intend to allow the debate to go any further than what is contained in the Bill. The honourable member for Kew is out of order in proceeding on the course she is taking.

Ms SIBREE—The Bill contains complementary legislation to ensure more rapid hearing, determination and settlement of industrial disputes. I am directing to the attention of the Minister an industrial claim that is disrupting a group of people wishing to put on a performance. I hope the honourable gentleman will inform the House how he considers the Bill will assist that situation and what he may be able to do about it. I speak on behalf of the hundreds of disappointed young people who are hoping that this legislative measure will help them and enable them to proceed with a major and significant concert to note and to give significance to International Youth Year.
No one is saying anything about these hundreds of young people who are being disadvantaged as the result of this current industrial dispute. The present industrial relations system does not cater adequately for the settlement of the dispute to assist the promoters of the concert and the televisors. My remarks are valid. I am sure that the Minister would like the opportunity of saying what he believes he can do to ensure that these young people can show their talents and abilities to the whole State.

The SPEAKER—Order! I advise the honourable member that, although she may believe her remarks to be relevant, I do not and shall not hear her if she continues on that course. The honourable member should confine her remarks to the Bill.

Ms SIBREE—Speaking to the Bill, I think members of the Liberal Party have adequately expressed their concerns about possible repercussions. As someone who takes an interest in leading society to a better way of handling disputes, I conclude by wishing the Bill a speedy passage and I look forward to hearing from the Minister on the matters that I have raised.

Mr CRABB (Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs)—The intrepid readers of Hansard may not be aware that all speakers have supported the Bill. I thank them for their support of the proposed legislation and wish it a speedy passage.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time, and passed through its remaining stages.

REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS DEATHS AND MARRIAGES
(AMENDMENT) BILL

The debate (adjourned from September 19) on the motion of Mr McCutcheon (Minister for Property and Services) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

Mr DELZOPPO (Narracan)—The Bill touches all members of the community at some time in their lives. Further, the proposed legislation impinges on several sensitive community conventions and habits. It is the duty of Parliament to ensure that the recording of information necessary for Government records does not intrude too much into the personal habits and the lives of the general community.

The Bill significantly amends the principal Act. It replaces a large proportion of that Act and I am at a loss to understand why the Minister for Property and Services did not initiate legislation to produce a new Act rather than attempt to amend the existing Act. I understand that Cabinet did consider this, but for some reason best known to Cabinet this was rejected.

The Bill introduces a range of new definitions. It defines “change” when that word applies to a change of name, and it defines “child” as a person who is not at least eighteen years of age and is not or has not been married.

I note in the Bill that some of the conventions to which the community is accustomed have been altered. It is usual for various forms to use the word “surname”; in the Bill this has been replaced by “family name”. Instead of “Christian name” the words “given name” are used.

I understand that some persons in the community who are not Christians and some who profess other religions might be unhappy at having to fill in a form which shows “Christian name”. However, I cannot understand why the deletion of “Christian” was not made so that forms would read “Christian or given name”, which would preserve some of the sensitive conventions of the community and still allow persons who do not profess to be Christians or who are members of another faith to use these forms without any offence.

The Bill defines “name” to mean: “(a) the given and family name; or (b) any name used, adopted or registered instead of the given name or family name or both the given name
and family name." The point is raised that under common law a person has the right to use any family name or any assumed name.

Previously the responsibility for compiling and recording births, deaths and marriages has resided with the Government Statist, but because the statist is concerned mainly with financial matters it has been seen fit by the proposers of the Bill, and I support the motion, to make the Register of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Names the responsible person in the State for compilation, recording and storing of all records of births, deaths and marriages. The Bill introduces a new concept where, in the event of any dispute over the ruling of the registrar, the Administrative Appeals Tribunal may adjudicate.

In the second-reading speech, the Minister referred to the Bill as a significant social reform—whether it is significant will be for others to judge. The Bill clearly sets out in clause 5 the objects of the Act, which are:

(a) require the registration of births, deaths and marriages occurring in the State of Victoria; and
(b) facilitate the naming of persons born in the State of Victoria; and
(c) maintain registers of births, adopted children, still-births, deaths, marriages and changes of names of persons in the State of Victoria; and
(d) facilitate and maintain a co-ordinating office for the collection of statistics; and
(e) provide services to members of the public by issuing certificates of entries in registers maintained by the Registrar; and
(f) provide services to members of the public related to registers and records held by the registry.

There is tremendous public interest in this information which has been stored over the years. More and more persons are showing an interest in the histories of their families and one of the methods that can be used to trace family trees is the records of the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

The amending Bill radically alters the principal Act. Schedules 2, 3, 5 and 6 of the present Act will be completely removed by the Bill.

One of the major changes to the Act is contained in clause 6, which deals with the family name of the child. Clause 6 replaces sections 16A and 17 of the principal Act. The family name of a child is set out as being the family name of the father if the father is shown on the original register or, if no person is registered as the father of the child, the child is registered in the family name of the mother. There is a further option whereby the child can take the name of the mother and that of the person registered as the father of the child or, if no person is registered as the father of the child, the mother and the person who produces evidence to the satisfaction of the registrar that he is the father of the child, the child is registered in the family name of the mother.

The family name of a child can be registered as the family name of the father whether or not joined by a hyphen with the family name or maiden family name of the mother; or the family name or maiden family name of the mother whether or not joined by a hyphen with the family name of the father.

The registrar must register as the family name of the child the name proposed in an application under proposed new section 16A (3) unless proposed new section 48 applies. The registrar has the power to refuse to register any obnoxious, obscene or frivolous name that may come before him.

Names should not have more than one hyphen. A proposed name should not be composed of more than two words. However, I believe the Minister will foreshadow some amendments that will remove this provision. If that is not done, there could be some
complication in registering a child whose parents both have hyphenated names. If there is
disagreement between the parents as to the name of the child, the registrar must use both
parents' names with a hyphen unless he is directed to the contrary by a court order.

Clause 6 also inserts a new section 17 of the principal Act which allows for the registration
of a given name some time after the original registration is made. This is applicable under
certain conditions where the applicant has satisfied the registrar of his or her bona fides
which are set out in the Bill.

In section 27 for the words “an extract of the entry” there is substituted the words “a
certificate in the prescribed form”. So that amended section 27 would state:

Within one month after a birth or death has been registered by the Government Statist the Government Statist
shall notify the person by whom the particulars relating to the birth or death were furnished that the birth or
death has been duly registered by posting to him a certificate in the prescribed form of the birth or death.

Delays have been encountered by some people in obtaining birth certificates. Previously
an extract of the entry of birth was provided for such things as insurance policies and so
on. Not many people bothered to obtain a full birth certificate for such occasions. However,
due to alterations to Federal legislation governing the issue of passports, an applicant for
a passport needs to provide a full birth certificate. Some delays have occurred in the
registry in meeting this demand.

The certificate in the prescribed form will be dealt with by regulation. It is proposed that
the certificate be composed of the full birth certificate with a perforated line at the bottom
and an extract of entry attached.

For example, a person registering the birth of an illegitimate child could conceal the
illegitimacy from the child until he or she was an adult. The certificate part of the form
could be removed and the extract provided in lieu. Confidential information could be
separated from non-confidential information. The full birth certificate contains all of the
relevant information, whereas only the date of birth is shown on the extract of entry.

Clause 8 replaces parts V and VI of the principal Act. Proposed new Part V provides a
more appropriate method for persons to change their names. At present names can be
changed by deed poll under section 15 of the Property Law Act. Approximately 5000
people a year change their names in Victoria by this method. The original provision was
designed to provide notification of change of name in the case of land dealings. However,
in the absence of more general legislative provisions, it has become widely used as a
mechanism for indicating a change of name. Not only is it an inappropriate mechanism
for indicating a change of name but it is also an inadequate means of recording a change
of name. However, under the Bill, a change of name will fall within the jurisdiction of the
registrar, who will have responsibility for recording such changes.

At present there is no provision for a change of name by deed poll or any other means
to be noted in the register of births. I also note that the rights of the person who changes
his name, with respect to voting at elections, is protected inasmuch as the electoral officer
has to be notified of any change of name.

I was dealing with the inappropriateness of the present deed poll method. The Titles
Office is not the appropriate department for such name changes to be recorded. The
common law rights of a person to assume or use a family name are protected under
proposed new section 33 and it is the responsibility of the registrar to keep a record of
name changes.

A person over eighteen years of age or under eighteen years, if married, may apply to
the registrar to change his or her name, provided certain evidence is tendered when
requested by the registrar—this may be proof of age or marital status.

Parents of children may change a child's name under certain conditions and the welfare
and interests of the child are assured by a provision in the Bill.
Part VI deals with the administration of the Act. The duties of the registrar are set out in proposed new section 41 which provides that:

Subject to the general direction and control of the Minister the duties of the Registrar are—

(a) to keep and maintain—
   (i) registers of births; and
   (ii) adopted children registers; and
   (iii) registers of still-births; and
   (iv) registers of deaths; and
   (v) registers of marriages; and
   (vi) registers of changes of names; and

(b) to obtain information about births, still-births and deaths in the State of Victoria; and

(c) as soon as possible after the event, to obtain and register in respect of every birth, still-birth or death which has not been registered the prescribed particulars; and

(d) to administer this Act.

The Bill allows for the correction of an entry and the cancellation of false or illegal registrations. Under certain conditions the registrar can refuse an entry if he considers that the application for the proposed name is obscene, offensive, frivolous or contrary to the public interest, or if he has reason to believe that the application has been made to facilitate an unlawful or fraudulent purpose.

Under proposed new section 49 the registrar is to make and keep indexes of the registers under proposed new section 41, which, as I mentioned sets out the duties of the registrar. Proposed new section 49 (2) provides that:

Any person may apply in the prescribed form together with the prescribed fee to have a search made by the Registrar of any index or register.

Under proposed new section 49 (3):

The Registrar may refuse to make a search only if the Registrar is of the opinion that there is not sufficient reason for the search to be made or that it is prohibited by any other Act.

Indexes of registers have a tremendous interest to many people and organizations, particularly historical societies such as the Genealogical Society of Victoria and the Australian Institute of Genealogical Studies. These indexes are the main tools in tracing family histories. Honourable members will be aware of the great upsurge of interest in past generations, which should be encouraged.

In a letter written to me by a person who is interested in the Genealogical Society of Victoria, the following statement is made:

... Victoria is one of the few Australian States which has not yet published its pre-1900 indexes of births, deaths and marriages. However, I understand that these indexes will be published this year as part of the 150th Anniversary Celebrations.

I would like to think that the Minister would agree and confirm that that is the case, because I can think of no more appropriate time to make these indexes available than during Victoria’s 150th year. This has far more meaning so far as history is concerned than some of the other activities and celebrations staged by the Government. The letter continues:

The main stumbling block to the publishing of these indexes is that the Government Statist consolidated his indexes for 1896 through to 1913 and it is time consuming (and expensive) to extract and make a new index for each year.

I suggest that the following amendment be put to the Bill to amend the present Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Act 1959 (No. 6564):

That is the principal Act. I ask the Minister to give consideration to this amendment between here and the other place. The suggested amendment reads:

The Registrar must in every year publish in a form approved by the Minister the indexes to each of the registers of births, deaths and marriages in his possession after the lapse of 75 years after the making of the last entry therein."
This would mean that a new set of indexes would automatically be available dating back 75 years, which would make it a lot easier for persons carrying out research into family histories to obtain the information and it would impose a duty on the registrar to compile such indexes every year until, ultimately, there would be indexes going back for more than 75 years.

I ask the Minister to consider this proposal between here and another place. Perhaps the Minister could reply to this suggestion during his second-reading summation.

The Opposition circulated the Bill widely throughout the community and a number of surprising replies were received. Some uncertainties were raised with my colleagues and I, and I wish to mention a few of those now. For instance, it was brought to my attention that proposed new section 51 (1) reads:

Any person may apply in the prescribed form together with the prescribed fee for a copy of any cancelled entry in a register book relating to that person to be given by the Registrar to that person or to a person authorized in the application.

I received a letter from a retired solicitor, who lives in my electorate and who has an interest in these matters, which letter states:

... Section 51 evoked the comment that the copy of the cancelled certificate may be given to a person to whom it relates, but otherwise, can only be furnished on a judge's order. This, of course, would involve much expense. It would preclude a lot of family tree interest.

But more importantly, it could make the administration of intestate estates very difficult and costly. A widower, for instance, with adult children, could change his name after all the children had severed any connection with him—neither side would know where the other is. His death notice would mean nothing to the children, nor would a probate notice. When there has been an alternate name, a probate notice refers to "William Smith, also known as John White"). No one else might know that the widower had changed his name, or that he had children. Someone at hand would supply details for the death certificate and under the column for "issue" would say "unknown". Advertising for relatives of the widower in his changed name would bring no results.

The letter raise the question:

Would the registration of the change of name under the new legislation mean that the birth certificates of the children would be affected? Or the widower's marriage certificate? Would there be any way for anyone to know of the death of the person who changed his name?

Of course, the same position probably applies now under the Property Law Act change of name provisions. One does not search for changes of name (if that is possible) in estates; maybe it would be a good thing to do this now automatically, that is, if such a search would reveal matters identifying claimants with the person searched against.

This is the most significant point the letter makes:

All this seems to mean that the Registrar should have a discretion to supply details—perhaps at the request of the Registrar of Probates—to facilitate identification of beneficiaries without recourse to a judge.

I ask the Minister for Property and Services to consider that point.

Certain groups within the community have taken an intense interest in the proposed legislation to amend the Births Deaths and Marriages Act 1959. One of the groups that has written to me and my colleagues is a group known as SANDS—the Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Support organization. That group is aware of a problem with the issuing of certificates for children who are stillborn and it maintains that because a birth certificate is not presently issued, this adds to the anguish of the parents. The group would like to see the Act amended to take care of some of the points it raises.

In a letter addressed to me, the group states:

1. by the definitions of 'birth' and 'still-born child' in the Act (pages 2-3) parents can give birth only to "a child which breathed or showed any other sign of life after being born". Those whose children are still-born, by definition, give 'still-birth'! This is offensive. Parents are of the understanding and feeling that they have given birth to all children, live born and still-born;

2. the name, if given, and sex of the baby cannot be officially recorded;
3. There is no guarantee of the permanency of the existing brief record as the Act provides for the destruction of any Still-birth Register after ten years.

I must add that, through proposed amendments, the Minister has removed that section of the Act. Where previously the Act required the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages to maintain a record of stillbirths for ten years with no guarantee of the records being kept permanently, this is now not the case; therefore, that point raised by the group has already been dealt with.

The group further states:

4. No 'birth' certificate can be provided; and

5. The baby is excluded from the listing of previous children of the marriage in the registration of the birth of any subsequent children.

This situation creates added anguish for many parents, as the anomaly exists where the parents of a full term still-born baby who dies unexpectedly during labour are not entitled to any legal acknowledgement of the "birth" of their fully expected baby, whereas the parents of a 21 week premature baby who dies even hours after 'live birth' are so entitled.

In its letter, the organization makes these proposals:

1. A redefinition of "birth" to include 'live birth' and 'still birth', which would enable parents to give birth to all children, irrespective of whether they are live born or still-born.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! I ask the honourable member to explain to me who gave that opinion.

Mr DELZOPPO—I am quoting from a letter addressed to me from an organization known as SANDS, which stands for Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Support. The organization gives mutual support to those parents who have had the misfortune of having had a stillborn child.

The second proposal contained in the letter is:

2. An amendment to section 27 of the Act (page 11) so as to provide for the issue of a birth certificate (designated still-born) upon request.

The Minister should give consideration to those matters. I am prepared to speak with him about the suggestions made by the SANDS organization when the Bill is between here and another place. It is a sensitive issue and I respect that sensitivity. I will leave the matter at that and speak with the Minister at a later date.

The letter goes on to state:

Redefinitions of "birth" of this nature were suggested to SANDS by Dr Jocelynne Scutt of the Law Reform Commission of Victoria and Mr Alan Nicoll of the Legal Aid Commission of Victoria.

That adds weight to the request made by SANDS and indicates that it has sought legal advice and has thought through the matter.

The letter goes on to state:

Mr Kevin O'Connor, Director of Policy and Research, Law Department, cannot see any substantial difficulty in legislating effectively so that SANDS' general proposals be incorporated in the Act.

These two simple changes and their consequential application to the Act would remove all aspects of the existing discrimination as outlined and also provide parents with options denied them at present.

The Minister should consider the objections raised by SANDS when the Bill is between here and another place.

In his second-reading speech, the Minister spoke about social reform, and the request made by SANDS should be seen in that light. A redefinition of birth may require an additional amendment to the Bill, and the request for a birth certificate where the birth is recorded as stillborn could be complied with by regulations made in the future.
Earlier I mentioned that genealogical societies have an added interest in the Bill. In case I have created the illusion that all is sweetness and light with the Bill so far as the Opposition and the community is concerned, I shall quote from a letter I received from the Mid-Gippsland Group of the Genealogical Society of Victoria. The letter states:

1. We are very concerned with the mentions throughout the Bill that the original certificate will be cancelled in certain circumstances. We feel it is VITAL that original certificates be retained and issued as the birth certificate of an individual when a copy of a birth certificate is requested.

The society is indicating that if a birth certificate is cancelled, some of the information it would need to trace family histories could be denied to it and its researchers would be brought to a sudden halt.

The letter further states:

2. The proposals appear to facilitate the breaking down of the family unit instead of building it. Traditionally, a child is given the father’s name as the “family” or “surname”, with this name bonding members of a family together. Do we foresee a family with each child having a different surname? e.g. child 1 .. mother’s maiden name, child 2 .. father’s surname, child 3 .. hyphenated version of both. What possible purpose can this serve?

2. Inherited medical conditions frequently necessitate the tracing of the history of the illness through family lines. An example of naming, as outlined in point 2 above, followed by varying related family groups, would make this medical history extremely difficult, if not impossible, to compile.

As a genealogical society, we are concerned at the difficulties the proposed system will pose for future genealogists. We feel that the child’s parents are “biological fact”, and for that reason the child should be registered in the father’s name. This does not mean that the child must necessarily be known by that name. A name changed by deed poll should be added to the original certificate, and be recorded there with the correct birth name.

The letter further states:

The remainder of the Bill inserts a new Part VII under the heading, “General”, and deals with the keeping of records. This part will provide for penalties for certain failures of performance, and failure to forward a document to the registrar will be an offence. I understand that there is some problem in that the courts may demand that the original register be produced, and that is inconvenient. The Bill makes it clear that a certified copy signed by the registrar shall be taken as prima facie evidence in any court where evidence of this sort must be tendered.

I have spent some time talking about the genealogists. They will be interested in proposed section 62, which deals with records relating to the period before 18 January 1853, before the Colony of Victoria was created. The clause provides that:

(1) Every register, book of entries or register book of baptisms, marriages or burials solemnized in the district of Port Phillip of the Colony of Victoria before 18 January 1853 forwarded to the Registrar under section 31 of the Marriage Act 1898 is to be kept by the Registrar as a permanent record.

(2) Any copy verified and forwarded to the Registrar under section 31 of the Marriage Act 1898 is prima facie evidence of all entries contained in the register, book of entries or register book.

(3) Any person who has possession of any register, book of entries or register book which has not been forwarded under section 31 of the Marriage Act 1898 must during normal business hours upon payment of the prescribed fee permit any other person to inspect any entry and upon request supply a certified copy of the entry to that person.

That refers to entries that were made in the church records before the office of Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages was established. The records of the church are to be kept by the registrar, who has the responsibility to keep them together so that there will be a permanent record rather than relying on church records.
Anyone who has researched a family history will know that, early in the history of the Colony of Victoria, and before that the Colony of New South Wales, many church records were destroyed by fires which were a scourge in rural areas in the early days of settlement. Tragically many records were lost. Until the clause becomes law, it is not the requirement that the registrar should keep all this information.

Under proposed section 64 wide regulation-making powers are conferred on the Governor in Council concerning the management of registration offices, the duties and the performance of the duties of the registrar, and all that is necessary for the good conduct and recording of information under the regulations made pursuant to this proposed legislation. The clause will have limited application and, therefore, will give wide powers to the registrar and to the Minister through the Governor in Council.

The proposed legislation is a step forward. It has some shortcomings to which I have referred and to which I ask the Minister to address himself during his second-reading summation and during the Committee stage. I also referred to a few minor items with which I shall deal in more detail during the Committee stage. The Opposition does not oppose the Bill.

Mr STEGGALL (Swan Hill)—The honourable member for Narracan has gone into considerable detail on the proposed legislation, which has been around for a long time. The Minister is the third, if not the fourth Minister, to attempt to introduce this measure. I congratulate him on eventually succeeding. The former Minister who was responsible for the portfolio for three years no doubt contributed a tremendous amount of work to the proposed legislation.

Many people are worried about certain clauses. The clause of main concern is that which provides for registering on the birth certificate the name of the father of a child born out of wedlock. Without affecting certain standards or changing accepted ways of life in society, the Bill will bring the law into line with the expectations of society. It deals with relationships and family structures in their varied forms. The Bill makes no moral judgments; no Bill should contain such judgments.

Several changes are introduced by the measure. Clause 4 defines the types of persons who may be affected by the proposed legislation. Under clause 10, for the first time a person who changes his or her name will automatically have his or her new name entered on the electoral role. For electoral purposes any change in name will be made by the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, who will inform the Chief Electoral Officer so that the name will be placed correctly on the electoral role.

Any person over the age of eighteen years can apply to change his or her name. Any changes that are granted will be noted on the register and a new birth certificate will be issued. A person under the age of eighteen years who is, or has been, married may also apply for a change of name.

Any parents wishing to change the name of their child, where the child is over twelve years old, must obtain the consent of the child. The Bill also provides that this can happen only once, except where, in the interest of the welfare of the child, the registrar decides that it is not a disadvantage for the child to have a further change of name.

The registrar, as I mentioned, has no choice and must notify the Chief Electoral Office of any change of name and an amendment must be made to the electoral roll. The registrar has the ability to, and must, make judgments as to which names are acceptable, and any name that is, in the judgment of the registrar, contrary to public interest can be rejected. The registrar may reject names that are obscene, frivolous or offensive or contrary to the public interest or refuse to register a change of name where he has reason to believe that the application had been made to facilitate an unlawful or fraudulent purpose.

Any person who challenges the decision made by the registrar has access to the County Court and may take his or her case there to settle it through legal action. The changing of names and correcting of errors on birth certificates will not be done as it is today, it will be
done through the issue of new certificates. As I understand it—and I should like the
Minister to verify this—the original entry will be kept for record purposes. I hope the
Minister can guarantee that that will be the case.

The Bill also makes provision for fathers to be registered on birth certificates in
circumstances in which that might not now be possible. This is quite an interesting point,
especially bearing in mind the provision of the adoption legislation, which, for the first
time, gave fathers, the male of the species, rights equal to those of the females. The same
sort of provision is being made in this Bill and I am sure that no one could have any
objection to that.

The father can be registered on the birth certificate if he can give proof by a declaration
of paternity under the Status of Children Act, or where a court order has been given to
dispense with the consent of the mother for the name of the father to be put on the register.
Therefore, the Bill is in line with other recent measures.

It is true that a lot of the hang-ups, emotions, fears and problems associated over the
years with issues such as this are slowly dying and our community is prepared to approach
these issues from a far more realistic position than it did not many years ago. In 1959,
when the original Act was introduced, there probably would have been an outcry from
various sections of the community over proposed legislation such as this. Interestingly
enough, little interest in this Bill has been expressed to me or my party. I have been rather
surprised, knowing the time and effort that has gone into preparing the Bill over the course
of three Governments—it started with the last Liberal Government—that more interest
has not developed.

The Bill also provides for the use of the terms “family name” and “given name” instead
of the terms “surname” and christian names”. The Minister and his bureaucrats are
probably happy with that but I think that maybe the suggestion from the honourable
member of Narracan, that we should retain the term “christian name”, would not hurt
anyone; it would not cost any more and would be a vestige of our heritage and the history
of this nation and the Christian values on which it was founded.

The Bill also does away with the title “Government Statist”. He becomes the Registrar
of Births, Deaths and Marriages, which is quite straightforward. Appeals against decisions
of the registrar go either to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal or, if settlement is not
reached between the parties, to the appropriate legal jurisdiction. I do not think there will
be any problems with this.

The organization that was mentioned earlier, the Stillbirths and Neonatal Death Support
group, or SANDS wrote to all honourable members—I received my letter yesterday—
raising issues connected with the stillborn child. The honourable member for Narracan
mentioned these issues and perhaps the Minister has some amendments in mind to
remove from the Bill provisions that might be regarded as offensive. I can only read that
assumption into the comments made by the shadow Minister, not being privy to any of
the amendments, which is a pity because we do not know what the Minister has in mind.

Until yesterday SANDS was unknown to me and I have not met any of the members of
that organization, so I do not know the background to the matter mentioned by my
colleague, the honourable member for Lowan, who wrote on 4 June to the Attorney-
General seeking answers to some questions. If I go through the answers the Minister gave
at that time, the honourable gentleman may be able to let us know whether the position
on some of the matters has improved. I shall be pleased to hear his responses.

The first question asked was, “Why is there a separate register for stillbirths?” The
answer given was that section 4 (1) of the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages
Act requires it. That is fair enough, but if that is the only reason it would seem that perhaps
more consideration should be given to the question.

The next question was, “Why does the Act allow for the destruction of any register ten
years after the last entry has been made therein?” It may be that the shadow Minister was
intimating that the Government had an amendment to deal with this matter, but it would seem to me, in this day and age, to be a rather strange situation if stillbirth registrations could be destroyed. I am not saying they will be, but it seems that any public servant would be quite within his rights in deciding to do so in the future.

The answer given by the Minister for Property and Services was:

The rationale for this section of the Act, 4 (2), is not clearly understood as it pre-dates the current Act.

I agree with that—

It is assumed to be a measure to reduce the volume of records being held. In practice, however, there has been no discussion of these records for some years.

I hope the Minister has now clarified that situation.

The next question asked by the honourable member for Lowan was:

Why is there a separate form for the registration of stillbirths?

The Minister replied:

Section 14 of the Act requires a form for the particulars of a birth as a second schedule and allows a prescribed form for the particulars of stillbirths. It is understood this is because they are providing information about similar, but importantly different facts.

It is a “Yes and no” answer. A birth is a birth whether the baby is born alive or dead. That is especially important for a woman who has had a full-term pregnancy. Is that a good enough reason for having a separate register?

The next question the honourable member for Lowan asked was:

Why doesn’t the Act allow for the provision of a certificate of stillbirth?

The Minister answered:

Although it is not clearly understood why not, it is assumed that it is necessary to certify what is, to many, a traumatic and disappointing event.

Those answers by the Minister for Property and Services were given in June this year when the Bill was still being formulated. I hope the Bill will answer some of those questions. I am sure that, if the Minister is prepared to have discussions with members of the National Party while the Bill is between here and another place, a successful solution can be achieved on a consensus basis—that being a popular word in the Labor Party.

The National Party supports the proposed legislation but it contains some provisions that should be changed. One of those is that the expression “Christian names” should be included with the expression “given names”. That is not a large change, but it would mean a lot to many people.

The honourable member for Narracan raised many matters that require answers. I believe the Bill will be accepted by the community; the community has not been forthcoming with views on the proposed legislation, so one must assume that departmental officers and the previous Minister of Health have proposed successful changes to the Act.

I look forward to the response of the Minister for Property and Services to some of the matters that have been raised by the honourable member for Narracan and myself.

The Bill deals with a sensitive subject, a subject that is the cause of a lot of trauma and worry in the community. The Bill will not affect many people but it has some peculiar anomalies. For instance, it could be possible to have three children in the one family who would have different family names.

I raise one other area of concern relating to the proposed introduction of identity cards by the Federal Government. Will that cause problems in the operation of this Bill? Approximately 5000 people will change their names by deed poll in the first year of operation of the Bill, but after the second year that number will probably be reduced to almost half. This opens up a possible area of fraud in relation to identity cards.
Mr WILLIAMS (Doncaster)—I have a genuine affection for the Minister for Property and Services, because like me he has a long Methodist tradition. However, I am taking him to task for saying that this Bill will carry out significant social reforms. Any Bill that takes the community back to the dark ages, to the pre-Christian era, is not a Bill of social reform.

The Bill provides for the use of “family name” and “given names” instead of “surname” and “Christian names”. That terminology will not be acceptable to many people in the community. I urge the Minister, whom I am sure is a student of the *Current Affairs Bulletin* to read what Professor Hans Mol said in the September 1985 issue. Professor Mol is Professor in Sociology of Religion at McMaster University, Ontario, Canada. The article is headed “Religion in Australia—Who goes where”. Professor Mol makes it quite clear that most Australians are Christians, even if they do not go to church. The article states that there is a lack of hostility towards organized religion whether people go to church or not. It further states:

The production of Australians who regard the church as important seems to be almost as high as the proportion of those who do not attend. They may be critical of religion, accuse churchgoer’s of hypocrisy and characterise church leaders as preoccupied with money, but when push comes to shove they would not want to do without it. Hedonism may for many be the motivating philosophy but they feel vaguely guilty about it. Pleasures of the flesh may have definitely won out over self-denial, but deep down religion is still widely respected.

That is the point I make. In my opinion the Government has no mandate for this amendment of the Act. Australia, primarily, is a Christian society. It is my democratic belief that the majority will prevail. I have no wish to insult my Jewish brethren, Moslems or non-believers, but this Bill is insulting to a large majority of Victorians and I am very disappointed at the Minister and the Premier, who gave a sermon to the House this morning about morality. The Bible states, “Let him who is without sin cast the first stone”. I believe this is an immoral Bill.

I have grave reluctance in supporting the Bill. I support social reform but I have great reluctance in bowing to a small minority. I suspect it is not the Moslems and it is not the Jews but it is people who owe their allegiance to another country who are determined to drag down our Christian tradition.

I have another complaint about the registration of births and deaths; if we are to have social reform it should begin at home with the department. I believe Victoria has the most old fashioned and inefficient department for the registration of births and deaths in the whole of Australia. Victorians pay exorbitant prices for inadequate access to that information. Victorians who want information dated after 1909 from the Government Statist must pay $18 for a full certificate if they do not have an extract of birth—which was all that was necessary in the days before a full birth certificate was required for a passport. Recently, I renewed my passport and I did not mind paying $18 because the certificate brought back great memories to see my father’s signature and personal particulars that I had never seen before because previously I have needed only the extract of the certificate for employment or a passport and of course for endorsement by my political party. I believed I would be going overseas and I had to pay an additional penalty—at my own expense—of $18 to get it quickly. My trip was cancelled because of the priorities of this place.

In no other State of the Commonwealth does a full birth certificate cost $10 and in some States the cost is as low as $5. In New South Wales one pays only $8 for a full certificate and for quicker service one pays an additional $5. The great Labor State of New South Wales is conscious of the church vote and it is no wonder the good Australian Labor Party remains continually in power there. I hope the brethren in Victoria will learn something from their wiser brothers in New South Wales.

In my opinion like so many things in modern society, from traffic fines to registration of births and deaths, the extract of records is being used as a money spinner for the Government and I protest! I believe births, deaths and genealogy are too sacred to be the subject of the money changers in the temple. There is no reason why Victorians should
Another point that is annoying is that we are squandering money on the 150th anniversary celebrations for all sorts of extravagances and I should have thought that tracing one's genealogical history is important. I can trace my history back to the 1850s when my great grandfather came to the Bendigo gold fields. I object, as does the genealogical society, to the extra cost involved in making a genealogy search when, unlike New South Wales, there is no index available of Victorian births, deaths and marriages for public use. Those who are fortunate to have ancestors going back to the convict days or the first fleet can go to the Public Library and look at the New South Wales index for free, so there are some advantages to being born of a convict in that one can have free access to the index of births, deaths and marriages, but if one happens to be like me born of a miner, one must pay to get such information.

I am resentful of these problems in the administration of births, deaths and marriages and although it is my party's decision to pass the Bill, if we had acted in the tradition of the Government, when in opposition we would have made political capital out of this and the Opposition would have forced the Government to a division on the retreat back to pre-Christianity.

Mr PERRIN (Bulleen)—This is an important Bill and I want to make a brief contribution on three major areas. Firstly, like the honourable member for Doncaster, I have serious reservations about changing the term “Christian Names” to “Given Names”. In my view Australia is a Christian nation and like the honourable member for Doncaster I am also conscious that there are a number of people in the community who may find the word “Christian” offensive. That subject was mentioned by the Minister in his second-reading speech but the majority of Australians and Victorians do not find the word “Christian” to be offensive.

It is interesting that the honourable member for Doncaster raised the matter of an article putting forward the situation so far as most people in Australia are concerned. They still have a strong recognition of the proper role of the Christian church.

Last year as a member of a statutory authority—I note the Minister for Consumer Affairs has just returned to the Chamber—I received a letter from the Minister who made a request that all Government departments change their forms to remove the term “Christian Name”. Applications for employment and other forms that may be used by Government departments have now been changed or are proposed to be changed by the Minister.

He put that forward as a proposition as the Minister for Ethnic Affairs on the basis that a minority in the community found the word “Christian” offensive. I have seen the memo from the Minister and I believe that it was regrettable that that letter should have been circulated. It would be interesting to know what the cost of changing the forms will be without the throwing out of all the old forms containing the words “Christian Name”.

Mr Spyker interjected.

Mr PERRIN—The Minister is now admitting he sent the letter. He said that the forms have run out but the fact is that the Minister has written the letter and made the suggestion to all Government departments. I find that offensive as a Christian in the community and I believe the majority of Australians would find that offensive.

The question has been asked by the honourable member for Narracan and members of the National Party as to why there cannot be a choice. If a person finds the word “Christian” to be offensive why can he or she not have a choice? They can have “either” and they have a choice as to what is put on the birth certificate or death certificate. That would appear to be a simple administrative matter.
However, the minority view prevails and the people are not to be given a choice. Subsequently, the majority have to wear a minority view, and that is of tremendous concern. I wanted my views on the matter placed on record. As pointed out by the honourable members for Doncaster and Narracan, the Liberal and National parties do not oppose the Bill.

A second matter that was raised by me with the Minister some months ago relates to the operations of the registrar and the delay in obtaining death certificates. A very distraught constituent of mine approached me about a six-week delay she had experienced in obtaining a death certificate from the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. My constituent was a widow and was dependent upon receiving money under a superannuation scheme for herself and her family. Because she could not obtain a death certificate, the trustees of the superannuation fund would make no contribution to the widow or her family because they had no evidence of death. That is a scandalous situation in which to place a person.

I wish to place on record that the Minister for Property and Services gave me a speedy answer when I raised the matter with him and also speedily settled the matter for my constituent. I place on record my thanks to the Minister. I trust that delays of that order do not occur again because it will cause hardship to people who are least able to bear it.

The third matter I raise has already been mentioned by honourable members on this side of the House. It relates to a letter from SANDS, which is the Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Support organization. I have had some connection with this organization for some time; I have advised its members and I have an understanding of the case it is presenting.

The background of this organization is that it is composed mainly of women and receives no Government funding. It is a support organization in a sensitive area where a woman has lost her baby either before, during or shortly after birth. Approximately 850 people fall into this category each year. With a total of 60,500 births each year, that does not seem so many. However, the Minister should understand the tremendous emotional problems that people have experienced from stillbirth or neonatal death.

The organization is completely voluntary. It operates in the community but it does not receive a cent of Government funding. It is a mutual support group which has made a request in a sensible way. It requests a redefinition of "birth" to include stillbirths, which would enable parents to register the births of all children whether they are born live or are stillborn. If section 27 of the Act were amended, it would allow a person upon request to obtain a birth certificate designated "stillborn".

The Reverend Michael Elligate of St Peter Julian's Church, Mooroolbark, has written to the honourable member for Narracan. Because of the specific information contained in that letter, I quote, inter alia:

The current interest of SANDS, (Vic.) (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Support) in regard to current revision of the Births, Deaths and Marriages Act has been brought to my attention.

As one who has been involved quite often in the situation of caring for grieving parents, I wish to strongly endorse the SANDS submission regarding changes in the Victorian stillbirth registration procedure.

My academic studies and constant community work would lead me to see the sensitive claims SANDS make as most reliable and authentic. It is important to many parents who have lost a child at birth that this child be fully recognized.

I am delighted to see that a helpful procedure is now in place in the Northern Territory Births, Deaths and Marriages Act 1980.

I hope that the values of human sensitivity are able to be brought to bear on the deliberations of the Victorian Parliament on this important matter.

The final point made by the Reverend Elligate is that legislation is already in place in another part of Australia, in the Northern Territory. The Minister could perhaps consider the Northern Territory model. I know that the honourable member for Narracan has asked the Minister to review this matter when the Bill is between here and another place.
The Minister has been responsive to the requests that I have made about death certificates. I hope he will be equally responsive to the requests from the SANDS organization because that organization plays a vital role in the community in assisting parents who have lost babies in unfortunate circumstances. Although it is a small percentage of births in Victoria, it would be an important service to these people and could be provided by the Government with little change to the Bill.

Ms SIBREE (Kew)—I support the Bill and the objects set out therein. Over a number of years I have received many letters, mainly from women, who have been concerned that they have been unable to register their newborn children in their own names as the family name of the children. These women have found themselves in distressing circumstances. Many of them have not wanted to register the child’s birth because of the problems associated with naming the child. As we know, that is not presently allowed.

Many women are keen to see this proposed legislation enacted so that they can benefit from it. I am pleased that the Bill is addressing an imbalance about which I wrote to the Commissioner for Equal Opportunity when representations were first made to me. The commissioner agreed that this was a discriminatory practice in law although, under the ambit of addressing equal opportunity, the commissioner was not able to do anything about it. However, I was aware that the commissioner had made representations to the then Minister to change the law. I am pleased that after what has been four years for me, and I am sure others have been urging this change for a longer period, proposed legislation has been introduced to keep up to date with social change.

I am pleased that the people responsible for drafting the Bill have partly overcome the problem of two parents wishing to use both family names and the problems of hyphenation of names. The Bill is about allowing greater flexibility of choice to parents in the naming of their children, and I do not understand the need for putting restrictions in the Bill regarding how many names one can put together.

I understand that the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages uses a computer system which operates on a limited number of characters. If one has a name with more than the permitted number of characters, trouble is caused. Technology should help us and it should not stand in the way of peoples’ choices. If people want to use three hyphenated names then that is their problem, not ours. Honourable members should seriously examine removing the restriction in the Bill on the number of names that can be used. The choice is up to the parents. By common practice the parents may be known by a hyphenated name because that suits them.

To their credit, more and more women are using their maiden names. The definition of “maiden name” has not been changed although a few other definitions have been changed in the Bill. “Maiden name” is something which we appear to be hanging on to. More and more women are retaining their maiden names for reasons of their own self-identification, professional reasons and personal reasons. That is a good idea because it complicates matters when one loses the name with which one began life and then one must try to identify oneself with another name when one goes through life.

Honourable members should consider removing the restriction in the Bill which limits the number of names which can be hyphenated. If it is a problem involving a computer, I am certain that the Minister for Property and Services, and the Officer-in-Charge of the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages and will find ways around the problem.

I am aware that some investigations have been conducted regarding how many people with hyphenated names are getting married or engaged and the results are that it appears that very few of those people will wish to use the facilities of the Bill with respect to the choice of mixture of names. If honourable members are discussing a Bill to allow maximum choice, I cannot understand why a limitation is placed on hyphenated names.

I am pleased that the Bill allows parents to retrospectively change the names of their children. This will overcome the problem of people who have made representations to
honourable members and who are the reason why the Bill is before the House, previously not being covered by it. It is right and proper that the Bill allows those people to change the names of their children to the names that they would have preferred if the Bill had been in operation at the appropriate time. Those people should expect that the Bill would provide for them.

I hope records have been kept of people who have made inquiries on this matter and who were the trailblazers of the proposed legislation so that they may be contacted and made aware that the proposed legislation has been passed and that they can change their children's names to the names that they may have wanted to have used.

The Bill is an important piece of social legislation which is far too late in coming—it should have been introduced long ago. I agree with my colleagues, the honourable members for Narracan and Bulleen, that the Bill is about allowing choice and versatility and about reflecting changes in society. Honourable members should be reflecting on the fact that some people like to use the term “Christian name”, others like to use the term “first name” and some use the term “given name”. In a social piece of proposed legislation, which is about diversity, those people should be accommodated. It could be done in the definition clause. If it involves a problem of saying “given” or “Christian” name, perhaps “first name” could be used. That idea should not be precluded.

Many people in the community would be pleased to see “family name” used rather than “surname” which has connotations of the male element of the family rather than both the male and female elements. I am pleased to support the Bill, and I will be contacting constituents who have written to me over the years about this matter to let them know that they have new rights available to them.

I have been a little doubtful about raising this matter, but, because it affects the registration of births, I indicate that I am still concerned that the situation still exists where an adopted child cannot obtain a birth certificate with his or her place of birth on it. It has been a continuing problem for passport purposes as the Commonwealth Government insists that a child’s birthplace, for example, Melbourne, Ballarat or Fitzroy, should be on the certificate and not simply the State where a child was born.

I understand that changes to that provision are in train, but because it is the responsibility of the Minister for Property and Services and because the House is considering changes to birth registration, I invite the Minister to comment on what is happening in that area.

All honourable members are concerned about the delays in obtaining information from the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. When listening to the Michael Schildberger radio program earlier this week—which I am sure honourable members listen to as it is an open line to the consumers in society—I heard one caller expressing grave concern about the long delays in obtaining a birth certificate. Only a few weeks earlier a representative of the registry had been on the program indicating how quickly things were moving. Apparently four or five weeks, or however long the caller had been waiting for the certificate, is considered by the office to be quick. However, that is not good enough.

A birth certificate is an important record of one’s life and the fact that one exists. Therefore, people are entitled to obtain that type of information as soon as they request it. In this day of technology when one can get money out of a bank by using a plastic card one should not have to wait eight or nine weeks to obtain a copy of one’s birth certificate. It is ludicrous!

I invite the Minister to inform the House whether matters will improve in order to overcome delays and the problems they cause with the planning of overseas trips and so on.

**Mr WEIDEMAN (Frankston South)**—In speaking on the Bill I shall refer to the problem one confronts in obtaining a passport. I understand that 100 problems are faced each week with regard to this matter. I was christened as George Graeme Weideman, and, obviously, the use of my second name causes some confusion. To add to that, my family name is
spelt with a double "n", but some people may have noticed that I spell it with a single "n".

When my family came to Melbourne in 1939, it was more appropriate to have a single "n" at the end of one's name rather than a double "n" as that was associated with Germany. A single "n" was associated with Holland and, being in business, my family may have believed it was smart to use one "n" instead of two "n's" at the end of the family name.

When I was attending secondary school and during my tertiary education, it was pointed out to me that I had been spelling my name with one "n" instead of two, and I had to change my name by deed poll in order to accept my tertiary qualifications. That causes a problem when applying for a passport because on my birth certificate, my family name is spelt with two "n's".

Now I have to execute a deed poll for something that occurred 30 years ago. The records are not particularly good. I am delighted that under the provisions of the Bill one can amend birth certificates, which in my case means that I can have only one "n" at the end of my name.

I ask the Minister to take up with his colleagues in Canberra the subject of passports and the fact that when required to produce a full birth certificate that has been altered, one does not require a deed poll. I see that as adequate in obtaining a passport without one having to obtain other documentation.

Thirty years ago extracts of birth certificates contained the names of the parents. If one reads the form one is required to fill in to obtain a passport, it seems that the fourth schedule makes it necessary to have parents' names listed so that the department is satisfied that the applicant is who he or she purports to be. I ask the Minister to inquire if that is all that is necessary rather than applicants having to obtain a full schedule of their birth certificates. If one has an extract that contains the names of parents, that should be sufficient. I realize the new certificates do not have that information.

I raise the issue because I understand it causes problems when people try to obtain passports. This has happened not only to me but also to other people, some of whom have raised the matter with me.

I support my colleagues in the Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Support group, or SANDS, which represents parents who have had stillborn babies. I have personal experience of this. After conducting some family research, I came across the birth certificate of a great-great-grandfather of mine and found three names registered which I did not know about. I assumed they were stillborn babies. Out of a family of fifteen, twelve members were alive in my father's time. Having no other information, I can only assume they were still-born babies.

It would be of enormous help for people wishing to conduct research to be able to obtain such birth certificates. Future generations will try to find out such information. After all, it is an historic register and people are interested in gaining statistics. I have sympathy for the SANDS (Vic.) organization and I know the trauma its members face. It would have been of great comfort to those people to have the births registered in the way required. It will also be helpful to people trying to discover more about their family history if the information were made available in the form of registration.

We have raised the issue of Christian and given names. It is common practice these days to note in clubs and all other organizations that one is given the opportunity of recording one's given or Christian name in one's application. I have no fixed idea about it, but it would seem that it is an area of registering one's intention and it is information that must be collected, first of all, from the parents. If that opportunity is provided, the Government is serving the public, which it wants the Bill to serve.
It is appropriate that the Bill was introduced. It has taken a long time and the matter is often brought to the attention of members of Parliament in their electorate offices. Recently there were alterations to legislation relating to adoptees, who can now obtain their birth certificates. A 60-year-old lady came to my office and I was able to obtain her birth certificate quickly through the courtesy of the Minister. The woman found that the office sent a birth certificate which reduced her age by some twenty years. She was not delighted at being told she was 40 years of age instead of 60. I would have been! This lady did not appreciate the fact and she did not believe it. Her 30-year-old daughter did not believe it either, which was more to the point.

I found it difficult to help the lady because the officers of the department would not cooperate. However, I hope it is satisfactorily sorted out. I realize that the office has to store and reproduce statistics that have accumulated over 150 years. With the technology available today, it may be possible to use abbreviations and hyphenated names to record what the parents really desire to be recorded.

I ask the Minister to consider an amendment to the Bill while it is between here and another place. My major point was to raise the issue of passport applications. The Federal Government has dramatically changed the issuing of passports. As honourable members know, one visits one's local postmaster after having made an appointment and goes through the necessary procedures. My wife has a passport but it is difficult to say when I shall get one. However, when the Bill is introduced I shall make an application.

Mr JOHN (Bendigo East)—I support the general thrust of the Bill and I think all honourable members agree that most of the key elements have been discussed by members of the Opposition who have spoken before me.

I represent a rural electorate, the electorate of Bendigo East, and I have circulated the Bill to a large number of welfare organizations, legal practitioners, churches and church leaders. I have found that they seem to be happy with what is an enlightened piece of proposed legislation.

There are five deficiencies in this area of the law. Firstly, it was out of step with community feelings and aspirations. Secondly, there were long delays in the system. Thirdly, there were inadequate procedures for the change of names by deed poll. Fourthly, the old laws discriminated against women and mothers and, finally, it discriminated against the family of the stillborn.

To elaborate, I consider the old system was out of step with the direction in which society was heading and did not reflect people's aspirations and the role of women. As a solicitor in practice for many years before coming to this place, other practitioners and I experienced serious difficulties with the office of the Government Statist. There were long delays in the issue of death certificates and sometimes four, five and six months would elapse before the issue of a certificate. One might ask what significance this might have? In the area of probate law and the finalization of the administration of estates it would often mean that the widow of a deceased person would be unable to collect the proceeds of, say, an insurance policy until the company had received the death certificate from the office of the Government Statist.

If one suffered a delay of four or five months in obtaining a death certificate, the widow could well be without means and, in many cases, there were severe financial repercussions for the family of the deceased.

The procedure for changing names under the old law was inadequate in that one executed a deed poll to change a name. This document stated that one had changed one's name but was never, in most cases—except in the property area—registered at any Government office, especially not the office of the Government Statist.

A person can change his or her name by deed poll, but when a birth certificate is sought for schooling, military or passport purposes, it shows the original name and further explanations have to be made by the production of a deed poll to interested authorities. I
am pleased that the Bill will see the end of positive discrimination against women and will ensure a proper reflection of their new role in society.

I do not intend my remarks to be taken as support for the radical minority element of the feminist movement, but the Bill should and does reflect equality before the law and respect for men and women in society.

Members of the Opposition have referred to a document circulated to members of Parliament by SANDS (Vic.) which is the Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Support organization. I support the comment in the organization's letter that the issue of the stillborn child has been a problem under existing legislation. The letter states:

Increasing numbers of parents are making more demands for appropriate recognition of the loss of an expected baby, contrary to the strong, out-moded community messages still prevalent, that tell them "to forget". The loss of a baby cannot be forgotten—neither the memory nor the day-to-day reminders can be obliterated.

Research evidence is accumulating (in line with the evidence in the general area of grief and loss) which supports the conclusion that appropriate recognition of the dead baby is associated with more positive adaptations to the loss and far better long-term psychological outcomes.

Of the 60,500 (approximate figures) births registered in Victoria each year, approximately 500 are stillborn and another 350 of the babies born alive die in the neonatal period (the first 28 days after birth).

The honourable member for Narracan referred in more detail to an existing anomaly. The letter states, inter alia:

... the anomaly exists where the parents of a full term stillborn baby who dies unexpectedly during labour are not entitled to any legal acknowledgement of the "birth" of their fully expected baby, whereas the parents of a 21 weeks premature baby who dies even hours after "live birth" are so entitled.

It is a serious anomaly, and I hope the Minister will listen to these matters relating to stillborn babies raised by members of the Opposition and will take them into account while the Bill is between here and the other place.

An important amendment is clause 39, which provides:

The Registrar must not register a change of name if the Registrar considers that the proposed change includes a family name which—

(a) is required to be joined or punctuated by more than one hyphen; or

(b) consists of more than two separate and distinct words.

In other words, if the Act were not changed, a father and mother with hyphenated names, who wished to register a child with double hyphenated names, would be unable to do so. If our society is to have freedom of choice, clause 39 should be amended so that the registrar, under the provision relating to his discretion on frivolous or obscene names, can examine the problem of hyphenated names.

A further problem includes clause 51, which provides:

(1) Any person may apply in the prescribed form together with the prescribed fee for a copy of any cancelled entry in a register book relating to that person to be given by the Registrar to that person or to a person authorized in the application.

(2) The Registrar must give a copy of a cancelled entry upon an application under sub-section (1).

(3) Except upon the order of a judge of the County Court, the Registrar must not give any other person a copy of a cancelled entry in a register.

Only that person or a person authorized by him can receive the certificate, and anyone else who wants to obtain the information must do so by an order of a judge of the County Court. I foresee a number of problems with that clause. Honourable members have already mentioned two of those problems. The first is: what would an executor in a probate situation have to do? Would he apply to the court for that information? The second concerns a person who wants to trace his family tree. Must people who wish to study genealogical charts or carry out research apply to the County Court for an order?
The third matter I raise concerns criminal investigations. If authorities conducting a criminal investigation want to find the previous name of a person, clause 51 will not assist them. I ask the Minister for Property and Services to consider amending the clause while the Bill is between here and another place.

The final matter concerns the definition of "given name". I agree with members of the Opposition who have said that it would do no harm and give satisfaction to people if they had the choice of having a "given name" or a "Christian name". I am sure many people would classify themselves as Christians and would like to use a "Christian name". However, I am also aware that a substantial number of people do not belong to the Christian religion and would find it offensive to use a "Christian name". Those people should have the choice of using a given name. I ask the Minister to consider the use of alternative names.

Mr MACLELLAN (Berwick)—The Opposition is guided by the desire to ensure that legislation meets the diverse needs within the community. It accepts the diversity of the community and, therefore, the need for existing legislation to be brought up to date.

I support the suggestion that that diversity of approach includes the possibility, which has been urged on the Minister by a number of Opposition speakers, that members of the community should be given the option of using a Christian or a given name. The current law could be found to be offensive to people who have no religious beliefs because they have to choose a Christian name. There is no need to have a totally secular approach and to give offence to people who may wish to choose a Christian name.

I believe Parliament should maximize rather than reduce the choices people have, and that is what the proposed legislation seeks to do. I support the views put forward by the SANDS (Vic.) organization. The heartache and difficulty of that situation must be accommodated, and the Bill offers honourable members an opportunity of doing so.

I thank honourable members who have enunciated that problem for the benefit of the Minister, and I hope he accepts the suggestion. If honourable members are guided by a desire to meet a diversity within the community, they should closely examine the question of deed poll. I do not want to lecture the Minister or the honourable member for Narracan on the subject because it is nearly a quarter of a century since I had to suffer the subject at law school. However, Victoria did not invent or initiate the deed poll system.

Some of the legal forms were inherited from the British system. We should work on the assumption that we did not invent deed polls. They came from medieval Europe, particularly medieval England. A deed poll existed when there was no other party involved. With two parties it was called an indenture, which would be cut with a pair of scissors so that one person received one piece and the other person received the other piece. The two pieces matched together. It worked like a receipt in the days when people could barely read or write. If one wanted to change one's name, one did it by deed poll.

Proposed new sections 36 (2), as contained in clause 8, provides that, after the commencement of the Act, the Registrar-General must not accept for deposit under section 15 of the Property Law Act any document for change of name. People who have been born in Victoria, who may be anywhere in the world, may be unaware of this provision for many years. They may choose with an English solicitor, Scottish proctor or heaven knows who else, depending on where they are— they may be in Hong Kong or hidden in any corner of the world—to change their names by deed poll. The provision means that what has been the rule for perhaps 1000 years will now not be accepted in Victoria. Those people will be sent a copy of the provisions and some forms and told that they must change their name by a different process. They will be told that the rules have been changed after 1000 years.

Perhaps the Minister will consider the prospect of still receiving deed polls after the commencement of the proposed legislation in a parallel system in which a person whose birth was originally registered in Victoria can use the normal legal system of the Western World of adopting the deed poll change of name and sending it back to the jurisdiction of
his birth. Under a parallel system the deed poll would be accepted and implemented. We should have courtesy enough not to reject the deed poll and narrow the opportunities of people to do what is perfectly normal, has worked in the past and can work in the future. Victoria can adopt new rules and new approaches to meet the diversity in the community, but that does not mean it has to deny people other opportunities.

I intended to make these remarks prior to the contribution of the honourable member for Frankston South. I wish to make an exception in his case. He has changed his name by deed poll and I think he should pay, but I do not believe anybody else should pay. I do not want to embarrass or compromise him: I know the Premier's sensitivity about these matters. I suggest to the Minister that no one—other than the honourable member for Frankston South—who has changed his or her name by deed poll in Victoria, who has gone to a solicitor, had a deed poll drafted, chosen a new name and had it registered should face another fee.

Under the proposed legislation the Registrar-General will charge a prescribed fee to change the birth certificates of persons who have had their names changed by deed poll. As those persons have paid once, they should not pay a second time. Surely, everyone other than the honourable member for Frankston South should be given the courtesy of having changes made to their birth certificates with being asked for more money. The Government has a fascination for collecting money and a desire to increase fees and charges.

It seems stupid to change the system without making transitional provisions to allow the old system that has worked well in the past to be used as well. A decent transition period should be allowed. After all, difficulties can arise. For example, a 60-year-old constituent came to me because he was going to New Zealand on his first overseas trip. When he went to the Registrar of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Names to get his birth certificate, lo and behold, he found that his birth had not been registered when he was born! What did the registrar's officers ask for? They asked for witnesses of the birth. As this man is 60 years of age, witnesses would be about 80 years of age.

Fortunately, it was established that a sister was in the house at the time of the birth. He was born at home in a remote part of Victoria and his birth was not entered on the register of births. As it later turned out, I understand that a brother and sister found themselves in a similar pickle. The embarrassment and difficulties involved are ridiculous. I managed to help this man to obtain his travel documents and enter New Zealand, but not as an Australian citizen as he did not have a passport; one does not need a passport to leave Australia to go to New Zealand, but one needs it to re-enter Australia. He returned from New Zealand with a piece of paper that had been issued by the Australian Government which informed the authorities that this man was to be allowed to re-enter Australia. I suppose it assured them that he was not a spaceman or something from the film Star Wars. Although he was not officially an Australian citizen because he has not been naturalized and his birth was never registered, he was allowed to re-enter the country because he is a person.

Mr Delzoppo—They take his tax!

Mr MACLELLAN—Yes, my word! There was no quick and easy procedure to adopt in that situation. He has now been invited to go to the County Court. If his mother were alive she may be able to explain the situation. He has a baptismal certificate which helps explain the situation, but it is certainly difficult to establish the birth of a person 60 years of age. One begins to understand the difficulties, embarrassment and expense people face in these matters.

I am suggesting that people who have chosen the old-fashioned method, which is perhaps 1000 years old, of changing their names by deed poll should at least be given the courtesy of having their birth certificates changed on the basis of the deed poll having been drafted and deposited with the Registrar-General. Of course, I except the honourable member for Frankston South in that matter.
The second point I make is that deed polls should be valid for at least a decent period. It is not known how many are in the mail on their way to Victoria from anywhere in the world from Victorians who have chosen to change their names. Why should Parliament legislate so that documents that arrive after the “magic” date will not be accepted? Those people will be told, “You are no longer living in Victoria, but we have changed the law. Deed polls might have been all right for the last 1000 years but from this day onwards they will not be accepted”. I suggest the Government adopts a more generous approach towards allowing deed polls to be received within a reasonable time. I do not know whether a parallel system can operate indefinitely, but at least a reasonable transition period should be provided.

Proposed new section 39 provides that the registrar must not change a name if he considers that the proposed change includes a family name which is required to be joined or punctuated by more than one hyphen or which consists of more than two separate and distinct words. I commenced my remarks by talking about diversity. Is it not time, Mr Speaker, that we accepted that Australia is part of the South-East Asian region and that many residents of Asian background have Christian names and surnames that do not happen to fit into that WASP-ish model of one surname or a hyphenated surname such as Baker-Finch, or whatever it may be. Many people may stretch the imagination of the computer by wanting to have twenty or more characters in their surnames. Those people may want to have the traditional names of their families. We should recognize diversity and must accept the idea put forward by the honourable member for Kew that, if people want to have a complicated surname, it is not for us to tell them they cannot have that name because it does not fit the computer’s capacity.

It is better to say that a name will be registered if it is reasonable and to have some assessor as to reasonableness, so that the doors are not open to someone to push it beyond the reasonable, and I shall leave it to honourable members to assess what I mean by that. Nevertheless, the Government should make the maximum opportunity of meeting the diversity within the community and the diverse needs of the community.

Honourable members have already said that it is all very well to say: in the first generation, one hyphen and two little bits. But what happens in the second generation when two hyphenated names come together and, as the honourable member for Swan Hill effectively put it, offspring is born out of wedlock? That is what he meant, I think, although he may have suggested some other concept, not in any way disreputable, but he lapsed for a moment to conception rather than the moment of birth.

The Minister for Property and Services is a sensitive Minister. He has the opportunity of grasping an all-party view on the legislative measure. I do not criticize those who drafted it. They have worked long and hard to produce it. However, if the Parliamentary process is to come to its true fruition and purpose, it should pick up the suggestions made within Parliament. I regret there have been no suggestions from the back-bench members of the Government party, although they may have made those contributions behind the scenes and may not wish to state those views publicly.

Where suggestions are made in Parliament, the Bill can be improved, and the challenge to the Minister is to take up the suggestion made by honourable members to improve the Bill to make it better and to make it better to suit the diversity in the community and for future years when, it is hoped, legislation will be passed on this approach. There are good grounds for saying that in keeping that diversity options are not closed off unnecessarily, and that the capacity of the computer to become a dictator of human names and human registration is not allowed. If there is one thing that should frighten all, it is that computers and their capacity will overwhelm the human dimension.

This is the moment to strike a blow for those people who choose to have names, perhaps outside the concept of white Anglo-Saxon Protestants and who for too long have dominated the law and attitudes of society. This diversity should be opened up for them and those old constraints should be challenged. There is an opportunity now of broadening those
matters. Mr Deputy Speaker, as you would know, I can happily criticize the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant views. You and I share a North-British heritage and we are neither Anglo-Saxon nor—I do not know whether you are—Protestant.

Mr J. F. McGrath (Warrnambool)—I support the Bill with my National Party colleague, the honourable member for Swan Hill. Several constituents have contacted me with their views. An important issue that has been canvassed already and a view that is shared by my constituents and myself is the suggested alternative of “given or Christian name” rather than “given and family name”. The suggestion of “given or Christian name” is acceptable. It is an accepted fact that society is changing its needs and that this should be provided for in proposed legislation. I understand that the word “Christian” is unpalatable to some, as “given and family name” would be unacceptable to others. There is good reason for the alternative suggestion.

A further issue was raised by SANDS (Vic.)—Stillbirth and Neo-natal Death Support. This group’s submission stated, inter alia:

Increasing numbers of parents are making more demands for appropriate recognition of the loss of an expected baby, contrary to the strong, out-moded community messages still prevalent, that tell them “to forget”. The loss of a baby cannot be forgotten—neither the memory nor the day-to-day reminders can be obliterated.

This reinforces my earlier point on the need for options. An option should be available to those who wish to record the full details of a stillborn birth so that they and future generations of their families are able to trace family names and family history. A situation occurred in my family records which came to my knowledge only when tracing the family tree. I learned of the existence of two members of my family, and it is not known even whether they were boys or girls as both parents and their immediate family have died and it is impossible to try to trace that history back any further.

Parents may very well decide not to exercise an option that is available, but it is important that that option should be available to them. It is important also for these records to be kept in perpetuity and not destroyed after ten years, as is the case with stillbirth registration procedures. Options are valuable to people and they should be available. People should be able to decide these issues for themselves. Stillbirth is a traumatic experience. Parents should be able to make decisions of registration according to their needs and to the options available to them.

Mr McCutcheon (Minister for Property and Services)—I have been very surprised at the interesting contrast in the contributions of the nine speakers, which have ranged from the ultra conservative to the radical. There has been an interesting mixture with people wanting to preserve forms like Christian names, and the honourable member for Berwick, for instance, who suggested that parents should be able to name their children in any conceivable way they wish to invent. It has been an interesting debate and I thank honourable members for their contributions.

Eight issues have been raised, to which I shall respond briefly. The first is the question of the Christian name and the surname and whether “given name and family name” is appropriate. The honourable member for Doncaster quoted Christian tradition in Australia. In putting forward the proposal the Government is merely saying that Victoria has a multi-ethnic society.

It is a perfectly clear and sane way of defining the names people want to put on forms. It is already in use in many other parts of the community and there have been no wild protests about the change. It is at least a recognition that there are significant groups in the community who do not use Christian names.

Mr Williams—What about the majority?

Mr McCutcheon—The Government has acknowledged the fact that Victoria is a multicultural society and it is meeting the needs of that society. The proposal is not offensive to anybody; it is simple and straightforward.
With regard to the use of computers and the constraints placed upon their use, the less information stored on computers and the more information registered by each entry, the more effective will be their use. That provision should not be altered despite the various arguments about it.

Mr Maclellan—The computers win.

Mr McCUTCHEON—The computers will not win. A number of comments were made about delays in obtaining copies of extracts of entries from the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. As the Minister responsible for the registry, in the past six months I have had to sign a considerable number of letters to people explaining the delays. There have been reasons for delays, such as the change in Commonwealth legislation governing the provision of a full birth certificate by applicants requiring passports. When that change was introduced it created a waiting period of five to six weeks. However, much effort has been put into revising the process in the registry and the delay has been reduced to four days and it will be reduced below that period.

Comment was made on the charge of $9 for an extract of entry. A further charge of $9 is made if the applicant does not know the number of the certificate when a full certificate is requested and there is an additional charge for same day service. Those charges have been in existence for some time, but they will be reviewed next year.

The Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Support organization raised a question on the separate register for stillbirths. That register has been kept for a long time, but under the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Act, the records of stillbirths were destroyed after ten years. The Bill will omit that requirement and a register of stillbirths will be kept along with all the other registers. The records of stillbirths for the past ten or twelve years are intact and will not be destroyed.

The Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Support organization has asked that the registrar make available upon request certificates to parents of a stillbirth. Such a request can be met under the existing regulations, although I will have the matter further examined and, if necessary, ensure that a certificate is issued on request to parents. I do not believe it is necessary to make such a provision in the Bill.

With regard to the removal of the restriction on hyphenated names, I foreshadow that, during the Committee stage, I shall move an amendment to delete the requirement preventing the use of hyphenated names so that parents can register hyphenated names with no restrictions. Not many people would want to do that, but I foreshadow the amendment so that the provision is available to those who want to avail themselves of it.

The honourable member for Narracan referred to section 51 concerning copies of cancelled entries. Those entries will be made available only under the authority of the person concerned or the person to whom authority has been delegated. This will mean that the information is not made readily available to other people. The honourable member for Narracan quoted from a letter which raised the problems that occur after someone has died and his or her family requires information regarding possible other names that appear in the register. The letter posed the question of how those persons can gain access to those names without encountering considerable trouble, effort and cost. The honourable member quoted from the letter that perhaps the registrar should have a discretion to supply details perhaps at the request of the Commissioner of Probates to facilitate identification of beneficiaries without recourse to a judge. I believe that is a sensible suggestion and I should like to consider it while the Bill is between here and another place so that a suitable amendment can be drafted.

Honourable members have referred to genealogical requirements. Last year work started on indexing the older records. My predecessor commenced the work and I should like to report that restoration of indices prior to their microfilming was completed on 10 October this year. Microfilming of indices was actually completed today. The conversion of microfilm to microfiche is in progress and is due to be completed next month and release
of the pre-1896 indices to the public should be possible early in December. I believe those responsible in the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages should be congratulated on their hard work and organization. Many persons interested in genealogy and history will be pleased to note that that work has now been completed. Those records will be progressively released and additional indices in the future will not require legislation for their release.

The honourable member for Kew raised the question of whether the place of birth should be included on the full certificate. It is presently omitted but when section 79 of the Act covering adoption is proclaimed in the near future—November—it will be possible to endorse the certificate with the place of birth.

There are some complicated issues involved in change of name by deed poll. The provisions of the Bill will simplify that procedure and, with each change of name, a new certificate will be issued so that the applicant has a certificate with his or her new name on it. That information will be conveyed to the Chief Electoral Officer and other places where that information is required for sensible purposes. I believe the following comments may be helpful to the honourable member for Berwick, who referred to the problems of deed polls.

Overseas, a person will register under the laws of the land in which they change their name by deed poll. In Victoria, a person will be able to register a change of name which will provide the benefit of a proper indexed record of the change and a certificate will be given to the person changing his name.

I believe some of the issues that arose concerning complications involving people born in other countries need to be considered and perhaps amendments made to the Act to ensure that the legislation works efficiently. I believe I have responded to the issues raised by honourable members and I thank them for their contributions.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time and committed.

Clauses 1 to 3 were agreed to.

Clause 4

Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Property and Services)—I move:

Clause 4, line 22, omit “at birth”.

The amendment was agreed to, and the clause, as amended, was adopted, as was clause 5.

Clause 6

Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Property and Services)—I move:

Clause 6, page 4, lines 16 to 21, omit all words and expressions on these lines and insert “section (3) unless section 48 applies”.

Mr STEGGALL (Swan Hill)—It is rather complicated to follow the amendments when one receives them on the run. I have not had the opportunity of considering the amendments. I wonder whether the Minister might provide an explanation of the amendments because, when going through the documents at the speed at which the Minister is travelling, it is not easy to follow them. Perhaps we could deal with the Committee stage after dinner.

Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Property and Services)—This matter was dealt with during the second-reading debate. The amendment will eliminate the restraint on hyphenated names. There was a constraint on names that could be registered but that is now being deleted from the Bill.

The amendment was agreed to.
Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Property and Services)—I move:

Clause 6, page 5, lines 9 to 14, omit all words and expressions on these lines and insert:

“given name upon—

(a) the application in writing of a parent or guardian of the child; and

(h) payment of the prescribed fee.”

This deals with the registration of the given name after registration of birth and simplifies the process in the terms already discussed during the second-reading debate.

The amendment was agreed to.

Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Property and Services)—I move:

Clause 6, page 5, line 21, omit ‘word “prescribed”’ and insert ‘words “in the prescribed form”’.

The amendment was agreed to.

Mr DELZOPPO (Narracan)—I direct the attention of the Minister to line 9 on page 7 of the Bill, which states:

(k) In section 27 for the words “an extract of the entry” there is substituted the words “a certificate in the prescribed form”;

During the second-reading debate, I mentioned a proposal, which has not yet crystallized, to provide persons registering a child with a prescribed form, which would be in the form of a certificate attached to an extract by means of a perforation, so that the certificate could be torn off from the extract. The Minister did not mention this in his second-reading summation.

Is it the intention of the Minister to introduce such a certificate combined with an extract under the terms of “prescribed form” in clause 6?

Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Property and Services)—I am not sure whether I can provide details of what the form will be, but I shall obtain that information for the honourable member and let him know later.

The clause, as amended, was adopted, as was clause 7.

Clause 8

Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Property and Services)—I move:

Clause 8, page 7, lines 22 to 31, omit all words and expressions on these lines and insert:

“33. This Part does not affect the right of a person to assume or use a name other than a name registered as the name of that person under this Act.”

The amendment was agreed to.

Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Property and Services)—I move:

Clause 8, page 9, line 11, omit “kept and maintained under this section”.

The amendment was agreed to.

Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Property and Services)—I move:

Clause 8, page 9, line 16, omit “39 or”.

Clause 8, page 9, lines 26 to 32, omit all words and expressions on these lines.

The amendments were agreed to.
Mr DELZOPPO (Narracan)—During the second-reading debate I mentioned a suggestion that was made to the Opposition by persons interested in genealogical studies. It involved a proposed new section 49 (4) and provided that:

The registrar must in every year publish in a form approved by the Minister the indexes to each of the registers of births, deaths and marriages in his possession after the lapse of 75 years after the making of the last entry therein.

I was not sure from the Minister's remarks whether he was prepared to consider the amendment. This change to the legislation has been eagerly sought for a number of years by people interested in genealogical studies. It would mean that automatically the registrar must bring forward an index dated back 75 years. In this way we would not have a backlog of indices not being published as we have at present. Will the Minister clarify his response and consider the amendment while the Bill is between here and another place?

Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Property and Services)—I give that assurance and will speak to the honourable member in the intervening period.

The clause was verbally amended, and, as amended, was adopted, as were the remaining clauses.

The schedule was verbally amended, and, as amended, was adopted.

The Bill was reported to the House with amendments, and passed through its remaining stages.

CONSTITUTION (GOVERNOR'S SALARY AND PENSION) BILL

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

In recognition of the service Sir Brian and Lady Murray have rendered certain undertakings were given in my Ministerial statement of 3 October. This Bill seeks to incorporate in legislation these undertakings, to provide a more flexible mechanism to increase the Governor’s salary and enable a more flexible approach for payment of pensions to future Governors.

Clause 6 provides for a full pension entitlement for Sir Brian Murray of 60 per cent of the salary of the Chief Justice, calculated on the basis of the Governor’s pension entitlement set out in the Constitution Act. This clause also provides for a lump sum payment of $30,000 and removal, resettlement and re-establishment costs of $15,000.

In my Ministerial statement to the House on 3 October 1985, I also stated that the Government had agreed to provide certain other entitlements to Sir Brian Murray.

These entitlements are normally available to former Governors at the conclusion of their term of office. I mentioned the availability of a Government car whilst in Victoria on official business, and secretarial services for three months from the date of resignation.

In addition, I inform honourable members that Sir Brian advised he had taken action some weeks ago to exercise the normal entitlement of Governors to purchase a new motor vehicle for his personal use on a concessional basis. Under Commonwealth law, a Governor is entitled to purchase a motor vehicle free of customs duty and sales tax.

Since it was not possible for this transaction to be completed before Sir Brian vacated his office, the Government agreed at his request that if retrospective approval could not be obtained under the taxation system it would meet the relevant customs duty and sales tax amounting to $25,018.96 so that Sir Brian would not be disadvantaged. I am advised that retrospective approval cannot be given as the entitlement lapsed when Sir Brian vacated the office of Governor. Sir Brian also sought an understanding from the
Government that he would not be financially disadvantaged from an income tax point of view in relation to the payments referred to. The Government has acceded to his request.

The understandings reached, including the understanding that no comment would be made by Sir Brian or Lady Murray, in order to protect the integrity of the office of Governor were noted down by the Governor's aide at Sir Brian's request. As these matters have been raised in the House, the Government felt that, before tabling the note of understandings, it should check with Sir Brian whether he wished the note to be tabled. The Secretary, Office of the Governor, Mr Charles Curwen, spoke to Sir Brian this morning. Sir Brian informed Mr Curwen that he never wished to be a part of the politics in this matter, but if Mr Kennett is wishing to pursue it, and if Mr Cain considers it is necessary for him to table it in the House, then insofar as Sir Brian is concerned, it has nothing to do with him and he is out of it now.

The Leader of the Opposition has to face up squarely to the consequences of his actions in this matter. It is he—and he alone—who wants to go on with this issue. It is he and he alone who is doing damage to the office of Governor by his politically motivated attacks, which have one purpose and one purpose only: to enhance the political prospects—as he sees them—of Jeff Kennett.

He has throughout this matter played with the truth in so many ways which can only hurt the people he so self-righteously says he wishes to protect.

There is a further point, and let it be clearly understood by everybody in this place: by his intemperate conduct and irresponsible attacks on this issue, he puts in jeopardy the Royal visit which I and all Victorians want to see proceed at the end of this month, and I shall do all I can to see that the visit proceeds. By his actions—his actions, nobody else's—he wants to create a climate of controversy so that the Royal visit will not be able to take place without the prospect of embarrassment to their Royal Highnesses.

I have so far sought to preserve the wishes of the Governor in respect of the undertakings which were regarded by him and accepted by me as private and personal. But in view of the course which the Opposition has taken, I seek leave to table the note of understandings reached.

The SPEAKER—Order! The Premier does not need leave to have the document incorporated. He should just make the document available to the House.

Mr CAIN—Thank you, Mr Speaker. I make no such application.

The SPEAKER—Order! The document has been made available to the House under the usual arrangements.

Mr CAIN—At the request of Sir Brian, I draw honourable members' attention to subsection 7A (4) of the Constitution Act.

Under this provision, which will also apply to Sir Brian's pension entitlement, a Governor's pension is reduced by the amount that a person is entitled to receive by way of pension or retirement allowance in respect of service under the Crown in any part of the Commonwealth of Nations, but excluding payments under the Repatriation Act and certain other Acts.

Sir Brian has asked that it be noted that, as he is in receipt of a pension under the Commonwealth Defence Forces Retirement Benefits Act, this will be offset against the amount he will receive under the Victorian legislation. As I have already mentioned, the Bill also seeks to provide greater flexibility in respect of the Governor's salary and pension.

Honourable members will be aware that each time the Governor's salary is increased an amendment to the Constitution Act is required. This was also the case with Supreme Court judges' salaries until 1980 when legislation was passed to enable their salaries to be increased by way of an adjustment certificate issued by the Attorney-General.
Clause 4 would put in place a similar mechanism in respect of the Governor's salary. I point out that this provision will not permit the Governor's salary to be reduced. Adjustments made to the salary of the Governor and the pension paid to a former Governor pursuant to these provisions will be reported to Parliament.

The fact that legislation has been necessary to enable payment of a pension to Sir Brian Murray also highlights the need for greater flexibility for pension entitlements for the Governor. Accordingly, the Bill provides for a proportionate pension entitlement where a person serves for more than one year but less than five years and is not otherwise entitled to a pension through disability retirement.

Clause 5 provides for a Governor to be entitled to a pension determined by reference to length of service. A full pension is equivalent to 60 per cent of the Chief Justice's salary. A retiring Governor would receive 20 per cent of the full pension entitlement for each full year's service up to five years. After five years, there would be an entitlement to the full pension. In addition, there would be flexibility to enable a greater amount to be fixed in any individual case.

The existing provision in section 7A (4) for the pension entitlement to be reduced by the amount of any other pension or retirement entitlement in respect of other Government service will be retained. These changes will implement undertakings given to Sir Brian Murray.

Other changes provide greater flexibility to enable increases to be made to the Governor's salary and for pension entitlements where a person serves for less than five years.

I emphasise that the provisions regarding the salary for the Governor are consistent with the existing provisions of the Constitution Act for adjustments to Supreme Court Judges' salaries. I commend the Bill to the House.

On the motion of Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition), the debate was adjourned.

It was ordered that the debate be adjourned until later this day.

**HOUSING (COMMONWEALTH–STATE–NORTHERN TERRITORY AGREEMENT) BILL**

The debate (adjourned from September 19) on the motion of Mr Wilkes (Minister for Housing) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

**Mr BROWN** (Gippsland West)—This important Bill will amend the Housing Act 1983 to ratify the execution for and on behalf of the State of Victoria of an agreement between the Commonwealth and other States relating to housing activities. The Bill will establish the basis of an agreement for a period of ten years as from 1 July 1985.

The Bill will lay down the mechanism for all housing activity in Victoria for the next ten years and is particularly relevant to the Liberal Party because, for the bulk of that period, it will be in government in this State and, effectively, will need to be assured that whatever legislative process takes place in the provision of funds for housing is done in the interests of people that the Liberal Government will be serving in the years ahead.

The agreement is an important social document because it sets out every aspect of housing in the State. I welcome the debate as an opportunity of discussing a wide range of issues. Sometimes those issues are complex, but there can be no argument that they are important to hundreds of thousands of people throughout the length and breadth of Victoria. In his second-reading speech the Minister stated that:

Approximately 95 per cent of the Ministry's new tenants are eligible for rent rebates because of low incomes.

He also stated:

The agreement provides that tenants who are on low incomes should continue to receive rent rebates.
The Opposition supports that statement. The Minister continued:

I mention in this context that rent rebates will cost the Ministry of Housing some $50 million in 1985-86, and that one of the Government's disappointments with the new agreement is that it does not provide for the Commonwealth to meet this cost. It is, by its nature, clearly an income security cost and thus, the Government would argue, a Commonwealth responsibility.

The Liberal Party shares the view of the Minister that it is a Commonwealth responsibility and it joins with him in condemning the activities of the Federal Government—his own Labor Party colleagues—who clearly are not prepared to shoulder the responsibility for these activities.

However, it is refreshing to see a Minister of the Crown who represents the Labor Party quite openly condemning, as does the Liberal Party, the activities of the Federal Labor Government. Indeed, I only hope that his plea does not fall on deaf ears. The Liberal Party joins with him in saying that it is time that those in Canberra—who, admittedly, are there for only a limited period, but who have the capacity over that period to implement policies that are beneficial to Victorians—woke up and started to listen even to State Ministers representing their own political persuasion.

The fact of the matter is that Victoria has been kicked in the stomach as a result of the Commonwealth Government's unpreparedness to face its responsibility in this area of income support. I conclude on this point by saying that it is refreshing to hear the present State Minister for Housing publicly stating that he sees it as the Federal Government's responsibility to get on with doing what it was charged with doing when it was elected as the Federal Government.

The Minister also indicated that this agreement provides for the introduction of cost rents. He said:

In the long term, this should lead to significantly lower rents for public tenants.

The Liberal Party has said publicly, and I say again in this debate, that that is not right. It will not lead to significantly lower rents for public tenants. Indeed, a reintroduction of the former method of calculating rentals for tenants of the Ministry of Housing would better serve those tenants. That formula was tied to market-related influences. Unquestionably, there are thousands of families who have experienced a substantial hike in rental costs since cost rentals have been introduced in Victoria. My office has been inundated by tenants telling me that their rentals have increased by $10 a week. I have been inundated to the degree that there has been a constant stream of mail and telephone calls pointing out to me that before the State elections the Labor Government said it would introduce a scheme that would reduce their rent, but instead they are faced with a hike of $10 a week.

Thousands of Victorian families have received notification from the Ministry of Housing, since the introduction of this scheme, that their rent will increase significantly. How the Labor Party can hold its head high and continue to claim that the introduction of cost rents is helping low income families, when we know and it is the fact that large numbers of people are suffering massive hikes in the amounts that they have to pay, is beyond me. I cannot fathom how the Labor Party can continue to claim what it claims it will do as a consequence of this Bill.

The Bill covers every facet of housing in Victoria, including the provision of finance, the management of estates or even the control of an individual house or unit that is made available by the Ministry of Housing. It states, in part, that its objective is to assist the delivery of housing assistance, so far as possible, and that people should be given an equal choice between the types of housing assistance available.

That is a fairly short statement, but the reality is that the Housing (Commonwealth-State-Northern Territory Agreement) Bill that we are debating here and now says that, so far as possible, an equal choice should be given between the types of housing assistance available. I refer particularly to rental housing co-operatives, which were initiated by a former Liberal Government. It goes back to the day of the Honourable
Brian Dixon, who was the then Minister of Housing. Naturally, the Liberal Party continues to support the concept of rental housing co-operatives. Indeed, the concept is excellent but we do know—and the honourable member for Frankston South has raised this—that problems are now evident within the administration of such an entity in Frankston. The previous Minister of Housing had departmental staff take over the control of a rental housing co-operative at Mornington last year. So the situation is that the administration of rental housing co-operatives has not been all that it should have been in the time of the Labor Government.

I am only making the point that the Administration should give closer attention to the management of rental housing co-operatives. I am certainly not advocating that they be done away with because, as I said, the concept is excellent and we do support it.

I also note that the agreement seeks to remove the stigmatization of the status of public tenants and it clearly states that this should be avoided to the maximum extent practicable, yet the Government continues to embark on a course of developing large estates. It is true that they are not large in the sense that they are high rise but, as I know you are personally aware, Mr Speaker, from a development in your own electorate, they are large in the sense that many units are put on a single area of land. Some of the developments that the Labor Government has carried out in its time in office—some of the estates that have been developed—are very large indeed. Examples are the Graham Road estate at Highett, the major project on the former Angliss meatworks site at Footscray and the proposals for the redevelopment of the Newmarket sale-yards, as well as the development of the Orana estate at Burwood, which has now begun. There are a large number of others, and it is evident that, despite the knowledge of all the problems that have existed in the past with large estates, this Government intends to continue to develop such estates. They are putting several hundred people shoulder to shoulder on single blocks of land in many locations throughout the metropolitan area.

That is very, very bad. The Liberal Party has highlighted the situation a number of times, yet the Government cannot be induced to see sense and introduce policies along the lines required by the Bill. The Bill clearly states that there should be no stigmatization of the status of public tenants. What happens when one gets several hundred people living on one block in any given area in the metropolitan area—or anywhere else in Victoria, for that matter? The community singles them out and says, “You’re from the commission area!” and that is a stigmatization that is not reasonable. Policies are available that would remove the necessity for large estates to be developed.

The spot purchase program and other methods of purchase are available to the Ministry of Housing so that tenants of the Ministry can be easily and adequately dispersed throughout the community. There can be no doubt that that is the preferable way to go. It is the way the Liberal Party, when it is returned to government in three years’ time, will go. No major housing estates will be developed, and in that regard the Liberal Party will be sticking to the spirit of the agreement that honourable members are debating tonight.

The agreement also provides for assistance to be given to create home ownership opportunities for those who are unable to obtain or maintain affordable finance from the private sector or from other sources outside the agreement.

The Liberal Party fully supports that concept. That is one area where I am prepared to praise the Federal Government when it says to the State Government that home ownership is a desirable method of providing accommodation to people. Undoubtedly, in the assessment of the Liberal Party, it is the preferable way to go for so many families. It is our judgment that at least 80 per cent of Victorian families who desire to have roofs over their heads can be accommodated.

The Liberal Party believes it is possible, with the right policies, for 80 per cent of Victorian families to own or pay off a home of their own rather than be struggling in Ministry of Housing residences all their lives. That is what the Government is doing purposely with its housing policy. It is building a large number of units on large estates. It
is buying approximately 3000 houses a year to add to the stock available, which presently stands at 47,000 units throughout Victoria, and it is the philosophy, primarily produced by the lunatic left of the Labor Party, that none of those properties will ever be available for purchase by the occupants. That is a scandalous situation. The 47,000 families presently in these units is increasing by approximately 3000 families a year and will do so as long as the State Government remains in office. Those tenants will never be able to purchase the house in which they live. That is a deplorable policy. It purposely keeps the poor poor.

Those same people, for less money and at less cost to the taxpayer, can be accommodated in houses that they are paying off and will eventually become their own. What is the corollary of that? One must ask, why is the Labor Party making sure that it keeps the poor poor? I say quite openly that it is for political reasons. The Labor Party does not want people to build a financial base and give their families security in the future because these families would then see the benefits of home ownership and question why the Labor Party for four decades has tried to keep the poor poor with its housing policy.

I shall outline clearly to the House later in this debate that it costs much more in monetary terms to have people housed in rental accommodation rather than to provide them with the opportunity for home ownership.

This Bill will also enable the State to exercise the maximum autonomy and flexibility in developing the administrative arrangements necessary to achieve the principles that I have already outlined. In other words, there is nothing under the terms of this ten-year agreement to stop the Labor Party Government changing its philosophy to help these people become homeowners. That is set out in the Bill clearly and succinctly.

It is also clear that it is up to the Minister for Housing when he goes to Canberra to ensure that he obtains the best housing deal for Victorians. The Bill requires him, as the Minister, to provide the Commonwealth Government in respect of each year with policies that are proposed in Victoria and the Bill sets out that the State and Federal Minister for Housing will consult as appropriate concerning the provision of financial assistance to Victorians, including additional financial assistance.

I place it clearly on the public record because it is stated in the Bill that the Minister for Housing will have the opportunity to go to Canberra annually and discuss all matters pertaining to housing with the Federal Minister for Housing, including additional financial assistance.

With the present waiting list for public rental housing standing at approximately 24,000 applications and growing, and with the policies that the Government has on foot for housing, particularly regarding the Residential Tenancies Act, which will be the subject of another debate at a later time, the Ministry of Housing waiting lists will grow by tens of thousands within the next three years. The Minister for Housing will find it necessary to go to Canberra and not only plead but also insist that this State receives a better deal from the Federal Government than it has been receiving during the period Mr Hawke has been Prime Minister.

The amount of moneys provided at both State and Federal levels for housing has not matched either Labor Party promises or commitments that were given to increase the assistance available for home ownership and the policies affecting public rentals.

Every year large amounts of money flow into State Government coffers to create revolving funds. The Federal Government lends the State Government vast amounts of money every year for housing purposes at a 4-5 per cent interest rate per annum. Indeed, this is repayable over a 53-year period. Well before that 53-year period is up a surplus amount of money accrues to the credit of the State Government that can be used as the Government sees fit for the development of housing policies and housing assistance programs.

As I said earlier, the lunatic left wing fringe and the ideologues within the Labor Party are constantly pushing to ensure that the poor remain poor and that they remain in public rental housing. However, the Liberal Party espouses that home ownership policies are
preferable. I shall push that point continually during the debate. I know that members of the Labor Party who espouse some interest in housing are in the Chamber at the moment and the Opposition will be anxious to hear their contributions to the debate. I shall name them if they do not speak in this debate. Those honourable members have a case to answer.

The honourable member for Ringwood, before the last State election, said that she would ensure that a rental housing co-operative was built at Ringwood. I am on the public record as saying that my first administrative action, as the Minister for Housing, would be to put a rental housing co-operative in place at Ringwood. The Opposition accepts that there is a crying demand for this sort of accommodation at Ringwood and it would make arrangements so that this special accommodation would be in place right now, this month, for those residents at Ringwood. Hundreds of families desperately need this sort of accommodation and the Liberal Party, in government, would redress this situation immediately.

The people of Ringwood have been misled by this State Government, because it is spelt out in its policy documents that there will be no rental housing co-operative established this year, anywhere in Victoria. Is that misleading the people of Ringwood or is it not? It is telling them pre-election a co-operative will be established soon after the election of a Labor Government, but in their own printed document stating that no co-operative will be established this year anywhere in Victoria. It is absolutely disgraceful that the people of Ringwood were misled, as were many other people in Labor-controlled seats.

Promises were made prior to the last election that were blatantly misleading and the chickens have now come home to roost. I am glad that I am not the honourable member for Ringwood or that I represent other electorates where this Government has blatantly misled the community.

I have indicated that the Opposition has a definite bias to ensure that people get a home of their own rather than maintaining them in rental accommodation all their lives. It is a fact that after a home is paid off, in Victoria the average time for the paying off a home is 25 years, that the relative cost of then maintaining that residence is very low.

What happens to the tenants whom the Government is forcing to go on a waiting list all their lives? I will tell you what happens: every year that he or she lives, his or her rental bill increases and it doubles in every ten years cycle.

There will be several members from the Opposition who will follow me in the debate and they will give examples of constituents in their electorates who have been kicked in the teeth when the Government could have invested in a decent reasonable community spirit but it has chosen not to do so. Indeed it is the philosophy of the Opposition that not only should every Ministry of Housing tenant have the opportunity to purchase his house or unit but also that it should be prescribed in legislation that he has that right. That is what the Liberal Party when it is in government will do when operating under the Bill. The Bill allows the Government to sell Ministry of Housing residences to tenants who are renting them. The Commonwealth Government sees the advantage, decency and benefit in allowing the State to sell off its rental stock and, so far as the Opposition is concerned, an important proviso is that as a house is sold to a tenant of the Ministry of Housing it should be replaced. The Opposition says that people in Victoria who cannot afford a house—and it acknowledges that about 20 per cent of families have the right to public housing—clearly and unequivocally should have that right. It says that 80 per cent of families who purchase a home should be given the right to do what they want to do; the majority of people in Victoria, the people the Government is keeping poor for a lifetime, should be given the right to purchase the home if it is their desire.

Under the incoming Liberal Government they will be able to do this because that Government will legislate to ensure—as is done in England—that they have the right at law and not only that but also it will give them a discount of 1 per cent off the purchase price for every year that they have been a tenant of the Ministry of Housing. In other
words, the worse they have been treated by the Labor Government, and the longer they have been kept in public rental property instead of giving them that opportunity, the Liberal Party will give some respite for that scandalous situation by giving a discount of 1 per cent for every year of occupancy.

In other words, if the Labor Government has forced them to stay in public housing for ten years the Liberal Party will give them a 10 per cent discount and that will be in the form of a direct subsidy from the State coffers. It will not impinge upon the agreement.

However, the first time I travel to Canberra as Minister for Housing I will want the agreement changed. There is provision in the Bill for the Minister of the day to negotiate with the Federal Minister for change and I will ensure that it is changed so that the discount is given to help these people get a stake in Victoria which will give them pride and ownership not only for them but also for their kids. The Liberal Party in government will want the Commonwealth to join with it to take a role in ensuring that those families are assisted.

There are a large number of other issues that I propose to canvass because it is rare for the Opposition to have an opportunity to debate any subject, even one as important as this. I am pleased today because the Bill affords me this opportunity. The Bill controls every facet of housing so far as the State Government is concerned. The provisions allow payment to be made or for bridging finance, for the provision of open space, landscaping, community facilities or the costs associated with land development including contributions to water and the reticulated services.

This matter relates also to the Frankston Baptist Retirement Centre which is by far the largest in Victoria and to my knowledge is the largest retirement village in Australia. The day after the Opposition became aware of the financial situation facing the village, it called upon the Government to step in and ensure that it would be underwritten financially if necessary and that it would give a guarantee that there would be no collapse because what has happened there could happen Statewide. People moved into these developments on what has been termed a residential funded village concept. All the people in the residence at Frankston paid the full cash value for the units they are occupying and yet they have no security other than a piece of paper called a life-time tenancy lease that is as worthless as the paper it is written on should the development company collapse.

This is a plea I do not wish to fall on deaf ears because this is an urgent situation that is facing not only the Frankston Baptist Centre but also it is undoubtedly facing other retirement villages in the State, although I am sure they would be small in number as most retirement villages are financially viable. In the example of the Frankston Baptist Retirement Centre and before there is a possibility that others will follow, it is imperative that the Government turns its attention to the problem. It must legislate forthwith and the Opposition will support the legislation. It must be done during this session. The Opposition is aware of evidence that has been placed before it and it does not wish to see any more villages established in Victoria in which people pay the full cost of the development but have no rights at law should that development company fail. They must be given security of tenure and some form of holdover title that can be in the form of a strata title or a lien over the master title.

This is one of the most pressing and serious social problems at this time. There are 600 residents at Frankston and the Opposition is pleased to see that the Government has propped it up financially for 90 days. It commends the Government for doing that. However, what will happen to that development after the 90 days is up? There is no undertaking from the Government. There must be an assurance given to the elderly people at Frankston that they are secure.

I say on behalf of the Opposition and with the full knowledge of my colleagues that it will leave no stone unturned to ensure that the interests of those people are protected and that they will be able to remain in what are rightfully their units for which they have paid in full value. The Opposition commends the Government for stepping in for 90 days but
it asks: what will happen after the 90 days is up? It is an issue that the Government must address and for which legislation must be enacted.

Turning to other issues encompassed by the Bill, it is possible that discounts can be given under the measure if the State decides as a matter of policy to sell a unit or house in which a public tenant lives. The Liberal Party believes that is something it would do as a Government. I ask the Government to turn its attention to that matter and ask whether it can do something to assist these people who are stuck on the treadmill of paying rent for a lifetime.

The Government recently introduced a new method of calculating rentals. As I said before, it has changed from what was known as market-related rentals to a cost rent formula. Under the cost rent formula, as spelt out in the Bill, I should like to give honourable members some insight into what must now be covered by Victoria—under the brilliant new policy that the Government has introduced.

It must recover from low income public rental families in this State the following costs for administration of public housing in this State. The Minister for Housing interjects and says that it covers all States, and he is absolutely correct. However, I make the following remarks for Victoria. I do not know how the Federal and State Governments can have the gall to introduce such a system, and how the Victorian Government can have the gall in Victoria to accept the principle that low income tenants have to cover these costs.

I shall list what low income earners will have to pay for under the cost rent formula. They will have to pay for the administration involved, and, primarily, that is the administration of the Ministry of Housing. The Opposition acknowledges that the Ministry is saving some $60 000 at present because there is no Director of Housing—and there has been no director for some nine months—but apart from that, the Ministry has staff virtually hanging out of the windows who are handling that administration in a grossly inept and incompetent fashion. For more than twelve months I have highlighted the problems that exist within the administration which require urgent attention. I assume, as the Minister for Housing is still fairly fresh in the job, he is just about to act after having recently found out about all the problems.

I could take honourable members through all the problems that exist, and they are not minuscule in number. I could relate to the House the problems of houses remaining empty for six months after being bought by the Ministry and, after all the issues have been raised concerning granny flats, there are still many that stay empty for an average of a year after the Ministry has been notified that they have become vacant.

The Government's solution to that problem was to say that granny flats will no longer stay empty; it decided to store them in a factory in Ringwood. The Ministry is still transferring granny flats to be stored when hundreds of people have been waiting for up to two or three years to move into them. Of course, some of the people have died before having their wishes fulfilled. I could talk about a range of issues to demonstrate the tremendous incompetence within the Ministry. Something needs to be done in that regard.

I make the point that low income earners, the tenants of the Ministry of Housing, will have to foot the bill for administration and the bill for all the rates. This will occur under the cost rent formula that the Government has introduced in the Bill. Low income earners will also be required to foot the bill for insurance costs, specific operation expenses associated with particular types of units, and annual maintenance. The annual maintenance bill of the Ministry of Housing is horrific—there is no other way of describing it.

Some of the programs that the Government has implemented have cost up to $3 million, and money has literally been wasted. The Government has become involved in the Glass Terrace purchase and restoration, which will house only a small number of people but which will cost about $3 million.

Under the cost rent formula set out in the Bill, all the costs of public rental housing in this State will be borne by the low income earners. They will be required to cover the costs
of yearly allowance for rent arrears and debts written off. That effectively means that the good tenants will subsidize the bad tenants. Rent arrears and debts written off will be covered by the pool of money that low income earners pay to the Ministry. So much for helping the low income earners!

They must also pay the cost of the yearly allowances for vacancies; leasing expenses related to land and dwellings; operating expenses of community facilities; and, to cap it all off, any other operating costs agreed between Federal and State Housing Ministers. Therefore, if the Ministry of Housing can whip in any other costs it can think of, it will do that, too.

This new widely acclaimed policy of introducing the cost rent formula is against the interests of public rental tenants in this State, and it is about time the Government publicly acknowledged that that is the case.

I quote directly from a publication of the Ministry of Housing entitled, “The State Housing Budget”, No 4. for 1985–86, which states that the achievements of Program One include:

The management of some 47,000 units of public rental stock. The cost of managing these units was $126 million in 1984–85.

I repeat that the cost of managing those units by the Ministry of Housing in this State was $126 million in the last financial year. What an enormous burden that is on the taxpayers of this State and those who are paying rent themselves, the low income earners!

If they were given the opportunity of owning their own houses instead of being forced to rent accommodation, it would not only save the taxpayers of Victoria hundreds of millions of dollars in the long run, but it would also reduce overnight the cost of managing those units, which, I assume, will be $150 million at the end of this financial year; and yet the Government has persisted with the policy of ensuring that all one can do is to come along and rent a house.

I note that some $43 million is provided from the Ministry’s capital budget for the purpose of that same management program in 1985–86, which represents an increase of 22 per cent over the 1984–85 financial year.

Later during the debate, I shall clearly outline to the House the cost to the taxpayers of the home ownership policies with which the Government persists.

The document to which I referred earlier also states, regarding Sub-Program Four—Community Managed Housing:

It is anticipated that no new rental housing co-operatives will be established in 1985–86. Arrangements for the operations of the 17 existing co-operatives will be maintained.

The statement is on the public record, published in the Government’s own document. All I can hope is that the pressure that the Opposition brings to bear will see that policy overturned tonight. The Opposition wants the Minister for Housing to stand up tonight and say that he will do what the Opposition would have done six months ago, that he will now ensure that a rental housing co-operative is established in Ringwood.

The Minister has an allocation of some $320 million for housing from which to obtain the funds to do that. The Opposition not only acknowledges the problem, but also it would have fixed it. It requests the Minister to address the plight of people in Ringwood, and hopes that an undertaking will be given by the Minister during the debate.

As an example of the Government’s bias and its onslaught into what was a very traditional source of funds for home loans, I note that, this year, $30.6 million of Ministry funds will be distributed to the co-operative housing society movement. It received some $30 million last year, so that is a reduction in real terms; despite the fact that the housing budget exceeds $300 million this financial year, this is a substantial increase in real terms on the allocation for the last financial year. However, there has been a reduction in the
amount allocated for co-operative housing. The Minister kindly answered a question on notice recently, which I will read to the House. Question No. 223 was put on notice by me.

I asked the Minister for Housing:

What is the number of rental units which could be provided for a given amount of $100 million under the costs as currently incurred by the Ministry of Housing in the rental construction program, including provision for operational costs in one year, as compared to the number of units which could be provided under a home purchase assistance program as currently operated through the Ministry and its agencies.

I asked the Minister for Housing how many houses could be provided for $100 million by the Ministry and how many could be provided by co-operative housing societies.

The answer was:

The number of rental units is 1479.

The number under home purchase assistance is 2353.

For the same $100 million the Ministry could have provided an extra 100 units and given what 80 per cent of the people want—a chance to buy a house of their own and to have the burden of paying rent for ever lifted from their shoulders.

I realize that the lunatic fringe of the Labor Party does not accept this, but the people involved would gain the advantage of obtaining the inflationary profit that is made by owning a property. I know that has been dented recently through the introduction of a capital gains tax, but it is still a preferable situation to having to pay rent all one’s life. If one owns a house, one has a good asset that may be passed on to other members of the family.

I am pleased that the Minister answered the question; the normal practice is for Ministers to say that it would take too many resources to answer a question. When the Liberal Party is in government, it will ensure that the Labor Party gets a fair go with respect to the answering of questions on notice. The Government claims to be an open government, but it uses the Freedom of Information Act to block as much information as possible. It obstructs the flow of information to the optimum degree.

The second question I asked the Minister for Housing was:

What is the average purchase price of the rental units obtained under the spot purchase program as compared to the average purchase price of units of accommodation provided under the home purchase assistance program, either directly through the Ministry or through co-operative housing societies.

I asked the Minister how many housing units the Ministry could purchase for a certain amount of money and how many units could be purchased by co-operative housing societies for the same amount.

The answer was:

Average acquisition price—including upgrading—per unit under the spot purchase program during early 1985 was $65 600.

The Ministry is going around the State buying 3000 houses at an average cost of $65 600. It pays $100 000 for a house in Toorak, but the average cost is $65 600.

The answer continues:

For the above outlay, the Ministry acquired a dwelling for use for public rental housing in perpetuity, in an area where public housing is needed.

Average purchase price per unit under home purchase assistance scheme is $45 922—this does not include upgrading costs.

The Ministry of Housing spends $65 600 for houses to put tenants into and people can buy their own houses for $46 000. Its a policy of lunacy to pay so much money to provide rental accommodation when one could use less money to help people purchase a house of their own. If people can buy their own houses, they are no longer a burden on the taxpayer,
they have pride of ownership and their children are not teased about coming from a commission area.

Why the Labor Government sticks with the lunatic ideological philosophy of keeping people in public rental housing all their lives is beyond the comprehension of the Opposition. Heaven help us if the voters of Victoria are stupid enough to return another Labor Government, as there would be a further 10 000 families who would be condemned to be poor all their lives, who would be forced to pay rent and who would never have the opportunity of owning their own houses. I hope the House is taking note of these points.

The third question I asked the Minister was:

What is the administration cost to the taxpayers of providing home purchase assistance through the Ministry?

That is a fairly straightforward question. The answer was:

Administrative cost of providing a home purchase assistance is estimated at $4.3 million for 1984-85. Obviously, the figure will be more next year. This year approximately $5 million will be used to administer the home purchase assistance scheme. Co-operative housing societies do it for exactly half that price and it does not cost the taxpayer 1 cent.

The Government has public servants literally hanging from the windows of Myer House in Bourke Street—the headquarters of the Ministry of Housing—it employs bureaucrats at twice the cost that it would cost private enterprise to do the same job. It comes down to a matter of philosophy. The Minister for Housing could agree that I am correct—I must be correct because I am using his statistics—and could indicate that the policy would be changed. I would applaud him if he did that.

The next question I asked him was:

How many persons are currently employed by the Ministry in providing home purchase assistance loans and what are the estimated total wages to be paid this financial year?

The answer was:

The number of staff currently employed in processing loans under the home purchase assistance scheme and their total estimated wages are:

81 persons—$1.65 million.

The co-operative housing societies do the job at no cost to the Government. This year the Government will spend almost $2 million to distribute the money that the co-operative housing movement would distribute at no charge to the Government. If that is not a policy of lunacy, I would like to know what is.

I shall now highlight what is probably the most pertinent part of this debate. The Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement enshrines as one of its basic principles the concept of recruitment of subsidies. The Ministry of Housing and the Victorian Government unquestionably have double standards on this issue. The Ministry of Housing is prepared to recoup subsidies by virtue of the capital scheme for the home purchase assistance scheme whereby low income earners are required to pay as much for their housing loans as persons obtaining finance in the private sector. Despite that, the Ministry and the Government are prepared to turn a blind eye to massive subsidy costs incurred by the administration of home purchase assistance schemes and rental programs through the Ministry of Housing. I have quoted, chapter and verse, examples of how that is happening in Victoria with its attendant dramatic costs to the taxpayers, and yet the Government persists with this policy of lunacy.

The spot purchase program is an extravagant waste of taxpayers' money in that the average purchase price for houses is $65 600, which is $14 000 more expensive than the maximum loan approved under the home purchase assistance scheme.

The honourable member for Syndal will follow me in this debate, and he will highlight to the House the fact that, in the electorate he represents, the activities of the Ministry of
Housing have pushed up the costs of an average three-bedroom brick veneer house by $10 000 to $77 000.

Mr Coleman—$77 000!

The SPEAKER—Order! I advise the honourable member for Syndal that he is out of his place, and when he is interjecting he is out of order.

Mr BROWN—In the Syndal electorate the Ministry of Housing is paying an average of $77 000 for the same houses that were sold for less than $50 000 when the Liberal Party was in government a little more than three years ago. The policies of the Labor Government and not the market forces have a put a false bottom in the housing market. Statewide people are being forced to pay tens of thousands of dollars more for accommodation because the Ministry is using megadollars from the bottomless pit of taxpayers' funds. The Ministry cannot buy three thousand-plus houses a year mainly from the metropolitan area of Melbourne without hiking the prices. They have standing orders with the estate agents.

Mr Wilkes—No, they have not!

Mr BROWN—They have so! Those estate agents know that they do not have to advertise that a house is for sale because they approach the Ministry of Housing first, knowing that it will purchase the house. If the house is brick veneer with three bedrooms, the Ministry moves in and the estate agents get the cash; although at present the Minister is more interested in the brick veneer house with four bedrooms and an en suite bathroom.

The purchase of houses by the Ministry has been one of the worst influences in the housing market in Melbourne during the past three years, and it has jacked-up the price of housing to an unreasonable level. The high cost of purchases incurred by Ministry officials under the spot purchase program can only be labelled as scandalous in the light of cost efficiencies which I have outlined. These can be achieved in either rental construction or home purchase assistance programs, especially when tenants who pay approximately $27 a week may take possession of a spot purchase rental home of a standard that cannot be afforded by individual families battling under more stringent home purchase assistance conditions.

The Ministry of Housing is moving into electorates such as Syndal and others that will be highlighted by honourable members and paying high prices for houses in those electorates. Tenants who rent those spot purchase homes pay only $27 a week.

The operational loss on the Ministry's rental program has increased from $16 million in 1982-83 to $30.1 million in the past financial year. The estimated operational loss for the current financial year is $57.5 million. How can the Government defend its policies? They are indefensible! This represents an increase in the Ministry's loss on its rental programs of 240 per cent while only approximately 16 000 additional units have been added to the rental stock. This is an increase of approximately 45 per cent.

This massive loss on the rental program is disproportionate to the amount of activity currently undertaken by the Ministry; yet the Ministry has been highly praised by the Labor Government for supposedly assisting in solving Victoria's housing problems. The waiting list for rental housing in Victoria in the time the Labor Government has been in office has grown from 17 000 to approximately 24 000. Is the Government overcoming the problems? It is not. The Government is wasting money and the scarce resources available to taxpayers, and the waiting list is increasing.

The irrefutable conclusion to be drawn is that the State Government's much lauded public housing program is incapable of meeting the rising demand for housing assistance, and the high cost of administration incurred by the Ministry of Housing is crippling that program. I have indicated that the Statewide housing co-operative sector has staff who are ready, willing and able to distribute the money at no cost to the Government.

It is beyond comprehension why the Government continues with its policies, especially in the light of the current economic climate, rising interest rates and the increasing cost of
housing. Only massive Government efforts will save the situation. There is no question of that. However, more efficient means of providing housing assistance can be achieved using the existing Budget allocation which has been allowed for in the Bill. The Bill places no restraints on that expenditure, and there is no further recourse to the taxpayers’ pockets.

These policies should be addressed, because that is what the Bill is about. The State Government has publicly made much of the fact that rent rebates will cost the Ministry some $50 million in 1985–86. I suppose the private sector will join with the Ministry of Housing. That is supportable and should have been done a long time ago. The Opposition hopes this long-term program will be upgraded.

The Opposition does not object to such an invasion of the market-place where the private sector institutions are encouraged to place their funds in housing and particularly to make available funds under terms that could be called housing assistance, but it strongly objects to the manner in which this program will be administered, especially when the administration costs of the program will be borne by the Ministry of Housing. The Ministry is not only blatantly inept, but it is also bleeding the public rental housing market through the tens of millions of dollars of administration costs.

Mr Wilkes—You want only home ownership.

Mr BROWN—The Opposition wants home ownership as the No. 1 priority for the 80 per cent of Victorians who desire that and the public rental housing policies should be structured to cater for the remaining 20 per cent who have no option. The Government is all for public rental and could not care less about home ownership.

Mr Wilkes—We are looking for a balance.

Mr BROWN—The Minister says he is looking for a balance. I would be happy if half the $324 million were spent this year on housing policies or home ownership.

The SPEAKER—Order! Would the honourable member for Gippsland West care to observe the document that has just been passed to him.

Mr BROWN—Thank you, Mr Speaker. By leave, I move:

That the debate be now adjourned and that I have leave to continue my speech when the debate is resumed.

The motion for the adjournment of the debate was agreed to, and it was ordered that the debate be adjourned until later this day.

The sitting was suspended at 6.29 p.m. until 8.4 p.m.

CONSTITUTION (GOVERNOR’S SALARY AND PENSION) BILL

The debate (adjourned from earlier this day) on the motion of Mr Cain (Premier) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

The SPEAKER—Order! I should advise the House that I intend to uphold Standing Order No. 108 to the extent of its detail, and I shall take any action necessary to ensure that the Standing Order is maintained.

Mr KENNEDT (Leader of the Opposition)—Today the Premier of Victoria, John Cain, has come clean after ten days—

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER—Order! I should advise the House that I intend to uphold Standing Order No. 108 to the extent of its detail, and I shall take any action necessary to ensure that the Standing Order is maintained.

Mr KENNEDT—Today the Premier of Victoria, John Cain, has come clean after ten days of evasion, distortion and cover-ups, but that does not take into account certain personal activities in which the Premier has involved himself.
The Opposition has been correctly pursuing this matter, given that Parliament and the community have a right to know the circumstances surrounding the Premier's dismissal of the former Victorian Governor. Today the actions of the Opposition have been totally vindicated. The credibility, honesty and integrity of the Premier, Mr Cain, now lie in tatters. The Government, the Premier and the Government Media Unit have desperately tried to mislead Parliament, the media and, through the media, the public. This time, thankfully, they have failed.

The Opposition was pressured by some sections of the media, and by the vitriol of the Premier's attacks and threats that much more could be revealed and that the Royal tour was at risk, to leave this issue alone. However, today, truth has conquered deception.

I shall relate some of the circumstances to which the Premier has alluded in his second-reading speech. There has been a history of the Premier's interference with the independence of the office of Governor in Victoria and its most recent incumbent. The first point that should be made tonight is that the Premier could, if he had wished, have stopped the former Governor from proceeding on the overseas trip. However, he elected not to do so.

If the Premier were concerned about the office of Governor, he could and should—he was in receipt of sufficient information about the Governor's trip—have informed the Governor about the police inquiry into discounted airline tickets allegation concerning the Police Force and other public office holders.

Today the Premier has in this House—and it is on public record—stated clearly that he knew about the investigations some time in the first part of August.

Mr Norris—Where is the tape?

The SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Dandenong is out of order.

Mr KENNETT—The Governor did not leave Melbourne until well into the third week of August. If the Premier really wanted to protect the office of Governor, if he really wanted to protect the incumbent of that office, out of sheer decency he should have informed the former Governor of this major inquiry, given that he knew the Governor was to take an inaugural flight at no cost to the taxpayer.

However, the Premier elected not to do so. At no stage did the Premier want to ensure that the Governor had protection despite the information that the Premier had.

Mr Remington—He cautioned him!

Mr KENNETT—That would be a change.

The SPEAKER—Order! The Leader of the Opposition will ignore interjections.

Mr KENNETT—I accuse the Premier of failing to perform his duties in protection of the office of Governor by failing to make the Governor aware of those investigations. The next point that is relevant is the fact that the Governor, on his return, was met by the Premier within about three hours when the Premier insisted that he see the Governor, having to some degree tracked his trip, even though he had no information initially, and brought to the Governor's attention the concerns that he as Premier once again had.

At that stage, if the Premier had been genuine about his concern for the office of Governor and any public controversy, he could have done as he has now elected to do in retrospect; that is, he could have said, “This is unacceptable; I invite you to repay the value of the trip”. The Premier never made that offer. He had the opportunity of doing so. He has elected today to repay the difference between a business-class and a first-class ticket some five months after the event. Why did he not give the Governor the same opportunity? Why was not the same standard applied? The same standard was not applied because the Premier for three years has wished to see the demise of the previous incumbent of this office. It is also obvious that this conspiracy by the Premier was widespread.
The Premier had already discussed with the Lieutenant-Governor, before moving on the then Governor, Sir Brian Murray, whether the Lieutenant-Governor would be ready, willing and able to step into the position in the circumstances. That, to the Opposition, is quite unacceptable. It is obvious that the Prime Minister knew some time before the event that the Premier was about to move on the Governor of this State. There is no doubt that this was a conspiracy, but it was at that point that the deception really started.

The SPEAKER—Order! I should advise the Leader of the Opposition that the Bill is, in a conventional sense, one dealing with a certain matter. I do not believe it provides the Leader of the Opposition with an ability to canvass major areas of controversy in respect of this matter. The Bill restricts the honourable member to certain issues. I shall be as lenient as possible, but I do not intend to allow either the Leader of the Opposition or the Leader of the National Party to entertain themselves with a wide expose of the issues surrounding this matter.

Mr KENNETT—Of course, I shall do my best to work within your ruling, Mr Speaker, but I make the point that, in the Premier's second-reading speech today, he canvassed issues that are not even related to the Bill in terms of information.

The SPEAKER—Order! I advise the honourable member that, irrespective of what the Premier may have said in the second-reading speech, the House is dealing with a Bill. If there is any dissent from my attitude in this matter, another avenue is open to the Opposition.

Mr KENNETT—I shall try to work within your ruling, Mr Speaker, but, for clarification, I refer to page 4 of the Premier's statement tonight in which he said:

It is he...

That is me—

... and he alone who is doing damage to the office of Governor by his politically motivated attacks which have one purpose and one purpose only: to enhance the political prospects—as he sees them—of Jeff Kennett.

The SPEAKER—Order! I advise the Leader of the Opposition that he has the opportunity of responding to that particular reference, but that is all.

Mr KENNETT—Thank you, Mr Speaker. That is what I am doing because, over the past ten days, we have made public statements which the Premier has attacked. I shall refer to that later. I hope to put an end to the issue but, in the event that it be the end of the issue, the record must be set straight in terms of the accusations and allegations taken on by the Premier.

On the Wednesday night before the former Governor's retirement, as honourable members all know, the Premier went to Government House and saw the Governor. He was there for approximately 6 minutes. The Premier then came back and informed the media of what was reported in many newspapers including the Sun on Thursday, 3 October, which was the next morning. It stated:

"He also ...........

By that he means the Governor—

............. indicated to me that he also intended to see the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party.

"I told him in my view that was not the proper course to adopt. He said he intended to do that and I departed.

It has now become a matter of public record that the Premier deliberately left out of his comments to the media half the conversation he had with the Governor. What the Governor said to him was, "I have a request from the Leader of the Opposition which came on the night before, and I intend to see him". The Premier then said, "I advise you against that. That is not a proper course". The Governor said words to the effect of, "I intend to see him". That was extremely relevant in the whole process that has led to the
Bill because that created for the constitutional lawyers the arguments that justified the forcing of the Governor's resignation.

I direct attention to a conversation that occurred at 10 o'clock that night. At about 10 o'clock the Governor summoned the Premier back to Government House and said to him, "Mr Premier, I want you to go back and correct the misinformation and misrepresentation you have created about the conversations we had earlier tonight, and I further want to inform you that I have decided not to see Mr Kennett and Mr Ross-Edwards".

The Premier came back and took no action whatsoever on the Wednesday night or Thursday to correct the misrepresentation that he had perpetrated. It was those misrepresentations that did so much damage in this whole affair. I said earlier that this has been an exercise in deception. I think it can be proved quite clearly that, on that Wednesday night, the Premier deceived the media by misrepresenting the Governor, and the media quite honestly misrepresented the fact to the community at large.

I consider that to be totally unacceptable conduct for a holder of public office and particularly for the Premier of this State. The constitutional lawyers to whom I talked—Professor Colin Howard, who is often aligned with the left, and Professor Blackshield, who is aligned with the right—both said on the Thursday that that was the turning point on which the Governor should resign. Their information was based on misrepresentation not only of what the Governor had said in the first place but, more importantly, of what was said when the Governor summoned the Premier back to Government House to ask him specifically to correct the record and to inform the Premier that he was not going to see me, as Leader of the Opposition. That was a major issue on the Wednesday night and the Thursday. It is unacceptable that the Premier of this State should so misrepresent the Governor and, importantly, not be prepared to be frank and open with Parliament and the community at large.

For the past ten days, the Opposition has been pursuing this matter because it believes the public and Parliament have a right to know how and in what way public money is being spent.

Mr Fordham—That's right—nothing about the integrity of the office of the Governor—it is money that is the issue.

Mr KENNETT—The public individually or collectively may always argue over the merits and demerits of the Premier's decision to get rid of the Governor, but at this stage there started a cover-up and that has been the issue for the past ten days.

Mr Fordham—Rubbish!

Mr KENNETT—If everything the Premier had done was correct, why did he not tell the public and the people of Victoria? I am not arguing about the settlement terms that the Premier has arranged because there is nothing wrong with those terms and I agree with them. The difficulty has been with the Parliament and the people of Victoria being treated like a subhuman group of individuals. The Premier chose to retain this information for his own benefit. Tonight, after ten days, the Premier has finally seen fit to release the document that everyone knows was in place. For ten days, the Premier tried to evade and deceive the people of Victoria by never once saying definitely whether the document existed. There is nothing in the document that could not have been made public ten days ago—nothing at all, except that it is a condition of silence.

Mr Fordham—Rubbish!

Mr KENNETT—How absolutely absurd that the Deputy Premier says, "Rubbish". Paragraph (a) of the understanding states:

That the circumstances of resignation and the surrounding events shall not be the subject of press comment or speculation in the future by His Excellency and Lady Murray.
It was binding only on the Governor and Lady Murray. No conditions were binding on
the Government. There is no doubt that was the wedge that was used by the Premier. The
Premier interjects, "No pre-conditions at all!" Ask Charles Curwen! Look at the document!
On the night that they went down to sign this elusive document, the Governor signed, the
Premier signed, other signatories signed, and Lady Murray said, "I will not sign this
agreement. I will base my commitment on your—Mr Premier’s—agreement to meet your
understandings on a gentleman’s agreement." She refused to sign it because she did not
trust the Premier. What happened then was that Sir Brian Murray said, "Jan"—Lady
Murray, whatever it is—"Jan, we have no alternative, the Premier has got a gun at our
head. He has threatened the Royal visit, and he has threatened our natural entitlement."

Under duress, Lady Murray signed this agreement. She signed it under duress, as did
the Governor. Mr Speaker, this exercise has been one of threat and counter threat by the
Premier. It was he who threatened the cancellation of the Royal visit. It was he who
threatened when Lady Murray refused to sign the document out of sheer dignity. He got
out of his chair and said, "That is it, I am walking out. You will lose office and you will
get nothing." He started to walk out of the room when the former Governor suggested to
his wife that they were being held over a barrel and that they should sign the document.
That is what they did. In a court of law any agreement entered into under duress is not
worth the paper on which it is written.

Further, over the past two or three days there have been deliberate leaks by the
Government—as I have said before—of further information. Yesterday, the media unit
leaked the story concerning "Murray secret grant".

Mr Fordham—Not true!

Mr KENNETT—Not many people will believe that. That was done for two reasons:
first, to denigrate the Murrays; and, second, to divert attention away from what was
happening in this place at 2 p.m. yesterday. No man or woman in this State with any
degree of common sense will argue against that.

The Premier himself was responsible for the leaking of this information. As if that is not
good enough what is found today? This was not part of the Ministerial statement last
Thursday week. The Premier hid this from Parliament and from the people of Victoria.
Why? Today the Government wishes to make sure that it can continue to undermine the
position of the Murrays. The Government has got out the story that the Premier, Mr Cain,
revealed that the State Government had agreed to pay any tax that the settlement
package of the former Governor, Sir Brian Murray, may attract. Both those stories were in
contradiction with the spirit of the agreement, with one exception—the agreement did not
bind the Premier, and the Premier did not stop speaking from the moment that the
Governor resigned.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER—Order! I advise the honourable member for Mornington that I am
warning him for the first time.

Mr KENNETT—Remember the impression that was created in the public arena when
the Premier went around claiming that there was much, much more.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER—Order! I advise the honourable member for Mornington that I have
now warned him for the second time.

Mr KENNETT—The Premier went around the State talking to the media trying to
justify his position by saying that there was much, much more. He was finally forced to
concede that there was not much, much more; he was referring to details outlined in his
Ministerial statement on 3 October and yet he deliberately created the impression and
virtually threatened other people that, if they talked, he was in receipt of extra information,
which he would drop. If the Premier had had any more information on other matters he
should have been man enough to mention them in his Ministerial statement. He was not prepared to do so then, and he knew the image and impression that he was creating in the community.

Today, as a result of comments made in another place by the Leader of the Government, the Leader of the Government in the other place had to correct his position. Today, he admitted that what he said yesterday was incorrect and that, yes, there was a document in place, and that he, the Government Leader in the other place, had seen it.

Someone interjects; "What is wrong with that?" The Premier said that this was a secret document to which only a few people were privy, but he showed it sometime yesterday, or before, to the Leader of the Government in the other place. So to how many other people did the Premier show that document? To how many other Ministers; to how many members of his media unit; to how many members of the public?

It is not good enough for the Premier to come into this place and say that he has done everything that he can to preserve the office of the Governor when he has been responsible for the leaking of information and the circulation of a document that he said was confidential. Bear in mind that for ten days he tried to keep it to himself. For ten days the Premier and the Government, the Premier in particular—because he did not consult Cabinet on this issue—have been hoping that the media unit would pull the wool over the eyes of the Opposition. He succeeded with some of the press, who warned the Opposition off, but the Opposition makes no apology for pursuing to the death the truth of any issue that concerns the public of this State.

Let me now specifically talk about the proposed legislation. The Opposition will obviously support the Bill but, again, there are omissions from the measure and from what the Premier said in his statement tonight and in his Ministerial statement made on 3 October.

Although, later on, honourable members will go through these matters, clause by clause, I draw to the attention of the House certain issues which I ask the Premier to consider. In particular, I want him to bear in mind the request of the former Governor to disclose to Parliament and to correct a misrepresentation about the former Governor’s salary—that is, his pension—which the Premier agreed to do, but has not been decent enough to do.

The media writings of the past week have all talked about a Governor’s retirement pension in the order of $50,000 or $60,000. That is not the cost to the people of Victoria. The Premier knew it. The Governor asked the Premier to disclose it in order to correct the false impressions that were being created, and this Premier did not have the decency to inform the public.

What are the facts? The facts are simply these: the Governor is in receipt of a naval pension, a pension he deserves, having served this country with distinction over many, many years. That pension is in the order of $32,000. What the Government and the people of Victoria will be up for is not $50,000, $60,000 or, as reported in some statements, $100,000; the people of Victoria are up for $28,000. The Premier did not have the decency to inform the people when the Governor himself had asked the Premier to go back and correct this misrepresentation.

We on this side of the House and the public can understand the pettiness and the vindictiveness of the Premier in wanting to get rid of the Governor; but having done it, we would have thought that he would have had some vestige of decency to at least meet the commitment he gave verbally to the Governor, in terms of correcting the statement that he made on the Wednesday night of the dismissal regarding my request to see the Governor and the Governor’s information to him when he called the Premier back at 10 p.m. saying he did not intend to see me.

One would have thought the Premier would have had the decency to do what the Governor asked and correct the situation regarding the pension. One should also bear in mind that the Governor was restricted by the agreement, and the Governor honoured that agreement. It was the Premier on whom the agreement was not binding. It was the Premier
who was prepared to misrepresent the Governor and to allow these issues to flow. It is the Premier's credibility, not only as a politician, but as a decent human being, that is now being called into challenge.

I know in this place that we on this side and the Government have differences of opinion on many issues and we argue viciously in the public arena. However, as you know, Mr Speaker, and as the Premier knows, when we go out to functions or elsewhere outside of the Chamber, we are always polite to each other and, basically, we get on well. It is this place that draws us together, because we are all subject to the same pressures.

I never thought, in the Premier's vindictiveness, that he would not have had the decency to honestly represent the views of the Governor and to correct the wrong impressions that he, the Premier, had created, which he knew were running, getting media coverage and influencing the public and the constitutional lawyers, to the Premier's political advantage.

Today is a very sad day, not only for Parliament but also for the person who will hold the office of Governor, when the Premier holds himself up as squeaky clean and as "honest John". This man is not honest. He does not even have a resemblance of any sense of decency in terms of the actions I have just described.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER—Order! I should advise the Leader of the Opposition that I again direct his attention to Standing Order No. 108 in respect to imputations, and I intend to ensure that that Standing Order is maintained.

I shall ensure that the Leader of the Opposition is provided with a copy of that Standing Order to make quite sure that his remarks are in order.

Mr KENNETT—In the Premier's statement tonight, he referred to the usual privileges being accorded a former Governor, and the Opposition accepts that. The only trouble is that there is no provision in the Bill in that regard.

I would ask the Premier to take that on board and in his speech tonight he may see fit to accept or introduce an amendment to insert a provision in clause 6 of the Bill which allows the usual privileges that he outlined would be accorded to Sir Brian and Lady Murray. He referred to that provision in the second-reading speech, but it does not appear in the Bill.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr KENNETT—These are unusual circumstances and I believe, in examining the Bill, that the Opposition has every right to ask the Premier to consider that aspect—again, just out of decency.

Also, although the Premier has referred in his speech tonight to undertakings to pay income tax on Sir Brian Murray's lump sum of $30,000, there is no undertaking in the Bill to do that. Given that it is still subject to negotiations with the Federal Government, I would ask the Premier to consider accepting or inserting an amendment to ensure that that is protected.

I make the point on behalf of members of the Opposition very clearly that we do not argue with the settlement agreement arrived at by the Government with Sir Brian Murray. I go further and say that, because the Opposition does not argue with it, and because it makes common sense, the Premier had absolutely nothing to hide. It is important, as we complete this debate tonight, in terms of the proposed legislation, that we put in place safeguards for the former Governor, given that the Premier has already exhibited examples of where he has not represented the former Governor accurately or fairly.

I just refer to the Premier's address tonight in which he politically attacked me and said that my claims and comments over the past ten days were politically motivated.

Honourable members interjecting.
Mr KENNETT—I would like to place on record a total denial of that charge.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER—Order!

Mr KENNETT—The Opposition does not apologize, as a group of men and women, and it does not apologize as a group of citizens, for trying to seek the truth. The public have a right to know the details of the former Governor’s dismissal and also about the financial arrangements that the Premier has entered into using our taxes and charges in arriving at that settlement.

The Premier has used words about me to the effect that my desire to make headlines seems to know no bounds.

The Premier has made statements such as:

The Leader of the Opposition appears to be having difficulty this morning in comprehending what is said.

He also stated, to use his words, that:

The desire of the Leader of the Opposition to make headlines seems to know no bounds.

It has not been our intention to get headlines.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr KENNETT—The Premier could have resolved the issue last Thursday week, had he been open and frank with the people of Victoria; had he told us about the car arrangement; had he told us about the taxation arrangements; and had he told us about the requests of Sir Brian Murray to the Premier himself.

The Premier has also made comments along the lines of:

Its Leader is not even responsible for what comes out of his own mouth.

I do accept responsibility for what comes out of my mouth, and, if I make a mistake, I am prepared to immediately admit it and apologize either for the error or to anyone I have offended. But, Sir, never once can I be accused of deceiving or being dishonest. In terms of representations I have made in this Parliament, or in public life, or in private life, never once can I be accused of doing what the Premier has done over this issue.

If the Premier had been frank and honest, this matter could have been resolved a long time ago. For ten days the Premier of this State has been heaping personal attack and vindictiveness on myself and the Opposition for having the decency and the courage to take this matter to its final conclusion. Tonight, the Premier, in a desperate attempt to restore some credibility to his image, has decided to come clean. We do not want to forget—and there is a comparison—that Watergate was not so much about the issue——

The SPEAKER—Order! The Leader of the Opposition on the Bill.

Mr KENNETT—Thank you, Mr Speaker. The analogy is very simple. The action itself was unacceptable. Where the most senior, popularly elected person in the United States of America got into trouble was when he tried to cover up. In this State, on this issue, there was nothing wrong with the settlement, and where the Premier has got into trouble and his credibility has been called into question is where and when this Premier decided of his own volition to attempt to cover up. If the Premier had been honest and frank this issue could have died ten days ago.

Mr Speaker, the involvement of the Premier in this affair has been one of deception; it has been an affair in which the most senior, popularly elected official in this State has not applied unto himself the same standards that he laid down for the holders of public office. The Premier of this State has been involved in an absolute grubby, unacceptable deal. The Premier, if he believes in the standards that he laid down last Thursday week in his own
bible, has now to take what is remaining of his dignity, his reputation and his credibility and resign.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr KENNETT—Mr Speaker, the Opposition knows, as the Premier knows, that one day full details of this issue—

Mr Crabb—You said they are all out now.

Mr KENNETT—No, they are not. One day the full details of this issue will be made public and it will form a best seller, because there are records going back over three years of this Premier's involvement in interference with the office of Governor. It is this Premier who has pulled down the office of Governor; it is this Premier who has acted to destroy the reputation and the integrity of the former occupants.

In terms of the Royal visit, Opposition members say again, as we have said before, that we at no stage wanted the Royal visit put at risk. But if it comes to a decision between pursuing the truth, as has been exposed tonight, and being forced by threat and innuendo to shut up, then the Opposition of this State will pursue the truth every time—time after time after time! The Royal visit is not at risk. If the Royal visit has been at risk, it has been because this Premier has conducted a campaign of cover-up.

Mr Speaker, I hope, tonight, a lot of the debate concerning the dismissal of Sir Brian and Lady Murray will be put to rest. The actions of the Premier in terms of his double standards, given the standards that he set last week for dismissing the Governor, will not be put at rest and the Opposition looks forward tomorrow to going on to the next issue where this Government has made the same error in covering up the facts, and that is the Nunawading election scandal; it has the same roots of involvement and filth and grubbiness that were associated with the Premier's cover-up with respect to the resignation of the Governor of this State.

Opposition members again place on record our appreciation for the work that Sir Brian and Lady Murray have done, the goodwill in which they are held by the people of this State as they tirelessly, and with charm, honesty and integrity, performed their duty.

The Opposition condemns the Premier of this State for his role, for his double standards, for his misleading of the media and the public with regard to requests made of him and information given to him by the Governor himself. Anyone who says that that was not deliberate need only look at the facts.

This House calls for, and the Opposition insists, that the Premier now, with whatever dignity is left, resign the office he currently holds.

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS (Leader of the National Party)—Mr Speaker, the National Party supports the proposed legislation. I must say that I have been disappointed with the contents of the Premier's second-reading speech. For the past many days, he has been preaching restraint and moderation in comments regarding this matter. However, the Premier in his second-reading speech made a bitter attack on the Leader of the Opposition and threatened once again that the Royal visit could be in jeopardy. They were his words; they were his threats; they were unnecessary. It was a tactless second-reading speech. A statesman would have poured oil on the troubled water and made a constructive speech, but the Premier, regrettably, was too small a man to do that.

In debating the proposed legislation and the circumstances leading up to it, one has to look at the Premier's behaviour and conduct over the past year. I can speak with some authority because I have watched him for over the 30 years during which I have known him. He is a man for whom, for most of that time, I have had a high regard. I was
disappointed last year when he acted quite out of character with his background and made a public attack on Lady Murray. All that Lady Murray did was at—

The SPEAKER—Order! I have already advised the Leader of the Opposition, and I intend to do so with the Leader of the National Party, that the Bill does not provide an opportunity to canvass issues other than those contained within the Bill before the House. If the Leader of the National Party wishes to canvass other matters, then he has another avenue to do so.

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS—Mr Speaker, I shall try very hard to do that. What I am doing, in effect—

The SPEAKER—Order! I advise the Leader of the National Party to not only try hard, but to respect the authority of the Chair and to debate the Bill before the House.

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS—Mr Speaker, I want to make it clear that I have always respected the Chair and I do so tonight.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Geelong should take his own advice.

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS—What I regard as my right is to have the same breadth in what I can say as the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition had, and they did not stick to the letter of the law.

What I was saying is this: this has been led up to over the past year and this is what forced the Governor to resign. The Governor's resignation is covered in the Bill, as is how he should be treated financially. He did not just resign because of ill-health; he resigned because of the behaviour of the Premier. In those circumstances what I am saying is perfectly relevant. I shall not speak about the Legacy ladies; it is well known. Anyone on the Government back bench could have handled the situation with Lady Murray better than that—even the honourable member for Springvale.

In the past two days in particular, we have had from the Premier evasiveness and double talk which is beyond belief. It has been different from answers to questions of former Premiers I knew, including Bolte, Hamer and Thompson. The questions had a direct relevance to the resignation of His Excellency the Governor. The questions asked were attempts to ascertain the position from the Premier. The Premier was asked questions about his behaviour and conduct which were very similar and parallel to what the Governor was supposed to have done. It took a whole series of questions to get the truth out of the Premier. The Premier is an expert at evasiveness and an expert on double talk, and the people of Victoria are disgusted at the way in which he behaves.

I make it clear that on his recent trip the Premier did nothing wrong legally or morally; it was perfectly correct. The only thing is that he set one standard for himself and another standard for His Excellency the Governor. The Premier accepted a gift of $2000; he accepted it from Pan American World Airways Inc. but he decided to pay it back. I correct that; he did not decide to pay it back, the Government decided to pay it back.

The Premier's actions did not abide by his own guidelines. He did not abide by his own guidelines. The Ministers do not abide by his guidelines. They are upgraded to first-class travel time and again. It is all right for Ministers; it is no good for the Governor. Members of the back bench take trips, and I agree that they are entitled to take them. However, that is not according to the Premier's guidelines. What Ministers do and what the Premier has done is not only legal and proper, it is outside the guidelines of the Premier. What the Governor did was perfectly legal and morally right; but he was forced to resign because of it. The only reason he resigned—let us get this straight—was because of the impending Royal visit. The Governor and Lady Murray were big enough people and they put the office above themselves and went.
I am certain in my own mind that, if it had not been for the impending visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales, Sir Brian and Lady Murray would still be at Government House. I recommend that honourable members read the editorial in today's Herald. It was a fine editorial and I congratulate the Herald for it. I do not intend to read it, but it sums up the position well.

The Premier had two distinct opportunities of avoiding the political crisis—not a constitutional crisis, I may say—that has occurred in Victoria over the past fourteen days. Firstly, he had the opportunity, before the Governor went overseas, to make the position clear. He knew about investigations into Continental Airlines Inc. but he decided to do nothing. Secondly, after the Governor's return, he could have given him the same opportunity that he had himself to repay the airline. He could have given him the same opportunity of refunding Continental Airlines as the Premier had when he got the Government to refund Pan American Airlines. But, he did not do so.

The SPEAKER—Order! I advise the Leader of the National Party that I have allowed some liberty with respect to the way in which he is headed, but I do not intend to allow the debate to go off on tangents. The Bill before the House deals with the former Governor's entitlements and that is the subject before the House.

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS—Thank you for your assistance, Mr Speaker. The Government made a refund to the airline and the Governor should have had the same opportunity because, if he had had the same opportunity, honourable members would not be debating the Bill. The Premier has admitted that he has transgressed his own guidelines. The Premier can do a lot for Pan American Airlines and Alcoa of Australia Ltd. Sir Brian can do nothing for Continental Airlines.

The public of this State respect honesty in government and good standards. However, the Premier has now got himself into a ridiculous position because of his personal behaviour. He has lost the respect of the public. He has set standards that are observed by himself and his colleagues only when it suits the Premier.

The words I have used in talking to people with whom I have spoken in the past twelve days or so are that this is a sad occasion for Victoria. The word “sad” is the key word. The resignation was unnecessary; it could have been avoided. It was avoidable and the Premier knows that. In forcing the Governor's resignation the Premier has lost the respect of the ordinary people of this State. It is the action of a man with a massive inferiority complex in his attitude to the Governor.

A very relevant point—I am sure honourable members will appreciate it—is the question of the next Governor because his pension rights are referred to in the proposed legislation. The real question is: for how long will the next Governor stay in office?

I shall make a short quotation because it is relevant. It comes from an article by David Broadbent in the Age of Friday, 4 October, where he quotes the Premier and states:

"I could have done it..."

That means dismiss the Governor—

... any day in the last three-and-a-half years," Mr Cain said.

"The office of Governor is in my gift. I can choose to make a recommendation to Her Majesty and that recommendation would be acted on. I did not so choose."

That interpretation by the Premier is wrong. There has to be a reason given and, if it is not wrong, what the Premier is saying is that the next Governor might be here for only a fortnight; he might be here for a week.

An Honourable Member—"He" might?

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS—"He" includes "she" in law. The honourable member who seeks to interject would not understand. The point is that if the Premier carries out the threat he or she may last a week, six months or whatever the case may be. We not only
want a Governor with all the traditional values, we want a Governor of independent mind and spirit. How will we find a person of independent mind and spirit when the Premier says that the office of Governor is in his gift?

If ever a man has condemned himself by a stupid statement, it is the Premier. This is a sad occasion for Victoria. I regret the passing of Sir Brian and Lady Murray from the Victorian scene. They should have remained in office for another eighteen months, but they put duty above themselves.

I also pay tribute on behalf of the National Party and all Victorians to the outstanding work Sir Brian and Lady Murray did in Victoria. They gave their best and served the State well, but have been shabbily treated.

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—Over recent weeks Parliament and Victorians have faced a difficult and testing time. The resignation of any Governor in the circumstances that have unfolded in Victoria places enormous strain upon the individuals and institutions involved.

One measure of human worth is how people cope under such pressure: how they cope when their values are tested; whether they are prepared to put the interest of institutions such as Parliament and the office of Governor above their own perceived short-term interests. By those standards, the Victorian Leader of the Opposition stands condemned. He has behaved in a puerile and pitiful manner—a performance that has tonight been demonstrated again to be full of half truths and innuendo.

I refer honourable members to the way in which the former Governor behaved. When faced with the recognition of the consequence of his earlier action, no matter how inadvertent, he chose to resign. Sir Brian Murray did that rather than put at risk, or in any sense compromise, the high office he held. I commend his statement to honourable members. He said:

My overriding concern is, and always has been, to preserve the integrity of the Office of Governor which is a vital part of our cherished constitutional processes and heritage.

The Governor acted with honour in deciding to step down. I endorse the words of the Premier when he responded to the actions of the Governor. The Premier expressed his admiration for the position Sir Brian had taken on this matter.

I contrast his concern for the fundamental institutions of this State with the performance of the Leader of the Opposition tonight and every day over the past few weeks. It is a matter of profound regret to members of the Liberal back bench that the Leader of the Opposition has chosen to act in that way. He has brought disgrace not only upon himself but also upon the Opposition. He has put a stain on Parliament that is undoubtedly perceived by the Victorian community. Victorians have come to expect certain standards of behaviour, dignity and worth of members of Parliament, but the Leader of the Opposition has again failed to live up to those standards.

He has undertaken this desperate act at the risk of destroying the foundations of Parliament and the office of Governor. The desperation of the Leader of the Opposition knows no bounds and is beneath contempt. The extent to which he was prepared tonight to speak of what obviously he perceived to be and were given to him as so-called confidences on the part of the former Governor and his wife, is an absolute disgrace.

An Honourable Member—On the Bill!

Mr FORDHAM—With respect to the measure being debated tonight, the two previous speakers spoke about the standing of the Premier in the community. The Premier stands high in the ideals of Parliamentary leadership in this country. He has distinguished himself not only in Victoria but also across Australia by his propriety and the highest possible standards of behaviour. If one were prepared to stand back and reflect on what has occurred over recent weeks, one could conclude only that the Premier had acted with dignity and restraint in the interest of the high office of Governor of Victoria.
The Premier has had many opportunities in Parliament, the media and the community to take a short-term benefit for himself, the Labor Party and the Government, but has chosen not to do so. Time and again he has withdrawn from taking that short-term political benefit, and the Leader of the Opposition knows it.

The king hit of the Leader of the Opposition tonight was some new revelation about a piece of paper tabled today. In his Ministerial statement the Premier stated clearly that His Excellency should not suffer any detriment by virtue of the action that he has taken.

Mr Lieberman—When was that?

Mr FORDHAM—3 October. The Premier outlined the financial benefits that would flow to the former Governor. They included a full pension, a lump sum payment and re-establishment expenses. The key aspect of the settlement was obviously that no financial detriment would result and tonight the Leaders of the Opposition and the National Party have agreed with that principle.

No cover-up has occurred. The Premier explained the circumstances in which those contingencies were covered. They are clearly contingencies so that no financial detriment would result to the Governor. Those matters cover the request concerning the motor vehicle and the resultant Commonwealth customs duty so that Sir Brian should not be required to bear expenses, and stipulate that the Government will cover any incidence of taxation. Those commitments were in keeping with the financial detriment provisions.

The only other aspect alluded to by the Leader of the Opposition was a suggestion that this was a bribe and that silence was bought. I direct the attention of honourable members to the statement of the secretary to the Governor, Mr Charles Curwen—not appointed by this Government—who has served Victorian Governors over a long period. The statement deals with matters contained in the proposed legislation.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr FORDHAM—The Opposition is trying not to listen to what Charles Curwen said. He is a man who has served successive Governors of Victoria with dignity and has been applauded by members on both sides of the House. I acknowledge the nodding of the Leader of the Opposition.

Charles Curwen signed the understandings document because he was a witness to it and knows about this matter. Mr Curwen states:

In my view, the continuing allegations that are being made from some quarters have the effect of not only causing embarrassment to Sir Brian but of damaging the standing of the office. The arrangements for Sir Brian's retirement had as their objective the avoidance of politicisation of the office. The continuing debate on this matter is bound to cause long-term damage to the office and it is for this reason this statement is being made.

I can say that there were no preconditions to the arrangements made for Sir Brian's retirement.

That was not a precondition.

Mr Kennett—What about this document?

Mr FORDHAM—He said that that was not a precondition. It was said by a witness to the document. Is the Leader of the Opposition saying that he was a witness to the circumstances? Was he a witness to the document? Does he know the arrangements within which that statement was made? The secretary to the Governor is obviously in a position to know those circumstances.

The House is in the extraordinary situation that, despite the statements made by the Premier, despite the pleas of the Governor for restraint by the Opposition on this matter, despite the comments made by the secretary to the Governor, who was a witness to those circumstances, these repeated attempts are being made as late as tonight to besmirch the office of the Governor and the circumstances that led to Sir Brian Murray's resignation. Attempts have been made to denigrate the events of recent days and weeks and to attack the people and injure the institutions of Victoria.
I have no cause to worry concerning my political colleagues, but I wonder whether the Leader of the Opposition feels so confident each night as he goes home from Parliament. In view of the revelation in the *Bulletin* regarding the conspiracy involving the Leader of the Opposition, it is no wonder that people have been calling all day for the tapes involving the Leader of the Opposition. The Government looks forward to the Leader of the Opposition making available details of his involvement in this matter.

In closing, I make this comment, that I am very proud indeed to have served as Deputy Leader and Deputy Premier to the Premier of this State. The Premier has set standards of behaviour and of Government performance that are ahead of those of any other State in this country. I know from my own travels across the country that so many other States and their Leaders aspire to the same sort of high standing and form of Government that has been demonstrated within Victoria. I know, because of the truth of this matter, that I can stand confident that in the months and years ahead I shall continue to serve this Premier, John Cain.

Mr Maclellan (Berwick)—The hot gospel politics of the Labor Party know no bounds. The hot gospelling of the Premier is now spreading to the Deputy Premier. I know that anyone who has the temerity to speak on this matter, whether in the public arena or the Parliament, is likely to be denounced from the pulpit. The Government, over the past few days, with reasonable hysteria, has denounced the Leader of the Opposition, has denounced the Leader of the National Party and has, in fact, denounced anybody who simply disagrees or wants to know more about the matter which is now before the Parliament.

Of course, it is all part of the price of silence; the price that Victoria pays for the silence of the Premier when he ought to have spoken out, when he ought to have made issues clear, when he ought to have confirmed the existence of understandings, of payments for cars, of the fact that the Governor's service pension is to be deducted from the amount of the pension provided for in this Bill.

I want to try and set for you, Mr Speaker, the example I suppose you expect of me, to try occasionally to refer to the Bill.

The Speaker—Order! I will insist on it.

Mr Maclellan—It is, perhaps, useful. The Deputy Premier was kind enough to put a few positive matters in his sermon. One was that all honourable members have been through difficult and testing times. I cannot agree more with the Deputy Premier because I know what difficult and testing times the Government, and the Premier in particular, have been under in recent weeks.

The Deputy Premier also said that it is good for us to know how we cope under pressure. The House has had an excellent example of how the Deputy Premier copes under pressure. He becomes a sort of John Cain holy-roller.

The Deputy Premier then said that the Governor had acted with honour. That is the common ground between the Government, the Opposition and the National Party, that the Governor and Lady Murray acted with honour throughout this matter. Therefore, I presume that there is not a miserable soul in this House who wants to say that the provisions of this Bill ought not be made. What I am saying is that the price of silence has been the controversy, the criticism, the press rumour and speculation and inaccuracy that not only honourable members—honourable members do not suffer very much from those things because, I suppose, they read the papers with a fair amount of care—but the public have suffered because the public have been told by leak, by non-attributable comment, by every means possible, that His Excellency and Lady Murray were somehow involved in discreditable conduct.

Mr Lieberman—Much, much more.
Mr MACLELLAN—Yes, much, much more. That was the very comment that the Premier made which destroyed the reputation of people who the House now knows were bound to silence; therefore, the discredit goes to the Premier. He used the media, he failed to speak out, he let the matter develop without correcting it. The very people who were the victims of the whole thing, Sir Brian and Lady Murray, were not able to speak. It was not until today that Parliament officially learnt that the Premier had put a price on silence on other people as well. The House has been presented with an understanding.

Ironically, if honourable members look at the piece of paper and see the symbol in the corner, they will find that that symbol is, perhaps the heart and soul of the problem between the Premier and the former Governor. One notices how carefully the top of the paper has been trimmed, and perhaps with good reason. The understanding between the Premier and the Governor and, incidentally, for good measure, Lady Murray—because, as the Leader of the National Party has said, I suppose, having spoken at a luncheon where she might have mentioned that Government House facilities needed some changes, she had to be bound to silence as well, because one knew that as an intelligent and achieving woman in her own right she was perfectly capable of saying what she thought about the situation. So the Premier carefully made sure that not only “HE” as the document says, His Excellency, but also Lady Murray was included.

The Leader of the Opposition has outlined what the Opposition believes to be the circumstances in which that agreement was procured. The Opposition says that it was open to the Premier to kill the controversy every day between the first break of the story in the papers and tonight. The Premier, on any occasion, could have quashed the whole controversy. He could have saved the Governor and Lady Murray from the agony they must have been through—and heaven knows they have been through the mill well and truly in the past few weeks!

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr MACLELLAN—If the little republicans on the other side of the House can keep their mouths shut, we will all be better off. I know the honourable member who is interjecting does not want the office of Governor filled. I know the honourable member does not care about it, but the House is discussing a Bill which is to provide, by agreement on all sides, for the proper recompense of a Governor of this State who was forced out of office. Just ask the public who forced the Governor to resign and the answer is, “The Premier did”. The hot gospeller of goodness in the State, who ought never put himself in a position of compromise! Apparently he suffered a temptation in Pittsburgh, but that could happen, I suppose, to anyone.

The whole matter could have been put to rest if the price of silence had not been so high for the Premier. If he had simply said what the truth and the whole truth was at the very beginning, whether he said it in the public arena before the Parliament started; whether he said it in a Ministerial statement of almost a fortnight ago, or whether he said it by way of press statement, television announcement or however else.

But all of us who have any claims to awareness of public events, as the honourable member for Monbulk would know, would know of the activities of the Premier’s media unit and the busy way in which it has been serving up the non-attributable comments to the Press Gallery of Parliament. If the honourable member for Monbulk does not know it all he has to do is ask them and they will confirm for him what the media unit of the Premier has been doing, which is to systematically destroy the credibility and reputation of Sir Brian and Lady Murray as a sort of publicity picnic because the Premier was not prepared to stand up and tell the Parliament and the people of Victoria the whole truth.

The truth has been finally extracted from him like pulling teeth and Parliament now gets the document that the public was led to believe did not exist. Talk about credibility! The credibility of the Leader of the Opposition was seriously dinted when a statement was issued to suggest there was no document. When one looks at the close print it talks about
pre-conditions but that is not the way the media dealt with it; it did not stress the pre-
conditions; what it produced for the public to read and see was that the Leader of the
Opposition was saying there was a document and Government House was saying there
was not a document.

Now the truth is out. There was and there always was the opportunity for the Premier
to confirm and take the controversy off the front page of the newspapers and put it in
Parliament where it belongs by consent and agreement of all parties, all agreeing that a
fine Australian with a great record of service, a wife who has supported him and worked
with him to represent the Queen in this State, as head of State, and who has done it with
dignity, with energy, moving around in difficult circumstances, and who has done the job
well is now to be given the proper pension and proper recompense that Parliament owes
him on behalf of the people of Victoria.

In a sense this is the price of silence, having a Government that buys silence with a
binding agreement on the former Governor and Lady Murray. The Bill we are supporting
tonight is just the apology that ought to have been made weeks ago to Sir Brian and Lady
Murray on behalf of the people of Victoria. We should all be ashamed if we have allowed
this to roll on for one day longer without the truth being revealed. I am glad that the
Government has at last brought it out, warts and all. I hope we are not going to hear, “But
there is more to come”, because from the Government’s point of view I hope it has said
all that it needs to say to fully justify the payments to the former Governor and to fully
justify the clearance of the controversy off the front pages and off the media to allow Sir
Brian and Lady Murray the dignified retirement that they so richly deserve after all the
hell they have been through.

On behalf of the constituents of my electorate of Berwick, I extend the deep regard they
hold for Sir Brian and Lady Murray and I state that in Parliament I have one objective
and that is to ensure that the office of Governor is well regarded and that the incumbents
of the office are well regarded. The Opposition does not suggest to the media there are sins
or things done which might justify the Government in dismissing the former Governor.

It should be realized that it was the Premier’s ambition to get rid of the former Governor
and he has achieved that ambition. The form and history will show that the former
Governor resigned, but the reality is that the Premier pushed him, stood over him,
required him to sign undertakings not to say anything and then said that a Bill would be
introduced in the Parliament to confirm the offers that had been made. The proposed
legislation should be passed; the payments should be made.

The truth about the payments should have come out in the first instance and not have
been dribbled out day by day as if they were something else extracted by Sir Brian and
Lady Murray, rather than something offered to them by the Government. If there is any
criticism of the offers made or payments made, let the Premier and his Government wear
it, because they are the ones that made the offers. They are the ones who offered the
pension and to pay duty on the car; they are the ones offered to make it tax free; they
are the ones who offered the removal expenses.

I hope I have abided by your ruling, Mr Speaker, in referring to the matters in the Bill.
These are matters which, if there is anything wrong, the Government should wear and let
the former Governor and Lady Murray not be regarded as anything less than people who
have served the country well, served the State well and who have served the office of
Governor well.

Mr McNAMARA (Benalla)—Today is a sad day in Victorian politics and this month
has been a sad and sorry month in Victorian politics because we have seen the Government
get into the gutter with the way it has behaved. The Bill is the culmination of three and a
half years of continuing undermining and disrespect for the office of Governor. This is
known throughout Victoria. Everyone knows the disrespect and the manner in which the
Premier—who is now leaving the Chamber which I believe is a disgrace.
The SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Benalla is now following the debate led by his Leader and I do not intend to allow the debate to go off into various areas and tangents; I ask the honourable member to come back to the Bill before the House.

Mr McNAMARA—I should have thought that a piece of proposed legislation that is the culmination of the sacking of the Governor of Victoria, which was engineered and orchestrated by the Premier and the Premier does not have the moral assumption to stay in the Chamber and cop it sweet; he is great at dishing it out. The Minister for Housing knows how good the Premier is at dishing it out.

The SPEAKER—Order! I advise the honourable member for Benalla that I will hear him on the Bill; I do not intend to allow the debate to stray from the Bill.

Mr McNAMARA—As I have said, the Bill is the culmination of three and a half years of disrespect by the Premier and other members of the Government towards the office of Governor. I place on record that the National Party and the constituents of the electorate of Benalla express their great appreciation of the untiring work of Sir Brian and Lady Murray and the gracious manner in which they carried out the duties of their office. There is no doubt that public opinion is on the side of the former Governor and Lady Murray. The Victorian public is appalled at the way in which the former Governor and Lady Murray have been treated, because they have been treated abominably.

What was their crime, if there was any crime? Their only crime was that they were too gracious, too hospitable and too untiring in their work.

The dismissal of the Governor can be traced back to when the Young Presidents held their international conference in Melbourne. On that occasion hundreds of the world's top businessmen visited Melbourne. The Premier showed them no hospitality. The only person who showed them hospitality on behalf of the people of Victoria was the Governor, Sir Brian Murray and his wife, Lady Murray. If this Government is going to be fair dinkum—

The SPEAKER—Order! I advise the honourable member for Benalla that I respect his opinion but the Bill before the House does not give the honourable member an opportunity to canvass areas other than those contained in the Bill.

Mr McNAMARA—Both the Premier and the Deputy Premier made wide-ranging comments about these events. It is important to discuss the reasons why the Bill is before the House, and I refer to a most disgraceful event in Victoria's history, namely, the sacking of a Governor. It was the first time that I understand it has ever happened in Australia. I wish to discuss the reasons why this pettiness developed between the Premier and the Governor. One of the events that led up to the dismissal of the Governor, which I am sure was premeditated—

The SPEAKER—Order! I advise the honourable member for Benalla that I respect his opinion but the Bill before the House does not give him an opportunity to canvass the matter that he is trying to enter into.

Mr McNAMARA—The Government has tried to link the standards of the Governor with those of colonial governors referred to in the Ministerial statement a little over a week ago when the Premier quoted colonial regulations for colonial governors. It was totally inappropriate to link those regulations with what was required of a modern Governor, but that was the message honourable members heard from the Premier prior to the Bill being introduced. The Governor was not a colonial Governor; he was the Queen's representative in the State of Victoria, which is part of the Commonwealth of Australia. It was totally inappropriate to suggest that the Governor should be dismissed for accepting gifts such as overseas travel. The only people who can derive benefits from gifts are obviously those in government.
The Premier could have stopped the Governor at any time from going overseas. There was no problem. However, the Premier wanted to lead the Governor into an event that would create a breach of the regulations to give him an opportunity to dismiss the Governor. The Premier could have asked the Governor to repay the air fare, as was suggested by the Leader of the National Party, but he did not give the Governor that opportunity. However, the Premier has taken that opportunity himself to repay PanAm $2000.

Dr VAUGHAN (Clayton)—On a point of order, Mr Speaker, would it be in order for the House to pause for a moment so that the honourable member for Benalla can familiarize himself with the contents of the Bill?

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

Mr NeNAMARA (Benalla)—I thank the honourable member for Clayton who, as they say, is the member one has when one is not having a member.

It was suggested that the Governor could have been given the opportunity to repay the air fare. The Premier has certainly taken that opportunity—the $2000 that was owed to PanAm airlines has been paid back not at the Premier's expense but at the Government's expense.

There have been many changes in recent days associated with the Premier's overseas trip. What was a 17-hour trip has now become a 14-hour trip. The Premier said that he advised the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party about not speaking to the Governor. How absolutely ridiculous! All honourable members know that when the present Minister for Housing was Leader of the Opposition he made regular and frequent trips to Government House to see the then Governor to advise him of the state of affairs and what was happening in State Parliament.

The Premier spoke about the office of Governor being a gift of his—a gift that he could give as he so chose. That is absolutely ridiculous because the office of Governor is not a gift of the Premier. The Governor is the Queen's representative in Victoria. It was hypocritical and a disgrace to every Victorian for the Premier to suggest that that office is a gift that he could pass around as he pleased. There might have been only 50 per cent of Victorians who voted for the Labor Party at the last State election but 47 to 48 per cent voted for the Opposition and the National Party. The Governor, as the Queen's representative, has the right to speak to whom he pleases. As I said, he is the Queen's representative.

The Governor faced continued intimidation in the various stages leading up to his dismissal. In the events building up to that climax the Premier threatened to cancel the Royal tour. That was probably the threat that had the greatest impact on the Governor because he fully appreciated the enjoyment the Victorian community would have gained from a visit by the Prince and Princess of Wales to this State. He did not want to do anything that would preclude Victorians from enjoying the Royal tour and he did not want to do anything to upset the travel arrangements and plans of the Royal couple.

The next threat was the entitlement of the Governor. Honourable members have seen the different agreements that are now surfacing. When the Premier made the Ministerial statement, he said that all the agreements were being presented, but things have kept trickling out. I remind you, Mr Speaker, that that is exactly what happened with Watergate. It was a little lie, a small matter, but there was deceit and concealment when little bits came out piece by piece.

The Premier also said that the Governor himself could be the subject of a police inquiry and there may have to be a Royal Commission established to look into the police matters.

The SPEAKER—Order! I advise the honourable member for Benalla that he is attempting to lead me into hearing matters that are not related to the Bill before the House. If the honourable member wished to debate the Ministerial statement, he had an
opportunity to do so some days ago. If any honourable member objects to what I am asking the honourable member for Benalla to do, a recourse is open. I ask the honourable member for Benalla to return to the Bill.

Mr McNAMARA—I thank you, Mr Speaker, and I assume you will give me the same leniency that the Premier and the Deputy Premier had on this matter. In this agreement, as outlined by the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party, the Government has got out on the cheap. Approximately $28 000 is all the Government is up for in paying the Governor in his retirement, which is a little under half what the Governor would have been entitled to under normal circumstances; so there is no great cost to the Victorian taxpayer.

There is no doubt that the Governor has been silenced by the Premier, who has continued to play politics. Honourable members witnessed the mad ranting of the Deputy Premier, who is now leaving the Chamber, but all honourable members know that if little Johnny goes down, he will go down too! There are no worries about that!

The Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs is smiling through his whiskers because he knows he is next cab off the rank and he is rubbing his hands. As the heir apparent, he is enjoying every moment of this debacle, as he sees the Premier and the Deputy Premier's stocks slowly going down the chute.

It will be interesting to hear the contribution that the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs makes to the debate. Mention was also made by the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources of The Bulletin article. That is an interesting one. It mentions this so-called grand conspiracy of the National Party, the Liberal Party and the Governor to dispose of this Government. I would like to bring to the attention of the House a photograph in this article.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Miss Callister)—Order! The honourable member for Benalla is digressing substantially from the Bill before the Chair. I ask him to come back to the point at hand.

Mr McNAMARA—Madam Acting Speaker, I am rebutting a matter that was brought forward by the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources. The Bulletin article stated that there would be a coup, a conspiracy between the National Party, the Liberal Party and the Governor. What a ridiculous statement! We know what actually happened. Things were starting to get a bit too hot for the Labor Government so the Prime Minister had to pull out a few favours.

So who did he pull out? He pulled out Richard Farmer to write an article for The Bulletin. The Bulletin article contains a photograph of the Leaders of the National and Liberal Parties plotting together.

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Miss Callister)—Order! I have already directed the honourable member's attention to the fact that he is digressing from the Bill. I ask him to come back to the substance of the Bill.

Mr McNAMARA—It was suggested, Madam Acting Speaker, that the same standards should apply to the Premier as apply to the Governor. In this article in The Bulletin, to which I shall not refer, there is a photograph of two leaders plotting in some hideaway. In fact, it is not a hideaway, it is on the steps of Parliament House in front of 40 000 farmers. That was the so-called conspiracy. The article is a drum up. The Prime Minister has pulled a few tricks and given a few favours. We all know Richard Farmer for what he is. We have seen him on the Sunday program and the way he is lovey-dovey with "Dear Bob", our Prime Minister. Any conservative member of Parliament gets a fair bucketing any time he is near. We know his background and we know he is a party man. We know the work that he has done with the Australian Labor Party, so we can place very little credence on that article in The Bulletin.
It has been suggested that the Premier is absolutely clean. I would like to finish on a few points about that. We have heard about the Premier’s airfare scam, his free accommodation at Pittsburgh, and his tennis club holiday at the taxpayers’ expense.

It is the Premier who claims to be so far above the standards of everyone else. To be consistent, if he accepts those rules for himself, he must accept those rules for the Governor and for every other office holder in this State.

The National Party supports the Bill, but its members are appalled by the circumstances in which the matter has arisen. I hope Victorians at the next State election will remember the shabby way in which the Premier and his Government have treated the Queen’s representative in this State.

Mr Crabb (Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs)—One would have thought that a measure like this would have been dealt with with dignity, instead of with the bellowing abuse of the Leader of the Opposition, the honourable member for Benalla and the Deputy Leader of the National Party. On reflection, what must come through to honourable members from this debate and from the debacle sponsored by the Leader of the Opposition in recent days is the total lack of morality that has been demonstrated by the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Crabb—Those of us who have been in this Parliament for some years have become accustomed to the amoral nature of the Leader of the Opposition; we have become accustomed to his capacity for sinking to previously unplumbed depths. We have become accustomed to his exceeding previously unexceeded limits and we have become accustomed to his capacity to impugn any person’s reputation in the pursuit of power.

Tonight the Leader of the National Party joined in and even suggested that the Governor had been morally right. Both the Leaders of the Opposition and the National Party are standing for the moral rectitude of all members of this Parliament in either House. If one had to go to someone for moral advice, the last two people one would go to—it would be a dead heat—would be the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Crabb—I doubt if either of them could spell “morality”. Throughout the debate tonight and the preceding debates in this House, we have seen two gutter politicians prepared to do anything to anyone, prepared to smear the very people they purport to be standing up for.

The Speaker—Order! I advise the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs that I informed the House earlier in this debate of Standing Order No. 108. I ask the Minister to observe that Standing Order.

Mr Crabb—we have become accustomed to the mouth of the Leader of the Opposition over the past ten years that he has been in this place. At the commencement of that time, he said he would stay for only six years. Since then, he has recommended that schools for crippled children should be sited on top of hills because it was good for them. Quite recently he suggested that the voters of this State lock up their daughters.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Crabb—the Leader of the Opposition likened the Bill to Watergate. That is a fairly old and tired analogy, but is perhaps apt in some circumstances to the matters we have been considering today, because one of the keys to Watergate was the tapes that Richard Nixon tried to conceal. Today, one of the significant issues is the tapes that the Leader of the Opposition is trying to conceal. In today’s newspapers on the matters being discussed that relate to the Bill, what issues are brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition? What did he say? It is reported, “The leader confirmed that he still held the
tapes of an hour long private conversation with The Bulletin but he declined to release it on ethical grounds”.

What sort of ethical grounds have we seen emanate from the Leader of the Opposition in recent days and weeks? What sort of ethics or morals have we seen come from the gutter politicians of the Opposition?

The SPEAKER—Order! The Minister will speak to the Bill.

Mr Stockdale—The Minister for smear.

Mr CRABB—I have not got to you yet, sport.

Quite apart from the Leader of the Opposition squibbing about the tapes, despite him being maligned and despite journalists calling him a liar publicly, which must be getting pretty close to a breach of privilege—I have not heard him complain about that—all that the Leader of the Opposition has to do to demonstrate that his privilege as a member of this House has been breached is to produce the tapes.

The Leader of the Opposition can demonstrate that he tells the truth and that someone else tells lies. If he does not do that, no doubt honourable members and everyone in the community will come to the appropriate conclusion.

I say to the Leader of the Opposition: put up or shut up! While he is putting up, the Leader of the Opposition might put up about the secret dinner that he had with the former Governor of this State a couple of days before he resigned. On the tapes, he said that there had never been a conspiracy and that he had never contemplated a thing like that. Fancy the Leader of the Opposition conspiring! If one wants to know about conspiracy, one can ask Dick Hamer, or Lindsay Thompson for that matter. The Leader of the Opposition has indicated that the dinner with the former Governor was not a conspiracy.

It may be an idea if the Leader of the Opposition informs the House of who else was at the dinner. It is about time that he came clean about the rest of it. Who else was at the dinner with the former Governor of the State—let him tell us. The Leader of the Opposition was not conspiring; he was just having dinner! He should inform the House about that dinner, just as he should release the tapes indicating that he is a truthful person, if, indeed, he can.

By his silence now—and it is about the only time he has had his mouth shut in the past five days—the Leader of the Opposition demonstrates that he is not able to release the tapes. He should stand up not only for his privileges but also for the privileges of all honourable members. We cannot have people outside this place calling us liars!

Mr Weideman—Will you have the guts to apologize if you are wrong?

Mr CRABB—I do not believe the honourable member for Frankston South should refer to my guts.

The honourable member for Benalla, who seems to have left the Chamber temporarily—he has gone to gargle or something—gave us a spirited rendition of his standard speech in which he tries to overcome lack of wit by turning up the volume. The speech was not a bad effort the first time honourable members heard it, but it is starting to grate on us a bit. For someone who cannot get the numbers in a caucus of twelve, he is not doing too well.

The Leader of the Opposition has continued to treat this place with contempt; he has treated the members of the House with contempt; and he has treated the conventions of the Westminster system with contempt. He has demonstrated his immorality in regard to all of the conventions of this place and the system that governs this State and, indeed, all of the former British Empire. The Leader of the Opposition has demonstrated his contempt of that system. There are no bounds to the lengths to which he is prepared to go to try to maintain his precarious hold on the position of Leader of the Opposition. He and the Leader of the National Party stand condemned by their actions tonight.
Mr Lieberman (Benambra)—I have listened carefully to the contributions made by members of the Government on this extremely important Bill. It is true that almost 100 per cent of the content of their speeches was abuse and vilification of honourable members of this House who have pursued their rights and responsibilities to get the truth for the people of Victoria. It is true what the wise man said many years ago; that a speech that constitutes 100 per cent of abuse has no substance because there is no argument. The Government has not put forward an argument in its desperate attempt to cover up the shoddy way in which it has handled the whole affair involving the former Governor and his wife.

It is important that the Bill is passed because, as the honourable member for Berwick stated, it is a form of apology to those fine people for what they have had to put up with.

I shall put a couple of propositions to the House. In his Ministerial statement, the Premier put forward the reasons why the former Governor was forced to resign and why Victoria was losing the services of Sir Brian and Lady Murray, who are very fine people. Why has it taken thirteen days for the Premier to inform Parliament and the people of Victoria about the terms and conditions relating to the former Governor's resignation? That poses a million questions that should be answered.

I am quite certain that the people of Victoria have made an extremely fine judgment about the Premier and the way in which he has handled this affair. The community owes the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party a debt of gratitude because, due to their courage—despite the vilification, smear and attacks from the Government, especially from the Premier—they have stuck to a principle that must be preserved at all costs in our society because otherwise the Westminster system would go. I refer to the principle that the Opposition must be fearless, despite the threats of the Premier that he will get someone who puts a question to him during question time and that he will go through the files and unload people because they have the temerity to ask questions that are relevant to a circumstance that is of vital concern to all Victorians.

The reputation of the Premier has been stained. In his contribution, the Deputy Premier abused the Opposition and indicated that the Opposition was a stain on Parliament. It is quite the contrary. The behaviour of the Government in this matter has constituted a stain on the office of Governor, on Parliament and on the Government itself and is an insult to the people of Victoria.

Why should thirteen days pass after an event as momentous as the resignation of a Governor with the Opposition calling on the Premier day by day to explain matters and provide the facts and circumstances that are relevant to the whole matter but be met with responses from the Premier that are inexcusable and from which the very next day he attempted to bail out?

What did the average Victorian think after learning of the shock resignation of the former Governor, when he heard the Premier say that "There was much much more" and that there may well be a police investigation? No reasonable person could be criticized if they had read into those words the meaning that the Premier was implying that the former Governor's behaviour was reprehensible and that it may have involved criminality. That is the reasonable interpretation that the people of Victoria would put on that statement made by the Premier. The next day, the Premier resiled from that; he stated that he did not mean it, but it is a stain on his reputation.

The Premier holds himself up as the born again Pennsylvanian and he expects all others to toe the line. However, when the Opposition demonstrates to the people of Victoria that the Premier has a double standard in respect of his own behaviour, the Premier vilifies the Opposition. The Opposition simply pointed out that the Premier expects a certain standard of behaviour from the Governor of Victoria and a standard of behaviour from Ministers, and when the Opposition pointed out that the Premier had been involved in accepting hospitality—which was probably hospitality that should have been accepted and would
have been accepted by any other head of State representing the State in important matters—the Premier turned around and arranged for a cheque to be sent after the event.

What went through my mind when the Premier stated today that he would send the cheque was: when was it that the thought process was in the Premier's mind that it was appropriate to send a cheque?

The SPEAKER—Order! I should advise the honourable member for Benambra that there would or could be an opportunity, if he or the Opposition so desired, of debating the matters that he is attempting to debate under this Bill. The Bill clearly contains a number of clauses dealing with the Governor's salary, the Governor's pension and the entitlements of the former Governor. It does not provide an opportunity, in my view, of canvassing the issues that the honourable member for Benambra is attempting to canvass.

Mr LIEBERMAN—Thank you, Mr Speaker. I respect your ruling and I shall not press that point. Nevertheless, the circumstances of the Premier arranging for a payment for his air-fare and that of his wife will always be given a certain construction and conclusion by most thinking, decent Victorians.

The Bill is not really about the former Governor. It is really about the circumstances and the reasons that led to the Governor's resignation, the results of that, and the Premier's treatment of the former Governor. The Premier has asked honourable members to approve a package of payment and a pension for the Governor, and all honourable members wish to endorse it.

I find it absolutely incredible that the Premier put the Leader of the Opposition in the position of saying to the community that there was an agreement that had not been disclosed in the Ministerial statement made by the Premier thirteen days ago, and allowed the community at large to accept the view—particularly because of the statement made by Mr Charles Curwen—that the Leader of the Opposition had acted irresponsibly by asserting that there was a document which was relevant to the circumstances leading to the resignation of the Governor. Thirteen days have gone by in which the Premier has allowed the people of Victoria to conclude that the assertion of the Leader of the Opposition was inaccurate.

Scathing comments have been made in some parts of Victoria about that assertion by the Leader of the Opposition. It was not until two or three days ago that it started to emerge that the Government was prepared to acknowledge the existence of that document. There had been resounding silence prior to that.

I suppose the Honourable Evan Walker, Leader of the Government in another place, will have some explaining to do to his boss as to why he answered honestly today a further question from the Leader of the Opposition in another place on the matter, which then led to a public statement that the document—which the Leader of the Opposition asserted existed—did in fact exist. Consequently, the document has been tabled.

Again I say the question that the people of Victoria will pose throughout the political career of the Premier and in the aftermath of this situation is: why on earth did we have to go through ten to thirteen days of controversy about the existence of a vital document when it existed all the time and when one of the signatories to that document was the Premier? That is the question the people of Victoria should ask, must ask and will continue to ask. I have no doubt that the debate on this Bill will be the end of the matter of the unfortunate circumstances of Victoria losing a Governor whom we all respect.

Undoubtedly the Premier will close the debate soon. The Premier and I entered Parliament on the same day; he made his maiden speech about 10 seconds after I made my maiden speech. He made a good speech on a matter in which we both had a common interest. Because we have reached this point I ask the Premier, as the Premier of Victoria, as the Leader of the Government that governs my family and all other families in the State, to forbear from now on from personal abuse. The arguments have been put, and it is up to the people of Victoria to make the judgments which undoubtedly they will make.
Personal abuse and vilification will not do Parliament any good. It is time the matter was put to rest.

The Premier has heard comments from all honourable members on the matters of concern. He knows he must justify his actions. He holds a high office, the highest office in the State, and he is also an eminent member of the legal profession.

Mr Cain—Your are squaring off!

Mr LIEBERMAN—I am not squaring off; I am saying something that I mean. The Premier upholds and should uphold high standards. He has taken an oath to which he would like to adhere. He is a member of Parliament and he is the Premier. Therefore, he has sworn to honour those obligations which he must uphold. All honourable members would like this matter to be finished with dignity. From now on there should be no further personal abuse about this matter. There should no longer be any implied threats.

If because I have spoken tonight, there should be some innuendo about my file tomorrow, the file should be brought out. Because members of the Opposition speak up, will it mean that the Premier will say, "If you say something that is critical of my stewardship, I will get you"? Will that be the standard that will be left by this Premier's reign in this State? I suggest the Premier knows that it should not be, and the Opposition hopes he will heed what I am saying.

Mr Jolly—What about your file?

Mr LIEBERMAN—I have said to bring it out, by all means, if that is the consequence of my doing my duty. I swore to uphold my duty without fear or favour as a member of the Opposition, and I shall continue to do so. If the Premier tries to get back at the Opposition, let him do so. That sort of continued abuse, threat and innuendo will do nothing for the Premier as a man and, if he continues in that vein, it will show him to be unworthy of the office that he has held and now holds.

Mr DICKINSON (South Barwon)—As the member for South Barwon and a member of Her Majesty's Opposition, I wish to make a few comments on the Bill. It seems only yesterday that the Governor made an address at the opening of the Fiftieth Parliament. For months, the Government has delayed delivering the Address-in-Reply to the Governor even after members had made their speeches. This sad saga is a studied insult to the position of Governor and our Sovereign, the Queen. This has been perpetrated in Victoria. I am well aware that many honourable members on the Government benches would like to see Australia with something other than a monarchy. Honourable members have heard comments from the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs whom we know to be a Eureka flag-waving member of the Labor Party.

The SPEAKER—Order! I advise the honourable member for South Barwon that, although his comments may be relevant to some matters associated with the office of Governor, they are not related to the Bill. I ask the honourable member to debate the Bill that is before the House.

Mr DICKINSON—If the Governor had been in the situation of being caught taking a free gesture offered to his office, I believe the Premier could have saved him and the office from any indiscretion. The Premier was an accessory before the fact, and the people of Victoria must now bear the cost, morally and financially, of this early retirement because the Premier of Victoria let the Governor fall.

The Opposition supports the Bill because it does not want to denigrate the office of Her Majesty's representative in this State. I am sure that, if honourable members on both sides of the House reflect on the wonderful attributes of the Royal Family throughout the British Commonwealth and on how the people of Victoria look forward to the forthcoming visit of the Royal couple, the Prince and Princess of Wales, we will put this matter behind us, but reflect sadly on the actions of the Premier of this State.
Mr HANN (Rodney)—This is the most shabby treatment I have seen meted out in the past four years of Labor Government. The Premier should be absolutely ashamed of himself for the way in which he has demonstrated a total disrespect for the office of Governor of this State. It is common knowledge in this House and throughout the State that the Premier has maintained a hostile and antagonistic attitude towards the former Governor and Lady Murray during the period in which he has been Premier of this State. I believe the Premier has been jealous of the office of Governor. He has obviously carried his jealousy from his childhood when his father was sacked some years ago.

The SPEAKER—Order! The Deputy Leader of the National Party is well aware that he is taxing the patience of the Chair. He is nowhere near the Bill and I ask him to come back to it. I do not intend to allow him to canvass matters other than those which are contained in the Bill.

Mr HANN—It is important to remind the House of the reasons why we are debating the proposed legislation tonight. The reasons are that the Premier of this State forced the former Governor to resign. There is no doubt about that. He went to Government House on the Wednesday night and again on the Thursday when he stayed at Government House virtually all day and forced Sir Brian to accept his terms and conditions and to resign; the Governor's alternative was to go out with nothing. Honourable members are aware from the comments of the Leader of the Opposition that part of that threat was that the Royal tour would be cancelled.

It is a disgusting situation. I place on the record of this Parliament the disgust of the vast majority of the people of my electorate at the way in which the Premier has handled this matter. It disappoints me that only a few weeks ago members from all sides of the House praised Sir Brian and Lady Murray for the excellent manner in which they were serving the people of the State. Ministers of the Crown praised the Governor, yet the Premier has dealt out this shabby treatment to him. The people of Victoria are disgusted at the actions of the Premier. There is no doubt that he set out deliberately to bring down the Governor. That is proven by the fact that he had the opportunity of advising the Governor not to take the trip, but he chose not to do that. He could have given him the opportunity of paying back the amount, as the Premier himself is now doing, but he did not do that.

Honourable members all know that members of the Government party, even former Ministers, were actively touting for the position of Governor on the Wednesday night and the Thursday when the former Governor's resignation was announced. There was joviality on the Government benches about the possibility of the Governor being sacked. I believe it was a total conspiracy, not just by the Premier, but by all Government members. That belief is backed up by the fact that the Deputy Premier, instead of flying straight to Germany, flew to London to be on hand to assist or facilitate the sacking of the Governor.

There is no doubt in my mind that the honourable the Premier—I wonder why we call him honourable—set out to sack the Governor. What was particularly despicable and deceitful was the way in which, firstly, the Premier attempted to withhold details concerning the additional benefits that were being provided to Sir Brian and, secondly, even more dishonest was the way in which the Premier led the people of Victoria to believe that the Governor would be receiving a pension of up to $60 000 a year. He deliberately let that story run in the media to try to build his own case to argue that he had given the Governor a reasonable deal to assist him to get out.

With the introduction of the proposed legislation tonight, for the first time the people of this State have been made aware that the former Governor will receive no more than $28 000 a year because his service pension, as I understand from the Leader of the Opposition, will amount to approximately $32 000 a year and Sir Brian has agreed that he will accept only the balance of the amount after the pension is offset.

That was dishonest of the Premier. As a member of this House I have had considerable respect over the years for the Premier, but my respect has gone out the door completely in
this issue. This man—the Premier—does not deserve the respect of anybody in this State. His regard in the community has taken the same course. If the Premier believes he has support, why does he not put the question before the people of this State? If the electorate of Victoria had the opportunity of voting on this issue, the Premier would be swept from office. Alternatively, having been found out in the fact that he cheated the system himself in taking a first-class airline flight to America and in accepting accommodation from Alcoa—

The SPEAKER—Order! The Deputy Leader of the National Party is taking considerable licence in his comments. He is not addressing himself to the Bill and the clauses relating to the salary and pensions of the Governor. I ask him to come back to the Bill.

Mr HANN—If the Premier were an honourable man, he would resign over the way in which he has dealt with this matter. The whole exercise has been a shabby, disgusting piece of political gutter tactics. Honourable members heard two of the most pathetic supporting speeches I have ever heard from the Government. The Treasurer has not spoken to support his Premier. The Deputy Premier made the worst speech he has made in the most pathetic performance I have ever seen of him. He is usually a scathing and attacking member of this House. His heart was not in it this time.

The Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations is also one of the most articulate debaters in this House, but tonight his heart was not in it. He could not convince anybody on the Opposition side of the House that anything he said had any merit. On the one hand, the Premier suggested to this House a week or so ago that something dishonest may have occurred and that the matter was the subject of police investigations, but, on the other hand this morning—

Mr SHEEHAN (Ballarat South)—On a point of order, I have referred to the Bill and it appears that the Deputy Leader of the National Party is disgressing totally from the contents of the Bill, which deal with the formula of the payments and entitlements of the former Governor. The Bill specifically refers just to formula and amounts of money that are part of the entitlements and financial arrangements dealing with the Governor’s resignation.

The SPEAKER—Order! I advise the honourable member for Ballarat South that I do not uphold his point of order. I have endeavoured with some earnestness to direct the attention of the Deputy Leader of the National Party back to the Bill. Some licence has been given during the debate. I now ask the Deputy Leader of the National Party to return to the Bill itself.

Mr HANN (Rodney)—In fact, Mr Speaker, as you are well aware, I was discussing the Bill. I was saying that the National Party supports the measure. It supports the provision of this assistance to the former Governor. In acknowledging the interruption of the honourable member for Ballarat South, I add that I recall that not so long ago the honourable member praised the Governor of Victoria in a speech he made in this House.

The National Party is prepared and happy to support the financial assistance to Sir Brian and Lady Murray. They have handled their roles in a very dedicated, charming and excellent manner. They have served the people of the State very well. The resignation is of grave concern and a matter of deep regret, particularly to the people in the electorate that I represent, who were to have the pleasure of a visit by Sir Brian and Lady Murray this Sunday at Echuca for the opening of the River Murray Festival. No end of trouble was gone to in order to arrange the itinerary for that visit. This Premier—this honourable devious man—has effectively stopped that with this action.

I place on record the support and loyalty of the people in the electorate that I represent not only to the former Governor and Lady Murray but also to the whole office of the Governor of Victoria. I wish both Sir Brian and Lady Murray well in their retirement. When the truth finally comes out in this matter, I have no doubt that the Premier will be looking for somewhere to hide.
Mr JASPER (Murray Valley)—It is a sad day for the State of Victoria when Parliament is debating a legislative measure of this sort. The Bill results from the forced resignation of the Governor of Victoria, Sir Brian Murray. This action and its treatment of the Vice-Regal office will be a blight on the Labor Government in Victoria. It will be a particular blight on the Premier of Victoria. I express my disappointment at the way in which the Premier has handled the whole business of the dismissal of the Governor of Victoria and the retirement benefits that have been provided.

Like the Leader and Deputy Leader of the National Party, I have had the greatest respect for the Premier of Victoria. We both entered Parliament in 1976 and I have found him always to have been an honourable man. However, in the handling of the dismissal of the Governor and this Bill, in the method of accounting and payments to be made to the Governor, the Premier has acted in a despicable manner. I wonder whether it is part of a conspiracy to effectively remove the office of the Governor of Victoria so that the Premier and members of the Labor Party may appoint a puppet in place of the person who has been most highly respected in his position of Governor of Victoria.

On the day prior to the Premier announcing the resignation of the Governor of Victoria I was with Sir Brian and Lady Murray for most of the day, in Cobram, where they were carrying out their official duties. I have nothing but admiration for the manner in which Sir Brian and Lady Murray carried out their duties, for their dignity and their composure, and for the way in which they held the office of the Governor of Victoria under extremely difficult conditions.

All day, they were being intimidated and hounded by the media to make statements. Under those circumstances the former Governor carried out his duties with the highest distinction. Both Sir Brian and Lady Murray had courage. No one could have criticized them. The media even took photographs of the couple in positions which, when published the next day, made them appear as though they were almost running for cover, and that definitely was not the case. As soon as Sir Brian returned to Melbourne late that evening the Premier called on him to discuss the business of the Governor’s dismissal.

It is obvious that the Premier wanted to get rid of the Governor. He had wanted to get rid of the Governor for a long time. This seemingly was the appropriate occasion when the Premier believed he could conveniently get rid of the Governor and the people of Victoria would not criticize the dismissal but would see it as a justification in asking for the Governor’s resignation.

The Governor was forced into making a statement on the supposed free trip that he had taken with Continental Airlines Inc. on an inaugural flight. As soon as the Governor made the statement, the Premier said that this action caused all the problems and this is why he had to take the Governor to task and ask for his resignation. The Governor had made a statement that he had accepted this free trip as a result of extreme pressure from the media wanting him to make a statement.

What was so bad about what the Governor had done? Many people have taken free trips and have been feted by various people, by organizations and by other Governments, and have accepted that as part of their office. The Governor had nothing to offer Continental Airlines Inc.

The SPEAKER—Order! I advise the honourable member for Murray Valley that he is going well away from the Bill. He is dealing with other matters that are not related to the Bill being debated. I have called other honourable members back to the Bill and I intend to call the honourable member for Murray Valley back to the Bill. If he examines the Bill he will note that three or four clauses relate to the Governor’s entitlement, and that is the extent of the Bill.

Mr JASPER—The resignation of the former Governor has stunned Victoria. The whole actions of the Premier have stunned Victoria. The Premier has in his hands the ability to prevent this action taking place, and I concur with the statement in the Herald
yesterday that, if on that morning the Premier had defended the Governor, if he had said yes, perhaps it was a mistake but not the worst mistake that a Governor has ever made, there might have been hope, but the Premier said nothing. This Bill is the result of the inaction of the Premier in defending the office of the Governor of Victoria.

The Premier has set very high standards for the office of Governor of Victoria. He has also set high standards for Ministers of the Government, which have been broken already, as has been indicated on many occasions. Victorians are stunned by the actions of the Government in forcing the resignation of the Governor of Victoria. What could the Governor do? He had to consider the offer that was being made by the Premier.

*In accordance with Sessional Orders, the debate was interrupted.*

**The SPEAKER**—Order! The time appointed under Sessional Orders for me to interrupt the business of the House has now arrived.

On the motion of Mr CAIN (Premier), the sitting was continued.

**Mr JASPER** (Murray Valley)—Prior to the interruption, I was saying that the Governor really had nowhere to go and, of course, the cunning and scheming of the Premier came into play. Realizing that the Governor was in a corner, the Premier went to him and negotiated with him the offer that honourable members are debating today. That occurred at a time when, if he had stood his ground, the Governor stood to be dismissed without any pension whatsoever.

The Premier spent hours at Government House attempting to work out the payment that was to be made to the Governor. I hope the Governor charged the Premier for lunch, if that is what the Premier had when he spent all that time working on the payout for the Governor.

I speak for the people of the electorate of Murray Valley when I say to this House, to you, Mr Speaker, and particularly to the Premier, that I have been contacted by a vast number of people since the forced resignation of the Governor, who have expressed concern for the actions taken, not by the Labor Government, but by the Premier of this State, in forcing the resignation of the Governor, when it was in the hands of the Premier to be able to exonerate the Governor, to view the situation in a different light—but that action was not to be taken by the Premier.

The Premier, supported by many people in the Labor Party—although not by everyone, because I do not believe everyone would support his action—took the action of forcing the resignation of the Governor and negotiating the payment to be made to him. Of course, the Premier also allowed information to be fed out quietly and slowly, so that it appeared that the Government and the Premier, at the request of the former Governor, were holding back information that would make the situation seem even worse so far as the position of Governor was concerned. They continued withholding vital information, which is now contained in the proposed legislation.

The Premier has shown a dishonest action against the former Governor. He has displayed double standards in many things that have come to light. Honourable members now see the Premier in his true colours. The people of the electorate of Murray Valley and I are concerned about the situation. We respect loyalty and the office of Governor, and we believe the people of Victoria respect the dedication and work that was undertaken by Sir Brian and Lady Murray. We are totally disenchanted and dissatisfied with the actions taken by the Premier in forcing the Governor's resignation and then coming forward with suggestions for a payment to be made to him over a period of time, without even giving the full facts of that payment.

It is a sad day for Victoria. I hope the situation will be corrected in future, but I cannot foresee it being corrected during the time of the present Premier and the present Government of Victoria.
Mr STEGGALL (Swan Hill)—The people of the Swan Hill electorate are also very disturbed, disappointed and saddened by the actions that have occurred in the past few weeks. When the Premier responds to the remarks of honourable members during this debate tonight, I just wonder—and a number of people have asked me the question—whether he can explain why this Bill is before the House. If the Governor did something wrong, if he broke some law or seriously broke some conventions, there would be no need for the Bill. If the Governor had done something as serious as has been suggested, occurred in this case, but has never been proved, he would not be entitled to any remuneration.

The purpose of the Bill is to make a pension payable to former Governors, and the need for it has arisen as a result of recent actions of the Government. The Premier has taken certain actions and has presented a package to the former Governor, which has proved to everyone in Victoria that the former Governor did no wrong and that the action of the Premier resulted in the resignation of the Governor just a few days ago.

In the Swan Hill electorate, the former Governor, Sir Brian Murray and Lady Murray, are very well loved and highly respected; the work they have done is very much admired. People are wondering, if someone was dismissed or asked to resign for committing a misdemeanor or something of a serious nature, why such a package would be put forward in proposed legislation.

As a result of the actions of the Premier over the past three years and the effort he has consistently made to make the position of Governor very difficult for the Murrays, the Bill is proof that he has bought off the Governor. He has succeeded in one of his vendettas that he seems to have, the other being that of the Upper House, but he has sold that one away to the Democrats' preferences.

The provisions of the Bill are very generous in many ways and rather surprising to many people. I put to the House and to the Premier that this is not the way in which a guilty man would be treated. I suggest that the former Governor and his wife, in the position they have both held in the past few years, have carried out their duties properly and correctly; the Governor himself has done nothing of which to be ashamed. I believe the people of Victoria will have a lot of trouble in coming to grips with the Premier and the actions he has taken on this occasion.

Mr CAIN (Premier)—Many wild things have been said tonight by a large number of honourable members who have spoken from the other side of the House. I am not aware of what are their sources. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition would choose to reveal his sources and thus give some authority to the charges that he lays.

I suggest the Leader of the Opposition should make some check with those who were present—and six people were present. They had no axe to grind. They were there to assist and advise Sir Brian Murray. Perhaps if he makes that check, the Leader of the Opposition might realize the error of the things he has said. The most reliable source of information is the Ministerial statement that I made.

Mr Hann—That is not true.

Mr Kennett interjected.

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I repeat that the most reliable source of what occurred is the Ministerial statement. It was carefully prepared. It was referred to Mr Curwen and Mr Teasdale, who were present, and they expressed the view that the statement summed up
what had occurred. I did say to them that it may not be possible to ensure that this matter could be disposed of by the Ministerial statement being made.

I and Mr Curwen and others were aware that the Leader of the Opposition was then running out of control and that view was expressed, and I said then that it would be my endeavour to ensure that what was said—and that was the wish of all present—should be confined to the Ministerial statement but that may not be possible.

What should also be said is that what decision was made on that day was not based upon a reliance by Sir Brian and Lady Murray upon just what I said. At my suggestion, they sought and got advice from other people. Sir John Starke was involved and I for my part, as I have said, did not rely upon my judgment, my assessment, as to what should occur.

I also, as I have said publicly, sought advice from others whom I believe could be said to be objective, detached, not a member of any political party, but people that I believe any thinking person would regard as reliable and detached.

Mr Maclellan—Who did you ask?

Mr CAIN—I will not reveal those matters and I do not intend to. The honourable member should know better than to ask. Endeavours were made to try to control the Leader of the Opposition. I believe he was made aware of the facts by Mr Curwen. Mr Curwen made them clear to the Leader of the Opposition, as I understand it.

Mr Hann interjected.

Mr CAIN—That is an insulting thing to say about Mr Curwen. The Deputy Leader of the National Party says “at my direction”. I sit here and I suppose I cop what every politician in this place digs but I do not believe it is reasonable to make those remarks about the office that Mr Curwen occupies or the man who occupies it. I hope the Deputy Leader of the National Party will withdraw those remarks.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr CAIN—He is not going to withdraw them. He is implying that Mr Curwen is acting on my instructions. That is utterly untrue. He ought to speak to Mr Curwen and say that to him, if he persists with that line. Mr Curwen is concerned about the office and is concerned to try to curb the excesses of the Leader of the Opposition. It got to the stage where he took the unusual course, to which the Deputy Premier has referred, of feeling it was necessary to go public and try to get some order and some restraint back into the matter. He was unsuccessful and I think he regrets, as others do, that the Leader of the Opposition was unprepared to see reason.

The document to which reference is made was sought by Sir Brian Murray, who asked that notes be taken of matters that were not the subject of agreement in the sense that they were matters contingent upon other circumstances—and they have already been explained in great detail. Those contingencies were matters that had to be investigated, and also whether or not additional payment was to be made depended upon those. One matter has been determined and the other has not. I repeat: the request was made by Sir Brian that Mr Teasdale should take some handwritten notes.

All present regarded the matters as being of a personal and private nature and it was agreed that it was desirable to so treat them. I repeat what Mr Curwen said, that there were no preconditions to the undertakings given that there be silence in respect of these matters for the good of the office. There were no preconditions, as Mr Curwen said. The Leader of the Opposition goes on giggling—that is about all he is good for.

There were no preconditions. If any further proof is required of that, then all I can say is that all of the money has been paid and the only matter remaining outstanding is the tax issue, nothing else.
I can only say again, as I have said before, that it was the wish of those present on that Thursday that there should be observance of the matters agreed to in the subject of the undertakings. There was no benefit to me or to the Government in observing the request that that statement of undertakings should be so treated—no benefit at all. It was the wish of those present, which I sought to observe, as did others, and I can only say the fact that we have had the sort of debate we have had tonight and the performance we have had over the past ten days rests very squarely with one person and I make no further observation than that. I indicated last night what I thought of that sort of behaviour.

The Bill is supported by all sides of the House. It is a great pity it was not treated with some dignity and some respect by all sides of the House.

The motion for the second reading of the Bill was agreed to by an absolute majority of the whole number of the members of the House, and the Bill was read a second time and committed.

Clauses 1 to 5 were agreed to.

Clause 6

Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—This clause provides for the entitlement to the former Governor. It may be appropriate that at some stage we will be debating it for the Premier. There is no doubt that the explanation just given by the Premier at the end of the second-reading speech was a further indictment of his whole performance in this affair.

Yesterday, in terms of these matters before the Parliament in this clause, the Premier said that it was Mr Curwen who notarized the documents; today he is saying that it was Mr Teasdale. One has to ask, "How can anyone any longer trust anything this Premier says?" It is hopeless. The Premier has given more information today and tonight in both his speeches, which obviously will need to be followed up. Let us not be under any illusion; the Premier has in his comments on the matter of the entitlement and the concern of the Governor hidden behind a public servant in the form of Charles Curwen.

No one questions Charles Curwen's ability and his dedication, but anyone would have thought from the Premier's speech tonight that it was Charles Curwen who fought about the whole event and not the Premier.

It is one of the most gutless performances I have ever seen. I shall raise two specific matters and I ask the Premier for his assurance in this Committee so that the proposed legislation is not delayed by the moving of amendments.

I understand—and the public will understand—that we run some risk, based on the Premier's past performance in terms of undertakings and decency, but it is in the interests of decency that I appeal to him.

In my remarks I mentioned that the Premier had referred to the fact that the former Governor will be afforded privileges usually afforded to a Governor who serves in the office of Governor for a period of five years. That does not appear as a condition in clause 6, which deals with the entitlements of the former Governor.

I ask that the Premier gives an assurance to Parliament, and through Parliament to the people of Victoria, that the privileges usually afforded to a Governor who retires after serving for a period of five years will be provided to Sir Brian Murray. I am speaking about the utilization of a car and office staff; those things that the Premier publicly expressed but has not seen fit to include in the proposed legislation. I am speaking about entitlements and I am asking the Premier to give that assurance.

Another matter on which I also seek an assurance from the Premier so that the passage of the Bill is not delayed by amendments relates to the outstanding matter just referred to, which was agreed between the Premier and the Governor, as I understand it, so that any tax that may be attributed to the lump sum settlement of $30 000 will be paid by the
Government to the Federal Government or the appropriate taxing authority. That is, the Governor will receive a lump sum of $30,000 not encumbered by any taxation provisions.

I ask the Premier to give the assurance to the Committee—and through this place to the people of Victoria—that what he was speaking about a few moments ago will be honoured by him and his Government.

Mr CAIN (Premier)—There has never been any question that what was agreed and understood on the relevant day will be honoured so far as this Government is concerned. I have given that assurance and it will be carried out.

As I said before, the tax is a matter to be determined. If that contingency occurs, the State will pay the tax that is incurred. As I said, we have already paid the customs duty and the sales tax. So far as the motor vehicle is concerned, that was a privilege I introduced so far as Sir Henry Winneke was concerned. Until about two years ago he did not have the use of a car. I became aware of it and made it available to him, for which he was very grateful. It is not a custom that was introduced prior to the Government coming to office.

That was introduced by me for Sir Henry Winneke and, as I have said in the letter that is referred to—the letter in the Ministerial statement—it will be accorded to the retired Governor when he is in Victoria on official duties.

The clause was agreed to.

The Bill was reported to the House without amendment, and the report was adopted.

The motion for the third reading of the Bill was agreed to by an absolute majority of the whole number of the members of the House, and the Bill was read a third time.

CRIMES (AMENDMENT) BILL

This Bill was received from the Council and, on the motion of Mr CAIN (Premier), was read a first time.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW (UNIVERSITY VISITOR) BILL

This Bill was received from the Council and, on the motion of Mr CAIN (Premier), was read a first time.

ADJOURNMENT


Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—I move:

That the House do now adjourn.

Mr DELZOPPO (Narracan)—I direct a matter to the attention of the Minister for Water Resources, who is not in the Chamber. The Department of Water Resources has compiled a report entitled "Victorian Water Law Principles and Options for Reform 1985". The Director of Water Resources has called for a lunchtime seminar tomorrow to outline the contents of the report. The report has been released to the public and, more importantly, has not been shown to the water industry. This in itself may not be seen as a matter for concern but the report advocates the replacing of the 21 Acts administered by the Minister with a single statute.

I put it to the Minister that those water bodies that will be affected by such proposed legislation have not been consulted. The water industry has just undergone reconstruction after extensive consultation. In fact, the Government has boasted of the extensive consultation during this exercise. I ask the Minister why there has been no consultation in
this case. Why is the seminar being organized tomorrow to explain the report which has not been made public and about which the industry has no knowledge?

I ask the Minister to cancel tomorrow’s seminar, make the document available to the public and to speak to representatives of the water industry. If the report is implemented, it will have a drastic effect on that industry. The industry should have some opportunity of responding to the propositions set out in the report.

It is disgraceful administration that a Minister should allow this to occur. Further, the Minister should make a Ministerial statement to the House to explain the nature of the planned reforms so that the House, the public and the water industry have some idea of what is in the mind of the Minister.

Mr NORRIS (Dandenong)—I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Last night the honourable member for Wantirna revealed startling allegations concerning people dressed in boots, Drizabone coats and wide-brimmed hats and masquerading as mountain cattlemen. Today other allegations have been made to me. One incident occurred at a Warrandyte polling booth where a local greengrocer, Bob Powell, dressed up as a mountain cattleman, was handing out how-to-vote cards. He was approached by a local councillor who knew him and said, “What are you doing in that get-up? I bet before today you believed Drizabone was a dog food!”

Tonight, I raise an allegation concerning the honourable member for Malvern and a statutory declaration sworn by a person who was disgusted at the honourable member’s actions during the Nunawading by-election. I ask the Minister to investigate the allegations.

Mr RICHARDSON (Forest Hill)—On a point of order, Mr Speaker, it is permissible to raise only one issue in the debate on the motion for the adjournment of the sitting. The honourable member for Dandenong identified the issue he wished to raise, which was something to do with mountain cattlemen, but he has now moved to a second issue relating to a statutory declaration involving the honourable member for Malvern.

I suggest that the honourable member for Dandenong is not entitled to raise two issues. He raised the first issue, which has now been concluded, and he is moving on to a second issue, which is out of order.

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—On the point of order, Mr Speaker, the honourable member for Dandenong is discussing people dressed as mountain cattlemen and has introduced a statutory declaration involving the honourable member for Malvern as part of that matter.

The SPEAKER—The honourable member for Forest Hill is correct in that only one matter may be raised on the motion for the adjournment of the sitting. I do not intend to uphold his point of order, because the honourable member for Dandenong had not reached the substance of his remarks in respect of the honourable member for Malvern. If the honourable member is relating the mountain cattlemen issue in some way to the statutory declaration involving the honourable member for Malvern, he is in order.

Mr NORRIS (Dandenong)—The statutory declaration made by a concerned constituent involves the honourable member for Malvern. The constituent was handing out how-to-vote cards outside the Croydon South Primary School polling booth and observed an alleged mountain cattleman dressed up in the full gear, also handing out cards. Honourable members have heard about “rent a crowd” but this is “rent a cowboy”.

The honourable member for Malvern then arrived and had a heated discussion with the mountain cattleman. It appeared that the honourable member was concerned that the mountain cattleman’s how-to-vote cards might confuse voters concerning their preferences.

Mr LEIGH (Malvern)—On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I ask the honourable member for Dandenong to make the document available to the House.
The SPEAKER—Order! There is no point of order. Would the honourable member for Dandenong make the document available to the House?

Mr NORRIS (Dandenong)—I shall make it available to the Minister.

The SPEAKER—Order! There is no qualification. The honourable member either makes the document available to the House or refuses to do so.

Mr NORRIS—I refuse to do so.

The SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member is out of order in quoting from the document.

Mr NORRIS—I shall make it available, Mr Speaker. The concerned constituent observed the honourable member for Malvern standing over the mountain cattleman and having a heated discussion. The mountain cattleman then went to his vehicle, returned and began handing out Liberal how-to-vote cards. What influence did the honourable member for Malvern have over the mountain cattleman and what did he say?

The SPEAKER—The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr GUDE (Hawthorn)—I raise a matter for the attention of the Treasurer and ask the Minister for Transport to refer it to him. The matter relates to considerable concern felt by thousands of small business people and owner-operator transport drivers, direct selling agents, insurance agents, house framers and so on.

The SPEAKER—Order! There seems to be some disputation in the House and, if it continues, I shall ask the Serjeant-at-Arms to take action. I ask the honourable member for Dandenong to make the document available to the House.

Mr NORRIS (Dandenong)—Certainly, Mr Speaker, but I seek your guidance.

The SPEAKER—Order! There is no qualification. The honourable member quoted from a statutory declaration which he was asked to make available to the House. I ask him to now make it available.

Mr NORRIS—I was about to do so, but I was being stood over by the honourable member for Forest Hill. Am I to put up with that?

The SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member is in the Legislative Assembly, not in the theatre.

Mr NORRIS—Mr Speaker, I suggest you say that to the honourable member for Forest Hill.

Mr GUDE (Hawthorn)—Mr Speaker, I trust that my time will not be wasted by clowns on the other side of the House. The matter I raise relates to small businessmen and, in particular, to section 3c of the Pay-roll Tax Act, as it applies to some small business operators. Honourable members would realize that that section does not apply to owner-operator transport drivers, direct selling agents or insurance agents.

Their concern is about the Government's reaction to section 9 of the Accident Compensation Act which contains similar provisions. I seek the guidance of the Treasurer on how he proposes to deal with, and interpret, section 9 of that Act.

A number of small business operators have been in touch with WorkCare officers seeking an interpretation, but there appears to be some confusion. Is the Treasurer aware that the Commissioner of Pay-roll Tax, Mr Gary Sebo, takes the view that, on the face of the two pieces of legislation, owner-drivers whose services are ancillary to the use of their motor vehicles would not be subject to the provisions of the two pieces of legislation?

The Opposition asks on behalf of owner-operator transport drivers and would-be workers whether the Government will admit its error in respect of the deeming provision contained in section 10 of the Accident Compensation Act.
I ask the Treasurer to review the practice of deeming referred to in section 10 and to assure small business owner-operators that they will be protected and encouraged to continue operating in Victoria. After all, they are the backbone of this country. In many ways they epitomize the Australian “fair go” ethic or the “have a go” principle.

The Opposition seeks an assurance from the Government that it will not in any way prejudice the role of the small business operators in the community, given the provisions of the Accident Compensation Act and, in particular, sections 9 and 10.

Mr WHITING (Mildura)—In the absence of the Premier, I raise a matter with the Minister for Transport. On 17 September the Leader of the National Party asked the Premier in this House if he would convene a summit of members of the three political parties in order to have a thorough investigation of the serious situation that has developed in hospitals throughout the State, particularly regarding the long waiting lists for elective surgery. The Premier, at that time, indicated that he would not agree to a summit of members of the three political parties because he believed there was no need for it.

The Leader of the National Party said that the situation was getting worse every day. However, the Premier responded, “I do not say that the system is perfect but considerable progress has been made in a number of areas”. The Premier went on to say that work was still being done to reduce the hospital waiting lists. He concluded by saying that he was confident that considerable improvement would occur in the health area in the future.

The State is faced with a strike of nurses tomorrow morning because the Minister for Health and the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs have not been able to reach agreement with them. Part of the problem has been that the Minister for Health claimed that a wage increase of $150 a week would be given to nurses. What the Minister failed to say was that the payment would be made to only a few nurses who were in their fifth year after registration and that they would have to be promoted or reclassified to a grade 3 level under the proposed new career structure. This is a terrible deception of the public of Victoria as well as the nursing profession.

Every member of the House would be aware that the nursing profession is made up of the most dedicated group of people in the community. In a letter to the Sun newspaper of 15 October, several nursing representatives of the Royal Australian Nursing Federation at the Ballarat Base Hospital pointed out that a registered nurse on $378.10 a week would receive less than a Government cash register operator on $378.60 a week, a physiotherapist on $429.10 a week, a radiographer on $468.30 a week or a school teacher on $516.80 a week. That points out the shabby situation that has developed with the Minister for Health and the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs.

I was urged to give credit to the nursing profession where it is due, and they should be rewarded because they are the most dedicated group of people in the community that any honourable member could have the privilege of knowing.

An Honourable Member—Do you support the strike?

Mr WHITING—Yes, under those circumstances. Members of the Government are hypocritical because they support strikes by almost every other organization and union in the State except the nursing profession. Their motives must be questioned. The Government is introducing a proposal for levels 1, 2 and 3 hospitals which will discriminate against country hospitals, because a nurse in a level 1 country hospital will be paid at a rate of $5 a week less than a nurse in a metropolitan hospital who is doing the same work. If that is justice for the nursing profession, I do not agree with it. The Premier ought to appoint a sub-committee straight away.

Mrs SETCHES (Ringwood)—I raise for the attention of the Minister for Public Works a matter concerning Pinex Pty Ltd, which has developed a new technological process for impregnating timber, known as Fire-X. The former Minister for Economic Development approved a loan from the Ministry of Economic Development of $300 000 for this firm to enable it to expand its market and to expand its range of products.
When the former Minister for Economic Development handed over that amount of money he had an on-site demonstration of the product, which showed that timber impregnated with this chemical does not burn or catch alight. Recently another on-site demonstration was held at the factory in Canterbury Road, Bayswater, where the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources had an on-site demonstration of the substance and saw how it retarded fire in timber.

I have directed this matter to the attention of the Minister for Public Works because I believe it would be beneficial for him to have an on-site demonstration because of his responsibilities and the fact that a number of public buildings are devastated by fire, vandals or other causes. The development of this product could result in a large amount of money being saved by the State because it would not be necessary to rebuild these buildings, especially schools.

The firm has advised me that the cost of treatment of the timber for an ordinary weatherboard home is approximately $1000 and for a three-bedroom brick veneer home it is approximately $500, so the cost of impregnating the timber is not large. The Minister for Public Works should have a demonstration of this product because he would see that even with the application of intense heat the timber does not catch fire. The product would be of great benefit to the department and the Minister for Public Works could act as an agent.

The chemical has been created and developed through the initiative of a local businessman, Mr Derek Maude. He is a very innovative inventor. He is taking this product into the export markets of South-East Asia, so not only is it a good product for Victoria and the public buildings in Victoria but it is also capable of earning export dollars for the State.

I ask that the Minister for Public Works have an on-site demonstration so that he can see the benefits of the treatment.

Mr WEIDEMAN (Frankston South)—I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. In November last year and last evening, the honourable member for Malvern raised an issue that was reported in the 24 October issue of the Standard newspaper relating to Mr Peter Batchelor, the Secretary of the Victorian Branch of the Australian Labor Party, who returned to a contractor a $1000 cheque which he had received as a donation to the Labor Party.

The article does not explain why Mr Batchelor returned that money, but I imagine it was in light of the evidence that the contractor had had charges laid against him alleging that he owed the Frankston Sewerage Authority $6000, and that his firm was in liquidation. He proposed to the Frankston Sewerage Authority, through his lawyers, that $3000 be paid, but the allegation was that $1000 was presented to the Labor Party.

Dr VAUGHAN (Clayton)—Mr Speaker, on a point of order, the honourable member for Frankston South appears to be reading from a document and I ask him to table it.

The SPEAKER—Order! Would the honourable member make the document available to the House?

Mr WEIDEMAN—Yes, I shall make the document available to the Minister. I ask the Minister to provide the same assistance that he provided to the honourable member for Wantirna relating to the Nunawading by-election. It is a serious matter and it involves a Mr Albert Knowles, who is the Mayor of Frankston and at one stage was the secretary to the honourable member for Frankston North. At one time he was the candidate to represent the Labor Party in the Federal seat of Dunkley.

He was subsequently removed and this caused much factional fighting. It would seem likely that Mr Batchelor took the action that he took in relation to the $1000 because it was inappropriate to accept that donation. Unfortunately, the course Mr Batchelor took
has left the mayor in the position of it having been alleged that he was in some way implicated.

There have been some other allegations in my district in relation to permits and getting different matters through the council. I ask that the Minister have the matter investigated to clear the people involved and leave the council without any taint of corruption or any suggestion of accepting bribes or giving special consideration to the Labor Party.

Last night the Premier indicated to the honourable member for Malvern that he was not prepared to enter into any investigation of Mr Batchelor's activities. He said that Mr Batchelor's action in the Nunawading issue was an indiscretion and that he should not be penalized for that indiscretion. I hope this is not the second indiscretion of Mr Batchelor in the past twelve months. I raise this matter because last night the Premier was careful about what he said on the Nunawading issue. I hope an investigation will clarify the matter.

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley)—I raise with the Minister for Transport a matter which relates to Freightgate and freight delivered to various areas in country Victoria. I especially refer to the operation of Freightgate at Wangaratta. Over a number of years V/Line has been endeavouring to improve its operations so that it can provide an efficient parcel delivery service to country areas of Victoria. It was found with the development of the freight centres, and subsequently Freightgate, that parcels and goods are delivered to those centres and then subsequently to Freightgate—and I refer especially to the one at Wangaratta, where the goods are delivered to Freightgate and then are delivered by road transport to various areas in northern Victoria.

I have received a complaint from a carrier who operates the parcel delivery around the city of Wangaratta. There are problems with the delivery of freight to the outlying areas but the main concern I raise with the Minister is the late arrival of the goods trains from Melbourne. The trains have been and are usually loaded during the late evening and the trains travel through the country centres, arriving at Wangaratta in the early hours of the morning so that the parcels are sorted, processed and ready for delivery by the road transport operator in Wangaratta around 8 a.m.

The service is so bad at present that the goods trains are not arriving until late afternoon and many of the parcels are not being delivered until during the afternoon. While V/Line is endeavouring to improve delivery of freight throughout country areas and to attract new customers and retain the customers they already have, services such as this will continue to reduce for the people who utilize them, especially people who rely on early morning deliveries of freight from Melbourne such as the Wangaratta Base Hospital, veterinary surgeons operating in Wangaratta and the engine reconditioners.

I ask the Minister to investigate the operation of the goods trains operating to Freightgate at Wangaratta to ensure that they arrive early in the morning so that the road transport operator can collect the goods and deliver them early and provide the service which V/Line says it will continue to provide not only to retain the customers it already has but also to attract customers back to V/Line. If the service is not improved, Freightgate will lose customers and obviously, with the upgrading of the Hume Highway, more and more people will transfer to road transport in place of the service provided by V/Line to the Wangaratta freight centre.

The SPEAKER—Order! In view of the incident that occurred during the debate on the motion for the adjournment of the sitting, with respect to the honourable member for Dandenong, I wish to make it clear to the House that in making a document available to the House the document is provided to the Clerk. It does not mean that an honourable member can cross the floor and appear to intimidate another honourable member in demanding the document. The document should be provided to the Clerk to ensure that all honourable members are provided with a copy of the document in question.

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—A number of matters were raised concerning various Ministers and directed to me. First the honourable member for Hawthorn raised
the matter of small business and the Accident Compensation Act. I shall take up that matter with the Treasurer and request that he reply direct.

The honourable member for Mildura referred to the difficulties that will face the hospitals tomorrow as a result of the strike by the Royal Australian Nursing Federation. That matter is before the arbitral commissions of the State. The Government has been concerned for a considerable time and, indeed, the federation and I entered into an agreement that we would examine the arrangements for special payments for those involved in clinical nursing because we recognized that a problem existed in this area.

After discussion with a variety of people the Government developed a proposition which it put forward as an offer, which had to take into account the various tasks of nurses, the various levels of responsibility and the specific problems of different clinical practices.

As with any wage matter, the proposal must be dealt with by the arbitral tribunal in accordance with the guidelines. The Government has acted appropriately by taking the matter before the commission and seeking to enter discussions under the umbrella of the commission with the federation. It also involves the private hospitals. That matter has been before the commission in direct and private hearing for the past three days. Now one can argue that it could have been useful if additional progress could have been made, but it is a complicated exercise and any decision made by the commission must fall within the guidelines. One cannot have a decision outside the guidelines.

The honourable member for Mildura interjects but he should note that wages are not set by summits but by arbitral commissions and this matter is about wage fixation for clinical nurses.

I am appalled that tonight the honourable member for Mildura has lent the support of the National Party to this strike, despite the fact that the matter is before the Industrial Relations Commission of Victoria. I should have thought that the appropriate response of the National Party would have been to encourage the nurses to have the matter properly resolved.

It is a difficult case that involves matters that are central to wage fixation and it needs careful attention rather than the attention of a summit or a meeting of people who may be interested in nursing. The matter should be heard by those persons who determine wage conditions and arrangements. That is what my colleagues have attempted to do and will continue to attempt to do because, unlike the honourable member for Mildura, the Government believes the wages system cannot be allowed to become a matter of summits.

It would be interesting if one had a summit on the honourable member for Mildura. All honourable members could gather around and suggest what he is worth! I wonder whether anyone would notice if he went on strike! There may be general support for that proposition!

The Government is attempting to address, as it has been for some time, a serious difficulty so far as clinical nurses are concerned. The Government will continue to address that matter in the wage-setting arena, which the Government so strongly supports.

The honourable member for Murray Valley referred to Freightgate at Wangaratta. I shall take up that matter with the State Transport Authority and provide the honourable member with a response.

Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Water Resources)—The honourable member for Narracan raised the question of a seminar which is related to water law reform and its necessities. It is widely recognized that the mass of Victoria’s water Acts require review and reform. Previous Governments and Ministers have stated that fact but have turned away from the task because of its overwhelming nature.

The present Director-General of the Department of Water Resources has the energy and the capacity to tackle this important review and he has done a lot of important initial work in compiling material that will form the basis of a discussion document.
In the six months in which I have been Minister, I have spent many occasions talking to sectors of the water industry around the State. When I addressed various conferences and seminars on the matter, I said that the Government will examine water law reform and that there will be a wide-ranging opportunity for all sectors of the industry to discuss and to consider the proposals that will come up in the discussion document.

I have confidence in the work that the department has already done. However, the document is not yet complete, but I envisage that towards the end of the year it will be available for circulation.

I assure all the water boards, irrigators and water users throughout the State that there is no rush in this process. It is a planned process which will provide the widest opportunity for people to consider the complex issues involved. That process will continue well into next year and I look forward to the considered replies and the responses to that process when the discussion document has been widely circulated.

Mr MATHEWS (Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—The honourable member for Dandenong spoke tonight on behalf of a constituent of his who shares what I understand to be a widespread view in the eastern suburbs that electoral malpractice occurred in connection with the so-called mountain cattlemen's campaign waged in connection with the Nunawading by-election.

The honourable member for Dandenong offered the House a statutory declaration prepared by his constituent which reflects the further concern widely held in the eastern suburbs that there was a connection between this malpractice and the Liberal Party. He offered the House, in the form of this statutory declaration, evidence of a link between a Liberal Party member of this House and one of these so-called mountain cattlemen.

The concern expressed tonight by the honourable member for Dandenong on behalf of his constituent added further to the knowledge of the House on this matter, which was contributed to last night by the honourable member for Wantirna, who also has tangible evidence to offer on the matter—photographic evidence demonstrating that in at least one instance what purported to be a mountain cattleman in full mountain cattleman's gear was in fact a suburban journalist.

I understand that the Chief Electoral Officer passed on this complaint to the police last Friday for their attention and that investigations into it are now proceeding.

I give to the honourable member for Dandenong the same advice that I gave to the honourable member for Wantirna last night. The appropriate course of action for him to take is to pass on the evidence in his possession to the police who are investigating this matter.

The honourable member for Frankston South quoted extensively from a newspaper cutting that he has in his possession regarding some events which I understand occurred in Frankston some considerable time ago.

It was not clear from the remarks made by the honourable member for Frankston South whether he was offering to provide additional evidence for a police investigation already in train into this matter, whether he was advocating that a police investigation should be initiated, or whether he was expressing dissatisfaction to the House at the zeal with which police investigators had themselves already pressed some matter brought to their attention.

If it is the latter and the honourable member is criticizing the Police Force for its conduct in a matter that it has in hand, that is a matter to be properly brought to my attention, and I shall follow it up if the honourable member will clarify the ground for his dissatisfaction with the Police Force.

If, however, the matter is one which he believes should be investigated by the police, but is not being investigated by the police, it is not a matter that he should raise with me but one which he should take up with the police, and I suggest he should do so.
Mr WALSH (Minister for Public Works)—I thank the honourable member for Ringwood for raising the matter of the Fire-X fire retardant timber treatment developed by Pinex Pty Ltd.

I am aware of this product and have heard good reports about it. It is my intention to arrange to attend a demonstration of Fire-X treated timber during the Parliamentary recess.

The motion was agreed to.

*The House adjourned at 11.39 p.m.*
Thursday, 17 October 1985

The SPEAKER (the Hon. C. T. Edmunds) took the chair at 10.34 a.m. and read the prayer.

BROADCASTING OF PROCEEDINGS

The SPEAKER—Order! I advise the House that I have given approval for the broadcasting of question time by television and radio.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

NURSING DISPUTE

Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—I address a question without notice to the Premier. I refer to the fact that hospital waiting lists have doubled under the Labor Government, that thousands of disenchanted nurses have been leaving the system and that the Minister for Health recently admitted that Government funding priorities were wrong.

In view of the statement of the Minister for Health today that the industrial problems could result in patients dying, I ask the Premier what immediate solution does the Government have for the crisis in our health system.

Mr CAIN (Premier)—The Government is very concerned about the situation in our hospitals as a result of the action by the nurses. We regret that they have taken the action that they have. We are monitoring the situation at the hospitals on an hourly basis, and that will continue. The Department of Health will do all it can to ensure that there is proper and adequate patient care.

Exemption levels for critical care patients are unclear at the moment. I do appeal to nurses with current practising certificates to contact hospitals in their areas and to assist if they are so able. I ask that families and relatives of patients might in some way assist in the care of patients as well to help overcome the problem in the short term.

There are a number of issues at the heart of the dispute. The first issue is the nurses’ workload and the other issue is wages. The Government had reached an agreed position with the nurses yesterday on workload, especially in relation to the admission and discharge of patients. Despite this apparent agreement, the nurses have now taken upon themselves industrial action.

On the wages issue, an offer was put to the Industrial Relations Commission of Victoria last week. We have restructured the offer as a result of concerns that have been expressed by the nurses and we have said that we are prepared to examine paid efforts as a result of this restructuring. The nurses have rejected this.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr CAIN—Let us not talk about trust. So far as I am aware, on the advice I have, this is the first time that an industrial stoppage of this kind has been called while a matter is before the Full Bench of the Industrial Relations Commission. That is the bottom line—I note that the honourable member for Mildura is nodding in assent—that must be understood. This Government has not undertaken negotiations in that way. They have been the subject of serious consideration and in full recognition that, historically, nurses have not been as well treated as they should have been.

We were mindful of the requirements of the accord and put together a package that was reasonable in all the circumstances. We have already put to the nurses a package that will
cost the Government some $25 million. What they are now seeking is radiographers' rates of pay which would cost some $80 million to implement. That is the additional demand that is now being made. They are refusing to budge on the $80 million claim and are refusing at this stage to compromise.

The Full Bench of the Industrial Relations Commission began the hearing yesterday. The bench told the nurses that, if their claim was within the accord, they would have to proceed through the commission and urged them strongly not to strike; it was outside the guidelines of the accord, it could not succeed anyway. The bench also stressed that their claim could be resolved only by the Industrial Relations Commission of Victoria.

I stress the point again. That is where the matter must be resolved; it cannot be resolved anywhere else. I ask the nurses to heed that advice and to go back to work to look after the patients who are in hospitals.

**DISCOUNT AIR TICKETS**

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS (Leader of the National Party)—Will the Premier advise the House whether the Government intends to establish a judicial inquiry or Royal Commission to inquire into the discount tickets scandal?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—The Government has asked senior legal counsel to assist members of the Police Force who are continuing their investigations. The legal counsel involved are Messrs Flanagan, Redlich and Strong. The investigations are being conducted by the Bureau of Internal Investigation because, initially, it involved an investigation of members of the Police Force. On the advice I have, I understand that normal investigation procedures are being followed.

The investigation by the police is being conducted with the assistance of legal counsel, and that is the most appropriate way for the matter to be handled. The Government has the matter under consideration and will await further reports from the police.

I have indicated what the current position is and that an investigation is being conducted; the Government will consider the matter as it sees fit.

**CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAM**

Mrs HIRSH (Wantirna)—Will the Treasurer inform the House what steps the Government is taking to co-operate with private industry in the capital works program?

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—As honourable members will be aware, the capital works expenditure of this State is not only important in terms of putting into place the social and economic infrastructure and ensuring that the Government delivers excellent services in Victoria but also it has significant economic benefits for the private sector. The value of projects approved in terms of the total expenditure over a number of years is $10 billion. Obviously, that amount of capital expenditure is extremely important.

The planned expenditure in the capital works area across both the Budget and non-Budget sectors for 1985-86 is $1.9 billion. That is a significant boost in economic activity. It highlights the interdependence between the public sector and the private sector. The majority of capital works projects are carried out by private sector organizations.

As a result of representations from the construction industry, it was decided that there would be an annual presentation of the details of the capital expenditure program. Although at this stage the Government does not have immediate plans to tape recordings of any meetings, if it does so, it will make the tapes available to the public, unlike the Leader of the Opposition who seems to like to have the tapes but does not like to make them available to the public.

The presentation is extremely important not only in terms of the dimension of capital expenditure that is taking place but also because it is across different aspects of the
construction industry. The heavy industry area is especially concerned to obtain detailed information of capital expenditure in this State.

The Government intends to provide information on major tender requirements. That information will be made available to the public, and it will be of great assistance to private firms who are considering tendering for capital works undertaken by the State. That area covers the heavy engineering industry and transport capital expenditure, which are extremely important.

Similarly, the State Electricity Commission is very important to the provision of a much-needed boost to the heavy engineering industry in this State.

There is also to be an outline of important expenditure in such areas as education, water supply, health and law. This detailed presentation will take place tomorrow. I am sure the private sector will once again welcome this important initiative from the State.

HOW-TO-VOTE CARDS IN NUNAWADING BY-ELECTION

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West)—I refer the Premier to the fact that Ministerial staff were interviewed by police in relation to the Nunawading scandal and ask, in his joint capacity as head of the elected Government and political head of the governing party, whether he has been interviewed by the police or volunteered himself for interview.

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I had hoped that a number of things might have enabled the Opposition to put this matter into perspective. I was somewhat heartened by the constructive question asked by the Leader of the Opposition this morning. It showed that he is not concerned only about what does not matter.

So far as Ministerial staff is concerned, it is a matter for the investigative process that is under way. The honourable member knows that a complaint has been made to the Chief Electoral Officer, along with a number of other complaints that concern a wide range of elections and concern members on this side of the House as well as those on the other side of the House. Anyone who took part, who is on a Ministerial staff will, if under the authority of the Minister, be asked to see police and provide what information is required.

All public servants have a right to work for and involve themselves with the political process if they wish. I shall not waste my time answering questions about this matter in this House if the Opposition wants to trot out question after question. If the Opposition wants to play games, it is up to it. I believe the matter has been put in perspective by what I have said about it and again by Tim Colebatch in the Age this morning.

If the Opposition wants to go on with all this nonsense, that is up to it. I have said before that members of the Opposition all know what has gone on over the years. There is not one person in this House who does not know about it. I am not condoning it and I am not saying it is not stupid. The test is whether the Opposition is prepared to do anything about it and whether it is prepared to put right what has been going on over the years. That will be the real test; I will not be distracted from running this State by all that nonsense. It has nothing to do with this Government.

That is my position. I am concerned to see the State running properly and I shall not waste time on the rubbish that the Opposition wants to trot up here day after day. If the Opposition wants to do it, it should do so. There is a process for dealing with these matters; it is before the Chief Electoral Officer and that is where it should be. If the Opposition is really interested in this matter, let it examine all the cases now before the Chief Commissioner and what has gone on in the past. Let the Opposition examine the High Court case of Evans v. Crichton-Browne and determine whether what has been going on for a long time is to be allowed to continue. That is the real test and that is what this Government intends to put right.
Mr McNAMARA (Benalla)—I refer the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to the annual general meeting of the Victoria Police Association at the St Kilda Town Hall on 15 August this year. There was a gathering of more than 2000 police at the meeting.

Is the Minister aware that the police there voted that there was no effective working relationship with the Minister and no productive contact was subsequently made with the incumbent in his particular post?

The SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Benalla appears to have asked his question. Therefore, there is no necessity for any further preamble to the question.

Mr McNAMARA—Has the Minister advised the Premier that 2000 police unanimously passed a motion of no confidence in him? Has the Minister offered the Premier his resignation as Minister for Police and Emergency Services, or has he asked the Premier for a transfer to another portfolio?

Mr MATHEWS (Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—I am delighted to be able to say to the honourable member for Benalla and to the House in general that, on the occasion to which he referred, I joined the ranks of those who have been censured by the Victoria Police Association: the Chief Commissioner of Police, Mr Miller; the Premier of this State, Mr John Cain; and my two predecessors in this portfolio under the former Liberal Government, Mr Pat Dickie and Mr Lindsay Thompson.

Since I have been Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Victoria Police Force has done better than in any comparable period in this State’s history. During the first three years of the Cain Government, this Minister had the capital works allocation for the Victoria Police increased by no less than 139 per cent. That money was spent overwhelmingly on upgrading the standards of accommodation for the Police Force to heights never before attained in the history of the State. The Victoria Police Force is now better housed, better staffed and better equipped than at any other point in time in its history. The police realize that that is a fact. The honourable member for Benalla fails to realize that now.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER—Order! The House is particularly noisy. I ask the honourable member for Benalla to cease shouting.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER—Order! Above all the other hubbub, I also ask the honourable member for Dandenong to cease shouting.

Mr MATHEWS—I was in the process of telling the honourable member for Benalla how the Victoria Police Force has done better under this Government and under this Minister over the past three years than in any previous comparable period in its history. The effective strength of the Police Force is now 714 greater than it was when the Cain Labor Government took office. We are engaged in implementing yet another massive increase through the Budget.

The Police Force has been provided with one of the most modern and massive electronic data processing information systems available to any police force in the world; $19.3 million worth of computerware will put the Victoria Police in the front rank of the scientific world in its fight against crime.

The Government inherited a disgraceful situation when it came to office because many police stations in Victoria had no vehicle available to them. The previous Liberal Government would not even provide them with a police car. Members of the Police Force who staffed those stations did not even have the benefit of a police radio to keep them in touch with their bases.
The previous Government was prepared to put at risk the lives and well-being of policemen by depriving them of the ability to have basic communication. This Government and this Minister have put right that situation. Every police station in Victoria, even the smallest one-member station, now has an official police vehicle available to it.

The Government is also in the process of carrying out the greatest upgrading of police training accommodation in Victoria's history. I offer the honourable member for Benalla the opportunity of inspecting with me the improvements the Government is making, at a cost of many millions of dollars, to the Police Training Academy at Glen Waverley.

At the same time these developments are occurring, the Government is also constructing the new Forensic Science Laboratory which the previous Government denied the Police Force. This process of improvement and upgrading of police communications is continuing.

The Leader of the National Party shakes his head; he denies that this is occurring. I invite the Leader of the National Party to inspect with me all the new police stations the Government is building in country Victoria.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER—Order! The House has worked itself up into considerable excitement. It is fairly obvious that the Minister is not going to resign. I ask the Minister to now round off his remarks.

Mr MATHEWS—I am rounding off my reply to the honourable member for Benalla, I shall refer to relationships between the Government and the Victoria Police Association. Within the first month of becoming Minister for Police and Emergency Services, I invited to my office the president, the secretary, the vice-president and the assistant secretary of the Police Association and said to them at the outset, "My door is open to the association at all times. Let us schedule regular meetings at which you can come to this office and lay down on the table your problems and I shall lay down mine so that they can be overcome". I am pleased to inform the House that that system has worked extremely well.

The Government also moved away from the adversary industrial relations climate which the previous Government insisted on imposing on itself and the Police Force. The Government has put industrial relations in the Police Force into the context of a working party which, in turn, has been triumphantly successful over the four years that the Government has been in office.

Mr Maclellan—You have got another 6 minutes!

Mr MATHEWS—I appreciate the interjection of the honourable member for Berwick and I find no fault with his timing of my speech.

We went even further and upgraded the scientific detection capacity of the Victoria Police to the extent that, if there is any necessity for the Kennett tapes to be analysed, at least the Police Force can carry out that task.

ROAD SAFETY

Mrs WILSON (Dandenong North)—Will the Minister for Transport advise the House of the further steps the Government is taking to improve road safety in Victoria?

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—In the past three and a half years the Government has constantly demonstrated considerable concern and vigour in dealing with one of the major problems confronting this State, namely, the carnage that occurs every day on our roads. My colleague, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, who has just outlined the huge improvements that have occurred in the Police Force, has co-operated with the Road Traffic Authority. We have co-operated with the Education Department and received the support of officers throughout the Public Service in a consistent and constant attack on the problems of road safety in this State.
In the past few years both legislative and administrative changes have resulted in the continuing reduction of road deaths and serious injuries. The Government believes we cannot rest there. The number of deaths so far this year is more than for the same period last year. Yesterday the Minister for Education and I launched a totally new program of road safety aimed at ensuring that children throughout their school years have access to information, advice and understanding of road traffic and road safety. This is the first time that this project has been carried out in Victoria and Australia.

We recently launched a new learner driving system to assist young people in particular to have a better understanding of the road laws before driving on the roads. However, many people still suffer unnecessary injury and death on the roads.

As an initiative to attack the road toll further, next week on 22 October we will auction a number of personalized number plates aimed at raising funds for road safety programs. This follows the initiatives of my colleague, the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs, Steve Crabb, last year, and will result in significant sums of money becoming available for road safety programs. Nearly $1 million was made available last year. I know some members of Parliament and members of the community have different views about personalized number plates. Some of us do not understand why people would want to place number plates with strange words on their cars. However, much community interest has been demonstrated.

The auction next week will raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for road safety expenditure. The auction will offer 250 names for number plates; not all names have yet been distributed. We have not yet put out a number plate “mouth 1”, which I offer to the Leader of the Opposition. He may be interested in “Load” or “Foot”. As no more than six letters can be included, “foot-in-mouth” is not a possible alternative, so “mouth 1” is probably the most appropriate.

Certainly Tandberg could use that to his advantage. The money that is received will be used to provide information for pedestrians and school safety. The Government will fund a program aimed at providing traffic safety arrangements and assistance for the Police Force.

The Leader of the Opposition interjects, as is his wont in these matters, but he totally ignores questions of road safety and totally ignores most of the major issues that occur in this State. As the Premier said, today was the first occasion for a long time on which the honourable member raised a matter of significance to the community as opposed to bits and pieces that he is inclined to put forward. He almost always raises matters on the periphery of community concern and not matters in the centre of community concern, such as nursing, road safety, housing and the police. Those matters are not the periphery but involve real Government administration.

Those funds will also enable the Government to continue its program of random tests on road vehicles. They will enable the Government to continue bicycle programs and will result in significant reductions in the number of young people, in particular, who are killed or injured on our roads.

**PERSONAL EXPLANATION**

Mr RICHARDSON (Forest Hill) *(By leave)*—Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation. In the final extra edition of the *Herald* of 16 October 1985 I was named in an article on page 3 in the following terms:

In State Parliament, a Liberal frontbencher, Mr Richardson, named Mr Crabb in a question to Mr Cain.

Mr Richardson asked: “I refer to the omission in public records that the Honourable J. Dixon, MLC, and the Honourable M. Arnold, MLC, and now the Honourable the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs have received significant contributions in cash or kind to make overseas trips.”

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948 ASSEMBLY 17 October 1985

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I inform the House that the Herald report is in error. I did not ask the question attributed to me and I wish my objection to the report, which is totally inaccurate, to be placed on the public record.

Mr STOCKDALE (Brighton) (By leave)—Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation. In last night's final extra edition of the Melbourne Herald, there appears what purports to be a report of a question by my colleague, the honourable member for Forest Hill, during question time on 16 October. The report is inaccurate in two respects. Firstly, the report clearly refers to a question asked by me and not by the honourable member for Forest Hill. Secondly, the purported report of the question in quotation marks commences with the words, “I refer to the omission in public records”. The word “omission” is inaccurate. The Hansard report of my question reads as follows:

I refer the Premier to the admission in published records that the Honourable J. L. Dixon and the Honourable M. J. Arnold from another place and the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs received significant contributions, in cash or kind, when making overseas trips. In light of the Premier's precedent for the repayment of perks, I ask the Premier whether he has instructed all three to repay.

Although the confusion of the words “omission” and “admission” is, perhaps, understandable, the report is in error. I make this explanation to ensure that the public record is corrected.

PETITIONS

The Clerk—I have received the following petitions for presentation to Parliament:

Child care and kindergarten programs

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled:

We the undersigned wish to express our concerns regarding the future of child care and kindergarten programs in the State of Victoria.

As parents of young children and citizens of your electorate we seek your assurance that these services, which are essential to the well-being of the community will continue to be provided and funded as in the past by your Government, not only in the coming year but in the years that lie ahead.

We request reassurance that there will be “no cuts” to existing programs and seek consideration for your ongoing support of “third groups” at kindergartens in communities where there is an identified need.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Mr Shell (28 signatures) and Mr Hill (11 signatures)

It was ordered that the petitions be laid on the table.

PAPERS

The following papers, pursuant to the directions of several Acts of Parliament, were laid on the table by the Clerk:


Port of Melbourne Authority—Report for the year 1984–85.

Road Traffic Authority—Report for the year 1984–85—Ordered to be printed.

State Transport Authority—Report for the year 1984–85—Ordered to be printed.

DENTAL TECHNICIANS (LICENCES) BILL

This Bill was received from the Council and, on the motion of Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport), was read a first time.
MELBOURNE AND METROPOLITAN BOARD OF WORKS (RECONSTITUTION) BILL

Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Water Resources)—I move:
That I have leave to bring in a Bill to amend the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Act 1958 and for other purposes.

Mr DELZOPPO (Narracan)—I ask the Minister to outline to the House the effect of the proposed legislation.

Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Water Resources) (By leave)—The Bill covers the re-structuring of the board following the transfer of planning powers to the Ministry for Planning and Environment.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

PREVENTION OF SECONDARY BOYCOTT BILL

Mr GUBE (Hawthorn) moved for leave to bring in a Bill to promote industry, trade and commerce, to outlaw secondary boycott action, to provide for a right of action for loss or damages should a secondary boycott occur and to amend the Trade Unions Act 1958, the Industrial Relations Act 1979, and for other purposes.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

GRAIN FREIGHT RATES

Mr W. D. McGRATH (Lowan)—I move:
That this House condemns the Minister for Transport for applying a 6 per cent increase in rail grain freight rates for the 1985-86 season thus financially disadvantaging grain growers in Victoria who have faced a 61 per cent increase in freight charges since 1980-81 and further jeopardizing the precarious financial position of Victorian growers.

It is because of my alarm after the recent announcement by the Minister for Transport that grain freight rates in Victoria will increase by 6 per cent for the forthcoming harvest that I have moved this motion today. It is necessary to reflect on what happened after the great drought of 1982 when the wheat harvest came in all over Australia at the end of 1982-83, which got the economy going at that time.

The Governments of the day took much of the credit, suggesting that they had created the initiatives in the economy to get things rolling. If one goes back through history one sees that there was a downturn in the rural economy that subsequently flowed right through the over-all economy. When the rains came the countryside began to prosper and, of course, a magnificent wheat harvest coupled with better returns for wool and meat saw a regeneration of the Australian economy.

The primary sector of this country generates, either directly or indirectly, more that 1 million jobs. It plays a significant role. To deal specifically with the Minister's decision to increase freight rates by 6 per cent, it is necessary to consider why the National Party is critical of the Government being totally unsympathetic to the rural community. This is a time when the rural economy is facing difficulties. It is vital that the Government exercises some sympathy towards that sector. Undoubtedly, if there is trouble in the workplace the Government has much sympathy for the union movement and those people associated with it but this is certainly not the case in its attitude to rural producers.
We are facing increased costs, especially with fuel and the continuation of world parity pricing for fuel. Everybody is experiencing the highest interest rates we have ever had in this country.

The freight rate for superphosphate, which is a vital element in the grain growing process, has risen by 6 per cent. Undoubtedly the Minister for Transport will argue that it is only a minor increase below the consumer price index and he will refer to the large increases in freight rates which occurred in earlier years.

I draw the attention of the House to some of the increases in freight rates that apply to Warracknabeal, which is in the heart of the grain growing area of the Wimmera. It is one of the most significant wheat producing areas in Australia.

In 1980-81 the freight rate was $13.90 for a tonne of wheat. That represented an increase of $1.85 a tonne on the previous year. In 1981-82 it increased to $15.90, which was an increase of $2. In 1982-83, when the Labor Party assumed office, the freight rate increased to $17.80 a tonne, which was an increase of $1.90 a tonne. In 1983-84, it rose to $20.25, which was an increase of $2.25 a tonne, which was the highest single increase. In examining those figures it is important to compare them in dollars rather than percentages.

In 1984-85, the freight rate rose to $21.46 a tonne, which was an increase of $1.20. It is anticipated that this year the freight rate from Warracknabeal will be $22.66 a tonne, which will be an increase of $1.20 a tonne.

Grain growers will be charged $22.66 for the transport of a tonne of grain on a 300 kilometre trip from the country to the seaboard. V/Line trains are filled under the Grain Elevators Board chutes and driven to the port where, once again, the Grain Elevators Board chutes are used and the grain grower is charged $22.66 for the transport of a tonne of grain. V/Line does not incur any handling costs because all of those costs are incurred by the board, which is also paid for by the grain growers.

The Grain Elevators Board, which is composed of grain grower representatives, is now controlled by the Minister for Transport. That board does not appear to be working as well as it did when it was under the control of the Department of Agriculture. It is National Party policy that the board should come under the control of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

I draw the attention of the House to the grain freight rates that grain growers in the Mallee face. Approximately 200 kilometres farther north at Yalta, the grain grower faces a cost of $26.85 a tonne to have grain transported to the seaboard.

The stage is being reached where there is no profit margin in grain growing, simply because Government charges in many areas are sending grain growers to the wall.

At present Australian growers are in a different position in the world grain trade from those in the United States of America who are taking on the European Economic Community in a grain trade war. That is having a significant ramification and is affecting the ability of Australian farmers to export to overseas markets.

For example, Egypt, which was a major importer of grain from Australia and last year imported grain to the tune of 2.6 million tonnes, is now obtaining that grain at a lower price from the American growers. Of course, that results in a lower export price for Australian grain. I am certainly not blaming the Victorian Government for that situation, but it shows that the Government must have some understanding of what occurs in the real world.

One of the damning things that has occurred during the time of the current Minister for Transport relates to a consultative process which was set up by the former Minister of Transport, Mr Crabb, for arriving at a grain freight charge for a particular harvest.

The former Minister set up a consultative network. Whenever the Government tried anything new, it talked about consultation that had taken place within the industry and
the consultative network was set up involving V/Line and other associated parties, such as the Australian Wheat Board and the Australian Barley Board, which had an input into striking a new freight rate.

Of course, this year V/Line, the State Transport Authority and the Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association began to meet, and rumours were circulating that V/Line believed it could justify only a marginal increase in the freight rate, and that that increase should be somewhere between only 1 per cent and 3 per cent.

The Minister thought this was not good enough; he was afraid that V/Line would listen to the Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association, which was advocating a nil increase, and that V/Line would adopt the view of the association. Therefore, the Minister informed the State Transport Authority that it was not to meet with the association—I suppose that was just in case the authority and the association happened to strike a mutual agreement that might be of some advantage to grain growers in this State.

This all occurred when the Government spoke about consultation within the industry in arriving at what is appropriate and reasonable. Honourable members have heard the Premier say, "I am a reasonable man", and that a consultative process is embarked upon to arrive at reasonable decisions. However, for the first time in some five or six years, the Minister has pulled the plug, thrown that idea out of the window, thinking that he could step in and demand any increase in the grain freight rate that he considered most appropriate.

Although the Minister speaks about a 6 per cent increase in the grain freight rate, it really means an additional $1.20 or $1.40 a tonne, which will mean a total increase in freight costs of approximately $650 to the average farmer. If one extends that analogy further, it means that some $12,000 will come out of that farmer's over-all income during the grain harvest. That is a substantial figure, particularly when one considers what has occurred to grain prices in the past few years.

In 1981–82, wheat farmers received a first advance payment of $141.55 a tonne; at that time they were paying $15.90 a tonne in freight charges. In the 1984–85 season, wheat farmers received a first advance payment of $131.08, at which time similar circumstances existed. There has now been an increase in the freight rate of the order of $20 or $25 a tonne.

Freight rates have increased by almost $5 a tonne and the price of grain in the first advance has increased by less than $4 a tonne, so the return to the farmer on grain has been less than the freight increases from 1981–82 to 1984–85.

Grain Elevators Board handling charges increased from $10.35 in 1981–82 to $13.75 in 1984–85. That is probably as a result of the public authority dividend tax which has cost the grain industry $13.5 million for the past three years. From time to time the Treasurer has suggested that that tax will not cost the grain industry anything. That is a completely different view from that of the industry, which would like to have the use of that $13.5 million. Perhaps the increases in grain-handling charges this year to the Grain Elevators Board will be held at a lower figure. The Minister has yet to announce these new charges.

What is happening in the industry? I refer to the Canac report and its recommendations of September 1984 which at point 8 states:

V/LINE OPERATIONS.

V/Line is already improving its grain-moving capability with route improvements, larger locomotives, and larger wagons, worked in longer trains.

That has all been supported by the industry. The report continues:

The Grain Elevators Board has improved receival arrangements at Geelong and Portland to accommodate them, and plans further improvements. But even the best of V/Line's operations, the block trains presently
running between the Western Region CRPs and Portland, fall well short of the throughput of which they are capable.

The consultants RECOMMEND that, as quickly as possible, V/Line lowers its grain haulage costs by:

Operating standard grain trains of at least 48 bogie wagons to Portland and Geelong, in place of the 33/22 wagon trains operated at present.

Improving the design of its grain hoppers to increase the load : tare ratio. Any new design must have at least a payload of 60 tonnes of ASW wheat on a tare of no more than 20 tonnes.

Increasing the fleet of bogie hoppers to eliminate the use of obsolescent four-wheeled wagons in grain operations in the intensive service to the ports or major domestic users.

The number of grain wagons over the past twelve months has not been substantially increased. According to my understanding, that program has fallen behind what was originally planned before the Government came to office in 1982.

Another aspect of efficiency that should be examined is the use of two man and now three man crews on trains operating in this State. Has the Government addressed this problem of crews, and when is it going to obtain a result?

Consultations take place with the unions but, as I have pointed out previously, when it looks as though the consultative process between the industry and authority may bring about a different result to what the Minister has in mind, that consultative process is called off. It is a one-way street. My understanding is that the Government has not honoured its commitment to provide sufficient facilities for V/Line to deliver the grain to the Grain Elevators Board terminal at Geelong so that it can be shipped out as soon as ships become available at the seaport.

Another problem that has been around for a long time—and I understand that it is costing the State Transport Authority somewhere around $2 million a year in extra costs—is the Echuca Bridge over the River Murray. The plan for improvements has been on the drawing board for I do not know how long. The limitations of the bridge mean that train movements in that area can only provide for the operation of the very smallest of locomotives because the bridge is the same one that was there in the days of the steam engine and the 4-wheel hop wagon. The load limitation is so small it costs the State Transport Authority almost an additional $2 million a year to bring wheat from New South Wales over the bridge into Victoria. The Government will not take the bit between the teeth and build a new bridge over the river at Echuca. The problem has been outstanding for a considerable period and yet this dynamo Minister for Transport cannot get his act together.

It could be said that because the honourable gentleman did not perform too well as Minister of Health, the Government decided to move him into the world of transport where perhaps his blunders would be less likely to show up. Of course, as the honourable member for Benalla says, he is the Jonah of the present Cabinet.

The Victorian transport system is not performing as efficiently as it should, either on the suburban lines or in country passenger and freight services, but I will not enter into that debate as the House is dealing specifically with rail grain freight rates.

In the present economic climate, the industry cannot stand the 61 per cent increase in freight charges that has taken place since 1981. It is just not on.

The volume of grain tonnage through V/Line operations is vital to its operation and its economy. Yet the Minister goes over the head of his own board and says that he will increase the grain freight rate, which will make the charges prohibitive and turn the farmers away. This action will bring about a less efficient system, and will force farmers in the Riverina and in the north west and west of the State to find alternative means of transporting wheat.

The loss of business will push up the cost for other rail users; already in South Australia the Australian National Railways is reaping the benefits.
What will happen next is that the farmers who have the financial capability, financial viability or financial strength will say, "Right; I will buy a better rig, I will store my grain on the farm and I will transport it over a period of time to the seaboard. I will not use the Grain Elevators Board installation in the country, I will not use the V/Line network in the country, I will use my own mode of transport".

Mr McNamara—They’re entitled to do it!

Mr W. D. McGrath—They are entitled to do it and there are cost advantages for them in doing this.

A number of farmers do not have the physical or the financial resources to stay in the industry in that sort of situation. Many farmers will not be able to survive because the Government of the day has placed unfair freight rate increases on them, giving them no incentive or ability to perform a duty in what is a vital Victorian industry. Their work is absolutely vital to the economy of Victoria and also to the social well-being of the State.

It is easy for a Government with a Labor philosophy to pull the rug out from under farmers because it has decided to centralize everything in the metropolitan area or in major regional cities. That makes it easier for the Government to manipulate the industry. The one thing the Government cannot centralize in the country is agriculture. The land is there and it has to be worked. It must be made economically viable for farmers to remain on the land and to maintain a living. It is the responsibility of the Government to assist the farmers wherever possible.

The decision by the Minister of Transport to increase freight rates by a further 6 per cent is another way of kicking the grain grower in the backside and telling him to cop it and to go on his way.

The Minister for Transport, in a letter dated 10 October 1985 to the grains group chairman of the Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association, explained why freight rates should be increased. He explained that the increase in grain rates in real terms from 1979 to 1982 was 38 per cent—I am sure the Minister for Transport will make great play of that point when he comes into the House—and that the increase in real terms during 1982-83 and 1984-85 was 4-7 per cent, and that from 1984-85 to 1985-86 there was a decline of 1-6 per cent in real terms.

However, the Minister has not examined the other side of the ledger to see what the wheat farmers are doing in real terms and that is because he is not really interested. On page 2 of this letter the Minister also states:

This rate anticipates a continuance of efficiency improvement within the rail system during the present year and it assumes implementation of a number of recommendations of the Canac report which you have endorsed as a member of the Grain Handling Review Group.

I take up that point of the implementation of a number of recommendations of the Canac report. That report states that a central receival point system should be established. Many farmers have criticisms about that. However, in the face of the economic situation and with the increased cost of road transport, the farmers of Victoria, through their organization, have agreed to accept the recommendations of the Canac report for a central receiving point.

Economies in grain freighting were carried out by the farmers. They took the bit between their teeth and attempted to improve their farm rolling-stock. They were prepared to travel further with each load of wheat from the farm to a central outlet. They suffered that inconvenience but they want some return from the Government through the State Transport Authority. The sacrifice made by grain growers of this State cannot continue.

The Minister for Transport has a lot to answer for if he tries to justify a 6 per cent increase. All that will achieve is a transfer of cost to the grower. The Government should
pick the cost up at its end. Not only is the Government transferring the cost to the grower but it is taking a bigger slice of the cake as well.

The letter to Mr Cock continues:

The Government is concerned to improve the performance and to reduce the costs of the rail haulage and general handling of grain as quickly as possible, and to pass these on to growers in terms of improved freight rates and other charges.

What a great statement that is in light of what the House is currently discussing.

The letter continues:

The Government is also concerned to see that the industry is not burdened with costs which may arise from decisions of the Government which, although taken in the overall community interest, could adversely affect the costs of transporting grain.

This question of the "efficient cost" of grain handling has been the subject of extended discussions between STA and the Ministry of Transport, as has the question of the extent to which, and the rate at which, costs can be reduced.

However, honourable members are currently discussing an increase of 6 per cent.

Farmers in Victoria are asking why in the hell does an industry that provides input into the community under Government direction have to pay 100 per cent of the overall costs of freight transport when suburban rail passengers only pick up less than 50 per cent of the actual cost. That is the question being asked around the bush. Why is there discrimination between one section of the community and another? In an article in the Wimmera Mail Times, Mr Vin Delahunty, Chairman of the Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association Bulk Handling Committee, stated:

There seems little point to freight negotiations which started two years ago. The Government took the decision out of the hands of its own negotiators. The rise is another tax, that's all it is.

That is exactly what it is. Mr Delahunty has been involved in the grain industry and has tried to provide representations for the growers of this State who elected him with a degree of confidence. Any negotiating powers that he may have had on behalf of growers have been stolen from him by the Minister for Transport who allows the State Transport Authority to negotiate with the Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association to achieve a freight rate. It is a disgusting indictment on the Minister that he should impose the freight increase and pull the rug on those authorities.

A number of questions should be asked during the debate regarding the Canac report. I raise with the Minister the vital matter of the maintenance of light rail lines. Recommendations have been put forward by a committee that was established to examine the recommendations of the Canac report. However, those recommendations are not yet fully understood and have not been fully analysed by the wider community, and I ask the Minister whether he will provide the finance to maintain the light rail lines that service the grain industry. I refer to lines such as the one that runs from Jeparit, the one that runs from Hopetoun to Patchewollock and the one that runs from Horsham to Carpoloc.

Will the Minister provide the finance to maintain those light rail lines or will he pull the rug from under them and let the grain industry carry the extra burden of additional costs incurred by using central reception points?

The Minister has a lot to answer for in justifying what he claims are just freight rate increases. It will be interesting to see what happens. The grain growers of the State believe they are being short changed by the Government. I say that from my position as a representative of a large section of the grain growing industry in this State. The honourable member for Swan Hill, who also represents a large number of wheat growers, knows that the industry has been short changed, and so do the honourable members for Benalla and Mildura.

The Minister should reconsider. Not only does the National Party condemn the Minister by moving the motion, but also the grain industry and grain farmers condemn the Minister.
If the Minister wants to wear that condemnation, good luck to him and that is the way it shall be.

The Minister will soon be out of office. He will not have the confidence of people vital to the transport industry. His Government will go under at the next election and I hope the incoming Government will have a more reasonable approach to the grain industry, which is a vital industry in providing opportunities to create a viable economy. It should not be crucified and killed off by Government taxes and charges.

Mr I. W. Smith (Polwarth)—The Opposition is pleased to support the motion moved by the honourable member for Lowan, which provides:

That this House condemns the Minister for Transport for applying a 6 per cent increase in rail grain freight rates for the 1985-86 season thus financially disadvantaging grain growers in Victoria who have faced a 61 per cent increase in freight charges since 1980-81 and further jeopardizing the precarious financial position of Victorian growers.

Shortly after the State election one could hear the heavy sighs and sinking hearts throughout country areas when people realized that the Minister for Transport, having been transferred from his role as Minister of Health, was to take up the transport portfolio.

Country people very much rely on a containment of transport costs for their basic productive industries’ viability, their private lives and the costs associated with that. However, those people, who possess a fair degree of common sense and look at Governments critically, had seen this Minister’s exercise in the health portfolio.

The Minister took over a health system that was the best in Australia with no waiting lists and, in three years, accumulated a 24 000 patient waiting list, one third of whom were waiting for pain-relieving surgery.

Country people examined the track record of the Minister and wondered what was going to happen in transport. The current Minister for Transport and his predecessor in that portfolio will turn out to be the most costly and disastrous Ministers in the period in which the Cain Labor Government is in office.

Total chaos has occurred within the Ministry of Transport. Even the trade union movement has been urging the Minister to recombine the metropolitan railway network with the country railway network to at least attain some semblance of the efficiency—such as it was—that existed prior to the division of the system. The Minister has not made himself available to travel around country areas and discover how the system is or is not working. I realize he is besieged by the inherited chaos of his predecessor, who adopted the theory that he should split up the various organs of transport into four—and they are hoping five—separate quasi-Government operations.

Instead of that theory being successful, one has only to look at the Auditor-General’s qualifications in the report to glean some insight into how financially out of control the Ministry of Transport is. If one does not want to do that, the appropriations in the Budget at present before Parliament clearly demonstrate that the Ministry had no idea of what its accounts were and what its costs and needs were likely to be.

The figures set out in the Budget do not indicate the extent of the cost and price increases that are now starting to dribble out through debate on the Budget. That matter ought to have been put in train earlier, properly negotiated and announced after it was finalized. All in all, what is occurring in the Ministry of Transport is a continual slip in morale but, at the same time, there is a rapidly escalating increase in expenditure.

At page 185 of Budget Paper No. 4, dealing with the operating expenditure for the public transport authorities, it is stated that “the net result is an estimated 18.8 per cent rise in the call on the Budget for recurrent purposes”. That represents a huge escalation in costs in one financial year and clearly indicates that the large expenditure undertaken by the Ministry during the previous three years has not led to efficiencies.
Grain Freight Rates

To further illustrate the unfairness of the cost increases imposed on grain growers, I shall quote from Budget Paper No. 2 at page 57. Under the heading, “Transport”, it states:

Activity in the transport sector has been strong in 1984-85. In the year to May 1985 compared with the same period in the previous year, the volume of freight carried by V/Line increased by 20.0 per cent. Much of this increase was due to a large increase in the amount of grain carried.

No doubt grain is the major freight income source on the railways system. The reason is that grain growers do not have a choice because the industry is so regulated.

Mr Remington—You never gave them a choice. Did you give them a choice?

Mr I. W. SMITH—Has the honourable member for Melbourne got his fly done up today? I am sick of his interjections.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fogarty)—Order! The honourable member for Melbourne will cease interjecting; he is out of order. The honourable member for Polwarth is also out of order. I ask him to withdraw that remark.

Mr I. W. SMITH—I withdraw that remark, Mr Deputy Speaker. The grain industry is the major earner for the Victorian railways system because of the compulsion on grain growers who do not have a choice of how to deliver their grain to the seaboard. The grain must go through the elevator system and on to rail transport, so it is easy for the Government to milk the grain industry dry by increasing the freight rates by 6 per cent, as the honourable member for Lowan said. People may say that it makes sense to cart grain by rail because it takes the heavy tonnages off the road system and is cost effective. So it used to be. When increases in grain freights were to occur, grain grower organizations and the Government had discussions and negotiations to arrive at a reasonable increase.

The Minister for Transport, in one of his rare country appearances, addressed a country conference of the Australian Labor Party and stated:

During the last three years of Liberal Government the grain rate increased by 54.7 per cent, compared to our 35.1 per cent.

The Minister then criticized the high rates of increases imposed by the former Liberal Government. However, after having criticized those high charges, he added a further 6 per cent to them!

The Minister does not realize that those freight increases, heavy though they were in 1982-83, followed a period such as the 1978-79 financial year when there was no increase at all. The reason then was that grain growers were going through a drought and were in difficult financial circumstances.

Mr Roper—1978 was an election year!

Mr I. W. SMITH—It was a drought year for the Labor Party, too. The history of discussions and negotiations between grain grower organizations and the previous Liberal Government led to understandings about the fluctuations necessary to protect the viability of the grain industry. In years when large increases in freight rates occurred, growers also received more money for their grain, which was then spent on upgrading facilities for the grain industry.

Although that working relationship received some criticism from individual growers, overall it was a reasonably satisfactory outcome and a proper way to conduct the grain industry. Victoria now has more proof that a socialist Government does not understand the free enterprise system. It is kicking yet another industry when that industry is down.

Earlier this year the Victorian dairy industry was in trouble. Did it receive assistance from the State Government? The only assistance it received was a small increase in the price of a small component of its product—liquid milk—and, ironically, the return from that increase to the farmer equated with the increased charge for electricity consumed by the average dairy farmer.
Grain Freight Rates

The Government has no understanding of rural industries. The addition of a 6 per cent increase to the high freight rate that the Minister criticized at a country conference of the Australian Labor Party is the straw that will break the camel's back.

In an article contained in Stock and Land of 12 September, Peter Hemphill writes about deregulation of grain transport and a farmer's suggestion that a $5 a tonne cost savings is available for growers. That article states:

Deregulation of grain transport could save grain-growers as much as $5 a tonne or 24 per cent of rail freight rates, a delegate to the Australian Wheatgrowers Federation said this week.

Don McGauchie, a strong critic of statutory authorities' charges, said Y/Line was overcharging grain-growers substantially and the industry was paying heavily for the inefficiency of the railways.

The article further demonstrates how this farmer calculated that his operating costs would be $5 a tonne or 24 per cent cheaper if he could avoid the compulsory system of grain handling forced upon growers.

I have no doubt that other nations might consider their armaments their greatest strength, but the greatest strength of this nation is its efficiency of agriculture. If a country does not have agricultural strength, it needs grains to command strength in the marketplace. The wheat growers of this State are as efficient as wheat growers anywhere in the world and more efficient than those in most other places. They will be put out of business only by deliberate Government intervention.

What is occurring on the farm now is not the result of world parity food pricing, but of the tax formula attached to world parity pricing. The huge increase in fuel costs is absorbing about 20 per cent of the costs of growing grain. A tonne of wheat is priced at approximately $140. Out of that $140, $13 goes to the Grain Elevators Board for grain handling charges, and $22 disappears in rail charges; that does not include the further 6 per cent increase in grain freight rates, which will add another $1.30 a tonne on average to that cost. All those increases have concertinaed in on the grain grower in about four or five years, during which time prices in the world market-place have increased by only approximately 15 per cent.

The Australian grain grower has suffered a 61 per cent increase in grain freight charges in that period. When one adds insurance increases, increases in municipal rates and all the other general cost increases, one realizes that grain growers are literally on the edge of ruin. They cannot go out, as they did in days past, with an axe and a tonne of guts and carve themselves more land out of the bush to increase their productivity. They are all now landlocked by neighbours who are desperate to acquire more land to improve their economies of scale in order to compete and stay in business.

The Government is aggravating their plight deliberately, without proper consultation and negotiation. As the honourable member for Lowan said, this is a one-sided affair. Grain growers are told what they will be given. The unions, which are responsible for added costs for rail charges, have been pampered like babies.

I shall refer to the agricultural outlook compiled mainly by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. The overview states:

Despite the beneficial effects of the depreciation of the Australian dollar on farm export returns, the overall economic performance of the rural sector is likely to decline further this financial year. The real net value of rural production, which is a key indicator of the economic performance of the rural sector, is forecast to fall by 22 per cent between 1984-85 and 1985-86.

A number of industries are in severe financial difficulties. These include the sugar, dairy and some horticultural industries. The incomes of wheat farmers should be down this financial year as returns to growers are likely to be down, and the wheat crop is expected to be nearly 3mt lower than last season. Increased fuel and fertilizer costs will also impact heavily on grain farmers.

The major reasons underlying the weak position of Australian farming at present continue to be weak international commodity prices, particularly for grains, sugar and dairy, and rising farm costs.
It goes on to quote the gross value of farm products. I do not need to remind honourable members of the vital importance of the farming sector to this nation, especially Victoria.

The Minister for Transport cannot find an optimistic outlook for the grain industry that would indicate extra production. Indeed the output for the industry will be cut in half by seasonal conditions in the State.

Mr Roper—Cut in half?

Mr I. W. Smith—Yes, but the Minister for Transport would not know what the real situation is.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! The Minister will get his opportunity later on.

Mr I. W. Smith—The Minister for Transport would not know the factors involved in earning a dollar because he has never had to fight in the private enterprise system to make a dollar. The Minister has come from the world of academia.

Mr Remington interjected.

Mr I. W. Smith—I shall deal with the honourable member for Melbourne if he continues with that sort of interjection.

The Acting Speaker—Order! I wish the honourable member for Melbourne would resist the temptation to interject.

Mr Maclellan (Berwick)—On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, you, having heard the honourable member for Melbourne interject and having responded to him, will ensure that if the interjection of the honourable member is recorded in Hansard you, Mr Acting Speaker, will have to examine what the honourable member for Melbourne said and then, with Mr Speaker, examine carefully the implications of the remark made by the honourable member for Melbourne, which relates to the privileges of honourable members in this House.

The Acting Speaker—Order! I thank the honourable member for Berwick for raising that point of order and I assure the House that I shall speak to Mr Speaker and have a determination made on the words used.

Mr I. W. Smith (Polwarth)—The Minister for Transport will not find any arguments to support his conclusion that the grain industry is able to bear additional costs. The quality of grain will be down by half and the price of it, if anything, will be down on the last financial year, certainly down in real terms despite the devaluation, but at the same time all other costs have increased.

Many of these costs are indexed and this is one of the factors I was talking about in the Budget debate. One of the real ills of socialism, with indexation tied into this form of socialism, is that it is totally unrelated to the market-place. In the running of government one requires sufficient flexibility so that the private enterprise sector can be assisted and can have its problems discussed and negotiated, so that it can maintain a competitive edge, particularly when that edge has got to be in the market-place.

The indexing of costs and charges on top of wages, salaries and conditions is a sure recipe for pricing out of the market-place those businesses that have to compete on the international market and are private enterprise oriented.

I have no doubt that the cycles in the agricultural area will recur. Good times for the farming community of this State will come again. They are the times to sit down and negotiate on increases in freight charges, not when an unavoidable reduction in quality and a rapid increase in costs has occurred.

It shows total insensitivity and lack of understanding by the Minister for Transport and the Government. The Minister, before long, will be wondering why the great rural industries
of this State are not employing the people that they now do and not proving to be the motor for the economy that they currently are. The rural community will not have the capacity to compete progressively under these sorts of indexed costs-charges policies, which are quite unrelated to the world market.

As I pointed out earlier, there is no doubt in the mind of the Opposition and in the mind of the unions involved in the transport industry that the Ministry itself is out of control. It has forced on to the community a very expensive system. Management costs have increased over three and a half years by approximately 650 per cent. Services to people in some cases have improved, but the services to the commercial sector, if anything, have degenerated.

The grain industry is expected to meet a 100 per cent recoup of the costs incurred without any say or effective action that the industry can take to reduce the costs of that system. The Government sets the pace. It puts on the staff. It increases costs of administration. It gives the handouts to the unions. It has high crewings on trains. It has short hours. It has huge taxi bills for running people backwards and forwards in order to meet trains. The industry that is forced to accept these charges has absolutely no control over those costs whatsoever.

Even worse, the industry is locked into the system. It cannot say the transport system is out of control, that it is too costly, that the industry has no control over this crummy railway system and, therefore, will transport grain in the industry's own trucks. Rail transport of grain is compulsory. Growers are locked into a system which has set itself on a course of destroying the grain industry with its high costs and lack of capacity to ensure appropriate rates.

No other industry is called upon to recoup 100 per cent of rail costs. The contrast is in the metropolitan area, of course, where passengers enjoy only a small 25 per cent recoup of the costs. How unfair that is! Surely, the people in the metropolitan area must realize that they depend on the basic productive sector which is being called on to meet 100 per cent of the costs over that which the industry has no control.

How many votes would there be for the Labor Party in the metropolitan area if the people of Melbourne had to meet 100 per cent of the costs recouped and if fares had to increase on an average fourfold to meet those increases? No, there are not many votes in that. There are no votes for the Labor Party—nor will there ever be if this procedure continues to afflict the grain industry—in the country. It will only be when the Labor Party sees that it has destroyed the motor of the economy, the basic productive sector, by forcing on it costs that are out of control that the Labor Party will begin to realize its mistakes—and that will be far too late.

How can the Minister for Transport have the hide to criticize a period in the early 1980s when grain prices were rapidly rising, as did freight rates, to praise his own Government's effort in reducing the rate of increases thereafter, then, in addition to that, to add a further 6 per cent? There should have been no increase in this financial year, like it was in 1978. The honourable member for Bendigo West, who is interjecting, should go out amongst his electorate and tell the farmers there that he is happy with 6 per cent, that he is happy with inefficiency in the railways, and that he knows that this Government will not control costs. Let him put views in the local newspaper. The honourable member has no concept of the productive sector. He has never been involved in it.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! I request the honourable member for Bendigo West to cease his unruly interjections. The honourable member for Springvale has been interjecting persistently. I ask the honourable member to cease—his niggle is a niggle, and that is all.

Mr I. W. Smith—I have conceded that in times when grain prices are buoyant on world markets is the time when negotiations can yield an increase for rail freight rates. It has happened in the past and no doubt it will happen in the future. When there is a set of
circumstances that put the grain growers in jeopardy with low world prices and rapidly escalating costs, that is not the time to hit them when they are down.

Unless the Government becomes more sensitive in dealing with the private sector, especially the basic productive sector on which the economy depends it will not only fail as a Government but it also will take down many of the other enterprises that depend upon the productive sector. The Government is condemned for its insensitivity and for the chaos in the transport system, as well as for the fact that it has no idea about the private sector and its needs.

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—It is significant that in the two speeches made so far in this debate there has been no suggestion about what should occur, apart from the suggestion that there should be no price rise at all. There is no suggestion of an alternative or of what basis costing should occur, unless one takes the view of the honourable member for Polwarth about how costings should occur, which is that as the grain prices go up the Government should come in and “rip” off all the money producers with increased freight rates.

Certainly, the Hamer Government between 1979 and 1982 did that and it is hardly a sensible policy. It is necessary to have a policy, which the Government has adopted, to make the railways more efficient and to pass on the benefits to the people who provide the freight, in this instance the grain growers.

The motion is somewhat selective. I am not sure why the honourable member for Lowan decided to use 1980–81 as the base for his proposition. The appropriate base would have been 1979–80, because that is when the previous Government decided—and honourable members have heard now from the honourable member for Polwarth why it so decided—to rip off grain growers with huge increases every year. The honourable member for Polwarth was Minister of Agriculture at the time.

He was Minister of Agriculture when the freight rate went up 18 per cent in 1979–80 and he was Minister of Agriculture when the freight rate went up 15 per cent in 1980–81. At about that time, as honourable members will recall, the then Minister and the then Premier had a difference of opinion and, as a result, in the following year when the honourable member for Ripon was Minister of Agriculture, there was the lowest increase for the whole of that period. The rise was a paltry 14 per cent in 1981–82.

The cumulative rate of increase in the last three years of the Liberal Government was 54.7 per cent. Honourable members now understand why that occurred, it was because, as the honourable member for Polwarth said today, “If the prices are going up you rip the money off them”. That is not the policy this Government has adopted. In 1982–83 and 1983–84, the rises were less than those of the previous years of Liberal Government, being 12 per cent and 13·8 per cent respectively. Last year, because the Government was able to provide a more effective rail system for farmers and everyone else in the community, the increase was 6 per cent. That was one third of the increase in 1979–80; it was the lowest increase for six years.

That has been repeated this year when there has been the first decrease, in real terms, in freight rates for grain growers. Honourable members should consider what that means.

In 1979–80 there was an increase of 18 per cent in grain freight rates. That increase was well above the consumer price index in that year. This year the increase in grain freight rates is 6 per cent, which is 1·7 per cent below the consumer price index and even lower than the increase in V/Line’s costs for the year.

The Government took a deliberate decision to ensure—as I said at Swan Hill earlier this year—that any increase in costs would be below the consumer price index, which would lead to a more efficient rail system for grain growers.

The honourable member for Polwarth referred to the question of train crewing. In 1955 the Victorian Railways moved from using steam to diesel trains. What action did the then
Bolte Government take to remove firemen from trains? The honourable member for Polwarth is regarded as Sir Henry Bolte's disciple and wonder boy. What action did the then Bolte Government take in all its years in office? It left the firemen on the trains even though the trains did not use coal. For 27 years the then Liberal Government did absolutely nothing to make the railways more efficient.

It was left to my predecessor, the Honourable Steve Crabb, as Minister of Transport, to commence negotiations which, in November this year, will result in two-man crewing on trains.

Which Government has acted to ensure a more efficient system operates on the railways so that grain growers face reduced costs in real terms? It was not the previous Liberal Government, which left firemen without work on trains for 27 years.

When I visit the electorate of the honourable member for Evelyn and travel on a train, it will need a fireman on board because it is a steam train. However, that train is used for tourism purposes. The Victorian railway system did not need firemen on trains between 1955 and 1982. No action was taken by the previous Liberal Government to remove those firemen.

This Government has taken action. It has had discussions with the union and encountered some industrial difficulties as well. However, the Government has made it clear that it intends to introduce two-man crewing on trains.

The honourable member for Polwarth also referred to taxis, which are a substantial cost to V/Line. Which Government agreed to a log of claims by the Australian Federated Locomotive Union of Enginemen under which the taxi arrangements occur? It was not a Labor Government; it was the previous Liberal Government which agreed to those arrangements. The Government is working with V/Line and the unions in an endeavour to determine what can be done to reduce the cost of taxis. Those are the two particular examples that were raised by the honourable member for Polwarth.

There are many other examples of areas where the Government is acting to make the railways more efficient but where the previous Liberal Government allowed it to deteriorate.

With regard to the number of shunters who are required for V/Line services, after a lengthy process of consultation, the Government is reducing the number of shunters required because there has been a re-examination of the task. The reduction in the number of shunters will benefit the people who use V/Line services.

In the past three and a half years efforts have been made to upgrade the railway system and improve its efficiency. The Government believes those improvements should be passed on.

I shall comment further on the capital works program because that has been one way in which that efficiency has been increased.

This is an important debate because it relates to the largest freight area of V/Line activity. It is also about a crucial matter for a major industry in this State. No one suggests that significant problems do not currently exist in the wheat area. No one needs to suggest that, as a nation, we must think very carefully about what will occur in international wheat markets in the next five or six years. We already know, after the first three months of this year, that a smaller amount of freight is to be carried to the ports by V/Line because of the international grain situation. That means less revenue for V/Line as well as, of course, less revenue for the growers over time.

The Government has an interest, in partnership with the growers, in ensuring that their returns are maximized and that the returns from wheat to Australia are also maximized. For many years I have taken a great interest in non-metropolitan Victoria and I continue to have that interest.
It was suggested by the honourable member for Polwarth that the grain crop will be halved this financial year. He is predicting a 1.75 million tonne crop.

Mr I. W. Smith—That is not half.

Mr ROPER—The average crop is 3.5 million tonnes, and half of that is 1.75 million tonnes.

Mr I. W. Smith—You are using an average figure.

Mr ROPER—If one does not compare it with an average figure, with what does one compare it? The Government is certainly concerned that there are some areas of the State where the wheat crop will be significantly down. As the honourable members for Polwarth and Lowan know, the situation varies from year to year and from area to area.

The Government was extremely concerned earlier this year when it appeared that there would be virtually no grain from the Mallee. On my visit to Swan Hill with officers of the Grain Elevators Board, we spent some considerable time examining the situation in an area of about a 60 mile radius around Swan Hill. I recall discussing the matter with the honourable member for Swan Hill and one of the grower representatives, who is on the wheat board, as we travelled to Swan Hill on the excellent passenger service which did not exist three or four years ago, but which is now operating.

The Government is concerned, and it will continue to be concerned, to ensure that the benefits of the efficiencies that are now occurring are passed on to grain growers and other users of the transport system. It is not only grain, but also the other freights that are carried by V/Line, that this Parliament and all members of Parliament agreed should bear 100 per cent cost recovery.

Mr Maclellan—No; that is not right.

Mr ROPER—That was the target we discussed in this place. The honourable member for Berwick is now saying that that is not his view.

Mr Maclellan—That is right; it certainly is not.

Mr ROPER—in terms of the carriage of freight by the railways, it is certainly the intention of the Government, over time, to ensure that there is not a hidden community subsidy on freight activities.

Rail freight carrying, as by road or by ship, is a commercial activity; it should be seen as such and should be run efficiently as a commercial activity. That is the intention of the Government.

It was suggested earlier that there was some double standard applied in terms of passenger services. I make it quite clear that there is also a subsidy for country passenger services. The Government adopts the view that one cannot, for social reasons, seek full cost recovery from passenger services; if the Government had to do that, it would be closing down all the country services rather than reviving them, as it has been doing.

The proof of the pudding is in what has occurred to country passenger services, which have increased patronage by 8.8 per cent, as is indicated in the report that was tabled in this place today. That is the second significant increase in country passenger services. Despite the fact that there was no increase in fares last year, revenue from passenger services increased by $3 million.

That is indicative of a system that is on the improve. It has turned itself around from the constant reduction in passenger activity that occurred previously. Not only is passenger service revenue and activity on the increase, but also freight revenue is on the increase,
with more than 11 million tonnes, or close to 12 million tonnes, being carried last year, of which a large part, about one-third, was grain.

That is a compliment to the people, from senior management to those who are involved in the operational side of the organization of V/Line and who have improved their performance over the past few years, and has meant that the State Transport Authority has been able to make significant improvements in the services it provides.

We would all like to be in a position so that there will not be any increases in charges this year or that there will be a reduction in charges. That is not seriously proposed by honourable members opposite because they do not nominate the areas in which they would reduce activities. If the revenue does not come in to pay for the service it has to come from somewhere else.

Perhaps the honourable member for Polwarth thinks we should run fewer country passenger services. If that is how he thinks the books should be balanced then he should say so. If his party is saying it will forgo the grain freight increases this year, where will that money come from? Would he increase the freight charges on fertilizer or some other product that is transported to the country, or would he do something about country passenger services?

The Government has started to pass on the efficiencies that have resulted in economic performance in V/Line. It has not been suggested during this debate that V/Line will make a profit from carrying grain this year. It is significant that none of the speakers in this debate suggested that profit will be made from transporting grain. There will still be a loss of between $5 million and $7 million on the carriage of a crop of about 3·4 million tonnes. That is something that I am sure concerns most people—it certainly concerns the wheat growers and the taxpayers. Over the next three years the Government intends to decrease that loss by improved efficiency in the system and not simply by increasing rates in the traditional manner.

The Government will continue to pass on the benefits of improved efficiency just as it will with the Grain Elevators Board whose rates will be increasing less than the consumer price index and, so far as wheat is concerned, in all probability less than the grain rate. That is another example of how, when the efficiency of an organization is improved, the benefits arising from that improved efficiency are able to be passed on. The Government is also aware that it has an obligation to pass on these benefits because part of the arrangements have resulted in increased costs or increased difficulties for many farmers whose situations have changed regarding silo facilities.

The Government is bound, through V/Line and the Grain Elevators Board, to ensure that as costs change special arrangements are made. For example, so far as country municipalities are concerned, special impact funds were made available to approximately sixteen shires to assist with the extra rate burden caused by changes in grain handling procedures. The Government has to ensure that that balance continues between road funds and rail funds and between the costs of the growers and the costs of transport services.

As further efficiencies are obtained over the next couple of years in the rail services and in the Grain Elevators Board, those benefits will continue to be passed on to growers. In some ways that does not help the growers in the way they would like to be helped because of the international situation. But that is something about which we can only do something on a national basis and, as honourable members may be aware, it may be difficult to do something on a national basis because of the over-all world situation.

It is interesting to examine how grain freight rates compare with other costs to the grain growers. This does not include the recent 6 per cent increase, but in terms of the other costs of grain growers, distillate has risen by more than 180 per cent over the past six years—as honourable members understand, as a result of the way in which petrol and distillate prices have been determined by Federal Governments of both Liberal and Labor persuasion—fertilizer has risen by 141 per cent, shire rates have increased by an average
of 300 per cent, and Grain Elevator Board charges have increased by approximately 97 per cent.

What is now occurring with Government charges is that those very large rates of increase are slowing down and, in real terms, the rates are actually reducing. The Government will continue to ensure that this occurs.

The cartage of grain is not simply a matter of the cost to growers or the cost to the community, it is also a matter of the efficiency of that system. In 1982, the Government inherited a run-down system, to put it mildly. Over the years, capital was not invested in the railways as it should have been. I am sure that various Ministers of Transport argued for increased capital expenditure, but they did not receive the audience that they might necessarily have wanted. Over the past three and a half years capital investment has occurred and will continue to occur, thereby assisting in providing long-term arrangements for grain haulage and assisting in keeping costs down to farmers.

Mr Maclellan—It is going backwards this year!

Mr ROPER—Over the past twelve months Victorians have seen the delivery of the first five of an order of fifteen “G” class locomotives, and in addition there has been a major reconditioning and upgrading of 49 other locomotives; the total cost of the locomotives project being nearly $85 million.

In addition, the Government has also introduced a new class—the “N” class—of passenger diesel engines which will again liberate other major diesel locomotives for the operation of freight services in country areas. The first two “N” class locomotives have now been received by V/Line.

Over the years, the wagon fleet had run down and this had an impact on V/Line—it also has had an impact on the ports. Over the past three and a half years a significant improvement has been seen in our wagon fleet.

Mr Maclellan—You are not saying that there are more wagons now, are you?

Mr ROPER—What I am saying is that there has been a significant improvement. The Government has replaced the aged vehicles that it inherited from the previous Government—rolling-stock that was ineffective and inefficient—with modern and effective bogie hopper wagons. One hundred new bogie hopper wagons were used to transport freight prior to the last harvest, bringing the fleet of those wagons to 544. This year it is expected that there will be a further 100 “VHGYs” built. This will also provide a significant improvement in employment in the workshops located in country areas where the new wagons are being built.

In this financial year, some $7 million has been provided for the project; the construction of an extra 100 new wagons.

With respect to sidings, V/Line has a policy of freight users paying for the upgrading or provision of sidings; however, approximately $750 000 a year is spent by V/Line on siding redevelopment as the central receiveal points network expands.

A facility upgrading program of $3.6 million is under way, of which $1.5 million will be spent in the current financial year.

More than $21 million will be spent in this financial year on track work and passing loops. That will ensure that V/Line can provide a more reliable and cost-effective service.

The Geelong loop, which is now in operation, should have been provided years ago. However, so many things were allowed to run down in terms of delivery of grain to the port of Geelong.

This track upgrading is important as part of an integrated program aimed at not only improving locomotives and wagons but also the tracks on which they operate. We need to continue to spend funds on this re-equipment program.
We are currently spending significant sums on the Portland—Ararat line and on the Portland terminal, a total of some $13 million in the program, of which $8.6 million will be spent next financial year. The Portland—Ararat line is one of our most crucial grain lines. It is crucial not only to grain growers but also to the port of Portland. The Government has provided resources to ensure that the State has those improvements.

The Government has been concerned to improve its capital activities in other areas. Although this debate is not specifically concerned with passengers, it was suggested that a special benefit has been provided for metropolitan passenger services. A huge upgrading of those services has occurred in the past three and a half years in terms of capital, service and time-tables. Part of that has been made possible by a continuing—although with some difficulty—industrial relations record. This has meant that the harvest has been serviced to the extent that it has on occasions in the past. With the changes that are occurring in two-man crewing, shunting reviews and other efficiencies, the Government intends to hand over these improvements to grain growers as they occur. Although there may be some industrial disruption, we are certainly talking in an ongoing way with our employees to minimize that happening.

That capital program is one of which all Victorians should be proud. It has enabled grain to be carried more effectively than otherwise would have been possible. In the same way, it has been a major capital program for the Grain Elevators Board. Last year some $22.5 million was available to the board for various activities: for country storage, $14.4 million; for the Geelong terminal, $3 million; and for other works, more than $5 million. That amount will increase in the current year to $27.5 million with $13.3 million for country storage, $8 million for Geelong terminals and $2.3 million for the Portland terminal.

We are aware that if we want to encourage shipping into our ports we must improve the terminals at Geelong and Portland and money will be needed to be spent there. Almost $4 million will be spent on other works.

An Honourable Member—Who is paying for all this?

Mr ROPER—The point I am making is that a major investment program is occurring to ensure that there are efficient and effective grain systems in this State.

We heard before a gutless comment from the honourable member for Lowan who suggested that the three representatives of the Grain Elevators Board were simply doing my bidding. That is quite interesting, and I am sure that those three gentlemen, together with the Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association, will wish to have discussions with the honourable member for Lowan.

Those three gentlemen are of sufficient status to be able to make up their own minds about matters, and that is the reason why the Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association put their names forward to me and why I forwarded two of the names to the Governor in Council for appointment. As honourable members should be aware, the Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association submits a panel of names to the Minister who then selects some of the names and recommends them to the Governor in Council. The honourable member for Lowan attacked those three gentlemen as being puppets of the Government.

Over the past couple of years, the Grain Elevators Board has started to significantly improve its grain handling capacity through its capital program. Benefits from that will be passed on to growers so far as grain and handling charges are concerned. The Government will continue to ensure that those benefits are passed on.

A number of other changes in the methods of operation will bring further benefits in time. The honourable member for Lowan referred to the review of the Canac committee proposals which I released last week. The report, which is extensive, contains a number of recommendations. The committee was broadly representative, but it did not involve representatives of many of the affected shires nor representatives of the unions. Those people have been sent copies of the report so that they can make their opinions known to
the Government. It may be that there will be disquiet in some parts of country Victoria about some of the proposals for the closure of light rail lines. That recommendation stems from the fact that, over the years, many of these light rail lines have been allowed to deteriorate by a process of constructive and deliberate neglect. The rail lines can no longer carry the capacity that they previously carried let alone the modern locomotives and wagons that are now in the fleet. The benign neglect can be attributed to various railway administrations and Governments, and it is the cause for this type of recommendation being put forward.

Significant capital costs would be associated with bringing the light rail lines up to their previous capacity. However, serious matters need to be considered before decisions are taken to close any of those lines. The Government must ensure that the lines are able to take the traffic for the coming harvest. Discussions are occurring with V/Line to ensure that that will occur. No action will be taken before the affected communities and unions have had a chance of commenting on the matter.

As the Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association has indicated, there are benefits to grain growers Statewide in terms of costs if the light rail lines are closed. That is one of the difficult judgments that individuals, councils, the Government and the opposition parties will have to consider as a result of this major review.

Other issues are mentioned in the document, and I shall refer to the bridge at Echuca. That bridge has not been inadequate only for the past six months. The Echuca bridge has been in need of replacement for years. I inspected the bridge with the Deputy Leader of the National Party and discussed it with Echuca people as well as engineers from V/Line and the Road Construction Authority. The current condition of the bridge is very worrying.

One of the reasons why nothing has been done in the past is because the Government, as a Government, has not been able to make up its mind about what to do. There have been differences of opinion between various Ministries that have stopped action occurring. The Minister for Planning and Environment and I have a joint position about what needs to be done to replace the bridge. Last Friday I held discussions with the New South Wales Government in an attempt to reach a joint position so that the bridge can be replaced and so that we can ensure that the important grain traffic from the Southern Riverina continues to flow through our system with benefits to all Victorian grain growers as well as other areas of the State.

Over the next three years there will be further changes in the efficiency and effectiveness of our rail system. We look forward to working with the management and the unions and with the other parties if they wish to ensure that these improvements occur.

It will be difficult, and I have informed the Ministry, V/Line and the Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association that by next June I wish to have an agreed basis on which grain rates will be set in the future so that the benefits that come from the increased efficiency continue to be passed on to growers. A further reason is so that we all understand exactly on what basis the charges are made. Differences of opinion exist, I have to admit, between various of the transport authorities and the Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association. I suspect that if one were to ask various branches of the Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association, one would find there is probably not agreement there, either.

We must develop a mechanism that ensures that over the next three years and longer there is an agreed system of setting grain freight rates—which are our biggest freight item—and an agreed system of passing on the benefits of the hard work they have done to users of the service, namely, the grain growers.

The Government does not accept the motion and is proud that for the first time in the past seven years it can say that the grain freight rate has gone down in real terms. The Government would have liked the increase to have been lower, but that was not possible. The Government wants to continue the downward trend. It does not want any more of the 18 per cent rises that occurred in 1979–80. I should like to have an even lower rise
during the next financial year, but that will depend on our achieving efficiencies and on discussions with the Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association.

I found the three meetings I have had with that organization to discuss grain matters to be extremely useful. I shall continue to have discussions with the organization about grain and other matters. The overloading of trucks and the long wait that previously existed has been stopped and under the present system it will be possible for councils to issue permits during the harvest season to allow larger loads. That was a good example of co-operation between the Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association and various transport authorities. I hope that type of situation will continue. I am concerned to provide an effective public transport system in this State, as was my predecessor, and to provide it at a cost the community can afford.

In accordance with Sessional Orders, the debate was interrupted.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! The time appointed under Sessional Orders for Government Business to take precedence has now arrived.

The sitting was suspended at 1 p.m. until 2.5 p.m.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW (UNIVERSITY VISITOR) BILL

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The legislation founding the University of Melbourne enacted in the mid-1950s provided for a visitor, currently specified to be the Governor of Victoria. The legislation founding Monash, La Trobe and Deakin universities enacted in recent years also provides for a visitor, which is the Governor in each case. Each of the respective Acts provides that the Governor shall be the visitor and “shall have authority to do all things which appertain to visitors as often as to him seems meet”.

The office of visitor is an ancient one and developed as a means whereby the Sovereign could protect the rights, privileges and interests of members of charitable, ecclesiastical and educational institutions, many of whom had no independent legal capacity to invoke the protection of the courts. A visitor was intended to act as a kind of Ombudsman in relation to disputes between members of the body or corporation which were internal or domestic in nature.

The current role of the university visitor is to determine complaints of and disputes between members of the university relating to the management, statutes, and regulations, affairs and membership of the university. A complaint is made to the visitor by way of petition. Matters which may potentially come before the visitor for resolution include a complaint by a student in relation to a decision by an academic board, the termination of a staff appointment, and the grant of a fellowship. The decisions of the visitor acting within his or her jurisdiction are both exhaustive and final. Such decisions are not reviewable in the courts.

Two recent cases have highlighted the desirability of allowing judicial scrutiny of administrative decisions of universities. In one case a student was not permitted to sit for a supplementary examination in the one subject needed to complete his degree. A committee convened by the faculty to reconsider the matter recommended that the decision be reversed, but this recommendation was not accepted. The proceedings took up the greater part of the academic year and thus, even if the decision had been positive, the student had already lost the practical benefit of sitting a supplementary examination.

In another case, Vujanovic v. University of Melbourne, a decision of the Supreme Court handed down in 1983, a student sought relief under the Administrative Law Act over her exclusion from the university following a recommendation to the academic board of the Faculty of Law. The student claimed that the Faculty of Law committee was not properly constituted and had not given her a fair opportunity to be heard. The Supreme Court held
that it had no jurisdiction in the matter, as it fell within the exclusive jurisdiction of the
visitor; her only avenue of relief was by way of petition to the visitor.

It can be seen from these two examples that the matters determined by the university
visitor are often very significant and can affect the future livelihood and career of an
individual. It is, therefore, desirable that procedures affecting such significant interests be
subject to judicial scrutiny. There is a discrepancy between universities and other tertiary
educational institutions in that the administrative actions of the latter are potentially
subject to judicial scrutiny as they have no visitor. Honourable members will know that
there has been a significant expansion of administrative law remedies in the past twenty
years. Whilst the staff and students of the universities were once no worse off than any
other members of the community seeking judicial review of administrative actions, that
is no longer so.

The Administrative Law Act marked a major extension of administrative rights in the
Victorian community, as has the Commonwealth Administrative Appeals Tribunal and
the Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act. The procedure for review by the
university visitor, that is, by petition to the Governor, is antiquated and relatively awesome,
whilst proceedings under the Administrative Law Act are comparatively simple and
speedy. The Bill seeks to provide an aggrieved person with the opportunity of pursuing a
remedy through the courts.

Denial of review under the Administrative Law Act of administrative decisions of
universities is not in accordance with recent developments in the law and is out of line
with the position in other tertiary educational institutions.

Although the universities may argue that there should be no interference with their
internal affairs, the availability of judicial review of administrative actions of other tertiary
institutions, and the significance of decisions made by universities are powerful arguments
in favour of an alternative system of review.

Proposed section 14 (1) gives a person affected by a decision of a university the right to
apply for an order for review under the Administrative Law Act even though the matter is
within the jurisdiction of the visitor.

Proposed section 14 (2) precludes an application by a person aggrieved by a decision of
the university visitor except on the grounds that the visitor had no jurisdiction or that
there has been a denial of natural justice. Those exceptions maintain the present position
at common law. The exceptions are consistent with and drawn in the same terms as
similar provisions in section 4 of the Act relating to decisions under the Small Claims
Tribunal Act, the Credit (Administration) Act and the Residential Tenancies Act.

In order to remove the doubt, proposed section 14 (3) provides that a visitor has no
jurisdiction if an application under the Act is granted. That may be the position at
common law, but it is not clear. The provision does not preclude the jurisdiction merely
because an application is made under the Act.

The intention of these amendments is to provide a choice of remedy for an aggrieved
member of a university. A person who chooses to invoke the visitorial jurisdiction will
not be able to appeal from a decision of the visitor except on the narrow grounds earlier
referred to. Likewise, a person who has been granted an application under the
Administrative Law Act will be precluded from appealing a decision to the visitor.

In summary, the Bill will allow an aggrieved member of a university access to the
provisions of the Administrative Law Act, thereby providing the same rights as other
members of the community enjoy. The Bill will allow for a more simple, speedy and
efficient mechanism to be invoked for the hearing of complaints. I commend the Bill to
the House.

On the motion of Mr AUSTIN (Ripon), the debate was adjourned.

It was ordered that the debate be adjourned until Tuesday, October 29.
Mr MATHEWS (Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The principal provisions of the Bill reflect the results of two major investigations into the functioning of the Victoria Police Force. The Committee of Inquiry—Victoria Police Force has investigated and reported on internal discipline procedures in the force, and the Government has examined the procedures for the investigation of complaints made by members of the public about the conduct of members of the force and the system for the review of the results of such investigations. Other provisions in the Bill are designed to facilitate the effective administration of the Police Force.

Turning first to the investigation of public complaints, I should say that the design of appropriate mechanisms for this purpose has been the subject of much examination and debate, both in Australia and in other countries. In Australia, we have been reminded of the need to ensure that appropriate procedures are in place by, for example, the views expressed by the Honourable Mr Justice Stewart in the Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Drug Trafficking. In recent years, most Australian Governments have moved to introduce revised procedures and, in Victoria, our proposals take account of these developments in the context of the Government’s stated policy that there will be an independent mechanism for overseeing the procedure adopted.

I mention one other point as a threshold matter. From time to time, concern is expressed about the use of police to investigate the actions of their colleagues. Indeed, in the light of those expressions of concern, both the Chief Commissioner of Police and the Victoria Police Association have expressed the view that they would not object to the removal of the investigation system from the force. But the fact is, and this is recognized throughout Australia and elsewhere, that there is no practical and cost-effective alternative to the use of police as complaints investigators.

Complaints about the conduct of police will continue, in the main, to be investigated by, or under the direction of, the Police Internal Investigations Department, which is headed by an Assistant Commissioner of Police. For the purposes of investigation, complaints received are classified into four categories in descending order of seriousness. These are—

1. allegations that police have committed criminal offences involving corruption, conspiracy, perjury, violence, theft and other serious offences;
2. complaints by persons arrested, intercepted or interviewed alleging assault, unjust arrest or other mistreatment;
3. verbal or written complaints alleging that police have been neglectful, rude or have otherwise acted improperly; and
4. internal matters of neglect or misconduct.

In 1983–84, 576 serious complaints in the first two categories were made to the police, of which 104 were found to be substantiated. On average, 700 minor complaints in the latter two categories are made to the police each year.

On completion of an investigation under the present procedures, the complaint file is referred to the Ombudsman for review. In 1983–84, the Ombudsman reviewed 927 police complaint files and formed the opinion in seventeen of those cases that there were inadequacies in the police investigations which were likely to have affected the conclusions reached.

In his annual report for that year, the Ombudsman cited several investigations and stated:

These examples in my view demonstrate how lack of persistence can create an impression of bias and the consequent need for those responsible for overseeing police complaint investigations to ensure that investigations are not only sound but also are seen to be sound.
The Government fully supports this view; the maxim that justice must not only be done but must be seen to be done has particular application to the investigation of complaints about the conduct of members of the force. Under the present complaint investigation procedures there is scope for public suspicion, whether or not that suspicion is justified, about the adequacy of investigations by police into the actions of their colleagues.

Accordingly, the Bill provides for the creation of a single person Police Complaints Authority to which complaints about police can be made. When a complaint is made to the authority, if it is accepted as warranting investigation, the complaint will be referred to the Chief Commissioner of Police for investigation. Where a complaint is about the conduct of any police commissioner or about conduct which is in accordance with established practices and procedures of the force which the authority considers should be reviewed, the authority may conduct its own investigations with the assistance of police investigators if requested.

The chief commissioner will be required to cause an investigation into the complaint to be conducted and to report the results of the investigation and provide advice of any action taken or intended to be taken to the authority.

The authority will be empowered to request the chief commissioner to further investigate a complaint or to investigate the complaint itself, if the authority is not satisfied with the adequacy of the initial investigation. The authority will also be empowered to request the chief commissioner to take such action as it considers appropriate if it is not satisfied with the course adopted by the chief commissioner. Such action may involve the laying of criminal or disciplinary charges against members of the force.

If the authority and the chief commissioner cannot agree on the course of action to be taken following an investigation, the Minister will adjudicate and have the power to direct that specified action be taken. In determining whether criminal proceedings should be taken against a member of the force, the Minister may consult with the Director of Public Prosecutions.

At the completion of these procedures, the person who lodged the complaint with the authority will be advised in writing by the authority of the outcome of the investigation and the action taken as the result of the investigation.

In conducting its own investigations into a complaint, the authority, with the approval of the Minister, may invoke the powers of a board of inquiry under the Evidence Act. These powers include the power to summon witnesses and to require the production of documents. In addition, both the authority and the chief commissioner may direct any member of the force to answer questions or provide information which is relevant to an investigation.

The powers available to the authority envisaged in the Bill in relation to the investigation of complaints against members of the Police Force are greater than the powers currently available to the Ombudsman under the present procedures for the review of police complaint files. These powers and the revised procedures for the investigation of complaints are designed to ensure public confidence in the system and to allay any concerns that may exist that the police do not adequately investigate the actions of fellow members.

Mention of the Ombudsman prompts me to say, and to stress, that the Government has been well satisfied with the manner in which he has undertaken the task of reviewing complaint files. I note, also, that the Ombudsman has contributed much to the review conducted of the existing procedures for complaint investigation. However, a need is seen to establish an agency which will concentrate all of its efforts on aspects of the revised system with which it will be concerned.

Let it be said, however, that the police administration is as equally committed as the Government to ensuring the proper investigation of public complaints. The identification and weeding out of wrong doers is essential to the maintenance of an effective Police Force and the morale of its members. Victoria has a fine force under the leadership of chief
commissioner Mick Miller and both he and the Government are committed to ensuring that the high standards of the force are maintained. The procedures outlined in the Bill will, I hope go toward improving the public perception of the integrity of the force in investigating complaints about its own actions.

I now refer to the provisions of the Bill that arise from the recommendations of the committee of inquiry on internal discipline. These recommendations apply equally to discipline charges that arise either internally or as the result of an investigation into a complaint from a member of the public.

The committee of inquiry was established in 1982 to examine the organization and administration of the Victoria Police Force. It was chaired by Tom Neesham, QC, the other members being David Biles, Harvey Parker, David Scott and David Swanson. Their extensive and exhaustive deliberations resulted in the presentation of a comprehensive report in June of this year which contained 220 recommendations for action. Those recommendations are being examined by the Government. However, at an earlier stage, the committee compiled a report on internal discipline in the Police Force that has been used as a basis for a number of the provisions in this Bill.

Procedures for the maintenance of internal discipline in the police force are contained in the Police Regulation Act and the police regulations. The regulations prescribe a range of offences which may result in the laying of a charge of breach of discipline. The Act provides that a member may elect to have the charge heard by the chief commissioner or the Police Discipline Board and a range of penalties is prescribed where the charge is proved. Only the board may dismiss members of the force. A right of appeal lies to the Police Service Board against a decision of the chief commissioner or the discipline board.

Investigations into the conduct of members are conducted by or under the direction of the Internal Investigations Department and the chief commissioner has the power to transfer members under investigation to other duties. The chief commissioner also has the power to suspend, without pay, any member charged with an offence or who is convicted of a criminal offence punishable by imprisonment. In the latter case, the Police Service Board may determine what action, including dismissal, should be taken against a convicted member.

The Act also provides for the appointment of persons to the force as constables on probation for two years and for all promotions to be subject to a period of probation of one year. However, the Act and the regulations are largely deficient on the conditions of probation.

The Bill effects numerous amendments to these procedures, which are designed to streamline the process of dealing with members charged with offences, to protect the rights of members and to generally clarify the various provisions. Details of the amendments are included in the explanatory memorandum that is attached to the Bill, and I will simply touch on the more substantive provisions.

The chief commissioner has power under the current provisions of the Police Regulation Act to suspend members from duty in certain circumstances. In line with the recommendations of the committee of inquiry, the Bill will empower the chief commissioner to suspend members who are reasonably suspected of committing a criminal offence and whose suspension from duty is desirable while investigations are completed. In such circumstances, the member may be suspended for up to three months on full pay and have a right of appeal against the suspension to a County Court judge.

Provision is also made for the chief commissioner to determine that other members under suspension be entitled to receive full pay during the suspension. At present, all pay is withheld during suspension and this can impose an additional punishment by placing financial strain on a suspended member. The Bill also clearly specifies the effects of suspension once imposed.
In relation to the hearing of discipline charges, provision is made for the Police Discipline Board to sit in two divisions to avoid accumulating backloads of work caused by lengthy hearings, for the monetary penalties which may be imposed by the board and, on appeal, by the Police Service Board to be increased and for both boards to be empowered to impose an additional penalty of reduction in seniority.

From time to time, the chief commissioner is confronted with the problem of a member who is generally unsuitable to remain in the force but who has committed no breach of discipline. The chief commissioner does not have the power to dismiss members of the force and the committee of inquiry has recommended that he should not have such a power. In order to deal with such problem members, the Bill empowers the chief commissioner to request the Police Discipline Board to determine the suitability of a member and empowers the board to dismiss or reduce in rank members found to be unsuitable. The member’s rights are protected by an appeal to the Police Service Board.

The committee of inquiry also made various recommendations dealing with probationary appointments. Briefly, the Bill provides for the appointment of police recruits to undergo initial training at the police academy. Police recruits will not be members of the force and will thus have no claim on the State Superannuation Fund if discharged on the ground of ill health at this very early stage of their careers.

After completion of academy training, the recruits will be appointed as constables on probation for two years. During the probationary period, the chief commissioner may discharge a constable from the force. At the completion of the probationary period the chief commissioner will be required to confirm or annul the appointment or extend the period of probation for up to twelve months.

Promotions to all ranks above constable are subject to a period of probation of twelve months. The Bill clarifies the powers and duties of the chief commissioner in relation to promotions on probation. A right of appeal against the disallowance of a promotion will be created in the police regulations.

These amendments have the effect of clearly stating the manner in which probationary appointments and promotions are to be dealt with.

The Bill also contains several miscellaneous amendments designed to improve the administration of the force. Again, details are contained in the explanatory memorandum attached to the Bill. They provide for the execution by police of warrants issued by statutory bodies, for the delegation of the chief commissioner’s powers, for more flexible procedures for the disposal of unclaimed property in the possession of police and for the granting of maternity and paternity leave to police reservists.

Finally, I should say that the issues which are dealt with in the Bill have been the subject of intensive discussion by a working party comprised of Mr Bob King, secretary of my Ministry, Mr Bob Emslie, the Ministry’s Assistant Secretary (Legislation), Deputy Commissioner Eric Mudge, Assistant Commissioner Kelvin Glare and Mr Bob Splatt and Mr Tom Rippon of the Police Association. Agreement was reached in the working party deliberations on the concepts expressed in the Bill. I commend the Bill to the House.

On the motion of Mr CROZIER (Portland), the debate was adjourned.

It was ordered that the debate be adjourned until Thursday, October 31.

**GROUNDWATER (BORDER AGREEMENT) BILL**

Mr McCUTCHIEON (Minister for Water Resources)—I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the Bill is to approve and ratify an agreement made between the States of Victoria and South Australia which provides for a co-ordinated management strategy for
the groundwater resources in the vicinity of the Victorian and South Australian borders. The agreement is set out as a Schedule to the Bill.

As some honourable members would know, an examination of groundwater resources along the border was commenced some years ago. This stemmed from a South Australian request that a mechanism for the legal sharing of the resource be arranged. In most areas adjacent to the border groundwater is the only reliable water source and the agencies of both States responsible for groundwater had been concerned that unregulated large-scale withdrawals could compete with existing private and urban supplies, perhaps to a point where continuity of supply could not be assured. In addition, because there is at present no provision for consideration of the potential effects of such withdrawals across the border, new and large-scale uses of groundwater in one State could adversely affect established uses in the other.

Projections of existing and possible development of the border groundwater resources have confirmed the advisability of joint management and sharing of the resources between the two States.

The management strategy, which is the subject of the agreement, was evolved by a joint committee representing the agencies concerned. These agencies are: the Rural Water Commission of Victoria; the Engineering and Water Supply Department, South Australia; the office of Minerals and Energy, Victoria, and the Department of Mines and Energy, South Australia.

The joint committee, with the aid of Professor S. D. Clark, Harrison Moore, Professor of Law at Melbourne University, prepared a report incorporating the agreement and the relevant supporting legislation, which honourable members now have before them.

The joint committee investigated several possible institutional arrangements for sharing and managing the resource adjacent to the border. It concluded that the most appropriate one was for an interstate agreement to ensure protection to existing groundwater users and facilitate the future use of groundwater.

Such an agreement forms the schedule to the Bill now before the House. The agreement is expressed to operate in both States for a distance of 20 kilometres from the border. This strip of border land, which is defined in the agreement as the "Designated Area", is thus 40 kilometres wide. The joint committee's investigations have disclosed that overall the annual volume of the groundwater resource available within the designated area is such that existing groundwater uses can safely continue and there is opportunity for expanded use with no significant adverse implications in the immediate future provided there is no undue clustering of large-yielding bores. The proposed policy is to divide the resource equally between the two States.

An extended observation bore network is being put in place which will help in providing data for the continuing assessment of the resource and in the forewarning of any problems.

Before dealing with the Bill proper, I would now like, with honourable members' forbearance, to explain generally, the scheme of the agreement.

The first two clauses provide definitions of various terms which take account of the different terminologies of the South Australian Water Resources Act 1976 and the Victorian Groundwater Act 1969 and apply the usual interpretation provisions.

Clauses 3 to 19 of the agreement are closely based on the provisions of the River Murray Waters Agreement signed by the Premier, the Prime Minister and the Premiers of New South Wales and South Australia on 1 October 1982. Within this group clauses 6 and 7 provide for the appointment, by the responsible Minister in each State, of two members and one deputy member to a review committee, which has the general oversight of the management plan. The remaining clauses in this group deal with formal, procedural matters such as terms, powers, and remuneration of members, meeting procedure, and delegation.
Clauses 20 to 23 of the agreement are again closely based on clauses in the River Murray Waters Agreement. They empower the review committee to co-ordinate studies of the use, control, protection, management or administration of groundwater within the designated area; to make recommendations to contracting Governments on such matters; and to review and recommend alterations to the agreement. Each Government binds itself to furnish the review committee with all information necessary for its functions.

For the purposes of the management plan the designated area is divided into eleven segments or zones in each State, which is a total of 22 zones. Clauses 24 to 26 of the agreement set out the management plan and provide means for applying appropriate management prescriptions to the various zones in each State. The legislation of each State is to be applied to all existing or future bores, except domestic and stock bores, within the zones in that State. No permits are to be granted or renewed within those zones, except in accordance with the management prescription set out in clause 26 of the agreement. In brief, this requires bores to be cased, where appropriate, and prevents further development when the permissible annual volume, or rate of drawdown, has been exceeded. Bores for other than stock and domestic purposes may be constructed within 1 kilometre of the State border only in accordance with procedures determined by the review committee.

Clause 27 of the agreement obliges each State to prepare an annual report for the purposes of the review committee.

Clause 28 of the agreement requires the review committee to review the management plan for each zone at not more than five-year intervals. It has power to make adjustments to minor aspects of the management plan on its own motion. It may recommend more important changes to the Ministers of both States. These more important changes are the establishment or alteration of permissible levels of salinity and the alteration of the permissible rate of drawdown in any zone. Such more important changes can occur only if both Ministers are in agreement.

Clause 29 of the agreement gives the review committee power to declare restrictions in relation to any zone as the optimum level of development for that zone is approached or exceeded. The effect is not to prevent all future development, but to require all further development to be referred to the review committee for comment before it proceeds. A compulsory cooling-off time of 30 days is also included before the Minister grants any permit in a zone subject to restrictions.

In addition, if the Minister decides to grant a permit against the recommendations of the review committee, he is obliged forthwith to notify the Minister of the other contracting State in order to allow that State to decide whether to exercise the right of appeal given to it.

Clause 30 of the agreement requires the review committee to submit an annual report to the responsible Minister of each State.

Clause 31 of the agreement requires publication of decisions taken by the review committee, or by the relevant Minister, with respect to the management prescriptions embodied in the management plan.

I now turn to the provisions of the Bill generally, as distinct from the agreement which forms its schedule. Clauses 1 to 4 cover the usual introductory matters of title, commencement and interpretation. Clause 5 approves the agreement which, as honourable members are aware, was signed by the Victorian Premier and the Premier of South Australia on 15 October 1985.

Clauses 6 to 10 of the Bill relate to the appointment of the members of the review committee, its powers, and the powers of the Minister. These provisions are modelled on the River Murray Waters Act 1982.

Clause 11 of the Bill requires the Minister to submit to Parliament the annual report he receives from the review committee. Clause 12 makes four consequential amendments to
the Groundwater Act 1969. These will: firstly, ensure that no action by any Victorian body, be it the Minister, the Rural Water Commission, the Director-General of Water Resources or the Groundwater Appeal Board, is inconsistent with the border agreement; secondly, provide for an appeal to the Victorian Groundwater Appeal Board, by South Australia, against any decision by Victoria, made by the Minister, the Rural Water Commission or the Director-General of Water Resources, which is contrary to a recommendation of the review committee. A provision giving similar rights to Victoria is contained in the complementary South Australian legislation; thirdly, clarify the existing purposes for which the Minister may authorize the drilling of observation bores; and fourthly, enable the Groundwater Appeal Board to hear the appeal of which I have just spoken.

Clause 13 of the Bill provides for the repeal of a spent Act. In introducing the Bill to the House, I make the following remarks: firstly, the proposed legislation provides that the day-to-day execution of the management plan should rest with the groundwater licensing authorities of the respective States. In other words, no inter-State executive body is needed to implement the management plan.

This arrangement contrasts with other inter-State agreements, such as the River Murray Waters Agreement, which provide for executive bodies. One advantage of such arrangement is that no additional costs to Government are anticipated as the proposal will form part of the general management of the State's groundwater; secondly, the main advantages of the agreement are that it—

(a) commits each State to legislative action to require licensing authorities and appellate bodies to abide by the agreement and the management plan embodied therein;

(b) assumes that the licensing authorities in each State will remain responsible for administering the management plan in zones within that State;

(c) requires inter-State consultation between the licensing authorities before granting permits for the construction or use of bores other than domestic and stock bores, in certain defined circumstances, or in order to change details of the management plan;

(d) provides for the joint imposition of restrictions within any zone after which inter-State consultation becomes obligatory before further development is allowed in that zone; and.

(e) provides for the regular review, with a view to amendment of the management plan and the agreement by means of a review committee.

Thirdly, the Bill is complementary to the Groundwater (Reserves) Act 1984. No. 10066, which provided for the planning in groundwater resource allocation for future urban use.

In conclusion, the Government believes this agreement provides a realistic and equitable framework for inter-Governmental co-operation in the development of long term strategies for protecting and harvesting the groundwater resource in the border area. As with any agreement, this one depends on the goodwill of the contracting parties. Events so far confirm that this will be forthcoming. I commend the Bill to the House.

On the motion of Mr DELZOPPO (Narracan), the debate was adjourned.

It was ordered that the debate be adjourned until Tuesday, October 29.

**MOTOR CAR (FURTHER AMENDMENT) BILL**

**Mr ROPER** (Minister for Transport)—I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The main purposes of the Bill are—

(a) to control speed trials on highways;
to empower police to detain a person who has undergone a preliminary breath test at a police station for up to 2 hours after driving for the purpose of furnishing a sample of breath for analysis by a breath analysing instrument;

to abolish minimum fines for certain offences; and

to increase motor registration fees from 1 January 1986 by approximately 7 per cent.

At present, it is an offence under section 83 (2) of the Motor Car Act for a motor car to be used on a highway for motor racing or speed trials. The offence is committed by the driver or the person in charge of the car.

An Order in Council can be obtained in respect of particular races or speed trials exempting these from the operation of section 83 (2). The making of such an order is only recommended where the police and other relevant traffic authorities are satisfied that the race or speed trial can take place without danger to the public. Where an order is made, a separate regulation must also be made so that the provisions of the Transport (Road Traffic) Regulations 1984 do not apply to those participating in the race or speed trial.

There are a number of difficulties with these arrangements. Honourable members will be aware that in 1984, an event known as the “Australian Cannonball Cup” was held. A number of participants in this event were charged in one or more of the three States through which they passed with the offences of speeding and dangerous driving. In Victoria speeds as high as 163 kph were detected during the “race”. The severity of accidents occurring at these speeds would be more than double that at the present speed limit. Moreover, such accidents are more likely to involve innocent road users and not only the offending driver.

It is an established fact that speed is a major contributor to the road toll. The responses of the driver and the vehicle on public roads are brought into serious question at high speeds, particularly when emergency situations develop. As evidence of the effects of speed on road accidents, in 1974, the year after the 100 kilometres per hour speed limit was introduced, road fatalities fell by 14 per cent and personal injuries by 12 per cent. Safety experts concerned about saving lives are alarmed at the irresponsibility of speed trials such as the Cannonball Cup.

The police will be greatly assisted in controlling this type of event, with the obvious dangers which they pose to the travelling public, if action can be taken against the organizers as well as those actually participating. The Bill provides for this by extending the offence currently provided for in section 83 (2) to the organizers of motor races or speed trials. In addition, the Bill specifically empowers police to apprehend drivers or organizers without warrant where apprehension is seen by the police as an effective way of controlling these events. These amendments will ensure that the existing prohibition against motor racing and speed trials on highways can be more effectively enforced.

In strengthening the enforcement provisions relating to speed trials and races, the opportunity is being taken to review the procedures for obtaining the necessary approvals for bona fide speed trials and races. The present procedures are lengthy and involve undue expense, because of the need for a separate regulation to be made for each speed trial or race for which approval is to be given and because each such regulation is only in force for the duration of the speed trial or race—I know that numerous honourable members made representations about obtaining approval in this area.

Accordingly, the Bill provides for an Order in Council to be made which will suspend the application of all except specified regulations of the Transport (Road Traffic) Regulations 1984 to the particular speed trial or race thus avoiding the need for a regulation to be made for each speed trial or race authorized to be held.

These amendments will ensure that unauthorized speed trials or races do not take place to the detriment of public safety. The amendments simplify the processes associated with obtaining approvals for speed trials or races with resulting cost savings through
administrative efficiencies and benefits to those seeking approvals, through the expedited processing of applications.

In relation to the second main purpose of the Bill, section 80F (6) of the Motor Car Act currently gives the police power to require a person who has undergone a preliminary breath test, or who is believed to be driving under the influence, to provide a sample of breath for analysis by a breath analysing instrument. For that purpose, the police may require the person to accompany police to a police station.

Section 80F (6), however, does not give the police power to ensure a person stays at the police station until a breath analysing instrument is available. From an operational point of view, it is not possible for the police to have a breathalyser and an authorized officer available at all times at all police stations. Consequently, the intention of section 80F (6), that the police be able to require certain persons to undergo a breathalyser test, can be avoided if a breathalyser is not immediately available at a police station and the persons refuse to wait.

The Bill amends section 80F (6) to provide for a person, who has been required to accompany a member of the police force to a police station, to remain at the police station for a period of up to two hours, for the purpose of furnishing a sample of breath for analysis by a breath analysing instrument.

The period of two hours has been selected as being the maximum period within which a person may be obliged to provide a breath sample.

The proposed amendments will prevent the intended operation of section 80F (6) from being avoided where a breathalyser and authorized operator are not immediately available at a police station to which a person is taken and it is necessary to arrange for the equipment to be brought to the police station.

In relation to the third main purpose of the Bill, the Government has received a number of representations from legal aid services requesting amendments to the Motor Car Act to remove minimum fines. The Act currently provides for minimum fines for the offences of driving unregistered or uninsured vehicles, the offence of failing to comply with the acquisition of vehicle provisions of the Act, and the offences of failing to pay a licence surcharge, driving without a licence and failing to stop after an accident where a person has been injured.

The rationale for minimum fines is related to the seriousness of the offence. The rationale, however, is applied haphazardly in that there are many other offences in the Motor Car Act which are serious and which do not have minimum fines associated with them.

In practice, the minimum fine provisions operate to impose undue financial hardship on defendants with little or no financial resources. They can also be self-defeating in that they sometimes lead to magistrates imposing a bond to avoid financial hardship, or else lead to imprisonment for fine default which is not what the legislation intends.

The minimum fine provisions in the Motor Car Act are also now inconsistent with the approach to sentencing provided for in the Penalties and Sentences Act 1981. The basic principle of this legislation is that offenders who are fined by courts for offences should have their means and ability to pay the fine taken into account by the court in imposing a fine. To overcome the problems referred to and to ensure a consistent approach to the imposition of fines, the minimum fine provisions of the Motor Car Act are now being removed.

Finally, honourable members will recall that my colleague the Treasurer, when announcing details of the Budget, referred to an increase in motor car registration fees from 1 January 1986. Registration fees were last increased on 21 November 1981. Between December 1981 and June 1985 the consumer price index has risen 29-3 per cent. The increase in registration fees provided for in the Bill is well below this increase and is also below the consumer price index increase of 7-1 per cent between June 1984 and June 1985.
Registration fees currently have two components. The first is the power mass unit of a vehicle multiplied by the rates set out in the Second Schedule to the Motor Car Act. The second component is the surcharge, introduced in 1971, which is either $2 or $4, depending on vehicle category and purpose.

It is proposed that the rates be increased by 4.3 per cent for private vehicles and 7.1 per cent for other vehicles. It is also proposed that surcharges be increased by $1.00 in each case. This increase in the surcharge represents an increase of 50 per cent and 25 per cent respectively for private and other vehicles. However, when the increases are taken together with the much lower percentage increases in the rates, and in particular the low percentage increase in the rate for private vehicles which constitute the bulk of registrable vehicles, the adjustments to registration fees made by the Bill only result in an actual overall increase of 6.72 per cent. I commend the Bill to the House.

On the motion of Mr AUSTIN (Ripon), the debate was adjourned.

It was ordered that the debate be adjourned until Tuesday, October 29.

SALE OF LAND (ALLOTMENTS) BILL

Mr SIMMONDS (Minister for Local Government)—I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The Bill has two main purposes:

(a) to facilitate the sale of land prior to approval of a plan of subdivision or strata subdivision; and

(b) to simplify the procedures involved in the resealing of plans of subdivision.

Honourable members will be well aware of difficulties and delays that are often experienced during the subdivision of land.

For some time the subdivision of land process has been under review. The basis for the review is the report of the Subdivision of Land Task Force. This report contains a number of recommendations that are primarily designed to simplify the subdivision procedure and thereby reduce the end costs to the purchaser.

A number of complex issues are yet to be resolved before new subdivisional legislation can be submitted to Parliament. The Government, however, is willing to move on those recommendations of the task force that can be implemented without awaiting the preparation of the complete subdivision package.

One such recommendation is that legislation should be enacted to permit the sale of allotments before the plan of subdivision is approved by the Registrar of Titles.

In 1984, the Kindred Industries Group (Housing Industry) recommended to the Government that this recommendation should be implemented without awaiting the final decisions on the task force’s report.

The Kindred Industries Group believed the result would be to speed up the subdivision process and thus give the purchaser access to a wider variety of residential land at an earlier stage than is possible at present. Additionally, the developer would be able to proceed with a subdivision with a greater degree of certainty.

As a result of the representations, a working group was established to consider the feasibility and the need for the pre-selling of land.

The report of the working party recommended that pre-selling of allotments should take place, provided that the legislation contained certain safeguards for the purchaser.
Honourable members may be aware that two previous Bills on the question of pre-selling were introduced into another place, but did not proceed, essentially, because of objections from within the housing industry.

The industry was requested to make further submissions on the legislation and meetings were then held to see if agreement could be obtained on the legislation.

The following groups were requested to make submissions and were then represented at meetings that followed:

- Estate Agents Board
- The Institute of Surveyors, Victoria
- Kindred Industries Group (Housing Industry)
- Municipal Association of Victoria
- The Real Estate Institute of Victoria
- Law Institute of Victoria
- Urban Development Institute of Australia (Victoria)
- Appropriate Government departments
- Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works.

The industry is now happy with the Bill and the Government, therefore, wishes that the legislation be enacted as soon as possible.

Turning to the Bill itself, the previous Bills would have permitted the sale of allotments shown on sealed plans of subdivision that were approved following the coming into operation of the legislation. Following discussions, the legislation will now apply to allotments shown on any sealed plan of subdivision whenever the plan was sealed. The vendor will, therefore, have the choice of operating under the old law or the new law.

Clauses 4 and 5 provide that an allotment shown on the plan of subdivision may, subject to certain conditions, be sold prior to the approval of the plan by the Registrar of Titles.

The conditions applying to the sale are set out in this provision and they may be summarized as follows:

Under existing law, pre-selling may occur where land is to be divided into not more than two allotments. The previous Bills extended those provisions to all land shown on plans of subdivision. There was some concern that including two-lot subdivisions under the proposed new law could cause some problems. As a result, it has been agreed that the existing law relating to two-lot plans will be unaffected, and the new proposed legislation will apply where the land is to be subdivided into three or more allotments.

The vendor may not request from a purchaser a deposit of more than 10 per cent of the purchase price of the allotment. The deposit is to be paid to a solicitor or licensed estate agent and held in trust or be paid into a special bank account in the joint names of the vendor and purchaser. The previous Bills provided that each deposit had to be paid into an interest-bearing trust account, but this requirement has been deleted.

The previous Bills provided that the vendor was to advise the purchaser of any works that were carried out on the allotment or other parts of the subdivision. This Bill provides that the disclosure will only relate to works affecting the natural surface of the allotment and of any abutting allotment on the same plan of subdivision.

If the vendor fails to fulfil the conditions of the contract or to have the plan of subdivision approved within twelve months of the date of the contract, the purchaser may avoid the sale.
The purchaser cannot take legal possession of the land until the plan has been approved by the registrar but it is to be given reasonable access to the land for any purpose relating to the proposed development of the land.

If the sale is avoided by the purchaser, the deposit money is to be returned to the purchaser. If the sale is avoided as a result of default by the purchaser, the vendor is entitled to be repaid the deposit money.

Clause 6 applies in the case of any dispute between the vendor and the purchaser, where provision is made for arbitration in accordance with the standard provisions already contained in the Sale of Land Act.

Clauses 9 and 10 make equivalent amendments to the Strata Titles Act to bring that form of development into line with the new provisions applying to the subdivision of land.

Clause 12 inserts a new section 569BAA into the Local Government Act to clarify and speed up the process of rescaling the plan by the relevant council when an amendment is required to a sealed plan of subdivision before the approval of the plan by the Registrar of Titles.

Clause 13 amends the Building Control Act to enable a purchaser of an allotment shown on a plan of subdivision to apply for building approval once a contract has been entered into. The Development Approvals Co-ordinator, however, is not to grant approval until the registrar has approved the plan. This provision is designed to enable building to commence immediately the plan has been approved and will eliminate the additional delay involved in obtaining building approval.

Honourable members will see that the provisions should work well for those who wish to take advantage of the new requirements relating to the sale of subdivided land.

The in-built safety mechanisms in the Bill will ensure that a purchaser is protected, so far as possible, until the plan of subdivision is approved and the sale is settled. The flexibility provided will also aid the developer of land. I commend the Bill the House.
FAIRFIELD LAND BILL

The debate (adjourned from September 19) on the motion of Mr Wilkes (Minister for Housing) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

Mr COLEMAN (Syndal)—The Bill is a park grab with which the Opposition is in agreement. It concerns 595 square metres of land, which is residual land in the City of Northcote. For the benefit of the Minister for Housing, the land was left over when the Eastern Freeway development took place through Yarra Bend Park.

The small, triangular piece of land is to be used in accordance with the recommendations of the Corrections Master Plan developed by the Government for the benefit of prisoners at Fairlea Female Prison. It is proposed initially to erect a fairly substantial security fence along the land, which has the freeway as its southern abutment.

The Opposition realizes that it is not possible to place the land back within the Yarra Bend Park and for that reason does not oppose the Bill.

Mr WALLACE (Gippsland South)—The National Party supports the Bill.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time, and passed through its remaining stages.

HOUSING (COMMONWEALTH–STATE–NORTHERN TERRITORY AGREEMENT) BILL

The debate (adjourned from the previous day) on the motion of Mr Wilkes (Minister for Housing) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West)—Before I was rudely interrupted—the Opposition is always prepared to accommodate the Government when necessary—I was highlighting the gross incompetence that had been displayed in several areas of housing administration in Victoria.

Before the matter concerning the former Governor came before the House, I was speaking about an initiative to be introduced by the State Government and about the costs to the Ministry of that initiative. Those costs will, of course, be borne by the taxpayer, and they can be conservatively estimated to be approximately $400 000 or equal to 0.8 per cent of the loan capital made available. The scheme will utilize funds from the private sector and private financial markets. The proposed scheme is an attempt to boost home ownership in Victoria. The subsidy will be borne by the taxpayers and will be administered by the Ministry, but it will not be recouped under the terms of the Commonwealth–State Housing Agreement.

The Minister for Housing has admitted in answer to questions on notice that the administrative cost to the Ministry for wages alone in processing housing loans is at present $1.65 million. That figure does not include overhead costs such as office space, heating and power costs, and as such it represents a massive subsidy which will be incurred in the administration of the Government’s housing program. That is inexcusable when one considers that home purchase assistance could be provided efficiently by the private sector—for example, as I indicated yesterday, by the co-operative housing society movement in Victoria.

It is estimated, for example, that the home finance branch of the Ministry of Housing is administering approximately $180 million of home purchase assistance funds. The current administration costs for wages alone represents 0.9 per cent or twice the administration cost that would be incurred if those funds were administered through the private sector. The most effective community agency to which I have referred numerous times during the debate is the co-operative housing society movement which administers Government funds at the low cost of 0.4 per cent. The Opposition has set out graphically that it is
cheaper to use the housing co-operative movement or the private sector rather than to use the Ministry of Housing.

I shall refer now to the submission by the Federation of Housing Societies of Victoria that was made to the Government and dealt with the issues being debated. The federation called upon the Government to allocate increased funding for that movement. Regrettably, the Government again did not see fit to agree to this proposal.

In each of the four State Labor Budgets handed down, the Government has in real terms reduced funds for distribution through the Victorian co-operative housing movement. The Federation of Housing Societies of Victoria submitted to the Government that an extra 5000 families could be assisted in four years, without cost to the Government, if some of its fundraising schemes were adopted. The federation proposed a number of schemes whereby money obtained from the private sector would be pooled with funds from the Ministry of Housing to subsidize interest rates particularly. However, without exception those proposals were rejected.

The Government's spot purchase program has overheated the housing market in many suburbs of Melbourne. In the electorate of Syndal, the average price for a house has risen from less than $47,000 in 1982 to more than $75,000 this year.

Other methods of obtaining and constructing homes used by the Ministry, such as infill projects, have not resulted in value for money. In Nelson Street, South Melbourne, seven units were provided at a contract price of $527,000 and the cost of the land was $89,000, so the cost of each residence in that development exceeded $88,000. I could quote numerous other examples involving the infill housing scheme undertaken by the Government.

Earlier in the debate I highlighted the Toorak development where the Ministry of Housing is involved and where the average cost of the three-bedroom homes to be provided for low income earners will exceed $100,000. Is the Ministry really obtaining value for money with these schemes?

The provisions of the Bill allow the capacity to help with any form of housing that the Government elects. I ask the Minister for Housing to carefully consider the next issue. Country students will face the loss of another city hostel after Christmas. The Phillip Hostel at Maribyrnong has been used for some time to accommodate country students, particularly those in the first year of study and those unfamiliar with Melbourne. Last month the Federal Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, which has responsibility for this hostel, advised the committee of management that from next year the hostel would be unavailable to country students. Honourable members should realize that this is against the background where the Government, for reasons not understood by the Opposition, decided to sell off other hostels which for many years had been available to country students.

Next year many country students who come to Melbourne for tertiary study will be denied the hostel accommodation that is currently supplied under a joint arrangement between the Commonwealth and the State Governments. I ask the Minister for Housing to consider that matter because the Bill is a Commonwealth–State housing agreement.

I ask the Minister to take on board the plight of the many students who will be seeking accommodation next year, many of whom will come to Melbourne from the country to commence their studies and will be thrust into the housing market. The Minister knows the crisis exists. It is difficult to obtain good, reasonably priced accommodation, and in many regions it is impossible for students to find reasonably priced accommodation. The funding provisions of the Bill provide the Minister with power to allocate resources for hostels and the like, and I ask him to consider the matter seriously in consultation with his Federal colleagues, so that hostel accommodation can be made available on a continuing basis or to research other options to ensure that, at the start of the 1986 school year, students will not face the situation of no accommodation being available.
One of those options must be to consider converting one of the existing high-rise housing developments in Melbourne. Hostel accommodation would require staff in attendance all the time because meals are provided and a degree of supervision is necessary. It would not be unreasonable for the Minister to consider the conversion. I acknowledge that this could not occur in one week. It would require a lengthy lead time. However, the Minister could consider asking the Federal Government to assist the State in the cost of upgrading and changing the high-rise buildings in Melbourne, which are conveniently located close to public transport and learning institutions. One of the average high-rise towers could provide approximately 200 separate rooms for a large number of country students. Students would not face the problems that existing tenants of those buildings face because they are young and fit and would not experience the sorts of social problems faced by the mix of tenants presently residing in those high-rise towers.

The other aspect I raise is that, in the past nine months, the Ministry of Housing has been without a permanent head. I am aware that the Minister for Housing became upset at comments I made in this Chamber yesterday on the staff under his control. I plan to refer to the Minister’s response later in the debate. I understand his concern. His Ministry has a large number of staff and I accept and acknowledge that, as a responsible Minister, he must show concern for his staff. I have pointed to programs within the Ministry that are not being administered properly.

I have highlighted several of those programs in the debate to date, such as the scandalous mismanagement taking place with the granny flats program. It is obvious that the Ministry would be better run with a permanent head. I cannot accept an organization as large as the Ministry of Housing floundering along without a permanent head. It appears that it may be another year before one is appointed. I am aware that the Government has in mind the appointment of a party hack and it is now on the public record, but the Opposition will not accept that appointment. The Government knows a furore will be raised by the Opposition if a party hack is appointed to that position.

Mr Wilkes—We will appoint whom we like.

Mr BROWN—It is now on the record that the Minister will appoint whom he likes. The only appointment acceptable to the Opposition is that of a person who is the most highly qualified and eminently suitable person for the position. I am aware of nominees for the position who are highly qualified and eminently suitable to take on the job. The person who I understand the Government desires to appoint is totally unacceptable not only to the Opposition but also to the people of Victoria because of his ties to and allegiance with the Labor Party and his public activities over a long period that have stirred up in this State housing issues which would have been adequately and reasonably handled had it not been for that individual’s involvement.

I am saying on the public record that if a permanent head is appointed to the Ministry of Housing—and he must surely be appointed in the near future, after a nine-month delay—and that appointment turns out to be political, all hell will break loose.

I have also pointed out that some Ministry brick veneer or weatherboard residences, and some granny flats, remain empty for lengthy periods.

Mr Wilkes—True.

Mr BROWN—The Minister for Housing acknowledges that it is true, as he must, because it has been highlighted for so long. How long does it take before a decent administrative arrangement can be put in place so that these problems can be overcome? It is a straightforward matter. The Ministry of Housing knows when the tenant moves out because the keys are handed back at the regional office. There is no question that the Ministry and the Minister for Housing know about it, yet these residences sit empty for months. If a granny flat becomes vacant, it may be a year before it acquires a new tenant. That is scandalous; it is an administrative system that is totally unacceptable. The Minister must turn his attention to that problem.
I have also highlighted the Liberal Party's total abhorrence of the Government's continual push to build large, high density estates. I hope the Minister takes on board my comments. One thing the Liberal Party did learn from 27 years of continuous rule was that the development of large estates is wrong. It knows that in hindsight, and I can inform the House that there is no way a future Liberal Government will ever build a high density or high-rise estate.

Mr Wilkes—Hear, hear!

Mr BROWN—The Minister interjects "Hear, hear", yet he leads an organization that is continuing to build and plan high density estates.

Mr Wilkes—Up to 50 units or less, with one exception.

Mr BROWN—There should be no exception. The Liberal Party's policy is that land should be developed, but the bulk of it should be handed over for normal, private occupancy. The Ministry should not put people for whom it is responsible all together in one large allotment and have them stigmatized. It is a human tragedy that these people are stigmatized. It is a blight on the rest of the community, of which we comprise a small part, that these people are stigmatized. People say, "They come from a commission area", or, "Your kids come from a commission area". It is a fact of life and it can be avoided. It is time the present Minister for Housing, who has been in his position for some time, does something about it. In this regard, Government policy should be changed.

I also highlighted the extravagance of the Ministry of Housing in building accommodation for low income earners in places such as Toorak. I have no quarrel whatever about them being housed in Toorak, but I am aggrieved because for the same expenditure the Ministry could build two houses elsewhere. It would be more sensible to move out further to build these sorts of development where land is so much cheaper. The Ministry would get greater value for its dollar, which would be in the interests of both the tenants and the Government.

The Ministry of Housing has estimated that to build a house in Toorak for low income earners would cost more than $100,000; it may end up closer to $200,000, time will tell, but the Opposition believes the Government would get better value for money if those places were built 3 or 4 kilometres further out in the suburbs. That would help the people the Government wants to help because it would provide more houses for the same amount of money.

The Liberal Party does not suggest that this accommodation should be moved outside the metropolitan area. The Liberal Party is saying that the Ministry of Housing should purchase properties in adjacent cheaper suburbs. If an allotment of the same size can be bought in an adjoining suburb for $20,000 cheaper, obviously more accommodation can be provided for tenants.

Another issue of concern to the Opposition is the Government's continued preparedness to accommodate squatters. The law says it is illegal to occupy a property one does not own without permission. Regularly properties, mostly owned by the Ministry of Housing but also owned by other Government departments, are broken into illegally.

Mr Wilkes—Not all are owned by the Ministry of Housing.

Mr BROWN—Nearly all these houses are owned by the Government. Once squatters are in, the Government is prepared to legitimize their tenancy and will accommodate them over the heads of hundreds of families who have been waiting, some up to five years, for housing accommodation. What anarchy is the Government trying to promote? Is it really saying to the people on the housing waiting lists, who have been waiting for five or six years, that they should bash down a door of a Government-owned property and move in illegally and that the Government will legitimize their tenancy in that event? Is that the way the Ministry of Housing wants to operate?

Mr Wilkes—No.
Mr BROWN—There appears to be some common ground on this issue between the Minister and the Liberal Party. Squatting is an illegal activity. There is no way that the Opposition will condone it, either now or in the future, and I ask the Ministry of Housing not to condone it by legitimizing these tenancies once squatters have broken into homes.

Mr Wilkes—This Ministry has never legalized that practice.

Mr BROWN—I also indicate that the Ministry of Housing owns several non-housing assets. Previously in the House I read a list of those assets and I shall not go over the same ground. The Minister should reconsider this situation. Is it reasonable for the Ministry of Housing to own a pub? I do not think it is. I cannot comprehend why the Ministry owns a pub. The Liberal Party would welcome an announcement of the impending auction of this hotel because the proceeds will provide several houses. The Minister for Housing laughs—perhaps the pub is on his way home, I do not know. I must say that, from the outside, it is a reasonable hotel. However, if the sale of that hotel would raise enough money to provide an additional five to ten homes, so much the better.

It is not just the pub; the Liberal Party urges the Ministry to sell all its assets that are not housing related, the proceeds from which will house many more tenants. The Liberal Party is not urging the Government to sell off the farm, like the Government has done in every other area where it has sold assets that should have been retained, but to sell assets that are not needed. The list includes a car yard, shops, a service station, and so on.

I raise further the issue of the Ministry of Housing’s purchase of the old Geelong wool store building. This is another brilliant concept initiated by the Labor Party Government in the face of howling protests from local people. My colleague, the honourable member for South Barwon, has been inundated with protests since the Labor Party first mooted its plan to convert the wool shed. Geelong residents are very much aware of the critical housing shortage in Geelong that has existed for many years. They want money spent in Geelong. There should be no equivocation. They want the Ministry of Housing to supply housing. That is the point on which they hound the honourable member for South Barwon and, no doubt, the honourable members for Geelong and Geelong North.

When the residents of Geelong learned of the Ministry’s plans to convert the wool shed they were aghast. Although the building is of brick exterior, it comprises six wooden floors and a wooden interior. One can imagine the accumulation of grease in a wool shed that is 100 years old. One would only have to stand in the entrance to light a cigarette and the whole place would ignite. The Government is considering converting this wool shed to accommodate low income housing tenants.

The wool store project would have been a virtual incinerator. The Opposition raised the point that the building was a fire hazard and there were many other considerations which made it totally unacceptable for a high density development in which dozens of families would have resided on one site, not close to the services they require, such as primary schools.

What happens? After continuing pressure from the Opposition and the community and the strong activities of the local member to ensure that the interests of his constituents were protected, the Government finally made an announcement, under duress, that it would sell the block. This asset should never have been purchased; it was a scandalous waste of more than $300 000 and, indeed, it will be sold at a loss.

More than $300 000 some would say was “invested” down there but I would say was “squandered” down there. It has been sitting empty, a potential fire trap, which may have incinerated residents, for longer than three years. If the money had been invested with Australian Guarantee Corporation Ltd or Custom Credit Corporation Ltd, it would have returned approximately $50 000 a year in interest, which would have been enough to build a new house in Geelong every year. Not only that, the Government committed hundreds of thousands of dollars to upgrading the property for each of the past two financial years and residents in Geelong have been done in the eye as a result, because the development
did not proceed, the money was not used to benefit Geelong and it has missed out on that expenditure for ever more.

Geelong has been ripped off by the Government not only with regard to that purchase, which was folly from the outset, but also in public rental housing. The Government is two years behind in what it has promised, which effectively has meant the loss of 200 properties. It is time the Government lived up to some of its promises. The honourable member for South Barwon continues to ensure that the Ministry of Housing honours its undertakings.

In the Geelong Advertiser of 16 October an article headed “Wool Store plan backfires” states:

The Ministry of Housing’s railway wool store project was a white elephant, the Barwon Regional Housing Council said yesterday.

The article goes on to quote the regional housing council. The council is made up of people who are astute and competent and who know the housing issues. Do they ever! The Minister will certainly bear the pain and heat of their sting before his time is finished in this State. The council knows it was a folly; it was lunacy even to embark upon the proposal in the first place.

Nothing is more upsetting to me than statements that are purposefully misleading or are found to be wilful in the light of day at a subsequent time. On 25 March 1985, after constantly pushing the issue of the gross incompetence within the Ministry of Housing, I said in a statement that received widespread press coverage:

Granny flats in Victoria were empty for up to 12 months despite a waiting list of more than 700 people, the State Opposition claimed today.

I would never expect a responsible press to merely believe my side of a story without checking it. Members of the press interviewed the Minister and told him that the Opposition had claimed more than 700 people were waiting for granny flats. The Minister was reported in the press as describing the claims as “arrant nonsense”. The Minister was also reported as having said that no granny flats had been vacant for more than twelve months and that the waiting list was nowhere near 700.

At that time I told the Minister there was one example of a granny flat at Balwyn which had been empty for fourteen months. I asked the Minister whether he would ensure that that flat was fixed up. Following that example I gave the Minister, he said nothing further about my claim of granny flats having remained vacant for twelve months.

The illustration I have given the House demonstrates that one should not make statements unless one is sure of the facts. At the time I thought I should investigate the Minister’s claim that my estimation of 700 people waiting for granny flats was arrant nonsense. I put a question on notice.

Yesterday to my delight, via the good offices of the Minister, which I appreciate, I received an answer, of which I hope the House takes note. When the Minister told the representatives of the press that my claim of 700 people waiting for granny flats was arrant nonsense, in fact 819 people were waiting for granny flats as at 30 June 1984. Nine months prior to that, 1017 people were on the waiting list for granny flats. My initial claim was not arrant nonsense; rather, the situation was worse than I had forecast.

On 30 June 1982 there were 629 applicants on the waiting list for granny flats. On 30 June 1983 there were 929 applicants. This is when the Labor Party was elected to office on the promise that it would solve all the problems.

On 30 June 1984, when the Labor Party had been in office for two years, there were 1017 on the waiting list. Three months ago there were 819 applicants. That is when the Minister described my claim of 700 applicants as being “arrant nonsense”. I can only hope that that description by the Minister was an honest mistake.
I am a benevolent type; therefore, I am prepared to take the view that the Minister did not have all the information at his disposal. If the Minister is prepared to back up his staff as being competent, he is one of the few I would commend for meeting the requirements of the Westminster system. If the Minister relies upon his staff and backs them up, in the way that he did when I attacked some of his staff yesterday during a debate, and if those staff feed him information that will get him into trouble, I suggest that the Minister should sort out some of his staff.

Yesterday during debate in the House, I attacked the Ministry of Housing for gross incompetence, mismanagement and inefficiency. I gave examples of that. I did not attack every officer in the Ministry of Housing because undoubtedly the majority of officers in the Ministry are good. However, when one has a festering sore on one’s body, one has to attack it.

I can inform the Minister now where the problem was in his Ministry; it was the party hacks who were loaded into the Ministry for Housing prior to him becoming the Minister. In the main, they were loaded into that Ministry within the first twelve months of the Labor Government and the party hacks and cohorts are all still there. They were not appointed by the current Minister for Housing.

There are some excellent staff in the Ministry, with whom I will be pleased to work—and I look forward to that occurring soon. However, there is no way that I would suffer incompetent fools lightly. I would ensure that they got their act into gear properly and gave the Minister proper information; and, when the matter was raised, I would ensure that they addressed within a reasonable time, the issue of having granny flats moved.

I would move to put other officers in their position. Why have people in positions of seniority continued to embarrass the Minister because they do not perform adequately? Indeed, the matter needs to be addressed, and it needs to be fixed.

I am tempted to quote from the Minister’s statement that appeared in the press yesterday, but I will not do so, except to say that the statement is “arrant nonsense”—and that is a fact. I can only suggest to the Minister that, before he makes such statements in future, he had better read them first. The statement that appeared in the press yesterday is full of inaccuracies, and it is obvious that it was prepared by someone other than the Minister. I suggest, before the honourable gentleman allows his statements to get into print in future, he first check the facts.

The Opposition will support the Bill. It acknowledges that the agreement is important for the future of housing in this State.

The ten-year agreement that has been entered into was drawn up on the basis of certainty and, as the Liberal Party will be leading this State in the future, it wants to ensure that the agreement will enable it to satisfactorily do the right thing for the thousands of families in this State who urgently require housing accommodation.

My main regret is that, by the time the Liberal Party comes to government, the waiting list for housing accommodation in this State will have doubled. If that is the result of a Government that says it is getting on top of the problem—when, in fact, the problem has doubled in the time that Government is in power—I am yet to comprehend how the problem is being fixed.

Mr J. F. McGrath (Warrnambool)—I make my contribution to the debate following a detailed and articulate dissertation by the honourable member for Gippsland West.

The purpose of the Housing (Commonwealth–State–Northern Territory Agreement) Bill is, as it states:

... to ratify the execution for and on behalf of the State of Victoria of an agreement between the Commonwealth, the States and the Northern Territory of Australia relating to housing.

It covers a wide spectrum of Victoria’s housing operations and, in particular, relates to the function of housing over the next ten years.
In his second-reading speech, the Minister for Housing stated:

The twin objectives are to alleviate housing-related poverty and to ensure that housing assistance is, as far as possible, delivered equitably to residents of different forms of housing. The spirit of the agreement is that every Australian has a basic right to adequate and affordable housing.

The National Party seeks to ensure that those objectives are carried out to the letter. The provision of adequate funding would enable that to occur rather than allowing the waiting list to lengthen—which is occurring at the present—which leads to those in the lower-income and benefit income areas being disadvantaged to a large extent because they are unable to obtain adequate housing at a reasonable price. The Minister also stated:

Commonwealth funding provided to Victoria under this agreement in 1984–85 amounted to $148 million, and the Commonwealth has already announced its 1985–86 agreement allocation of $156 million.

It is interesting to note that last year there was an increase over the previous year's allocation of approximately 15 per cent and the increase this year is down to approximately 5·5 per cent. That is a disappointing and sad state of affairs at a time of growing waiting lists for public housing.

The Minister has made strong comments about the reduction in funding and I congratulate him for making those comments, but we need more than words. What we need to adequately house the people of this State who require public housing is more funds from the Commonwealth to be matched with State funds.

The spirit of the Commonwealth–State Housing Agreement is that every Australian has a basic right to adequate and affordable housing. Good housing is an essential requirement for all people and the National Party is committed to encouraging home ownership for all Australians. It is my experience that those of us who are married and settled down or who follow a career and never marry consider the acquiring of a home of our own as an important part of life.

We need to think long and hard about what we should do to assist people to buy their own home. The honourable member for Gippsland West referred to the ongoing support of housing co-operatives. The National Party supports that view and looks forward to encouraging banking institutions and co-operative societies to provide home finance.

The National Party believes the private sector, particularly the co-operative housing sector, can deliver the best services and therefore provide homes in the most cost-effective way. The size of the budget is not necessarily important; it is how to spend that budget wisely and to make every dollar go as far as possible. The National Party's housing policy states:

It is important that a balance be maintained between public housing for rent and for purchase.

As I understand it, in the past when people took advantage of the opportunity of purchasing the public house which they were renting, another property was put on to the rental market to replace the property which had been sold. This ensured that people who required rental accommodation were not disadvantaged. We must keep that important point in mind.

We need to encourage home ownership and the purchasing of homes but we must continue to provide housing for that group of people who, in some cases through no fault of their own, will never be able to buy their own home because of their economic circumstances. The National Party's housing policy goes on to state:

The National Party believes that it is essential to house as many people as possible. To this end, it is acknowledged that more people can be housed in country regions per dollar spent than in the metropolitan region.

The basic reason is that land can be bought in the country for a cheaper price. Whether the Government builds houses in Housing Commission estates, which have carried a stigma over the years, or purchases blocks of land to enable the building of public housing
for rental, it is more economical and more achievable in country areas than in the metropolitan area because of the difference in the cost of land.

Now that the number of people drifting from the country to the city seeking employment is levelling off, it is perhaps appropriate to review the balance of funding for public housing between the metropolitan and country areas.

I am now given to understand that approximately 70 per cent of the funds are concentrated in the metropolitan area and the National Party asks the Minister to keep that under consistent review, bearing in mind that there is a slight shift now of people saying, "We might as well stay in the country if we are to be employed, instead of coming to the city and having all sorts of problems in terms of housing, change of lifestyle and so on." These people are now drifting back to the country and we need to address ourselves to that issue so that some provision is made for adequate housing for those people who choose to live in beautiful rural Victoria.

We talk about accommodation for pensioners and the elderly, and the current trends are certainly portraying an ageing population. This trend and the numbers involved should be recognized and projections should be made to ensure adequate accommodation for elderly people in the future. Quite often, when travelling around the urban centres of the electorate of Warrnambool, I find that the people are expressing grave concern about the ageing population and about what happens to the elderly when they move out, once they are unable to continue to maintain the domestic home.

Another problem faced by the Government—and I think that adequate accommodation for the aged can redress part of the housing shortage problem—is that many cases exist where a couple who are in their retiring years, or a widow or widower are living in a three-bedroom home whilst there is a waiting list. In Warrnambool, for example, some 360 or 370 people, are looking for family homes. The first group of people are in the three-bedroom homes because they do not have the alternative of the one or two bedroom unit to move into. More consideration should be given to the development of accommodation for the aged because this would have the added advantage of allowing more families to move into these larger homes.

It is evident in the electorate of Warrnambool that we are entering an era where more people are retiring per head of population and adequate housing for these people, generally located close to centres of service, is necessary. In terms of projection, that is what is needed.

Today we are all aware of youth and the problems of youth and certainly one of the problems in country Victoria—and I guess it is no different in the metropolitan area—is adequate accommodation for youth, whether on a share basis or on a crisis basis.

There is a decided problem for youth and the National Party believes that this is something else that the Ministry of Housing should put on its list of priorities.

Next time the Minister returns to Canberra to argue the case for the reallocation of funds, the National Party hopes that Victoria will fare better; with an increase in the State's allocation as opposed to the decrease suffered this time. Victoria was allocated approximately a 5·5 per cent increase this time as opposed to a 15 per cent increase last year.

This issue needs to be addressed and the Minister should be encouraged to be persistent and insistent in pursuing that course.

A Government allocation of $20 million for low income earners was proposed some time ago, and it is hoped the present Minister for Housing does not distribute that allocation in the fashion of a lottery as happened previously when approximately 12 000 applicants applied for 450 to 500 loans and those loans were literally distributed by lot. It makes a mockery of the priority system if people who have been on the waiting list for eighteen months or two years—up to 30 months in some country areas—have to take pot
luck or even have their names drawn out of a hat. It sounds like another Nunawading by-election and it is a disgrace.

There has been much discussion about interest rates and concession rates. An interest rate system was devised whereby borrowers paid interest rates at 9 per cent or 11 per cent on home loans that attracted a rate of 12 per cent. These borrowers were introduced into the loan at a lower rate and, over a five year period, the interest rate was increased to its full amount.

People in the community need to be encouraged to buy their own homes because, in many cases, home ownership is the only nest egg that many people will have. In the electorate I represent, I meet many people on limited or low incomes who have trouble meeting day-to-day or week by week expenses. The light at the end of the tunnel for many of those people is the building that they will own at the end of their working lives, whether they distribute it amongst their children or just enjoy it themselves in their retirement.

Another matter that relates to home ownership is the exemption of stamp duty. The ceiling on the exemption has been raised to $65,000. It would be difficult in Melbourne and also in country areas to buy a home today for less than $65,000. Very few people would qualify for that stamp duty exemption. I urge the Minister to consider reviewing the upper level of that exemption as an incentive to home buyers. The figure could be raised to perhaps $80,000 or $85,000 and that would be an incentive to new home purchasers. The price of housing continues to increase because of inflation and the figure of $65,000 is out of step with today's prices.

Interestingly enough, I was recently in the offices of the Ministry of Housing in Warrnambool. The Ministry has a magnificent facility in Warrnambool and the staff do a wonderful job in extremely difficult circumstances. I have the greatest admiration for these people who so willingly put their noses to the grindstone and get the job done. While I was there, the subject of computerization came up. The staff were recounting the problems, which I also encounter in my own electorate office, of waiting lists for housing. I believe the only way to address the waiting list problem is with State funding and with sensible and planned spending of that funding.

The Bill is about the amount of funding that Victoria did not receive from the Commonwealth and the amount of money the State must allocate to fund housing needs in Victoria.

The length of waiting lists must be considered. It is quite frustrating to try to service the needs of some of the people who come into my electorate office and who are, in my opinion and in the opinion of the local Ministry of Housing office, priority cases for housing accommodation. Recently, an unmarried mother with a fifteen-month-old child visited my electorate office. She was living in a situation where fairly heavy drug usage was involved, but it was impossible to house her at that time. She was on the waiting list but was not at the top of the priority list. That is the type of difficulty being faced in Victoria, especially in the electorate I represent.

In the short term in which I have been a member of this House, more than 50 per cent of the people who visit my electorate office have had housing problems. As the honourable member for Syndal indicates by interjection, the same applies in the electorate he represents.

The problems are caused by the long waiting lists for accommodation and do not necessarily relate to the conditions or the size of the housing provided. Most problems are due to the time people must wait to obtain adequate housing.

An organization in Victoria has put forward some comments about the housing situation. The organization stated:

The Ministry needs to acknowledge its responsibility to homeless people and those in inadequate housing.
Many are struggling to maintain themselves in the private rental sector; doubling up with friends and relatives; living in substandard accommodation because it’s all they can afford; remaining in intolerable or violent domestic situations with parents or partners, because the alternatives are unknown or inaccessible; or moving from refuge to refuge, if they are able to find a vacancy.

All these people need long-term appropriate housing options.

They may also need assistance with information—to find a flat, to know their rights as a tenant, to know how to get onto the Ministry’s waiting list.

I shall now refer to the Minster’s second-reading speech, which indicates that the Bill has two objectives. The last line of the third paragraph of the speech states:

... every Australian has a basic right to adequate and affordable housing.

A strong message should be forwarded to the Commonwealth Government in relation to its reduction in housing funds for Victoria. It is deplorable that people are forced to go on waiting lists and that, in some cases, delays of 30 months occur before they obtain accommodation. That is not acceptable and the Government of the day—both in the State and Federal spheres—has a responsibility to the people it represents.

I urge the Minister for Housing to take up this case with the Federal Government to ensure that, next year, the State receives an adequate increase in Commonwealth funding and that Victoria is adequately compensated for the moneys it did not receive this year. Last year, Victoria received an increase of 15 per cent in its housing allocation from the Federal Government, and this year it has received an increase of 5.5 per cent. Next year, the increase will have to be substantial to put the housing situation in Victoria, especially in the electorate of Warrnambool, back into order.

The Federation of Housing Societies of Victoria has some concerns about the present housing situation. I pay particular attention to those concerns because the federation deals with an area of the market that needs to be developed and opened up to those people who can economically put themselves in that situation.

This is bearing in mind that I believe in many cases the opportunity of purchasing and inevitably paying off their own homes is something most Victorians would see as their main goal in life. That opportunity should be available to everyone. The Federation of Housing Societies of Victoria could play a significant part in this. It proposes that cooperative housing societies could create a stable and affordable pool of private sector housing finance and, if given full support by the State Government, could more than double the amount of housing assistance funds available. That is, another 5000 families could be assisted in a four-year period.

That goes back to the point made by the honourable member for Gippsland West, that private development has proven over a period to be more equitable and reasonable in cost than the corporate structures in which we become involved.

The federation also points out that with the increasing cost of housing finance and the growth in values, which creates problems with bridging the gap or obtaining adequate deposits, the demand for increased assistance for low and middle income families is growing rapidly and approximately $550 million is currently required to satisfy that demand. The federation also states:

As well as supporting the State Government’s election commitment to assist an extra 2000 families by making institutional finance more accessible, the federation recognizes that State Government support should be given to influencing the investment criteria of large investment bodies who may not traditionally be lending for housing and provide “roll-over” facilities for short-term lending for housing.

In other words, the Government should provide more opportunities for people to get into the housing market. I still believe that in this day and age many people are crying out for the opportunity of putting their noses to the grindstone and putting nooses around their necks to work to pay off their houses. We have a responsibility to provide that alternative and that is what we should be able to do.
The federation puts forward a couple of other suggestions, such as creating a special housing bond issue to increase the pool of available finance. That is valuable in terms of understanding the amount of money that is likely to be available to potential house owners or buyers.

In the Warrnambool electorate we are examining a development near a large industrial complex at the Kraft Foods Ltd factory in Allansford. Housing availability in the small town of Allansford is scarce. I have made extensive inquiries into the land and services available, and the costings.

In the near future I shall be taking up the matter with the Ministry of Housing with a view to ascertaining whether we can start some sort of development—such as a spot purchase program—to service the Kraft Foods factory, which employs 500 people. It has plans on its drawing board for substantial growth in the next five years and we are examining the possibility of retaining those business and employment opportunities in the Warrnambool electorate. We are anxious to be able to press on with the development, firstly, because it will assist the small township of Allansford and the Kraft factory and, secondly, it will take off the pressure from existing waiting lists in the City of Warrnambool and the surrounding towns of Port Fairy, Mortlake, Koroit and Terang.

I shall take up the matter with the Minister on behalf of the employees of the Kraft company and the residents of Allansford. I urge the Minister to pursue with the Federal Government the matter of the funding that is necessary to provide adequate housing for people in Victoria. Will the Minister consider the fair distribution of funds by the Ministry of Housing to both metropolitan and country areas? He should bear in mind the trend, to which I referred earlier, of people moving back into country areas where there are obviously more job opportunities.

I am gravely concerned about the proposed closure of the Phillip Hostel. Although the Warrnambool electorate is fortunate to have the Warrnambool Institute of Advanced Education, which provides a high level of post-secondary education, restrictions are faced by the institute because it has a limited number of subjects and courses which can be undertaken by the students.

Therefore, many country students must come to Melbourne to continue their tertiary education and to pursue their chosen lifestyle. Both country students and their parents are worried about the availability of accommodation for those students when they arrive in Melbourne.

Over the past couple of years there has been a reduction in the availability of accommodation for country students. Once again this demonstrates the Government's total disregard for country students. The students and parents in my constituency are at present extremely vocal in expressing their concern about what accommodation will be available if the Phillip Hostel is closed. I urge the Minister for Housing to do all he can to prevent its closure.

A couple of points need to be considered: first, a substantial change in lifestyle is experienced by country students who move to Melbourne to continue their education. They need to adjust to the change in pace, their environment and, as the honourable member for Syndal has interjected, their change in security. One could expand on the various changes confronted by these students. Second, due to their relocation, students face economic disadvantages when they arrive in Melbourne. For some it is the first time away from their parents. Mothers, being what they are, are gravely concerned about their children getting the necessary nutrients when they have to fend for themselves.

The Government has a responsibility to ensure that the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs does not proceed with the proposal to close the Phillip Hostel in 1986. The Government should act quickly on the matter to allay any fears held by parents who are making plans to accommodate their children in Melbourne in the next school year. If
the Government can dispel those fears, the students can continue their study for their final exams without the worry about accommodation hanging over their heads.

On behalf of the National Party I have much pleasure in supporting the Bill. I ask the Minister to consider the points I have raised.

Mrs HIRSH (Wantirna)—The Bill ratifies the adoption of a housing agreement between the Commonwealth and the States. The agreement has social ramifications in Australia.

Mr Kennett interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fogarty)—Order! The Leader of the Opposition will have every opportunity at a later time.

Mrs HIRSH—The agreement sets out principles which will have a direct effect on public housing in Victoria. Its objectives are to relieve housing-related poverty and to ensure that people in different forms of housing receive appropriate Government assistance.

The priorities for granting housing assistance are related to need. The social stigma that used to be associated with public housing must be avoided. The Cain Government has taken many important steps to ensure that that stigma no longer exists in Victoria. The Government has moved from the Housing Commission estates of former Liberal Governments into developments comprising public sector housing that cannot be differentiated from private sector housing. A maximum of 50 units is built in small groups within specific areas and, whenever possible, public housing is spread amongst private housing in the community so that public housing tenants are not discriminated against and can live in harmony amongst other members of the community.

This is an extremely important change because, in the past, the widespread belief was that people who lived in Housing Commission houses were somehow inferior to the rest of the community. In the speech made by the honourable member for Gippsland West, I noted that that feeling is still present amongst members of the Liberal Party. The Liberal Party is still locked into its old welfare housing policies and attitudes of the 1970s.

I shall explain some matters to members of the Opposition to correct their understanding of the situation and to assist them in recognizing the deficiencies of Liberal party policy. The honourable member for Gippsland West said that the Liberal Party would provide subsidies to people who purchased houses. He espoused the view that home ownership was possible for everyone and that that was a tremendous ambition. The honourable member believes it would be wonderful if all families owned their own homes, and it would be wonderful.

However, the honourable member should realize that between 20 per cent and 30 per cent of people in Victoria cannot, and never will, own their own homes. No Government can ignore the existence of those people.

Mr PERRIN—Mr Deputy Speaker, the honourable member’s contribution is interesting, so I direct your attention to the state of the House.

A quorum was formed.

Mrs HIRSH—I was outlining the differences between past Liberal Government policies and the policies of this Government on public housing. Previous policies were put in place in order to put people who could not afford housing into second-rate accommodation and high-rise estates. The idea of the Liberal Party was to sell off public housing. Before the March State election the Liberal Party even put forward the idea of selling off high-rise estates for office space, or whatever. What did it intend to do with the thousands of tenants who are currently housed in those developments? Would it put them on the street?

The honourable member for Gippsland West commented on the incredible waste of the taxpayers’ money spent on public housing. He said that the State should not be bothered about providing housing and should be selling public housing to tenants as they move into
the dwellings to prevent them from staying in rental accommodation. That is what was happening prior to the Labor Government taking office in 1982. During the last years of the Liberal Government the public sector housing stock decreased markedly. Housing was being sold off without replacement and often without maintenance having been carried out.

This Government is prepared to sell housing to tenants provided it is sold at replacement cost and is in the proper area. It is all right to sell off some public housing so long as it is replaced, but to engage in asset stripping of that nature, as happened under the Liberal Government, is totally unacceptable. That is one of the reasons why the Labor Government faced an incredible crisis. A major run down in public rental housing had taken place in the 1970s and early 1980s.

At present the Cain Labor Government is increasing public housing units so that 12 000 units will be provided during its four-year term, in addition to those that already exist. The Government is also expanding the range of accommodation and having regard to quality of accommodation. It is not building rows of second-rate houses or engaging in spot purchase programs without ensuring that the accommodation is of an equivalent standard to that in the private sector.

Location is an important factor. The honourable member for Gippsland West suggested that public housing should be a couple of kilometres out. I think he means in the bush in areas that have no access to transport or resources, such as the broad acres that existed in the 1970s.

The houses provided must also suit the families concerned. The Government is not providing bed-sitters such as those that elderly people were once given. They are now given attractive one-bedroom or two-bedroom dwellings. For families houses of up to four bedrooms are provided.

Another aspect of public housing policy is the issue of cost rents. The cost rent is the cost of the provision of housing. It is 90 per cent of the market rent and is not related to the market rent of private sector housing. It is related purely to the cost of housing. It is a much fairer form of rent. It has been suggested that people on rebated rent should live in second-rate housing. It was also said by the honourable member for Gippsland West that a woman living in a three-bedroom house was paying $27 a week.

Rental rebates are paid by the Government to people who cannot afford private housing. I am disappointed that the Opposition has not discussed the implication of rental rebates. These rebates are income-related and are really part of an income support scheme that should be provided by the Commonwealth Government. The Commonwealth Government has accepted that principle but, as yet, has not funded it. Rental rebates are a costly item in the State Budget, but are nevertheless very important.

The Government provides an important resource for people to assist them in home ownership. Many families cannot at any period of their lives afford homes, particularly during periods of sharply fluctuating income earning capacity when they would have a zero or negative saving capacity. In those cases, even subsidized home purchase is not possible. Public rental housing has to be provided for these people. Home ownership is a viable option for many people, but it is important that State funds are directed to areas of need and are not used to subsidize people who can afford home ownership.

The Government had commenced an important pilot scheme in the home finance sector by making capital indexed loans, income geared loans, available to enable people to finance their own homes. Under the conditions of those loans, applicants pay no more than 25 per cent of their incomes during the repayment of the loans. That is a more equitable way of providing assistance for housing and enables more people at a lower income level to finance their own homes, people who would have found it almost impossible under the old credit foncier system of home finance.
Housing interest rates are kept under control by the State and Federal Governments and it seems that other options will need to be investigated in a deregulated financial system. Capital indexed loans appear to be an equitable way of providing housing finance to home buyers because they are income geared and enable people to predict the payments they make so that they can deal with crisis periods in their lives—for instance, where a person becomes unemployed or sickness interferes with his or her income earning capacity. Under this system, loan repayments are always 25 per cent of a person's income.

The honourable member for Gippsland West commented about the differential cost of private and public housing. The cost differences are related to the standard and location of houses. A private sector house may cost less than public housing because the public housing may be closer to resources such as schools, shops and transport. It may even be in better condition. A house purchased in the private sector may not be close to transport, schools or shops.

The maintenance of public sector housing is important. The Liberal Government, at the end of its period of office, provided $2 million a year for public housing maintenance. The Labor Government is providing $22 million for maintenance. It is important not only that good quality public housing is provided but also that those houses are maintained at reasonable standards rather than being allowed to run down. People have been living in sub-standard public housing for years because no maintenance money was available.

The Government has the unenviable task of catching up on all those lost years of home maintenance. The honourable member for Syndal, who is interjecting, should have listened to the remarks that I have already made about interest rates, which are pertinent and important. In addition, the Government is examining other forms of housing. It is examining a new non-profit housing sector—that is common equity rental co-operatives and other rental co-operatives—which will enable people to be housed other than in the private rental sector. Although it is important to maintain the private rental sector, these new initiatives are crucial because the private rental sector is expensive and cannot be afforded by many people. The community housing sector and local government initiatives are extremely significant.

The Commonwealth–State agreement also provides specific housing assistance to specific groups, including pensioner housing, Aboriginal housing, crisis accommodation, emergency accommodation for people in trouble, mortgage and rent relief for people who again are in crisis and, rather than lose their homes, are able to apply for assistance, local government and community housing. Also, a maintenance service is provided for people in the private sector, mainly the elderly, whose homes are deteriorating in standard and who cannot afford house repairs. Some of these houses may need reblocking, reroofing, and so on, and the Victorian Ministry of Housing will provide maintenance assistance to enable people, especially the elderly, to stay in their homes longer.

The honourable member for Gippsland West suggested it was cheaper to put people into home ownership than to provide public housing. It needs to be remembered that public sector housing can be reused by other tenants because these houses remain the property of the Government. When subsidies are provided for people who move into home ownership, that money is lost to the public sector. A comparative costs argument of that description is not simple.

The Victorian Government has a balanced housing policy. It includes encouragement and assistance for people who move into home ownership and at the same time it continues to build and to expand the public housing sector.

Mr WEIDEMAN (Frankston South)—The Bill gives honourable members the opportunity of debating many issues concerning housing. The agreement between the Commonwealth and State Governments provided for in the Bill concerns Commonwealth funding for housing over the next ten years. My colleagues have emphasized the need for the Federal Government to provide more funds for housing purposes so that it is not
solely a burden on the State Government. The Minister for Housing has a difficult job in dealing with housing needs.

Honourable members are also aware that, as the honourable member for Gippsland West has indicated, the waiting lists for public housing have increased dramatically in the past three years and most honourable members are aware, as the honourable member for Warrnambool has said, that probably 50 per cent of the people who come into electorate offices have housing problems.

I was delighted that the honourable member for Wantirna contributed to the debate. It is pleasing that a Government member is prepared to support her Minister. Since I have returned to this place, I have been amazed at the lack of debating skills of Government members and their apparent inability to support their Ministers. My local press claims there is a superwoman in the House who is the best debater in this place. I am yet to hear her perform; I wait anxiously for that to happen.

My remarks relate to the rental housing co-operative program. I shall be quoting from some documentation and I am happy to table any documentation to which I refer, if honourable members care to study it. Section 4 of a document published by Shelter Victoria, in April 1985, refers to community management. The concept of co-operative rental housing was adopted by the previous Liberal Government in 1977, when the Fitzroy and Collingwood Rental Housing Co-operative was set up. It was an excellent program and I am happy that the honourable member for Richmond supports it. That program was well researched; it was supported by the Ministry and its officers and by the people involved in it. They did an excellent job. I am 100 per cent behind that approach to management and I support the idea of people getting out and creating new home environments for themselves.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! Would the honourable member for Frankston South cease directing his remarks across the table to the honourable member for Richmond and address the Chair.

Mr WEIDEMAN—I bow to your direction, Mr Acting Speaker, but the honourable member for Richmond's smile was so encouraging it was difficult to resist.

A research program was entered into and there appeared to be quick growth in the co-operative movement. In the short time since 1977, eighteen co-operatives have been established in the State. This number has been reduced recently by some closures but at present co-operatives are responsible for some 280 houses valued at between $10 million and $15 million, which is a substantial amount of money. Shelter, which would not be seen as a group that supports the Government—it would tend to get more out of the system if it did—in its report on rental housing co-operatives states that there has been no mutual understanding between co-operatives and the Ministry about their respective roles, rights and responsibilities. The Ministry is preoccupied with controlling the policies of individual co-operatives and the autonomy of the co-operatives is limited by it. The report contains several comments:

As co-operatives began asserting their perceived rights based on that original philosophical framework, major areas of contention have arisen between them and the Ministry. These have culminated in disagreements over the Ministry's proposed head lease.

It recommends that no more housing co-operatives be funded by the Ministry under the present program until the existing co-operatives have had time to consolidate. Its second recommendation is that negotiations of the proposed head lease should be used as an opportunity for the Ministry and the co-operatives to outline their ideologies about co-operative housing. Thirdly, and more importantly, a recommendation of which the Ministry should take heed is:

A research brief should be developed to investigate the closure of the Mornington co-operative and other general problems of the leasing co-operative program. Research funds could come from the Ministry of Housing and the co-operative development program...
The brief should be developed in consultation with CHAS, Joint Co-operatives and Shelter.

The experience of that group highlights the problems of rental housing co-operatives. Indeed, the Shelter Victoria group referred to the Mornington Rental Housing Co-operative, which closed due to bad management; subletting; tenants not paying the correct rent and people moonlighting from one house to another. The co-operative became an embarrassment to the Ministry, so it closed it down.

The Springvale Housing Co-operative, which housed 13 families and 44 adults, also had to close down because of similar problems. A number of housing co-operatives have had to close down due to the problems I have referred to.

With regard to the Frankston Rental Housing Co-operative, one of the members of that co-operative informed me that he had encountered various problems about which he wrote to the former Minister of Housing. In that letter the co-operative member outlined the problems of the co-operative working within the guidelines set out in a document entitled "Background of rental housing co-operative program. Information sheet No. 1".

At the time I thought that this person may have been disillusioned because he had been unable to get on to the waiting list of the then Housing Commission and, therefore, I was not prepared to use the information he provided. In a letter dated 25 November 1983, the then Minister of Housing wrote to this person stating:

In reference to your letter of 15th September, 1983, I have now investigated your housing situation in relation to the Frankston Rental Housing Co-operative (R.H.C.). I apologise for the delay in this reply.

As you are aware, R.H.C.s are responsible for selecting their own tenant members so long as they are eligible for Ministry of Housing assistance and the selection system used is primarily needs-based and non-discriminatory. It would appear that the Frankston Co-operative was acting within its rights to not accept you as a tenant member.

I can appreciate your disappointment at not being housed by the Frankston R.H.C. However, the Rental Housing Co-operative program is only one of the Ministry's accommodation programs and for a further discussion of your housing situation, I would urge you to contact the Frankston District Office on 781 4955.

This person wrote another letter, stating that the group had acted outside the guidelines.

In reply, the former Minister stated:

Thank you for forwarding to me a copy of your letter of 24th January, 1984. I apologize for the fact that the original was lost.

The complaints you have made against the Frankston Rental Housing Co-operative... And I emphasize this point—

... will be thoroughly investigated by officers of the Ministry.

I have known the Minister for quite some time and I imagine that he meant what he said in the letter that he signed during the election campaign. I thought that was the undertaking he had given my constituent and that it would be carried out. The honourable gentleman also stated:

It will be some time, however, before I can respond in detail to the allegations you have made, since these will have to be raised formally with the co-operative. As soon as I have the information to hand, I shall contact you immediately.

I should point out, however, that the Frankston R.H.C. is governed by rules on eligibility and allocation which are the same as those applying to general public housing stock.

You may be interested to know that the Ministry is currently examining the development of a new form of co-operative housing, common equity rental co-operative housing, which would allow people such as yourself, with assets in excess of standard eligibility guidelines, to become members. If you are interested in learning more about this type of co-operative you should write to the Rental Housing Co-operative unit here at Myer House and they will forward information to you as it comes available.

The Minister stated that he would have the matter thoroughly investigated.

Mr Remington—He is a good Minister.
Mr WEIDEMAN—Yes, and my impression when I first came to this place and brought matters to his attention was that he was a great debater in the House, that he had great potential and was a man of the future. That is what I thought.

However, the matter was again directed to my attention some months later. It was not only in regard to the reply to Mr Poole’s request for support but also other members of the co-operative came to me and produced further letters that they had received. The letter from which I shall now quote was sent to the co-operative by a staff member in the Ministry of Housing. I should like the Minister to listen carefully, in view of the fact that he had said that the matter would be thoroughly investigated. The letter, which was sent to the co-operative worker in charge, stated:

Dear Jinny,

Re: Attached correspondence for attention of Co-op members

I wonder if you will mind bringing this correspondence to the attention of co-operative members at your next general meeting.

The Minister has asked me to seek the co-operative’s reply to each of the accusations and claims made by Mr Poole.

Needless to say a quick reply would be much appreciated.

That was the total investigation carried out by the Ministry. The Minister had said there would be a full investigation. My interpretation of “full investigation” is a bit more than just a letter seeking people’s views. If one wrote to Norm Gallagher and said, “Look, Norm, I think there are a few problems; write back and tell me about them and give me the answer”, that would be laughable. I am not laughing but crying in my attempts to obtain justice for the people involved.

The former Minister wrote back on 13 September—perhaps that is the Freudian date, and it was probably a Friday, too—stating:

I refer again to your letter of 24 January 1984 in which you laid complaints against the Frankston Rental Housing Co-operative. You will recall that in my reply to you on 31 May 1984 I stated that I would write to you again when further investigations had been carried out into your complaints. These investigations have been completed and the results are as set out below.

Firstly, you remarked that I had “authorized the Frankston R.H.C. to buy 18 houses this year”. This is not quite correct on two counts. Although the purchasing target for Frankston in the 1983–84 financial year was 18 properties only 11 houses were actually bought. Furthermore, the co-operatives do not have authority to buy houses; they are bought by the Spot Purchase Branch of the Ministry of Housing for the Ministry which then leases them to the co-operatives to be managed by them. The price limit for houses in each area is set by the Ministry and every property must be bought at a price which is equal to or less than the Valuer-General’s valuation.

Members of the co-operatives, provided they are eligible to be housed in accordance with the Ministry of Housing’s income eligibility requirements, may be housed in these properties after they have been handed over to the co-operative. Apart from meeting the income eligibility requirements, the co-operative is required to observe a simplified version of the Ministry’s allocation policy; this amounts to ensuring that there is at least one person per bedroom in the household allocated to any property.

Rent is charged on the basis of 20% of the household income up to the minimum wage after which it is charged at the rate of 25% of that income until it reaches the market rent on that property. All regular income earned is taken into account when the rent is calculated.

The letter dated 13 September 1984 further states:

I believe that the requirements outlined above are being met by the Frankston Rental Housing Co-operative.

I am aware that co-operative members also benefit, in some cases, from a standard of housing which we cannot yet make available to all our clients. Nevertheless, co-operative members are required to participate and to work hard on the management of their housing. Other Ministry clients have no such obligations. In other words, there are some “gains” and “losses” for co-operative members.

After a group from the co-operative came to see me in May of this year, I took the opportunity of talking to the present Minister for Housing, Mr Wilkes, and I received a different response from the Minister. He was most concerned about the situation.
I have been involved in management and business for most of my life and it was obvious to me that management problems could be the cause of the closure of the Springvale, Frankston and fifteen other co-operatives. The Minister made available to me some of his staff so that I could put before them the problems experienced by the co-operatives. It appears that the members of the Frankston Rental Housing Co-operative held a meeting, and 20 out of 25 members present decided to close the co-operative and to sell off all the tools and equipment they had accumulated. They also decided to destroy the personnel files and information they had collected. The Minister informed me, through his officers, that the co-operative was not permitted to sell off this equipment as it belonged to the Ministry. I was delighted to receive this response from the Minister on behalf of my constituents.

A meeting was held in Frankston and some of the questions raised included:

What has the co-operative decided with regard to winding up or continuing?

It was explained at the meeting that the co-operative was re-considering the position. Its members were questioned about selling off the equipment and were told they could not do that. They were also told that some of the auditing and reserve fund activities were not in accordance with normal financial statements. Some of the members had not seen a financial statement for some months.

The financial statement I saw indicated that, out of 26 people, 16 people had rent arrears of the order of almost $4000—this was of some concern—and that some people had been given houses above their requirements. That is, some single mothers with one child had been given three-bedroom houses, and some even had four or five-bedroom houses. I understand that when they were given the houses they were told that these people were not allowed to live in the house. They were unaware of the rent that should have been paid on the property or that their tenancies were to be in line with Ministry of Housing directions.

Most people in public housing do not worry about rising costs. Rent is charged on the basis of 20 per cent of the household income up to the minimum wage of $196, after which it is charged at the rate of 25 per cent of that income until it reaches the market rent on the property. In the case of the co-operatives, they also had to pay 10 per cent of other household incomes, where a fourth or fifth person is living in the house.

In examining a monthly return from the Frankston Rental Housing Co-operative, it was noted that it had something like $1700 coming in in different rentals from its members. If one averages that out between the 26 properties, one finds that they are paying about $14.50 each, and that is a cheap rent.

I inquired into this statement and found that some of the tenants who were receiving maintenance payments through the courts, as a result of divorce proceedings, for example, have had their pensions reduced. For example, if the pension was $40 or $80 a week, they would be paying 20 per cent—say, $8 or $16 a week for these houses. That is not the way that one would interpret the guidelines set down by the Ministry.

They asked other questions and they were told that their problems would be looked at and the Minister, through David McCutchan of the Housing Services Division, wrote to them and pointed these things out, saying that some matters were incorrect and that they should correct some of these situations.

Two months later it came to my attention, through members of the co-operative, that no action had been taken, so again I went back to the Minister, had a discussion with him and he kindly provided more officers to go down to the Frankston co-operative. This has caused an enormous number of problems within the group. The upshot has been that the Minister allowed co-operative members who wished to remain in the co-operative to do so—and I understand that that is approximately fourteen members—and those members who wished to leave the co-operative came under the normal jurisdiction of the Ministry.
The people who left, numbering twelve, were of high principles and did not want to be involved in some of the different practices going on within the co-operative, and did not want to break the rules and guidelines that were set down.

I thank the Minister for the co-operation I have received over this matter. Both of us have put an enormous amount of time into this project. We see this area as a great problem. I ask the Minister and his officers to establish a task force to review the whole program, as Shelter Victoria has pointed out.

It is a superb program if it is taken on the principles that are set out, but we all know what human nature is like. We all want a share of the barley sugar. If one offers something to one person, one must offer it to the other because all people want the same and no person is prepared to let the other person get a little more than he is getting. The result is that the $12 000 is being split up in order to buy carpets, extra heaters, extra gates and all sorts of different things that are not normally given to those in the public housing area.

Another nasty problem with which I was confronted concerns a lass who came to me, prepared to relate her story to myself and to the Minister, who has had difficulties surrounding some of the nonsense put forward and the changing and breaking of the co-operative rules. She received a letter that said, “Be warned, talk co-op you’re in trouble. Revenge!” She also received some very obscene phone calls.

This is the type of action that some of these people are prepared to take and maybe it was the people on one side who had paid their way and done the correct thing fighting against those who were not even prepared to keep up with their rent payments.

They were so far behind with their rent that I understand, between the first letter and the next communication, the rent arrears increased to more than $6000. This is quite a considerable amount when one realizes that the rents they are paying are between $10 and $40 a week.

The Minister and the staff in his department should come up with a new program and a new approach. It is obvious that the co-operatives see the Minister and his staff as enemies. It is a “them and us” approach. They will not sign their leases and they will not communicate with the Ministry and they have been fighting all the way down the line.

When the new cost rent scheme was introduced on 1 July 1985, applicants were required to sign statutory declarations. I understand that someone attempted to help the applicants fill in their forms and that person announced that he was a commissioner for taking affidavits and he actually signed many blank declarations. One of the problems associated with this area has been a too casual approach.

There has been much division on this issue and it must be closely investigated and cleaned up. The Fitzroy and Collingwood Rental Housing Co-operative was a superb program, which worked extremely well for a group of people in those suburbs. It has been of enormous value to them.

There were originally eighteen co-operatives and there are now fifteen. That means three have gone out the door in the past year. At that rate, there soon will be no program unless the Minister is prepared to act. The previous Minister of Housing said to one of my constituents, “No problems, I have looked into it, it is okay. I have made a thorough investigation.” The problem still exists.

This week has been an historical week for Victoria. Today, nurses are on strike. This week, the Premier has been accusing everybody of all sort of things. Next week the teachers will be on strike.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! The honourable member has 2 minutes and I would ask to him to stay with the Bill.

Mr WEIDEMAN:—It has been a dramatic week in Victoria. The issue I raise may not be of importance to others but it certainly is to me. The Minister wrote to Mr Poole stating
that he has taken action. I believe the Minister has the integrity to act in the way he said he would and to instigate a full investigation. However, despite the effort made by the previous Minister and the present Minister for Housing, we still do not know the magnitude of the problem. The head lease for the Frankston co-operative has been signed.

Mr Wilkes—They have all been signed bar one.

Mr WEIDEMAN—The Minister knows the problems and he will resolve them. The people in the Frankston co-operative are prepared to return to public housing units, but I am sure that they would rather stay within the co-operative movement. I hope at some time in the future they may be able to come together and form a co-operative which is genuine, honest and within the Government's guidelines for co-operatives, which are perfect in their conception. I hope if this matter is debated in Parliament next year that it will have been totally resolved by then.

On the motion of Mr COLEMAN (Syndal), the debate was adjourned.

It was ordered that the debate be adjourned until next day.

ADJOURNMENT

City of Oakleigh—Allegations in The Bulletin—False and misleading advertising—Bus services in Doncaster and Templestowe—Media coverage of mountain cattlemen during Nunawading by-election—Big Desert fire control—Muscular Dystrophy Association of Victoria

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—I move:
That the House do now adjourn.

Mr COOPER (Mornington)—I direct a matter to the attention of the Minister for Local Government, which concerns the council of the City of Oakleigh. For some two years, the Opposition and many residents of Oakleigh have been drawing to the attention of the Government the shambles in which the City of Oakleigh finds itself.

The Minister for Local Government should be aware of the shambles which occurred in August with the electoral rolls and which was well publicized. The scale of the duplication of names on the rolls was unique to the City of Oakleigh. The matter of the nominated candidate for the East Ward, Mr Stephen Bingie, was drawn to the attention of the Minister, but that matter has apparently been buried and will not be investigated further because it may represent an embarrassment to the Australian Labor Party.

Since that time, there has been a scandal at the old Oakleigh tip, which smells in more ways than one, as does the council's own abattoir. Since the council elections in August, there have been two well-publicized walk-outs by the six Labor Party councillors on the Oakleigh City Council. One occurred on 16 September, which caused the quorum to fail and the other occurred on 15 October and had the same result.

The leader of the Australian Labor Party caucus, Cr Perryman, has stated in newspaper articles that:
They also want an administrator appointed to take control of the troubled council.

Cr Perryman indicated that he would like the former Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Eddie Beacham, appointed as administrator. What a grand scheme! The councillor has also stated that the council "is in a perilous situation."

The Oakleigh City Council is in crisis, and the present situation is impossible. The present mayor, Cr Hargraves, stated in the Sun of 16 October that Labor councillors have "abrogated their responsibilities." Cr Kneebone stated that:
We've received nothing but obstruction from the Perryman regime.
He’s a little child stamping his feet because he can’t get his way in council.

The Oakleigh City Council is in a state of continuing and growing crisis. It must be drawn to the attention of the Minister for Local Government that he has failed to properly carry out his responsibilities and that the smell of the Oakleigh council owes much to his own inaction. It must be pointed out to the Minister that, since last April, the honourable member for Malvern and I have been calling on the Minister to act on the problems confronting the council.

For the past two years, the honourable member for Malvern has been calling for action to be taken. The people of Oakleigh deserve better treatment than they are getting from the Government; they deserve better than what they are getting from the Minister; and they certainly deserve a better service than they are receiving from the council.

The council is in a shambles; it is a blot on the escutcheon of local government, and the Minister’s inaction creates an aroma around local government generally but, more especially, around the City of Oakleigh, that leaves a lot to be desired. Instead of badgering his way around councils throughout the State and threatening them as he goes along, the Minister should put his energies into cleaning up the mess associated with the Oakleigh council. It is about time the Minister got off his backside and started to do something about a matter that has been continually drawn to his attention and the attention of his predecessor for more than two years.

Mr SIMPSON (Niddrie)—I direct a matter to the attention of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, who is the representative in this House of the Attorney-General. The Minister would be aware of the controversy surrounding the publication of an article in yesterday’s edition of *The Bulletin* which alleged a conspiracy between the Leader of the Opposition and the former Governor.

Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, I wish to advise Parliament that this is a matter of sub judice. Earlier today, given that the media wished an independent arbitrator to listen to the tapes, I decided that the only fair way of resolving the matter—given the damage that was done to myself and my party—was to issue writs in the Supreme Court of Victoria against *The Bulletin* magazine and the journalist, Richard Farmer.

Further, other writs will be issued tomorrow against Mr Farmer for comments he has made other than the remarks in *The Bulletin*.

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—Mr Acting Speaker, I am sure you will take advice from the Table Officers, but my understanding is that it is only when the matter is listed before the court that the rule of sub judice applies in Parliament. As has been indicated by the Leader of the Opposition, it is not a matter that has been listed before the court; it is simply a writ that he has issued. Therefore, the honourable member for Niddrie is in order, much to the chagrin of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr SIMPSON (Niddrie)—On the point of order, as has been indicated, although writs may have been issued, the case has not been listed before the court. The matter I bring to the attention of the Minister is that the tapes, which honourable members know were in existence yesterday, should be made available to you, Mr Acting Speaker, for safekeeping, so that nothing can happen. It is important that you do not uphold the point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, because there is absolutely no listing of this case.

Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—Further on the point of order, as I announced to the media only a few minutes ago, earlier today the tapes were delivered to my solicitors, Smith and Emmerton, for their safekeeping so that the proceedings against *The Bulletin* and Mr Farmer can be handled in a totally legal way without any other further political intrigue or risk of loss or tampering with the tapes.
The SPEAKER—Order! As the House would be aware, I have been listening through the amplification in my office to the points of order that have been made. I do not uphold the point of order. I advise the honourable member for Niddrie that he needs to exercise some care in the manner in which he raises the issue because of its sensitivity. The sub judice rule does not apply, as most honourable members are aware, until the matter has been listed for hearing by the court.

Mr SIMPSON (Niddrie)—I am fully aware of the gravity of the situation when such an article appears concerning the Government, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party. It is because of the gravity of the situation—honourable members knew of the existence of the tapes yesterday and that they run for 1 hour—that I urge the Minister to make sure that every step is taken to ensure that the integrity of the tapes can be preserved so that every means possible is available to all parties to ensure that this matter can be given a full and proper hearing.

Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—I direct to the attention of the Deputy Premier the article that appeared in The Bulletin yesterday and the tapes to which the honourable member for Niddrie referred. I am also well aware of the fragility of the situation we currently face. I wish to say that, to preserve the tapes so that there can be no cover-up as occurred with the Premier in dealing with the Governor’s dismissal and the Nunawading by-election scandal, once I heard Mr Farmer’s comments yesterday on 3AW, in which he accused me of being a liar, I came back to the office and asked if the tapes were in existence and I yesterday pointed out frankly to the media the defects of the tapes.

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology, and Resources)—On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I am interested in this matter and it is a pity that this information did not come out yesterday. I should like to know in which capacity I am being approached, which Minister the Leader of the Opposition wants the matter taken up with and to which aspect of Government administration the matter refers. If the Leader of the Opposition is offering that the tapes be held in the good care of the Government, I am sure the matter will be considered.

The SPEAKER—Order! Does the Leader of the Opposition wish to address the point of order?

Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—On the point of order, Mr Speaker, the honourable member for Niddrie spoke about the aim of the Government to ensure that the tapes will be secure, and he indicated that he wanted the tapes tabled. I am now directing my comments to the Deputy Premier, who is the most senior member of the Government in the Chamber at present. To ensure, according to Government tradition as laid down and expressed by the Premier, that there will be no interference with the due process of the law, I have today ensured, in the interests of open government, that those tapes are handed over complete to my legal advisers so that—

The SPEAKER—Order! I do not wish to interfere with the Leader of the Opposition in the debate on the motion for the adjournment of the sitting, but the honourable member is addressing the Chair on the point of order. The point of order asked what part the Government or the Deputy Premier was expected to play in the safeguarding of these tapes. Therefore, I uphold the point of order and ask the Leader of the Opposition to advise the House how the Deputy Premier will play a part in this matter.

Mr KENNETT—Very simply, Mr Speaker. The honourable member for Niddrie asked that the matter be referred to the Attorney-General. I now refer a matter to the Deputy Premier because he is the most senior member of the Government in this Chamber.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr KENNETT—The honourable member for Niddrie raised an issue with the Minister who is the representative of the Attorney-General in this place. I am now raising the same matter with the most senior popularly elected member of the Government present, the Deputy Premier, to ensure that the action I have taken will lead to the full disclosure of
the issue. I have allowed for the tapes to be properly assessed by an independent arbitrator in a court of law under a defamation suit.

I hope the Deputy Premier will notify the Attorney-General that it is not the Government's role to interfere in this matter. I, as Leader of the Opposition—unlike my counterpart, the Premier—have absolutely nothing to cover up, and I have taken action to ensure that the matter is resolved once and for all in the proper place, a court of law.

Dr Coghill (Werribee)—The matter I raise with the Minister for Consumer Affairs is a tempting get-rich-quick scheme recently promoted in a double page advertisement which appeared in the Australian Financial Review on Monday, 14 October. The advertisement promotes a technique called Neo-tech which is supposed to be an invention by a Dr Frank R. Wallace.

In the advertisement, Dr Wallace claims to have invented this wonderful new psychological practice which offers extraordinary benefits in monetary, personal, romantic, sexual and financial activities. The advertisement should be examined by the Minister for possible breaches of the law on false and misleading advertising pursuant to the Consumer Affairs Act. The reason I say that is that, on the evidence, the scheme and Dr Frank R. Wallace appear to be frauds.

The techniques in the advertisement are described as neo-cheating, a name that was given to the technique at one stage by Dr Wallace. When one reads the terms of the advertisement one understands that that is an apt description. For example, Dr Wallace provides a table headed, "Contrasting Characteristics", and describes the traditional cheater as stiff and nervous and describes the neo-tech man, in juxtaposition, as relaxed and confident. In other words, the advertisement suggests that, by the use of this technique, one can become a successful con man, a successful cheat.

The advertisement claims that Dr Frank R. Wallace is a former senior research chemist with a prominent company E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Co., and that as a research chemist he had an impressive stream of inventions in the commercial area.

I have checked the authenticity of those claims in scientific literature which should know about this gentleman, and American magazines and newspapers. None of them mentioned Dr Wallace, Neo-tech or any similar psychological practice that might be referred to as Neo-tech. The advertisement invited people interested in the Neo-tech system to send $A99.75 to a Nevada address. Similar material was sent by direct mail earlier this year.

As a result of an earlier complaint, the publishers undertook, if further advertisements were made in Australia, to include the name and telephone number of an Australian contact, and a Betty Harland was mentioned. The advertisement in the Australian Financial Review of 14 October gave no Australian contact point. It merely had the address of the American publishing company.

The people involved in writing and publishing the advertisement were invited to substantiate the claims of Dr Wallace and his background, but they have failed to do so. I ask the Minister to carry out investigations to determine whether there has been a breach of the Act and to take the appropriate action in that event.

I suggest that the Australian Direct Marketing Association of which the publishers are members should review its standards of practice, and newspapers such as the Australian Financial Review should be careful in accepting such advertisements. I am sure few people would be taken in by these advertisements but those people deserve the protection of the law.

Mr Williams (Doncaster)—I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Transport. I am concerned that again a Minister has been called out of the Chamber when I rise.
I refer the Minister to the inconvenience to peak hour commuters, including myself, who use the Doncaster and Templestowe bus system because of changes to ticketing arrangements but not time-tables over the past few years. No bus during peak morning periods travelling to the city is ever on time and I have suffered inconvenience on several occasions, particularly with the 8.35 a.m. freeway service. Sometimes it arrives at its destination in Melbourne at the same time as the 9.30 a.m. bus, which is approximately 10 a.m.

I also refer the Minister to the Bulleen bus service that serves my home and the constituents of the honourable member for Bulleen. I had the unfortunate experience recently of missing two buses, each of which, according to the time-table, should have arrived at 5.54 p.m. but which were 10 minutes late. I alighted from the Doncaster-Melbourne bus to catch one of those buses, but they left me for dead, and I had to wait another 20 minutes. Another two buses that should have arrived at 5.59 p.m. and 6.4 p.m. travelled together and I caught one at 6.20 p.m.

Not only are the time-tables significantly irrelevant to actual travelling times, and out of date, but because of vandalism a number of time-tables are indecipherable. I invite officers of the Tram and Bus Transport Division of the Ministry of Transport to inspect the time-tables at the corner of Bulleen and Doncaster roads which are indecipherable, and also those at the corner of Thompsons and Manningham roads, Bulleen, where I regularly catch a bus. At that bus stop no time-table has existed for several months for the Heidelberg-Box Hill service. It has been taken down by vandals.

This new high-flying Ministry with all its boffins in the wonderful new tower at 589 Collins Street should give better service. It is about time the Government received value for money and looked after the poor, lowly commuters of Doncaster and Templestowe, including me. We are the real workers of the State, and it is about time we were looked after.

Mr Norris (Dandenong)—I preface my remarks to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services by reminding the House of the Nunawading by-election campaign scandal involving the so-called mountain district cattlemen and the Liberal Party. That exercise was shonkie enough, but now sections of the media have much to answer for as well. I am informed that a Channel 10 reporter who covered the mountain cattlemen story in some detail on the air before and during the campaign was at that time media adviser to the Mountain District Cattlemen's Association of Victoria. I understand also that the stunt with the star from the film The Man from Snowy River, Tom Burlinson, was another brainchild of that Channel 10 reporter.

I hope Tom Burlinson, who is a paid-up member of Actors Equity, was at least paid a fee for his performance. The reporter concerned was Jim Brown. If the information I have is correct—I have every reason to believe it is correct—Jim Brown has some explaining to do on his ethical standards in the matter. The issue should be investigated in the light of investigations currently taking place linking the Liberal Party with the mountain cattlemen in the Nunawading by-election campaign.

When one considers the significant coverage this incident received during the campaign and the enormous amount of footage shown by Channel 10 of the mountain cattlemen, one adds 2 and 2 together and gets 4. Honourable members are aware that cowboys and stuntmen were used as actors in much of the footage seen on television. I urge the Minister to investigate the subject of my remarks concerning Mr Brown. I hope the Australian Journalists Association will also take note of the statement I have made.

Mr Heffernan (Ivanhoe)—I direct a question to the Minister representing the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands in this House.

The Speaker—Order! I advise the honourable member that the debate on the motion for the adjournment of the sitting is for raising matters of public importance, not for asking Ministers questions.
Mr HEFFERNAN—I direct the matter to the attention of the Minister who is the representative of the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands in this House. Is the Minister aware that the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands plans as a matter of policy to burn 50 acres of the Big Desert north-west of Jeparit next year and that some of the area has not been burnt since white settlement? Have any extensive surveys been made of the old vegetation to ascertain its value botanically or for future scientific and educational reasons? If not, will the Minister investigate the use of Lansat imagery, which I believe is an economical way of determining previous patterns, in order to produce a fire prevention plan that will protect important unburnt areas?

Will the Minister ascertain why it is necessary to burn vast areas when maintenance of the existing 6-chain firebreak strips is more acceptable to local landholders and conservationists and is, furthermore, better for the plants and animals?

At a recent meeting of the Rainbow group fire brigades, the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands officer in charge of fire control in the Grampians, the Little Desert and the Big Desert, stated that, next year, it is his policy to burn 50,000 acres of the Big Desert, described as the area from Atwills Road to Chinaman's Flat and the Amy Johnston Highway to Pigick. It is an area south-west of Jeparit, part of which is known as the Birdcage because of the bird trappers who operate there, which is an indication of its value.

Most of the area consists of old vegetation, some of which has apparently never been burnt. Local farmers would be quite satisfied if just the existing 6-chain fire breaks were cleared and burnt. Similar habitats were destroyed when fires burnt 68 per cent of the Wyperfeld National Park and it seems a sacrilege deliberately to burn more land. The officer concerned has accumulated most of his experience in east Gippsland and has been in the dry country for only eighteen months.

The Mallee fowl population in Australia is gradually declining and they are dependent on areas that have not been burnt for at least fifteen years, perhaps more. Regular burnings result in a change of vegetation to fire tolerant species, usually in increased numbers.

Areas that have not been burnt since white settlement could be important reservoirs of known, or even unknown, plants. It is not an expensive process to determine whether that is so.

I bring this matter to the attention of the House in light of the Government's conservation policy regarding the proposed National Tennis Centre, and the extension to the Arts Centre in the Domain.

Mr COLEMAN (Syndal)—I raise for the attention of the Minister representing the Minister for Health in another place a matter concerning the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Victoria. The association appointed one full-time staff member out of its own resources and also has the benefit of a part-time social worker who is employed at the Royal Children's Hospital. The Australian Brain Foundation was sharing the cost of that part-time social worker, but it has withdrawn its funding, which has left the association in a dilemma. It wants to retain the full-time services of the social worker concerned but is not able to provide the funds from its own resources.

It is a matter that concerns a number of people. One hundred and twenty-nine cases of muscular dystrophy have been diagnosed since 1983. It is a matter of considerable concern to the 550 people who are involved and I ask the Minister to ascertain whether it is possible for the Department of Health to expedite an application for the funding of this person's services with a view to ensuring that the person employed at the Royal Children's Hospital has a continuity of employment and, more importantly, is able to help the families involved with the advice that he supplies to them.

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—The remarks of the honourable member for Niddrie drew my attention to the matter of the Leader of the Opposition and the infamous tapes. The Leader of the Opposition sought my assistance
and I shall be happy to assist him in the safe keeping of those obviously important tapes—important to the future of a number of people, including himself.

Mr Coleman—No, yourself!

Mr FORDHAM—No, the Government has not been accused of any scandal. It has been suggested in some newspapers and in the The Bulletin that the Leader of the Opposition has been conspiring with other parties, including the Leader of the National Party so, obviously, these tapes are very important indeed. I can understand the Leader of the Opposition's sensitivity given the significance of the material that is obviously on the tapes.

If the Leader of the Opposition would like the Government to assist with safe conduct of the tapes, I shall be happy to look after their safe conduct, to take copies of them, to ensure that they are not lost and even to ensure that they are kept for posterity. A copy can go to the museum. Certainly, a copy will be kept for Government purposes.

I shall be very happy to take up the issue with the Premier to assist the Leader of the Opposition in his obvious difficulties in facing this very difficult matter before him. As he says, it is now before the courts of this land, and I am sure that he will need all the help that he can get from as many honourable members as possible in the months and time ahead.

Mr SIMMONDS (Minister for Local Government)—The honourable member for Mornington is concerned at the events occurring within the Oakleigh City Council. I share his concern, as I shared his concern also at the time of the recent council elections when the honourable member advocated that the council election should be aborted. The result of the election was that the independent group achieved the election of six councillors and the Australian Labor Party group achieved the election of six councillors. To determine who would be mayor, a name was drawn from a hat. It proved to be the name of an independent councillor. Since then, there have been almost daily meetings of the council, culminating in a meeting on 15 October that was adjourned in circumstances where six councillors left the meeting.

A meeting last night, which was more or less a continuation of that adjourned meeting, failed through lack of quorum. I have perused the Local Government Act and I direct to the attention of the House the fact that it is my responsibility to administer that Act. Those councillors who took the action of failing to attend a council meeting have certain obligations under the Act and I shall be drawing the proper conclusions from that situation. The option open to the administrator of the Act basically is that a Bill needs to be introduced to amend the Act to deal with the situation, and I invite the honourable member for Mornington to join me in the drafting of the Bill that will be necessary if the twelve councillors in Oakleigh do not perform the function for which they were elected. They will have their final opportunity to do so on Monday next.

Mr MATHEWS (Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—The honourable member for Niddrie attempted to raise with me the security of a set of tapes that are material evidence in a matter currently of some concern to the community and, in particular, of concern both to himself and to the former Governor of the State, Sir Brian Murray. The Leader of the Opposition intervened in the presentation of the honourable member for Niddrie, which demonstrated very clearly the desperate desire of the Leader of the Opposition to suppress all reference to the existence of the tapes and to their significance and, in particular, to the media having any opportunity of reporting about the tapes or discussing their significance.

The Leader of the Opposition outlined three devices by which he has attempted to pursue this disgraceful course. Firstly, there was his attempt by a spurious point of order,
Mr Speaker; a point of order which you refused to uphold, to muzzle the honourable member for Niddrie in his presentation of a matter in the Chamber.

Secondly, the Leader of the Opposition revealed that he has today issued a general stop writ to everyone in sight in the media designed to ensure that these matters are not the subject of media report or comment.

Thirdly, he revealed that the tapes have been handed over to his solicitors! I say at the outset that it will not satisfy any member of the Victorian community, much less any member of this House, that those tapes are secure and safe in the custody of a person who is a paid servant of the Leader of the Opposition.

On three levels the Leader of the Opposition has attempted to suppress discussion and reporting of this matter. He has tried to stifle discussion in this House, he has tried to stifle discussion in the media, and he has tried to present spuriously the impression that these tapes are in safe custody, when in fact the person holding them is really the paid employee of the Leader of the Opposition. I demand that some appropriate mechanism for the custody of these tapes should be found forthwith. The people of Victoria are entitled to an assurance that this vital evidence in a matter of major public concern and importance is held with proper security, and that is not at present the case. The effect of what the honourable member has done is plain; he slaps a stop writ on the media, which has the effect of suppressing discussion of these matters in the media until the matter comes to court.

At the same time, these tapes are turned over to the custody of solicitors—which is better than having them in the custody of the Leader of the Opposition, although it may well be that it is too late because 24 hours have passed in which these tapes could have been interfered with. The effect, of course, is that these tapes will now be kept from public hearing and kept from being played publicly until the trial comes up, which of course is the aim of the Leader of the Opposition.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr MATHEWS—Over the past 48 hours honourable members have seen unfolded an account of a conspiracy which, if true, is so far-reaching—I invite the honourable member for Gisborne to note it—so audacious and at the same time so squalid as to have few equals in our history.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr MATHEWS—It is thanks to the Premier that honourable members know that the reasons that prompted the departure of the former Governor, Sir Brian Murray, are not those which are set out in the article in the *The Bulletin*, and nobody has challenged that statement on the part of the Premier.

The Leader of the Opposition, in his turn, has denied the part in the conspiracy attributed to him in *The Bulletin*. The Leader of the Opposition has claimed that he did not, as *The Bulletin* claims, state that he was now ready to depart from his previous undertaking that under his leadership the Liberal Party would not force an election by refusing the Government Supply. He said that he did not say to this journalist that he would, instead, bring down the Government by defeating the Appropriation Bill in the Upper House.

Unfortunately for the Leader of the Opposition, his account of these matters is not only contradicted by the journalist who wrote the article but also the journalist says there is irrefutable evidence of what the Leader of the Opposition said available in the form of this tape, this tape that the Leader of the Opposition is now seeking so desperately to keep out of circulation until the matter comes to trial. That is what the Leader of the Opposition is about—keeping the tape under wraps!

There has been a good number of interjections from the other side of the House casting aspersions on the character of Mr Richard Farmer, who is the journalist responsible for
this article. Let me say to the House that I have known Richard Farmer for a great many years.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr MATHEWS—Mr Farmer is, in the eyes of his colleagues in the media, a journalist of high intelligence and of high integrity. Asked to choose between the word of Mr Farmer and the Leader of the Opposition, I would have no hesitation in choosing the word of Mr Farmer.

The SPEAKER—Order! The Minister is now canvassing issues in respect of the character or characters involved in this matter and, although it is not set down, I should advise him that it is not the proper form, so far as this House is concerned, to prejudge a matter that is the subject of a writ. I ask the Minister to round off his remarks.

Mr MATHEWS—Mr Speaker, tonight I do not seek to prejudge the matters which are the subject of a writ. The matters to which I address myself tonight are those which have been raised with me by the honourable member for Niddrie, who raised the question of the security of this vital material. I am concerned to demonstrate to you, Mr Speaker, and to the House why this material is at real risk under the current circumstances. I want to demonstrate why this material figures for the Leader of the Opposition as the Watergate tapes figured for President Nixon. They are the smoking pistol directed at the Leader of the Opposition. Let me proceed with this demonstration, Mr Speaker—

Mr LEIGH (Malvern)—On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I believe the Minister is flouting your ruling by casting aspersions on the Leader of the Opposition after you have ruled on the matter.

The SPEAKER—Order! There is no point of order. I call the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to round off his remarks on this issue.

Mr MATHEWS (Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—I am representing the Attorney-General in this matter, Mr Speaker. My concern is simply to demonstrate to you, Mr Speaker, and to the House, why the concerns expressed by the honourable member for Niddrie are well based and why it is that these tapes represent for the Leader of the Opposition just such a smoking pistol as the Watergate tapes represented for President Nixon because yesterday, Mr Speaker, on the Derryn Hinch show the following exchange took place:

Q. The story you've written can make the scenario which puts a whole new light on what may have happened down here. But unfortunately Jeff Kennett's just been on the program and he categorically says he will not block supply or an Appropriation Bill. Where does that leave your story?

A. It just proves that politicians are very fickle people, because he told me last week when he spoke with me that he would.

Q. He told you that he would block supply?

A. He told me that he would.

Q. Well, three minutes ago on this program

A. I heard him.

Q. So obviously what he told me and what he told you are totally diametrically opposed?

A. Funny people politicians aren't they?

Q. Obviously you're saying Jeff Kennett lied?

A. He either lied to me or he lied to you.

Q. And he told you he had part of this scenario that he and Ross-Edwards were working on blocking the Budget, forcing the State to an election?

A. He told me that he wouldn't block supply.—

Mr CROZIER (Portland)—On a point of order, Mr Speaker, in spite of your injunctions on at least two occasions tonight, the Minister continues to canvass the issues. All
honourable members know his enthusiasm for denigrating the Leader of the Opposition. He is not making too good a job of it. All honourable members know his propensity for histrionics, but I suggest to you, Mr Speaker, that he should be instructed, for the third time, to round off his remarks and to steer away from canvassing the matter which is the subject of a writ.

The SPEAKER—Order! I uphold the point of order, and I ask the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to conclude his remarks on the matter raised by the honourable member for Niddrie.

Mr MATHEWS (Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—The interview continued:
A. He either lied to me or he lied to you.
Q. And he told you he had part of this scenario that he and Ross-Edwards were working on blocking the Budget, forcing the State to an election?
A. He told that he wouldn't block Supply, that Supply was the Bill that went forward in April, that did not apply to what he'd do to this Budget.
Q. So when he talks about Appropriations Bills, he said to me he categorically spelt those out and included them. He didn't include them when he talked to you?
A. No. On the contrary. I asked him to play the tape of our interview which took an hour and a half last week. Ring him up and ask him would he like to play the tape. He took the tape recording of it, I didn't. I don't like politicians who lie and he's lied.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER—Order! I again ask the Minister to cease heading in the direction in which he is now heading. He is using this particular forum to produce what I believe to be material that will be required by the courts if this matter ever arises in the courts, and I ask him to use his own intelligence with respect to his reply on this matter.

Mr MATHEWS—Mr Speaker, the honourable member for Niddrie has directed to my attention, as the Minister representing the Attorney-General in this House, the absolute overriding need for the people of Victoria to be given a guarantee that this evidence will be protected, that its integrity will be preserved and that it will be available, untampered with, when the Leader of the Opposition, many, months from now is required to produce it for the court—as the honourable member for Niddrie rightly says, by interjection, "If ever it goes to court".

I shall certainly, on behalf of the honourable member for Niddrie, bring to the attention of the Attorney-General both the utterly inadequate, unsatisfactory and unacceptable provisions for the integrity of this material, which the Leader of the Opposition purported, on that night, to have taped with good intentions.

I will ask the Attorney-General, as the first law Minister in this State, to advise on how the integrity of this material can now properly be protected. I shall say to the Attorney-General that this is a matter of extreme urgency, because every hour which passes without these tapes being in safe hands increases the chances that they will be tampered with.

Mr CROZIER (Portland)—I raise a point of order, Mr Speaker. I submit to you that the Minister is treating with contempt your earlier instructions, and that he should now be ordered to wind up his remarks and cease this diatribe.

The SPEAKER—Order! I uphold the point of order. I ask the Minister to conclude this aspect of his contribution to the debate on the motion for the adjournment of the sitting and go on to commenting on the matter raised for his attention by the honourable member for Dandenong.

Mr MATHEWS (Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—The honourable member for Dandenong raised with me a related matter, a matter that is related inasmuch as it again brings into question the integrity of the Liberal Party and those who support it.
We heard tonight from the honourable member for Dandenong the presentation of yet another piece in the jigsaw of the Mountain District Cattlemen's Association affair, which has slowly been coming to light in the House, night by night.

I know that members of the Opposition do not like to hear it, but I can assure them that there is more to come that they will enjoy still less.

On Tuesday night the honourable member for Wantirna drew to my attention in the House—she was prepared to put herself on the public record about these matters—photographic evidence. The honourable member for Malvern may not relish it but it was photographic evidence that one of these people who was purporting to be a mountain district cattleman, handing out cards in the interests of the Liberal Party during the Nunawading by-election, was in fact a suburban journalist who had probably never been any nearer to the mountains than Ringwood.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr MATHEWS—I do not purport to be a mountain cattleman. The following night we had a statutory declaration with the signature of the person responsible for it attached—a sworn legal document—linking the honourable member for Malvern with this disgraceful affair.

We know that since his arrival in this place the honourable member for Malvern aped his leader, both in his tactics and in his disregard for the truth and, on this occasion, it is both the tactics and his disregard for the truth that are catching him out.

The third instalment which has come to light tonight is the situation where one of the television people responsible for putting the mountain district cattlemen's story—this pro-Liberal story—across in the media was simultaneously the technical adviser of this organization. What a mosaic of deceit; what a mosaic of misrepresentation; what an attempt to mislead the people of the Nunawading Province.

I say to the honourable member for Dandenong tonight, as I said to the honourable member for Wantirna on Tuesday night, this evidence should be drawn to the attention of the police who have been investigating the matter since last Friday when it was referred to them by the Chief Electoral Officer and who will pursue the matter to the ultimate end, sift it meticulously and interview people who need to be interviewed—I hope they will talk frankly with them—and when that process is complete, will refer the whole matter to the Director of Public Prosecutions for his advice.

Mr SPYKER (Minister for Consumer Affairs)—The honourable member for Syndal raised with me a matter regarding additional requirements for social workers at the Royal Children's Hospital. The honourable member would be well aware that the Government has allocated much more in the Budget than the previous Government and the Minister does his best to meet all commitments. I will bring the matter to the Minister's attention.

The honourable member for Ivanhoe raised with me a matter for the attention of the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands. I am surprised to see that the Opposition has allocated much more in the Budget than the previous Government and the Minister does his best to meet all commitments. I will bring the matter to the Minister's attention.

The honourable member for Ivanhoe raised with me a matter for the attention of the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands. I am surprised to see that the Opposition has at least one conservationist amongst its ranks because most honourable members opposite are totally in favour of the destruction of our natural habitat. I hope the honourable member will use his influence in the party room so that when the alpine legislation is introduced he will get the support of his colleagues to ensure the passage of the Bill.

Members on this side of the House believe in a balanced approach to conservation, to ensure that our heritage, which is so near and dear and precious to us, is kept intact for future generations.

I can advise the honourable member that the present Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands agrees with that line of thinking and she is probably the best Minister we have had to date in that portfolio.

I refer to the concern of the honourable member for Doncaster about the transport issue, particularly the problems with the buses in the Doncaster/ Templestowe area. I should like
to remind the honourable member that the Government is spending enormous amounts of funds on improving the public transport system that was left in a dilapidated state by the Liberal Government.

I shall inform the Minister for Transport of the matter raised by the honourable member for Doncaster and the matter concerning some of the time-tables along the bus route from Melbourne to Doncaster, which have been vandalized. I should also like to ask the honourable member to advise me of any other time-tables that are vandalized in order to ensure that the Minister for Transport can attend to them.

Once again I stress that the honourable member for Doncaster must agree that the bus service now operating, although some buses run a bit late from time to time, is a 100 per cent improvement on the service operating when the Liberal Party was in office.

The honourable member for Werribee raised a matter concerning the get-rich-quick scheme, promoting a technique called "neo-tech". I have become increasingly concerned about these types of schemes because they seem to be appearing all over the place, and while they may be technically lawful, it could well be argued that they are false and misleading advertising because they say they can do what cannot be done.

Unfortunately, this particular company is a member of the direct sellers association in America and, in turn, is a member of The Direct Selling Association of Australia. I am concerned, as is the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, that when the matter was raised previously, we were assured that there would be an Australian contact. The honourable member for Werribee named the person, a Betty Harley; and the understanding was that if there were any problems with the company, Betty Harley would be the person to contact.

As I understand it, this has not been carried out and it is a breach of the agreement of understanding reached with the company.

Again, I advise all honourable members to warn their constituents to be careful of these types of schemes. The schemes are not necessarily illegal, but it is definitely possible to mount a fairly good argument that they are false and misleading and people can squander large amounts of money on these schemes and not receive the result desired.

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs has monitored this situation carefully and has worked closely with the Trade Practices Commission to stamp out these unethical practices as quickly as possible.

The motion was agreed to.

The House adjourned at 6.3 p.m. until Tuesday, October 22.
The following answers to questions on notice were circulated—

GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS OF DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL AFFAIRS
(Question No. 65)

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West) asked the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs:

In respect of all costs associated with the production of all books, brochures, pamphlets, documents or publications of any kind published by each department, agency and authority within his administration in the three year period ended 2 March 1985:

1. What was the cost and purpose of production of each publication?

2. Whether the design and placement of each publication was prepared by staff under the Minister's control or by outside staff, organizations or consultants, indicating the cost in each instance and in the case of outside assistance the names of people and organizations involved?

3. Whether he will provide any other information required in order to enable the public to establish the full extent and cost of such publications over the above period?

Mr CRABB (Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs)—The answer is:

The time, cost and resources necessary to prepare an answer to this question cannot be justified.

However, I would be happy to give consideration to any request made by the honourable member about a specific publication.

GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS OF MINISTRY FOR THE ARTS
(Question No. 67)

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West) asked the Minister for the Arts:

In respect of all costs associated with the production of all books, brochures, pamphlets, documents or publications of any kind published by each department, agency and authority within his administration in the three year period ended 2 March 1985:

1. What was the cost and purpose of production of each publication?

2. Whether the design and placement of each publication was prepared by staff under the Minister's control or by outside staff, organizations or consultants, indicating the cost in each instance and in the case of outside assistance the names of people and organizations involved?

3. Whether he will provide any other information required in order to enable the public to establish the full extent and cost of such publications over the above period?

Mr MATHEWS (Minister for the Arts)—The answer is:

The time, cost and resources necessary to prepare an answer to this question cannot be justified.

However, I would be happy to give consideration to any request made by the honourable member about a specific publication.

GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS OF DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AFFAIRS
(Question No. 81)

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West) asked the Treasurer, for the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs:

In respect of all costs associated with the production of all books, brochures, pamphlets, documents or publications of any kind published by each department, agency and authority within his administration in the three year period ended 2 March 1985:

1. What was the cost and purpose of production of each publication?
Questions on Notice

2. Whether the design and placement of each publication was prepared by staff under the Minister's control or by outside staff, organizations or consultants, indicating the cost in each instance and in the case of outside assistance the names of people and organizations involved?

3. Whether he will provide any other information required in order to enable the public to establish the full extent and cost of such publications over the above period?

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—The answer supplied by the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs is:

The time, cost and resources necessary to prepare an answer to this question cannot be justified.

However, I would be happy to give consideration to any request made by the honourable member about a specific publication.

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LOANS TO DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL AFFAIRS

(Question No. 88)

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West) asked the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs:

In respect of all moneys borrowed by each department, agency and authority within his administration in the three year period ended 2 March 1985:

1. How many loans were transacted over this period, indicating the date each loan was formalized and the amount of money borrowed as a result of each loan?

2. What are the details of the loan repayments, including the rate of interest payable and whether there is an escalation clause for the interest rate payable?

3. From whom each loan was borrowed and what are the details regarding each individual or organization approached to provide finance, indicating the terms offered?

4. What was the total amount of loans outstanding against each body as at 2 March 1982 and 2 March 1985, respectively?

5. What are the full details of each offer to provide finance which was made to each body during this period?

6. Whether he will provide any other information required in order to enable the public to establish the full extent and cost of such borrowings over the above period?

Mr CRABB (Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs)—The answer is:

The answer to all these questions is nil.

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LOANS TO DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AFFAIRS

(Question No. 101)

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West) asked the Treasurer, for the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs:

In respect of all moneys borrowed by each department, agency and authority within his administration in the three year period ended 2 March 1985:

1. How many loans were transacted over this period, indicating the date each loan was formalized and the amount of money borrowed as a result of each loan?

2. What are the details of the loan repayments, including the rate of interest payable and whether there is an escalation clause for the interest rate payable?

3. From whom each loan was borrowed and what are the details regarding each individual or organization approached to provide finance, indicating the terms offered?

4. What was the total amount of loans outstanding against each body as at 2 March 1982 and 2 March 1985, respectively?

5. What are the full details of each offer to provide finance which was made to each body during this period?

6. Whether he will provide any other information required in order to enable the public to establish the full extent and cost of such borrowings over the above period?
Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—The answer supplied by the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs is:

The information requested is far too detailed and the time and resources necessary to provide an answer cannot be justified. Furthermore, disclosure of the information requested would jeopardize the commercial position of the Government and the companies with which it has dealings.

ADVERTISING BY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AFFAIRS
(Question No. 110)

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West) asked the Treasurer, for the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs:

In respect of all advertising undertaken by each department, agency and authority within his administration in the three year period ended 2 March 1985:

1. What was the purpose of each advertisement or advertising undertaking, indicating which advertising organization was involved and the total expenditure in each case?
2. Whether the design and placement of each advertisement or undertaking was prepared by staff under the Minister's control or by outside staff, organizations or consultants, indicating the cost in each instance and in the case of outside assistance the names of people and organizations involved?
3. Whether he will provide any other information required in order to enable the public to establish the full extent and cost of such advertising over the above period?

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—The answer supplied by the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs is:

I do not propose to answer this question because of the inordinate amount of time and resources required to do so. I would be happy to give consideration to any query that the honourable member may have about a specific advertisement.

ADVERTISING BY DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL AFFAIRS
(Question No. 114)

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West) asked the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs:

In respect of all advertising undertaken by each department, agency and authority within his administration in the three year period ended 2 March 1985:

1. What was the purpose of each advertisement or advertising undertaking, indicating which advertising organization was involved and the total expenditure in each case?
2. Whether the design and placement of each advertisement or undertaking was prepared by staff under the Minister's control or by outside staff, organizations or consultants, indicating the cost in each instance and in the case of outside assistance the names of people and organizations involved?
3. Whether he will provide any other information required in order to enable the public to establish the full extent and cost of such advertising over the above period?

Mr CRABB (Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs)—The answer is:

I do not propose to answer this question because of the inordinate amount of time and resources required to do so. I would be happy to give consideration to any query that the honourable member may have about a specific advertisement.

ADVERTISING BY MINISTRY FOR THE ARTS
(Question No. 121)

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West) asked the Minister for the Arts:

In respect of all advertising undertaken by each department, agency and authority within his administration in the three year period ended 2 March 1985:

1. What was the purpose of each advertisement or advertising undertaking, indicating which advertising organization was involved and the total expenditure in each case?
2. Whether the design and placement of each advertisement or undertaking was prepared by staff under the Minister's control or by outside staff, organizations or consultants, indicating the cost in each instance and in the case of outside assistance the names of people and organizations involved?

3. Whether he will provide any other information required in order to enable the public to establish the full extent and cost of such advertising over the above period?

Mr MATHEWS (Minister for the Arts)—The answer is:

I do not propose to answer this question because of the inordinate amount of time and resources required to do so. I would be happy to give consideration to any query that the honourable member may have about a specific advertisement.

SALE AND LEASE-BACK TRANSACTIONS OF DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AFFAIRS

(Question No. 189)

Mr STOCKDALE (Brighton) asked the Treasurer, for the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs:

1. Whether any department, agency or authority within his administration, or any predecessor to such bodies, has sold or leased back any assets since 3 April 1982; if so, which bodies?

2. In respect of each such sale and lease-back transaction—(a) which body was involved; (b) what was the nature of the asset concerned; (c) what was the money consideration for the sale; (d) what proportion of the asset has been leased back; (e) what are the names and addresses of the companies or individuals who are now the owners of the assets concerned; and (f) what is the expiry date of the current lease?

3. In respect of each such sale and lease-back transaction, whether the proceeds of sale have been retained by the body concerned?

4. How the proceeds of such sale have been applied?

5. In respect of each such sale and lease-back transaction, what has been the effective rate of interest under the lease-back arrangement and, if the lease has been arranged on a floating rate or other variable rate basis, what has been the range of effective interest rates?

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—The answer supplied by the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs is:

No department, agency or authority within my administration has sold and leased back any assets since 3 April 1982.

SALE AND LEASE-BACK TRANSACTIONS OF DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL AFFAIRS

(Question No. 193)

Mr STOCKDALE (Brighton) asked the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs:

1. Whether any department, agency or authority within his administration, or any predecessor to such bodies, has sold or leased back any assets since 3 April 1982; if so, which bodies?

2. In respect of each such sale and lease-back transaction—(a) which body was involved; (b) what was the nature of the asset concerned; (c) what was the money consideration for the sale; (d) what proportion of the asset has been leased back; (e) what are the names and addresses of the companies or individuals who are now the owners of the assets concerned; and (f) what is the expiry date of the current lease?

3. In respect of each such sale and lease-back transaction, whether the proceeds of sale have been retained by the body concerned?

4. How the proceeds of such sale have been applied?

5. In respect of each such sale and lease-back transaction, what has been the effective rate of interest under the lease-back arrangement and, if the lease has been arranged on a floating rate or other variable rate basis, what has been the range of effective interest rates?
Mr CRABB (Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs)—The answer to all these questions is nil.

SALE AND LEASE-BACK TRANSACTIONS OF DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
(Question No. 194)

Mr STOCKDALE (Brighton) asked the Minister for Consumer Affairs, for the Minister for Community Services:

1. Whether any department, agency or authority within her administration, or any predecessor to such bodies, has sold or leased back any assets since 3 April 1982; if so, which bodies?

2. In respect of each such sale and lease-back transaction—(a) which body was involved; (b) what was the nature of the asset concerned; (c) what was the money consideration for the sale; (d) what proportion of the asset has been leased back; (e) what are the names and addresses of the companies or individuals who are now the owners of the assets concerned; and (f) what is the expiry date of the current lease?

3. In respect of each such sale and lease-back transaction, whether the proceeds of sale have been retained by the body concerned?

4. How the proceeds of such sale have been applied?

5. In respect of each such sale and lease-back transaction, what has been the effective rate of interest under the lease-back arrangement and, if the lease has been arranged on a floating rate or other variable rate basis, what has been the range of effective interest rates?

Mr SPYKER (Minister for Consumer Affairs)—The answer supplied by the Minister for Community Services is:

No property or equipment in my department has been sold and leased back.

SALE AND LEASE-BACK TRANSACTIONS OF ETHNIC AFFAIRS COMMISSION
(Question No. 204)

Mr STOCKDALE (Brighton) asked the Minister for Ethnic Affairs:

1. Whether any department, agency or authority within his administration, or any predecessor to such bodies, has sold or leased back any assets since 3 April 1982; if so, which bodies?

2. In respect of each such sale and lease-back transaction—(a) which body was involved; (b) what was the nature of the asset concerned; (c) what was the money consideration for the sale; (d) what proportion of the asset has been leased back; (e) what are the names and addresses of the companies or individuals who are now the owners of the assets concerned; and (f) what is the expiry date of the current lease?

3. In respect of each such sale and lease-back transaction, whether the proceeds of sale have been retained by the body concerned?

4. How the proceeds of such sale have been applied?

5. In respect of each such sale and lease-back transaction, what has been the effective rate of interest under the lease-back arrangement and, if the lease has been arranged on a floating rate or other variable rate basis, what has been the range of effective interest rates?

Mr SPYKER (Minister for Ethnic Affairs)—The answer is:

The Ethnic Affairs Commission has not been involved in sale or lease-back arrangements in the period since 3 April 1982.

PUBLIC RENTAL HOUSING
(Question No. 231)

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West) asked the Minister for Housing:

1. How many persons were on Ministry of Housing waiting lists for public rental housing as at 31 March 1985, giving a breakdown of the categories of applicants and a breakdown on a regional basis?
2. What were the numbers on these waiting lists in each region as at 31 March 1984?

3. How many of these persons were given accommodation between 31 March 1984 and 31 March 1985, giving a breakdown of the categories of applicants and a breakdown on a regional basis?

4. Why applicants who were not placed in Ministry of Housing accommodation were removed from the waiting list if they were not housed by the Ministry?

Mr WILKES (Minister for Housing)—The answer is:

During the period in question, the Ministry's housing services staff have been employed in converting the waiting lists to the new decentralized data based computer system. As the staff resources in the Ministry's Management Information Unit were fully extended during this period of change, statistics were not collated for the March quarter. The following statistics represent the earliest figures as at 31.12.84.

Region | Categories | Total
|---|---|---
| EP/BS | EP/IBR | Childless | Couples | Families |
| Frankston | 285 | 126 | 53 | 1181 | 1645 |
| Dandenong | 281 | 122 | 84 | 1987 | 2474 |
| Morwell | 335 | 113 | 48 | 965 | 1461 |
| Geelong | 308 | 93 | 80 | 1176 | 1657 |
| Benalla | 330 | 139 | — | 1232 | 1701 |
| Bendigo | 429 | 167 | 94 | 1222 | 1912 |
| Ballarat | 435 | 127 | 46 | 878 | 1486 |
| Warrnambool | 126 | 39 | 36 | 346 | 547 |
| Metropolitan | 784 | 726 | 238 | 5512 | 7260 |
| | | | | 3313 | 1652 |

2. Waiting Lists—31 March 1984

Region | Categories | Total
|---|---|---
| EP/BS | EP/IBR | Childless | Couples | Families |
| Frankston | 374 | 151 | 45 | 1138 | 1709 |
| Dandenong | 257 | 129 | 67 | 1615 | 2068 |
| Morwell | 320 | 114 | 43 | 976 | 1453 |
| Geelong | 283 | 114 | 99 | 1120 | 1616 |
| Benalla | 309 | 119 | — | 783 | 1446 |
| Bendigo | 580 | 221 | 105 | 1224 | 2130 |
| Ballarat | 331 | 164 | 24 | 869 | 1388 |
| Warrnambool | 115 | 44 | 24 | 340 | 523 |
| Metropolitan | —2433 | — | — | 7428 | 9861 |

In addition there were 2467 applications from tenants who applied to transfer to alternative accommodation.

3. A total of 7812 tenancies were granted between 31.3.84 and 31.3.85. Hereunder is a breakdown.

Region | Categories | Total
|---|---|---
| EP/BS | EP/IBR | Childless | Couples | Families |
| Frankston | 107 | 37 | 2 | 186 | 332 |
| Dandenong | 50 | 19 | — | 201 | 270 |
| Morwell | 89 | 30 | 2 | 479 | 600 |
| Geelong | 35 | 50 | 9 | 324 | 418 |
| Benalla | 64 | 112 | 9 | 556 | 741 |
| Bendigo | 53 | 65 | 3 | 451 | 572 |
| Ballarat | 50 | 45 | 4 | 406 | 505 |
| Warrnambool | 48 | 7 | 1 | 208 | 264 |
| Metropolitan | 533 | 285 | 142 | 3150 | 4110 |
| | | | | 1029 | 650 |

In addition there were 2467 applications from tenants who applied to transfer to alternative accommodation.
4. Applicants were removed from the waiting lists after their applications were cancelled for one of the following major reasons:

1. Applicant no longer interested in Ministry of Housing accommodation.
2. Applicant had a change of circumstances, no longer met eligibility requirements.
3. Applicant failed to appear at assessment interview.
4. Applicant rejected third offer of accommodation.

RESIDENCES OWNED BY DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL AFFAIRS
(Question No. 236)

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West) asked the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs:

In respect of all residences owned by departments, agencies and authorities within his administration as at 1 April 1985, and which have been vacant for two months or longer, what is the length of time each has been vacant, the location and the reason?

Mr CRABB (Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs)—The answer is:
Nil.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS EXPENDITURE BY MINISTRY OF HOUSING
(Question No. 268)

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West) asked the Minister for Housing:

1. What was the expenditure by departments, agencies and authorities within his administration in the 1984–85 financial year on matters directly related to Aboriginal affairs?
2. What is the estimated expenditure for the 1985–86 financial year in this area?
3. How many staff are employed in each organization, indicating whether full time or part time, and in relation to part-time employees the number of hours devoted per week to work associated with Aboriginal affairs?
4. What are the costs of all overheads in each organization in connection with employment of staff in the area of Aboriginal affairs?

Mr WILKES (Minister for Housing)—The answer is:

1. Expenditure on Aboriginal housing during 1984–85 ($000)
   (a) For acquisition of rental stock 2488
   (b) Maintenance of Aboriginal housing stock 869
2. The estimated expenditure in 1985–86 is
   (a) For acquisition of rental stock 4417
   (b) Maintenance of Aboriginal housing 1010
3. The Ministry of Housing currently employs
   2 staff full time and 6 liaison officers seconded to the Aboriginal Housing Board working on Aboriginal affairs.
4. No specific separate records are kept for overhead costs for Aboriginal affairs but based on the Ministry's allocation of overheads the cost was $291 000 during 1984–85.
ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS EXPENDITURE BY DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL AFFAIRS
(Question No. 272)

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West) asked the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs:

1. What was the expenditure by departments, agencies and authorities within his administration in the 1984-85 financial year on matters directly related to Aboriginal affairs?
2. What is the estimated expenditure for the 1985-86 financial year in this area?
3. How many staff are employed in each organization, indicating whether full time or part time, and in relation to part-time employees the number of hours devoted per week to work associated with Aboriginal affairs?
4. What are the costs of all overheads in each organization in connection with employment of staff in the area of Aboriginal affairs?

Mr CRABB (Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs)—The answer is:

1. Aboriginal groups would have received grants under my department’s employment and training programs. Grant payments will be listed in my annual report, which will be available in Parliament shortly.
2. Details are not available.
3. This department funds groups to conduct specific projects under its grants programs. Staffing details of each group are not available.
4. Again, this information is not available within this department.

BUDGET ALLOCATION FOR DISTRIBUTION BY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AFFAIRS
(Question No. 279)

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West) asked the Treasurer, for the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs:

1. Whether any moneys were allocated by departments, agencies and authorities within his administration in the State Budget delivered on 18 September 1984 which would be available for distribution at his discretion; if so, what is the amount allocated?
2. Whether such discretionary funds were available within the 1983-84 State Budget; if so, what amount?

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—The answer supplied by the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs is:

1. Yes. An amount of $125,000 was provided as grants to agricultural and pastoral societies in 1984-85. Funds allocated in the State Budget to the department are identified for particular programs and purposes. Within these programs, and subject to Treasury regulations, the Minister, as the person responsible for the implementation of the Government’s policies, has discretion in the allocation of funds.
2. Yes. An amount of $135,000 was provided in 1983-84.

BUDGET ALLOCATION FOR DISTRIBUTION BY DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL AFFAIRS
(Question No. 283)

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West) asked the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs:

1. Whether any moneys were allocated by departments, agencies and authorities within his administration in the State Budget delivered on 18 September 1984 which would be available for distribution at his discretion; if so, what is the amount allocated?
2. Whether such discretionary funds were available within the 1983-84 State Budget; if so, what amount?
Mr CRABB (Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs)—The answer is:

1. A total of $7·85 million was allocated in the 1984-85 State Budget for distribution at the Minister’s discretion for purposes defined by particular programs as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Services</td>
<td>$400 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants to organizations and costs associated with provision of corporate services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>$2 600 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship incentive and training schemes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants to organizations and costs associated with employment and training schemes</td>
<td>$2 700 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour Market Information and Research</td>
<td>$350 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants to organizations and costs associated with employment and training schemes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Policies and Programs</td>
<td>$1 300 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants to organizations and costs associated with employment and training schemes, programs studies, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational and Public Health and Safety</td>
<td>$500 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants to organizations and costs associated with occupational health and safety schemes, programs, studies, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>7 850 000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. For the 1983–84 Budget moneys available for distribution at the Minister’s discretion were allocated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division No. 290 Ministry of Employment and Training</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 8 Grants to organizations and costs associated with employment and training schemes, programs, studies, etc.</td>
<td>$5 000 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**WELFARE SERVICES FUND**

(Question No. 311)

Mr E. R. SMITH (Glen Waverley) asked the Minister for Consumer Affairs, for the Minister for Community Services:

In view of the Council for the Single Mother and Her Child receiving a grant of $35 000 from the Welfare Services Fund, why the Adoptive Parents Association of Victoria was denied funding of $2000 from the same fund for a project to publish an information booklet on the Adoption Act 1984 and for the installation of a 24-hour telephone counselling service?

Mr SPYKER (Minister for Consumer Affairs)—The answer supplied by the Minister for Community Services is:

The funding request from the Adoptive Parents Association of Victoria for $2000 “to develop, publicize and distribute an information booklet for adoptive parents on all aspects of the new adoption legislation” was rejected due to—

1. the fact that my department was in the process of producing an information booklet to be distributed to all agencies and groups involved in adoption. The funding of an information booklet by the APAV would have resulted in duplication;

2. priority consideration for funding of a large number of applications within the constraints of limited funds available.

There are no records held in my department indicating that the organization has applied for funding of a 24-hour telephone counselling service.
PRINTING OF RAILWAY TIME-TABLES
(Question No. 333)

Mr DICKINSON (South Barwon) asked the Minister for Transport:
1. What was the total cost of printing the new V/Line railway time-tables?
2. What firm was engaged to print the time-tables?
3. How many time-tables were printed?

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—The answer is:
1. $64,899.42.
2. While the typesetting for the time-tables was undertaken by V/Line, an anticipated printing delay of some months by the Government Printing Office resulted in the following firms being engaged to print the time-tables:
   - Cambec Press Pty Ltd
   - Pemara Press (Vic.) Pty Ltd
   - Ramsay Ware Stockland Pty Ltd
   - The Craftsman Press
   - Vaughan Printing Pty Ltd
3. Twelve separate time-tables were produced for a total of 357,200 copies, including 10,200 copies of a 94-page booklet titled “Time-tables for Country and Interstate Services”.

USE OF VEHICLES BY DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION, FORESTS AND LANDS
(Question No. 356)

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West) asked the Minister for Education, for the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands:
In respect of motor vehicles operated by each department, agency or authority within her administration, how many travelled on either the South Gippsland or Bass highways, or both, on Saturday, 1 June 1985, indicating—
(a) the registration number of each vehicle; (b) how many officers travelled in each vehicle; and (c) the purpose of the trip in each case?

Mr CATHIE (Minister for Education)—The answer supplied by the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands is:
(a) No vehicles were allocated by my department for travel on the South Gippsland or Bass highways on Saturday, 1 June 1985.
(b) Not applicable.
(c) Not applicable.

USE OF VEHICLES BY DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
(Question No. 360)

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West) asked the Minister for Consumer Affairs, for the Minister for Community Services:
In respect of motor vehicles operated by each department, agency or authority within her administration, how many travelled on either the South Gippsland or Bass highways, or both, on Saturday, 1 June 1985, indicating—
(a) the registration number of each vehicle; (b) how many officers travelled in each vehicle; and (c) the purpose of the trip in each case?
Mr SPYKER (Minister for Consumer Affairs)—The answer supplied by the Minister for Community Services is:

From records maintained within my department, I have ascertained that no departmental vehicles travelled on either the South Gippsland or Bass highways on 1 June 1985.

PUBLICATIONS BY MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT
(Question No. 372)

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West) asked the Minister for Transport:

1. What is the name of each book, brochure, pamphlet or publication produced by each department, agency or authority within his administration in the three-year period ended 2 March 1985?
2. What was the approximate date of publication of each book, brochure, pamphlet or publication?

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—The answer is:

The time and resources necessary to answer this question cannot be justified.

Information in relation to major publications produced may be obtained by reference to the annual reports of the Ministry and its authorities as well as to their respective Freedom of Information Part II statements.

STATE OWNED OR CONTROLLED LAUNDRIES
(Question No. 390)

Mr GUDE (Hawthorn) asked the Minister for Transport:

Whether the Ministry of Transport or any of its agencies has laundry undertaken in a State owned or controlled laundry; if so—(a) what is the location; and (b) what is the capital investment and the financial results of each such laundry?

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—The answer is:

The State Transport Authority's occupational health department and ambulance section has its laundry undertaken at the Royal Melbourne Hospital Central Linen Service and group laundry.

Neither the Ministry of Transport nor any of its other agencies has laundry undertaken in a State owned or controlled laundry.

NOTICES OF INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS
(Question No. 394)

Mr RAMSAY (Balwyn) asked the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs:

How many notices of industrial accidents, as required by section 20 of the Industrial Safety, Health and Welfare Act 1981, were received by the responsible department in each month between 1 July 1982 and 30 June 1985?

Mr CRABB (Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs)—The answer is:

Notice of industrial accidents as required by section 20—Industrial Safety, Health and Welfare Act.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 1982</td>
<td>2759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>2195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>2315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>2689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>2477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>2443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1983</td>
<td>1593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>1646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>2247</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 14 878
**INDUSTRIAL SAFETY**

(Question No. 395)

Mr RAMSAY (Balwyn) asked the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs:

On how many occasions between 1 July 1982 and 30 June 1985 the Minister responsible for administration of the Industrial Safety, Health and Welfare Act 1981 exercised his power under section 18 to order the cessation of a dangerous process?

Mr CRABB (Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs)—The answer is, "Nil".

**GEELONG RAIL SERVICE**

(Question No. 422)

Mr DICKINSON (South Barwon) asked the Minister for Transport:

1. How many trains which leave from Spencer Street for Geelong or from Geelong for Spencer Street have been cancelled during the months of February to July 1985, respectively?

2. How many trains have not kept their scheduled time-table on the above line during the period February to July 1985?

3. On how many occasions in the past twelve months passengers to and from Geelong have been required to use buses because of equipment failure, and what reasons were given to passengers on each occasion for the cancellation of train services?

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—The answer is:

1. 170 Geelong trains were cancelled between February and June 1985 inclusive. This represents approximately 3 per cent of the total number of trains, but includes cancellation of 70 trains because of two separate industrial disputes, one between 21 and 29 March and one on 2 April 1985.
2. From 1 February to 30 June 1985, 64 per cent of Geelong trains ran on time. A further 21 per cent arrived within 10 minutes of the scheduled arrival time.

Running has progressively improved since the 14 April time-table alteration which at first caused major disruptions because of disturbance in the metropolitan area.

For instance, on-time running in July for Geelong services was 70 per cent peak and 90 per cent off peak.

3. Complete records were not kept prior to February 1985, but from 1 February to 30 June 1985, on the 170 occasions when buses were substituted for cancelled trains, the following were the reasons:

1.3.85 to 5.3.85
90 trains replaced by road coaches due to major derailment at Little River, 28.2.85.

21.3.85 to 29.3.85
36 trains replaced by road coaches due to industrial dispute.

2.4.85
44 trains replaced by road coaches due to industrial dispute.
Tuesday, 22 October 1985

The SPEAKER (the Hon. C. T. Edmunds) took the chair at 2.5 p.m. and read the prayer.

ABSENCE OF MINISTER

The SPEAKER—Order! I advise the House that the Minister for Housing will be absent during questions without notice.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

VICTORIAN ECONOMY

Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—Is the Premier aware that, in the month since the Hawke-Keating tax package was announced, more than 1000 sackings have occurred in the Victorian restaurant industry; that some 10,000 other restaurant and hospitality industry jobs are threatened; and that the car industry and the supporting component industry face widespread retrenchments? Does the Premier still support the Federal Government's tax package; if not, what will his Government now do to protect jobs for Victorians?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I am not aware of the source of the assertions made by the Leader of the Opposition. I am prepared to say, however, that anyone who dares to make those sorts of assertions and predictions so soon after the announcement of the tax package and to draw some link between the package and those figures is a fool. That would not be unusual for the Leader of the Opposition.

I think everybody in this State knows that this country is doing better than it has done for the past twenty years. Over this year and the two preceding years, growth of around 5 per cent has occurred in the economy. Nobody should be unmindful of the consequences of that in terms of jobs and economic growth. Victoria is leading the way in that regard.

So far as the labour force is concerned, Victoria has the lowest unemployment rate of any State—6.6 per cent as compared with 8.5 per cent for the rest of the country—and the level of youth unemployment is also lower in Victoria than in any other State.

So far as capital investment expectations are concerned, Victoria's share of capital expenditure is expected to increase from 24.8 per cent actual in the March 1985 quarter to approximately 26.8 per cent of the national total in 1985-86. The same growth situation applies in respect of building approvals and car sales.

The Leader of the Opposition should not become distracted by peripheral matters. That is the problem with so many commentators. The comparison should be made between what is occurring in this State and this country this year as compared with three and a half and four years ago. That is where the real comparison is. We are streets ahead of where we were three and a half years ago. The tax package is designed to ensure that that sort of growth continues and that confidence is maintained in this country and in this State.

The Government will monitor closely both the restaurant industry and the car manufacturing industry—the latter being of especial concern to Victoria. My colleague, the Deputy Premier, constantly watches the figures in the car industry.

I raised that matter on the day the tax package was announced. I said that we were mindful of the possible consequences for the car and car parts industries in which this State had a leading role in terms of the dimension of its participation. That is being done.
It would be extremely foolish to draw any conclusions and even more foolish to draw a causal link between assertions that are made by restaurant patronage figures and the tax package. I reject the notion.

**HOW-TO-VOTE CARDS IN NUNAWADING BY-ELECTION**

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS (Leader of the National Party)—I refer the Premier to the bogus nuclear disarmament card handed out by the ALP at the Nunawading by-election. Can the Premier advise the House when he first became aware of the existence of this card? Was it on 17 August, election day, or was it prior to that date?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—The Leader of the National Party is aware, or should be aware, that six complaints are currently being investigated.

Mr Ross-Edwards interjected.

Mr CAIN—Six complaints involving four electorates are currently under consideration by the Chief Electoral Officer. A complaint was made on the Monday following the Nunawading by-election. As I said before, an investigation is being conducted by the Chief Electoral officer and that is the proper course to take.

If it is now suggested, as was said last week, that I should conduct some concurrent inquiry into those matters, I reject that notion entirely and I say to the Leader of the National Party and to the Leader of the Opposition that they should do the same thing with their members on allegations made in respect of a wide range of electoral issues.

**ALLEGATIONS IN THE “BULLETIN”**

Mr SIMPSON (Niddrie)—In view of the matter raised by the Leader of the Opposition in the debate on the motion for the adjournment of the sitting last Thursday, can the Premier advise the House of steps being taken by the Government to protect the tapes which contain information on which a recent Bulletin article appeared concerning the effective operation of Government and the Parliament?

The SPEAKER—Order! I call the Premier, believing that the matter can be linked with Government administration.

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I am aware of the concern expressed by the Leader of the Opposition about this matter. He brought it into this Parliament on Wednesday of last week when he rushed in here before the ink was dry on the Bulletin and made a personal explanation. He also raised it with the Deputy Premier in the debate on the motion for the adjournment of the sitting on Thursday night, seeking some response from me.

The Government shares the expressed views of the Leader of the National Party that the tapes should be safeguarded. The matters to which they refer are of immense public importance. As I understand it, they involve the assertion that there was a desire or an attempt to bring down the Government by rejecting Budget Bills.

It is also alleged that a conspiracy existed involving the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party. It is breathtaking stuff! It is in the public interest that the tapes should be made available at the earliest opportunity. Placing those tapes in the hands of a solicitor in civil litigation will not achieve any end because I am advised that defamation proceedings will take five to six years. Having regard to the number and the nature of the parties involved, if the case were settled we may never know what is on the tapes.

This matter does not just concern the proposed civil litigation. I call on the Leader of the Opposition to make the tapes available. If there is some concern about possible contempt or defamation proceedings, I have asked the Leader of the House to consult with the Leaders of the other two parties with a view to setting aside time while the House is sitting so that the tapes can be played with the protection of Parliamentary privilege.
The suggested time that the Government is looking at is 2 p.m. tomorrow at which time tape recording and amplification facilities can be made available in this Chamber so that the tapes can be played and the record set straight.

As I stated previously, the Leader of the Opposition drew this matter to the attention of the Deputy Premier last Thursday night. The Leader of the Opposition is always saying that people have the right to know about matters that affect the Government of the State. I cannot think of anything that more fundamentally affects the Government of Victoria than the assertions that are being made and denied about this issue. At 2 p.m. tomorrow, the Leader of the Opposition has the opportunity of making the tapes available.

**HOW-TO-VOTE CARDS IN NUNAWADING BY-ELECTION**

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West)—I ask the Premier which Ministers of the Government worked on the Labor Party’s Nunawading campaign committee in July and August of this year.

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to the question which concerns the internal operations of a specific party campaign committee. It may well be that the honourable member for Gippsland West has misphrased the question, but it is clearly out of order in its present form by referring to the internal operation of a party committee. Question time allows the opportunity for questions to be asked that deal with Government administration.

Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—On the point of order, Mr Speaker, if a Minister of the Crown was involved in an activity, Parliament has a right to know how his or her time was spent. If the Premier will guarantee that the Ministers involved did not draw a salary throughout that period, it may be argued that they were working as individuals and not as members of the Labor Party. I put it to you, Sir, that the activities of Ministers in receipt of money from the people of this State are a matter of Government business, and unless the Premier has something to hide he ought to give a frank and honest answer.

The SPEAKER—Order! I uphold the point of order. I ask the honourable member for Gippsland West to rephrase the question.

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West)—I shall rephrase my question to the Premier and ask: If any Minister of the Crown has been involved in any illegal activity, will the Premier assure the House that the appropriate measures will be taken?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I can only repeat what I have said before. The matter to which the Opposition is seeking to allude is the subject of a complaint and examination, along with five other matters concerning elections in the past eight months. I shall say nothing more than that. Those matters are under consideration and it is a proper matter for determination by the Chief Electoral Officer.

Mr WHITING (Mildura)—I direct a simple question to the Premier. Can he advise the House clearly and concisely whether his first information of Peter Batchelor’s involvement in the Nunawading by-election nuclear disarmament how-to-vote card issue was prior to his knowledge of a member of his staff being involved or after that time?

The SPEAKER—Order! I am having some difficulty in allowing that question because of the distinction between the Premier’s responsibility as the Premier of Victoria and his responsibility so far as the political party is concerned. If the honourable member will rephrase the question to directly point to the responsibilities of the Premier, I shall hear him.

Mr WHITING—The Premier has already indicated a knowledge of the involvement of certain members of his staff in the how-to-vote card issue, so I ask——

The SPEAKER—Order! Will the honourable member commence the question again, because I cannot hear?
Mr WHITING—Did the Premier know of the involvement of a member of his staff in the Nunawading by-election how-to-vote card issue prior to his knowledge of Mr Batchelor’s involvement?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I can say little more than what I said when this matter was raised by the Leader of the National Party. Regardless of whether members of the Public Service are exempt public servants or full-time public servants they have the right to work for or support a political party as they see fit and that is true of members of the Public Service who support all political parties.

So far as the question suggested that I should take it upon myself to be involved in detailed party organization, as I said before, I reject that notion. I do not intend to assume that sort of generalized guardian role. It is not my job and I will not take it on.

TAP RECORDINGS

Mr FOGARTY (Sunshine)—Will the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, who represents the Attorney-General in this House, inform the House what action can be taken against a person or persons involved with tape recordings and other devices that may be used impending legal proceedings?

Mr RICHARDSON (Forest Hill)—On a point of order, the honourable member is obviously asking for an opinion because he used the words, “what action can be taken”. Therefore, the honourable member is asking for an opinion, is out of order and should not be heard.

The SPEAKER—Order! I uphold the point of order. The question is in two parts; it asks for a legal opinion and is hypothetical. I ask the honourable member for Sunshine to rephrase the question and I shall hear him again.

Mr FOGARTY (Sunshine)—Can the Minister for Police and Emergency Services inform the House what action can be taken against a person interfering with tapes intended to be used in future court proceedings?

The SPEAKER—Order! I am unable to entertain the question. It seeks a legal opinion and is therefore out of order.

NUNAWADING BY-ELECTION

Mr AUSTIN (Ripon)—I refer the Premier to documented evidence of 7 August that the Premier’s adviser, Mr David Withington, had been assigned to work on loan with the Labor Party candidate in the Nunawading Province by-election. Why did the Premier allow this to happen when the official guidelines for Ministerial staff forbade it?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—A number of members of my staff—in company with members of the staff of the Opposition—involve themselves in political matters. The Nunawading Province by-election was a political matter.

HOW-TO-VOTE CARDS IN MONASH PROVINCE ELECTION

Mr NORRIS (Dandenong)—Can the Minister for Police and Emergency Services inform the House whether the attention of the police has been drawn to allegations of improper activities in the March election for the seat of Monash Province; if so, what action has been taken?

Mr MATHEWS (Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—I am not aware whether such a complaint has been made to the police, but I am aware that such a matter has been drawn to the attention of the Chief Electoral Officer. I am advised that this complaint reflects widespread concern about the bona fides of the how-to-vote ticket that was distributed outside polling booths in the Monash Province during the State election by
and with the active involvement of members of the Liberal Party, including members of this Parliament.

Mr Leigh—Who?

Mr MATHEWS—I am delighted to advise the honourable member for Malvern that the new Liberal Party member for Monash Province in another place was responsible for the planning and production of these how-to-vote cards. It is alleged that supplies of those cards were carried around in his car on polling day and that he went from person to person amongst those who were handing out how-to-vote cards asking them whether their supplies were adequate and offering to replenish those supplies.

I am further advised that members of the Liberal Party who reported to the party campaign rooms for the purpose of being assigned Liberal Party how-to-vote cards were given instead supplies of the Save Prince Henry’s organization how-to-vote cards to hand out. I am advised that the organization was totally unaware that those cards were to be produced on its behalf and has reprimanded the honourable member for Monash Province for their production. The production of those Save Prince Henry’s how-to-vote cards which directed preferences to the Liberal Party was a shabby fraud planned and perpetuated by the Liberal Party and executed by members of the party—including members of the Victorian Parliament—for the purpose of misleading the electors of Monash Province and nothing else.

The SPEAKER—Order! I should advise honourable members that Standing Order No. 108 refers to offensive and unbecoming words in reference to any member of the House or any imputations that are deemed to be disorderly. All honourable members of the House should observe that Standing Order. I now call the honourable member for Derrimut.

Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the call was due back to the Opposition side of the House.

The SPEAKER—Order! I run a tick board—in Labor Party language—and the call I have is to the Government side. I shall ask the Clerk whether that is correct.

I am informed that I am incorrect. I call the honourable member for Benambra and I shall call the honourable member for Derrimut next.

TEACHERS’ STRIKE

Mr LIEBERMAN (Benambra)—I ask the Premier: given the total breakdown in relations between the teaching profession and the Minister for Education, which has resulted in disruptions, strikes and community distress, what action will the Government now take to protect students from continued disruption in the vital third term, particularly students in their final year seeking qualifications they will need to gain their preferred jobs in the work force?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I reject the alarmist premise in the question asked by the honourable member for Benambra. I hope all honourable members support the attitude and responses of the Minister for Education to matters currently in dispute.

When the record of this Government over the past three years is compared with that of previous Governments in Victoria, no one in this State should have any cause for complaint. We all wish that greater resources were available. The advice I have about the current stoppage is that 52 per cent of secondary teachers and 60 per cent of primary teachers presented for work today.

I believe the high profile that, understandably, has been given to disputes involving nurses and teachers is perhaps the most powerful evidence of the Government’s superb industrial relations record. When a disturbance or industrial dispute of these dimensions occurs, it is big news because Victoria has not had one for so long.

Mr Williams—Wait until Norm starts on you!
Mr CAIN—Mr Gallagher has already started; he is in a coalition with Bill Hartley and the Leader of the Opposition. I am sure the honourable member does not want to know who will win.

Mr Kennett interjected.

Mr CAIN—It will be me; honourable members need not worry about that. With a coalition involving Bill Hartley, Jeff Kennett and Norm Gallagher, how do honourable members think I will go? It will be easy with opposition such as that!

The number of days lost in Victoria over the past twelve months as a result of industrial stoppages has been approximately one-sixth of the number lost in any one year in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The Government is extremely proud of that record.

The record of the Government, through the current Minister for Education and the previous Minister, the Deputy Premier, is second to none. The Government has ensured, and will continue to ensure, that the Victorian education system is the best in Australia. Although there will be difficulties because of the sorts of coalitions I spoke of earlier—some people will try to flex their muscles—the Government will continue running Victoria in the best way it has been run for the past 30 years.

AUTHENTICATION PROGRAM FOR VICTORIAN WINES

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley)—I refer the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources to the authentication program being developed in Victoria for Victorian wines. Can the honourable gentleman indicate the progress of that authentication program, and particularly relate his comments to the old established wineries within the electorate of Murray Valley which has produced world-class wines?

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—I thank the honourable member for his question and acknowledge his ongoing and close interest in the wine industry and thank him for his repeated invitations to me to visit establishments within the electorate he represents, which I have always gratefully accepted.

The Government has proceeded, together with the Victorian Wine Industry Association Inc., to develop this authentication scheme.

The scheme had its genesis both within the industry itself and from the inquiry by the Economic and Budget Review Committee into the wine industry. It became apparent to the Government that it would be to the benefit of the industry if an authentication scheme could be developed and targeted within the State’s economic strategy.

After lengthy and detailed discussions involving all elements of the industry, a subcommittee made recommendations to the association last August, which were adopted. I am delighted to say that last Friday I was present at the official tasting and launching of the first of those authenticated wines. Sixty wines were submitted for consideration by a testing panel. I am pleased to say that 58 were accepted and will now receive a special press that will be part of the labelling of the bottle to indicate that the wine has received special commendation.

As honourable members may know, a number of vignerons from north-eastern Victoria have been behind the scheme as they have sought to establish and maintain the reputations they have developed over a long period of quality wine. The rationale of the scheme to the Government and industry is to protect the good industry in Victoria from some of the interstate predators who have lowered the quality of their wines and, regrettably, have been marketing them as Victorian products. The Government recognizes that Victoria has the opportunity of marketing wine both in other States of Australia and at a later stage overseas, but that will require an authentication scheme of the sort that is being developed.

I repeat that north-eastern Victoria is at the forefront in this area. One of the first of the two authenticated wines has come from the north east. Mr Colin Campbell of Campbell's
Winery has submitted his current range of offerings. I commend Campbell’s Winery to honourable members for their consideration. Those wines have now been considered and adopted by the panel. I commend Mr Campbell for his initiative, ongoing support for the authentication scheme and for the leadership he has shown throughout north-eastern Victoria.

Similarly, Mr George Sutherland Smith from All Saints Winery in the north-eastern area, has submitted much of his current wine for consideration, and this has been adopted by the authentication panel. The leadership from the north east is to be commended. I look forward to a further growth of the industry in Victoria, particularly the north east of the State.

TEACHERS’ STRIKE

Mr CUNNINGHAM (Derrimut)—Further to the answer given to a previous question by the Premier, will the Minister for Education inform the House what steps are being taken to resolve the teachers’ strike?

Mr CATHIE (Minister for Education)—I have always genuinely sought a settlement to the current dispute because I realize only too well the damage that it is inflicting upon Government schools and the students enrolled in these schools. As the Premier indicated, of the 21,000 primary teachers, 60 per cent presented for work this morning, and the majority of high school teachers remained at work. Although I am disappointed that the strike went ahead today, the figures indicate that teachers by and large have accepted the assurance that I gave them in writing that the Victorian Government will continue to improve the quality and standards of education in Victoria.

I expect that the unions will now come back to the negotiating table. My colleagues, the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs, Steve Crabb, and the Minister for Public Works, “Bunna” Walsh, are ready as I am, to meet with the unions tomorrow or to sit down for further negotiations with the Education Department on Thursday. The difficulty has been that in the past we have not been able to establish a basis on which negotiations can proceed because we have been presented with a number of demands that do not require additional expenditure of millions of dollars, but tens of millions of dollars. There can be no response to that demand.

The Government has determined the priorities in education and they are set out clearly in the Budget. The Commonwealth Government has stopped funding pre-school education and the State Government has to make up those funds once injected by the Commonwealth Government.

Under the Youth Guarantee Scheme, the Government made a commitment, particularly to work study positions in a number of Government departments and with the Commonwealth Government, for the development of Kirby-type traineeships. It means that the Government has to build additional class-rooms and find extra teachers for the expected 27 per cent increase in first-year apprentices this year, which mirrors the splendid economic recovery taking place in this State at present.

The Government is faced with a problem to provide sufficient resources for education. The Government has also to develop three entirely new technical and further education colleges next year at Broadmeadows, the outer eastern areas and in the Wimmera. Additional staff for those colleges will have to be found.

The Government has also made a commitment to develop nurse education, which will take place in colleges of advanced education. All of these things are set out clearly in the Budget, and, therefore I am prepared to discuss with union leaders at any time items which are not of large additional cost to those Budget priorities.
HOW-TO-VOTE CARDS IN NUNAWADING BY-ELECTION

Mr STOCKDALE (Brighton)—I direct my question without notice to the Premier and I refer the House to the fact that the Premier appointed legal experts to the discount airline ticket investigation on the pretext that if criminal prosecutions could not be justified against certain Government-paid individuals, internal disciplinary methods could be taken. Will the Premier also appoint legal experts to the Nunawading by-election investigation for the same reason?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I do not know whether the honourable member for Brighton understands the nature of the airline ticket investigation, but police have investigation proceedings under way and the Government is providing additional assistance by way of counsel. Police investigations are being undertaken by the Internal Investigation Department because that is the way the matter first came up.

Normal investigation procedures are being followed. The honourable member must know that it is not unusual for counsel to be involved in assisting police regarding commercial matters alleging white collar crime.

I hope the honourable member also understands what the duties, powers and obligations of the Chief Electoral Officer are under the Act; to receive complaints and investigate them. The Chief Electoral Officer, so far as I am aware, has made no suggestion that he is unable to do his job. I imagine, like everybody else, he is appalled at what the Opposition is trying to do in this matter, to interfere with the independence of his role.

This Act lays down certain requirements. The Chief Electoral Officer has six complaints, five plus the one now referred to him, involving four elections. It is his duty to investigate those matters in whatever manner he sees fit.

ALLEGATIONS IN THE "BULLETIN"

Mr HARROWFIELD (Mitcham)—I ask the Minister for Police and Emergency Services whether he has sought advice concerning the matter raised by the honourable member for Niddrie during the debate on the motion for the adjournment on 17 October regarding the safekeeping of evidence. If the Minister has sought and obtained advice, could he advise the House of that advice?

Mr MATHEWS (Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—I have had discussions with the Attorney-General regarding the extremely grave matters that were raised in the debate on the motion for the adjournment on 17 October by the honourable member for Niddrie. These grave matters touch on the well-being and safety of the institution of democratic government in this society and the integrity of senior members of this House.

I recall, since it seems to have escaped the memory of the Leader of the Opposition, what was the substance of the matters touched on by the honourable member for Niddrie last week. He referred to the issue of the Bulletin of Wednesday last which reported that the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party were partners in a disgraceful conspiracy.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Ross-Edwards—Be a man; go outside and say it!

Mr MATHEWS—The legal stratagems of the Leader of the Opposition may have succeeded in muzzling the media. Neither those legal stratagems nor being shouted down by the Leader of the National Party will muzzle me or muzzle this House. The Bulletin reports went on to describe how the objective of the conspiracy in which the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party were partners was to bring down a Government of the State democratically elected as recently as seven months ago.

Honourable members interjecting.
The SPEAKER—Order! I again advise the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the House generally of Standing Order No. 108. For the benefit of honourable members I shall recite it and ensure that it is not infringed. It reads:

No Member shall use offensive or unbecoming words in reference to any Member of the House and all imputations of improper motives and all personal reflections on Members shall be deemed disorderly.

The question the Minister was asked was specific and I should advise the honourable gentleman that that should be the substance of his reply.

Mr MATHEWS—The matter that was raised with me last Thursday and the question that I have been asked today arising from it concerns the report that appeared in last Wednesday's Bulletin. The allegations that I have been summarizing for the benefit of the House could be confirmed or dismissed in a totally simple 100 per cent reliable and effective way if the Leader of the Opposition were to allow to be played publicly the tapes that he himself took of his conversation with the Bulletin journalist.

Denials by the Leader of the Opposition of the substance of the Bulletin article have led to the Leader of the Opposition twice being called a liar in public in the past week.

Mr Speaker, I say that the institution of democratic Government cannot long be allowed to remain overshadowed by the suggestion that it is so held in contempt by the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party as would be implicit in their involvement in the matter described in the Bulletin last week. Nor, Mr Speaker, can the Leader of the Opposition's name remain overshadowed for the period of one to six years which will elapse before his legal action comes up, the tapes replayed and it can be established once and for all whether it was Mr Farmer of the Bulletin or the Leader of the Opposition who was telling the truth.

The integrity of these tapes is already a matter of grave concern in the community. I say that advisedly for the honourable member for Niddrie who has raised this matter twice in the House; the tapes remained for several days in the possession of the Leader of the Opposition before they were turned over to the security of the custody of his solicitors.

The honourable member from Gisborne asks me whether I think the Leader of the Opposition is dishonest; I point out to the honourable member that in this House last Thursday the Leader of the Opposition began to lay the foundations of his cover-up for the doctoring of the tapes.

The SPEAKER—Order! I advise the Minister for Police and Emergency Services that he is going well beyond the Standing Orders in respect of answering a question without notice. He is debating the subject. I believe him to be out of order. I ask the Minister to round off his answer.

Mr MATHEWS—The honourable gentleman himself referred to the fact that he believed there were defects in the tape. Richard Milhous Nixon made similar references to the Watergate tapes and it turned out that many whole minutes of the tapes had been erased.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr MATHEWS—I demand that the Leader of the Opposition take up the invitation extended to him by the Premier and have the tapes played publicly in this House at 2 p.m. tomorrow. Let the honourable gentleman come clean with the House and with the community.

The honourable member for Niddrie asked me what has been the outcome of the discussions which I held with the Attorney-General over the week-end following the request from the honourable member. The Attorney-General has advised me in the following terms: first, that the defendant in a defamation action—in this case the proprietors of the Age—may apply to the court to obtain discovery of the tapes which is clearly relevant to the present action as well as to the well-being of the State. However, the Age
would not be able to publicly reveal the contents of the tape. So there is no refuge for the honourable gentleman in the suggestion that because the Age has a legal right to discovery of the contents of the tape that will therefore bring the matter into the public domain.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr MATHEWS—The honourable gentleman says the press were told that the disclosure would not be private. This disclosure will take place in not less than one year and perhaps as many as six years hence. The honourable gentleman will be history by then, as the honourable member for Polwarth well knows.

The SPEAKER—Order! Would the Minister round off his reply to the question!

Mr MATHEWS—Second, the Attorney-General said that if the tape is tampered with by the Leader of the Opposition or anyone on his behalf in a way that interferes with its integrity as evidence, then a most serious contempt of court will have been committed. I invite the attention of the Leader of the Opposition to that and to the extent to which he may have already imperilled himself.

Third, the Attorney-General said that the responsibility for—

Mr DELZOPPO (Narracan)—On a point of order, you, Mr Speaker have already asked the Minister to round off his answer to the question. I believe the Minister has gone far beyond the propriety that would be used in answering the question and, quite frankly, I have had enough of this crap.

The SPEAKER—Order! I advise the honourable member for Narracan that I find the word that he has used offensive and I ask him to withdraw it.

Mr DELZOPPO—I withdraw.

The SPEAKER—I ask the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to cease providing free legal opinions with respect to his answer and to round off his answer to the question raised by the honourable member for Mitcham.

Mr MATHEWS (Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—Mr Speaker, it is within the power of the Leader of the Opposition to dispose of this matter simply, cleanly, finally and once and for all by accepting the invitation of the Premier. He need have no fear of defamation proceedings; he will be protected by the privileges of the House. He needs simply to walk in here at 2 o’clock tomorrow, put the tapes on the table and they will be played. If he declines that invitation, he stands exposed as a schemer, as a conspirator and as a person who has total disregard both for the truth and for propriety.

PETITIONS

The Clerk—I have received the following petitions for presentation to Parliament:

Pre-school education

TO THE HONOURABLE THE SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED:

The humble petition of citizens of the electorate of Corio sheweth that the preservation of pre-school services is essential to provide every child with the right to a kindergarten experience without discrimination.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the State Government ensures that the existing high standards of pre-school education be maintained by granting the maintenance subsidy grant on the basis of individual centre needs and number of kindergarten groups attending the centre and index the maintenance subsidy grant through the consumer price index rises.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Mr Williams (12 signatures) and Mr Trezise (300 signatures)

It was ordered that the petitions be laid on the table.
PAPERS

The following papers, pursuant to the directions of several Acts of Parliament, were laid on the table by the Clerk:

Dietitions Board—Report and statement of accounts for the year 1984–85.
Police Regulation Act 1958—Determination No. 418 of the Police Service Board.

Town and Country Planning Act 1981:
- Bacchus Marsh—Shire of Bacchus Marsh Planning Scheme, Amendment No. 26.
- Colac—City of Colac Planning Scheme Amendment No. 22.
- Geelong Regional Planning Scheme, Amendment No. 116/1984.
- Lillydale—Shire of Lillydale Planning Scheme 1958, Amendment No. 182.
- Shepparton—City of Shepparton Planning Scheme 1953, Amendment No. 85/1984.
- Tambo—Shire of Tambo (Lakes Entrance) Planning Scheme, Amendment No. 58.
- Traralgon—City of Traralgon Planning Scheme, Amendment No. 54.
- Waratah Bay Planning Scheme, Amendment No. 20/1984.
- Warrnambool—City of Warrnambool Planning Scheme, Amendment No. 12.

CONSTITUTION (GOVERNOR’S SALARY AND PENSION) BILL

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor, intimating that, at the Government Offices, on 22 October, His Excellency had reserved the Constitution (Governor’s Salary and Pension) Bill for the signification of Her Majesty’s pleasure thereon.

APPROPRIATION MESSAGES

The SPEAKER announced that he had received messages from His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor recommending that appropriations be made from the Consolidated Fund for the purposes of the following Bills:

- Police Regulation (Amendment) Bill
- Groundwater (Border Agreement) Bill
- Residential Tenancies Bill

CRIMES (AMENDMENT) BILL

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

That this Bill be now read a second time.

It has three important purposes:

1. To rid the criminal law of the outmoded notion that a man cannot rape his wife because the existence of the marriage constitutes a presumption of consent on the part of the wife.

2. To continue the progressive overhaul of the substantive criminal law which this Government has undertaken. In particular, it substantially implements the recommendations of the criminal law working group in relation to the law of attempts. It thus completes a codification of the preliminary crimes of conspiracy, incitement and attempt following the enactment of Crimes (Conspiracy and Incitement) Act 1984.

The Bill also introduces a simplified set of provisions relating to offences against the person.
3. To implement certain key recommendations of the Shorter Trials Committee in so far as those recommendations require amendments to the Crimes Act.

I shall deal with each of these issues in turn.

MARITAL IMMUNITY AND RAPE

At common law, the traditional view was that a husband could not be guilty of raping his wife. The law, based on authority dating from 1609 or earlier, stated that the wife's consent to marriage constitutes a consent to sexual intercourse with the husband which cannot be revoked during the continuance of the marriage. The common law has since been modified by judicial decisions which remove the immunity if the wife has obtained a judicial separation order, a decree nisi of dissolution of marriage, or a judicial order restraining the husband from molesting the wife.

In Victoria, the passage of the Crimes (Sexual Offences) Act 1980 inserted section 62 (2) into the Crimes Act. That section removes the immunity where the husband and wife are living separately and apart. However, the section did not remove the immunity in respect of a husband and wife living together. Because the Crimes (Sexual Offences) Act 1980 widened the definition of rape, the Act in fact compounded the difficulties of the law in this area rather than simplified it. In a recent case a judge ruled that the immunity extended to the definition of rape as defined in the Crimes (Sexual Offences) Act 1980, thereby effectively widening the scope of the immunity to include anal rape and oral rape.

The time has come for this common law rule to be swept away. There has never been any question in fact that a wife may and often does withdraw consent either temporarily or permanently for one reason or another. The common law presumption is an obvious and ridiculous fiction and cannot support the rule. There is no good reason why married women should be afforded less protection under the law than anyone else. All people should be protected from sexual assaults and other acts of sexual coercion. This vestige of the past, which suggests that a woman has a subordinate position in marriage, reflects the unacceptable view of women as the property of their husbands.

There is widespread community support for this change; indeed, the call for reform of this area of the law has been overwhelming. The change is in accordance with Government policy and reflects the view of the Government that women are to be treated equally.

ATTEMPTS AND OFFENCES AGAINST THE PERSON

In March 1977, the Criminal Law Working Group, consisting of Professor Louis Waller, Judge Paul Mullaly, Dr T. W. Smith, QC and Mr Robin Brett, was established by the then Attorney-General, the Honourable Haddon Storey.

In 1980 the group commenced an examination of the preparatory crimes of conspiracy, incitement and attempt, all of which were defined at common law. The group delivered its report on conspiracy in 1982 and its report on incitement in 1983. The recommendations in these reports were combined and, with some changes, were enacted in the Crime (Conspiracy and Incitement) Act 1984. This legislation was welcomed as a significant reform by those concerned with the criminal law.

The group has now delivered its report on the crime of attempt. This Bill gives effect and substance to its recommendations. They were based in large part on a recent report of the English Law Commission, which was enacted as the United Kingdom Criminal Attempts Act 1981.

The working group has recommended that the existing common law be clarified and reduced to statutory form. The principal changes in the common law involved in this part of the Bill fall under four headings—impossibility; proximity; jurisdiction; and penalty.
IMPOSSIBILITY

It is undesirable that an intending criminal should escape liability for attempt simply because unknown to him or her it so happens that the crime intended cannot be completed. At the same time the present law that a person who attempts to commit a crime that does not exist cannot be guilty of any offence must be preserved. The working group recommended that the law reflect these policies and the Bill gives effect to those recommendations.

PROXIMITY

The Bill enacts a definition designed to answer the question, “How close to the crime must the accused be before the attempt is committed?” The common law had great difficulty with this issue. Since attempts to break the law can be made in an infinite variety of ways, no conclusive definition is possible. The proposals in the Bill come as close as possible to an answer.

JURISDICTION

The Bill makes it clear that anyone in Victoria who tries to commit an offence outside Victoria shall be guilty of an offence in Victoria if and only if that conduct would have constituted an offence if done in Victoria. The common law does not cover that case. Further, the Bill makes it clear that anyone outside Victoria who tries to commit an offence in Victoria shall be guilty of an offence in Victoria. The common law covered only some of such cases.

PENALTIES

At common law the maximum penalty for an attempt is life imprisonment, and may bear no relation to the maximum for the crime attempted. The working group recommended and the Bill provides that the maximum penalty for attempt be the same as the maximum penalty for the crime attempted. The one exception to this principle is the offence of murder. Section 14 of the Crimes Act currently provides that the penalty for attempted murder is fifteen years’ imprisonment. It is thought desirable to retain that penalty.

The Bill will make the provisions relating to impossibility, proximity, jurisdiction and penalty consistent with the similar provisions in the Crimes (Conspiracy and Incitement) Act.

I should like to record my gratitude to the members of the Criminal Law Working Group for their hard and painstaking work, which has resulted in this part of the Bill.

OFFENCES AGAINST THE PERSON

This part of the Bill deals with non-fatal offences against the person. It makes a fundamental reform to an area of the law which has long needed simplification. The purpose of the Bill is to replace sections 11 to 13 and 15 to 43 of the Crimes Act with simpler offences against the person.

Sections 11 to 43 inclusive of the Crimes Act contain the serious offences against the person. These offences cover a range of behaviour such as unlawful and malicious wounding, the administration of noxious substances, the infliction of grievous bodily harm and serious assaults. With a few exceptions these offences are precisely as they were enacted by the Criminal Law and Procedure Statute of 1864. They have been copied from the consolidating English Offences Against the Person Act of 1861 but the roots of some of the offences lie in the eighteenth century or even earlier. The original offences have been augmented in Victoria in a piecemeal fashion, usually in response to specific events of the day.

The time has come for reform of this area of the Crimes Act. The legislation has become anachronistic over the passage of 120 years. In some cases whole offences have become
outdated—for example, specifically proscribing assaults with intent to obstruct or compel the sale of grain. In other cases parts of offences have become outdated—for example, offences deal with the dangers of the nineteenth century, such as railways and gunpowder, but not also with modern equivalents.

Further, the old offences have produced complexity and confusion. The convoluted old drafting style with its spiralling subordinate sub-clauses produced a large number of overlapping offences and unnecessarily complicated the law. The existing sections 32, 33, 38 and 41 of the Crimes Act must be classics of the obscure and incomprehensible drafting centre. Trouble has been experienced in the instruction of juries in relation to alternative verdicts. This has meant that time and money have been wasted unnecessarily on disputes both in court and in plea negotiations over what the charges against the accused comprehend. Moreover, the offences have varying penalties which require co-ordination and reconsideration.

In general the Bill will replace the old sections with new ones. It is not intended in any way to reduce the coverage of these serious offences. On the contrary, in some cases coverage has been expanded in accordance with the needs of the times. For example, the present section 15 covers only threats to murder sent by post because it was drafted before the invention of the telephone. I shall now deal with the specific parts of the Bill.

THE BASIC OFFENCES—SECTIONS 15 TO 18

It is proposed to replace the current collection of general offences phrased in various ways using such words as wounding, assaultling and causing harm with three offences, on a scale of seriousness. These offences are:

1. Causing serious injury intentionally;
2. causing serious injury recklessly; and
3. causing injury either intentionally or recklessly.

This achieves both the simplification of the offences themselves and, by the provision of a graded structure, a simplification of the relationship between them. In general these three offences are designed to replace section 17, malicious wounding with intent to do grievous bodily harm; section 19A, malicious infliction of grievous bodily harm, and section 19, malicious wounding.

The approach taken in the Bill is where serious injury is inflicted there is a sufficient difference in moral turpitude—sufficient to justify distinct defences—between one who does so intentionally in the sense of desiring to cause serious injury and one who does so recklessly—aware that an injury might result to another but goes ahead anyway. Where less serious injuries are involved the difference did not justify different offences.

SUPPORTING OFFENCES

In addition to these basic offences, the Bill contains a number of supporting offences designed to cover special situations:

A. ADMINISTRATION OF DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES—SECTION 19

The Bill contains an offence concerning the case in which the accused has administered to the victim without the consent of the victim some dangerous substance. It will overlap with the basic offences to some degree, but it is designed to catch the case in which no injury results from the administration. The administration of dangerous substances without the consent of another is a serious matter and ought to be punishable whether or not harm is actually done.

B. THREATS—SECTION 20 AND 21

It is wrong for one person to threaten another with death or serious injury. The Bill sets out two offences, one dealing with death threats and one with threats of serious injury.
C. RECKLESS ENDANGERMENT—SECTIONS 22 AND 23

The Bill contains two offences of reckless endangerment. One covers the case where another's life is endangered, the other when there is danger of serious injury. Again it was thought that the difference warranted separate offences. It should be noted that it is not necessary to prove that any person was actually put in danger. It is enough if that could have been so. These offences will replace a large number of endangerment offences such as exposing children to danger, throwing missiles at railway trains, impeding survivors and so on.

D. NEGLIGENTLY CAUSING SERIOUS INJURY—SECTION 24

This is a mere re-enactment of a current provision.

E. SETTING TRAPS—SECTIONS 25 AND 26

Again the Bill creates two offences of setting traps, one which deals with traps endangering life, the other with traps designed to cause serious injury. These offences modernize the current section 32 which dates from and deals with the more dangerous practices of English landowners of the eighteenth century.

F. REMAINING SECTIONS 27 TO 31

The Bill enacts the current sections dealing with extortion, using firearms to resist arrest, threats to resist arrest and assaulting police. The only change made is in the last of these. That change requires that in respect of a charge of assaulting police in the execution of their duty there be proof that the accused knew that the victim was a police officer.

Many of these proposals are based on the fourteenth report of the Criminal Law Revision Committee of England and Wales published in 1980. Section 14 of the Crimes Act, which deals with attempted murder, is unaffected by this part of the Bill. The law relating to homicide is currently the subject of examination by the Victorian Law Reform Commission.

This proposal, with other parts of the Bill, has been widely circulated to judges, the legal profession, legal academics and those involved with the administration of criminal justice. It is an important measure of reform and I am grateful to those who took the trouble to express their views. Generally there has been strong support for these proposals. The proposals simplify and strengthen the law in the important area of offences against the person. They involve an enormous reduction in the amount of words previously contained in the statute to achieve the same purposes. It is an indication that law reform combined with clear drafting can result in effective legislation shortly and comprehensively expressed.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SHORTER TRIALS COMMITTEE REPORT

It is difficult to overestimate the extent of the threat to our legal system posed by the fact that the length of the average criminal trial is for ever growing. The recognition of this problem led the Victorian Bar Council to set up a Shorter Trials Committee in 1982. Subsequently, with the approval of the Bar Council, the Australian Institute of Judicial Administration became involved later in 1982 and the Shorter Trials Committee became a joint committee of the Victorian Bar and the Australian Institute of Judicial Administration. It delivered its report last month.

That report notes that the daily cost of a criminal trial in the County Court is in the vicinity of $4550, not including the cost of providing the court building or the cost of prosecuting counsel or defence counsel or lawyers. The cost of $4550 is the cost including the salaries and overheads of the judge, associate and tipstaff, as well as the cost of juries, witnesses, court reporting staff, prison officers and others involved in the trial.

If the daily cost of a prosecuting counsel and counsel briefed by the Legal Aid Commission for the defence were included, the cost would amount to $5500. As the report notes that since the normal court day occupies four and a half hours sitting time, that sum represents $1200 per hour or $20 per minute. A wasted half hour, therefore, absorbs almost $600 of
community funds. In the Supreme Court the estimates are in the vicinity of $7200 a day, $1800 an hour or $30 a minute.

In addition to the enormous cost, the fact that the length of the average criminal trial has continued to grow has meant that there has been a growing number of persons awaiting trial in the County Court. Although steps taken by the Government have resulted in a generally satisfactory position in the civil lists in the Supreme Court and in the County Court and although the delays in the Magistrates Court remain at an acceptable level as a result of reorganizational change, the problem of growing criminal lists in the County Court has proved to be very difficult. This problem remains despite the fact that in the past three years the number of judges in the County Court has been increased from 33 to 41 and an additional judge has been appointed to the Supreme Court.

The Government acknowledges that more court space will be needed in the future for the conduct of criminal trials. Steps are being taken to expand court space in the existing County Court building with long-term plans for a central criminal court in Melbourne being well in hand. Additional judge power from time to time will undoubtedly be necessary.

However, unless the central problem of the ever-increasing length of criminal trials is addressed, all the other efforts which have gone into improving the efficiency of court administration on the part of the Government and on the part of the judges in recent years will be wasted, at least in respect of the criminal lists. A recognition of this problem was expressed in the Crimes (Procedure) Act of 1983, which resulted in the introduction for the first time of pre-trial procedures and some other measures designed to make the criminal trial system work better.

The Shorter Trials Committee report, however, represents the first comprehensive attempt to deal with this problem. The committee was a singularly distinguished committee. It was chaired by Mr Justice McGarvie of the Supreme Court and included judges, the Director of Public Prosecutions, a police officer, the Chairman of the Legal Aid Commission, an academic, and practising lawyers. Its recommendations have been welcomed by the Government. I am committed to the speedy implementation of the substance of the recommendations. It is for this reason that the Bill was introduced into the House within a month of the handing down of the committee’s report. The Bill contains all the amendments that need to be made to the Crimes Act in the light of the recommendations.

I shall now outline the measures contained in the Bill. First, the Bill provides that the process which initiates and defines the criminal charges against the accused, namely, the presentment, be served on the accused in accordance with the rules of court. The rules of court will be made by the judges in due course. The purpose of this proposal is to expedite the procedure by giving the accused person or his or her representatives early notice of the intentions of the prosecution. Once the presentment is available, the defence can plan its approach to the case with some precision. It is thought that this will assist the early identification of which cases will be contested and which cases will be pleas of guilty as well as the expedition of plea negotiations. It must be recognized that the considerable proportion of the number of cases awaiting trial will, in fact, not result in trial but pleas of guilty. The earlier these cases are identified in the process, the quicker they can be disposed of. In addition, where a contested case is identified early in the process, the planning of trial for both sides can be better undertaken.

Second, the Bill amends the Crimes Act so that a trial judge has a discretion as to whether or not he or she would hear the evidence for the prosecution or for the accused first in hearing an application to exclude evidence. This provision relates to a procedure known as the voir dire. The evidence is taken in the absence of the jury. The present Victorian practice is that in these cases the prosecution must call its evidence first. Often no evidence or only slight evidence is called on behalf of the accused. Once that is apparent, the accused’s application often effectively collapses although a considerable amount of time has been taken up with cross-examination of Crown witnesses. The procedure is time consuming and open to the abuse of using the procedure for the purpose
of having a dry run in cross-examining Crown witnesses, despite the fact that there is little or slight defence evidence in support of the application to exclude the evidence. The effect of the proposed change will be to reduce the number of such hearings and reduce the length of the hearings. The matter will be a discretionary matter for the judge as to which side he or she wishes to hear first, but it should result in substantial savings without prejudicing an accused person.

Further, this part of the Bill will require that the presentment be endorsed with the name of any witnesses whose evidence was received at the committal and to indicate which of those witnesses and which other witnesses will be called by the prosecution at the trial. This means that the accused will get a clear picture as early as possible of which witnesses will be called by the prosecution. The advantage of this is the encouragement of early preparation of a trial on both sides so as to achieve maximum efficiency of the trial itself to expedite the possibility of pre-trial procedures and negotiations, and to minimize disruption of the trial which is sometimes caused by the calling by the prosecution of witnesses without any substantial prior notice to the defence.

Third, the Bill amends the Sixth Schedule of the Crimes Act. There will be an endorsement on the presentment served on the accused to the effect that the accused person should seek legal advice privately or through the Legal Aid Commission. This is designed to reduce pre-trial delays by encouraging accused persons to seek legal advice as early as possible in the proceedings. Again it is thought that this will expedite guilty pleas and plea negotiations. It will reduce the number of delays occasioned by adjournments to obtain legal advice. In addition, there will be an endorsement to the effect that the solicitor retained should notify the listing directorate. This will facilitate efficiency in the listing system.

Fourth, the Bill provides that the crime of conspiracy should not be charged in a presentment without the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions or his nominee. This proposal stems from expressions of considerable concern about the inappropriate or overuse of the conspiracy charge and the finding that conspiracy trials are generally longer, more complicated and more expensive than trials of other offences. The Shorter Trials Committee was of the opinion that this recommendation will result in significant advantages without prejudice to the prosecution or the accused person.

This Government is committed to the ideal that the criminal law should be as simple and easy to understand and free of technicalities as is consistent with the highest quality of criminal justice. It is also committed to reducing delays and expenses associated with the criminal process without upsetting the current balance between the prosecution and the accused. Those principles underpinned the Shorter Trials Committee report. This part of the Bill is an extremely significant reform and I wish to express my gratitude on behalf of the Government and the community to Mr Justice McGarvie and members of the Shorter Trials Committee for their outstanding work. I commend the Bill to the House.

On the motion of Mr JOHN (Bendigo East), the debate was adjourned.

It was ordered that the debate be adjourned until Tuesday, November 12.

DENTAL TECHNICIANS (LICENCES) BILL

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

This small Bill is fairly straightforward and is designed to make three relatively minor amendments to the Dental Technicians Act 1972. Among other things, the Act provides for the licensing of dental technicians by the Dental Technicians Licensing Committee. Dental technicians who are appropriately qualified are entitled to be licensed as advanced dental technicians by the Advanced Dental Technicians Qualifications Board.
The first of the three amendments to be made to the Dental Technicians Act is to build in a greater flexibility for fee adjustments under the Act. Both the Dental Technicians Licensing Committee and the Advanced Dental Technicians Qualifications Board are self-funding. This means that the costs of the committee and the board are financed from fees paid by dental technicians and by advanced dental technicians, and that neither the committee nor the board represents a burden on the general taxpayer.

The present revenue derived from fees is no longer adequate and both the committee and the board have incurred operating deficits in recent years. Therefore, the Act needs to be amended to enable fees to be maintained at a level reflecting the cost of providing a registration service to the profession. This will be achieved by clause 4, which repeals the words "which shall not exceed $15" whenever it occurs in sections 11 and 26 of the principal Act.

The effect of the repeal will be to delete the present limit of $15 on the amount for a licence as a dental technician or as an advanced dental technician, which may be prescribed in regulations under the Act. It is important to stress that the Government expects that any recommendations by the committee or the board for future fee adjustments will accord with the policy of the Government of holding taxes and charges at or below the rate of inflation.

The second change proposed is the deletion of the requirement in section 21 of the principal Act that an applicant for a licence as an advanced dental technician must have attained the age of 21 years. The other requirements of the section are that the person is, or is entitled to be, licensed as a dental technician and has completed an approved course of training for advanced dental technicians.

The age restriction is an anachronism, particularly in the context of the Age of Majority Act, and the Government sees no reason why a person who is otherwise qualified should be precluded from being licensed as an advanced dental technician merely on the ground of age. Accordingly, clause 5 will repeal any reference to age as a qualification for a licence as an advanced dental technician.

The last of the three proposed changes to the principal Act to be made by the Bill is to revise penalties, and to express such penalties as penalty units. The aim of the amendments to sections 15, 32 and 34 of the principal Act as set out in clause 6 is to bring the penalties contained in the principal Act into line with comparable penalties fixed in other health registration Acts. I commend the Bill to the House.

On the motion of Mr WEIDEMAN (Frankston South), the debate was adjourned. It was ordered that the debate be adjourned until Tuesday, November 12.

MELBOURNE AND METROPOLITAN BOARD OF WORKS (RECONSTITUTION) BILL

Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Water Resources)—I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

This is a small but important Bill. Its purpose is to reconstitute the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works. The Government, in accordance with its policy of creating a more efficient and effective public sector, has taken a number of steps relating to the structure of the water industry and the functions of the Board of Works. Honourable members will recall that the town planning functions of the Board of Works were recently transferred to the Minister for Planning and Environment while at the same time the Government confirmed the hydraulic services role of the board and expanded its responsibilities in relation to parks, open space and waterways management.

In addition, it is proposed that the board be given explicit responsibilities in relation to the transport, storage and disposal of industrial waste. These additional functions, which
will be contained in separate legislation intended to be introduced in this session of Parliament, will give the people of Victoria generally an interest in the efficient and effective management of the Board of Works.

The current composition of the Board of Works reflects both its historic origins and the particular importance of the board’s previous town planning responsibilities to local government. With the transfer of the board’s town planning powers to the Minister for Planning and Environment, together with the other changes made to the board’s responsibilities, the Government has decided to reconstitute the board in a form which will better reflect the variety of community interests in the board’s activities and enable the board to better carry out its role and responsibilities in the future.

The Bill provides for the board to comprise seven members. This will include a part-time chairman, five other part-time members and the board’s general manager. The five part-time members will be drawn from a variety of backgrounds and bring to the board experience in local government, business management, trade union and industrial relations matters, environmental management, and the needs of the board’s domestic consumers.

The consumer representative will be a person with particular understanding of the potential impact of the board’s activities on the users of board services, particularly those on lower incomes, and other disadvantaged groups. Appointments are to be made by the Governor in Council and, apart from the general manager, who will be an ex-officio member, board members will serve for a term of up to four years.

I should like to emphasize that the reconstitution of the board will not lessen the importance which the board places on liaison and consultation with local government. Apart from the fact that the board will include a person with local government experience who is currently active as an elected member of a council within the board’s area of operations, a number of other measures are being put in place to ensure continued effective co-operation. These measures include:

The appointment of four local government representatives to the Melbourne Parks Advisory Committee, which will provide advice to the board on policies and priorities for the development of Melbourne’s metropolitan parks and waterways. In addition, the board will continue its practice of seeking local government representation on the advisory committees for particular metropolitan parks and waterways.

The appointment of local government liaison officers in each of the board’s five regions to act as an initial point of contact between the board and councils on matters of common concern and interest. The liaison officer will report directly to the regional managers and it will be a major responsibility of the regional managers to promote effective and cordial working relationships with councils in their regions.

Consultation with regional planning bodies on board programs and activities of regional importance. Among other things it is expected that the board will provide the regional planning bodies with information on a variety of matters such as its capital works programs, flood mitigation and flood plain management plans, waterways and parks planning, and other proposals for changes in board policies which may impact on regional planning strategies. Similarly, the board would expect to be consulted via the regional planning bodies on regional issues which may affect its hydraulic areas, parks and waterways and industrial waste responsibilities.

Taken together, these measures should ensure that in future the board is, if anything, more closely attuned to local government needs and views and better able to seek local inputs in framing its policies and programs.

As some local government bodies have expressed a concern that the reconstitution of the board is proceeding in advance of the finalization of proposals to establish agreed regional planning structures, the Bill provides for the restructure to take effect on a date to be proclaimed. The Government undertakes that the reconstitution of the board will not
be brought into effect until the proposed arrangements for creation of regional planning bodies are clear.

The proposed legislation also contains a number of transitional provisions to ensure that the new board will continue to have the responsibilities and liabilities of the existing board. I commend the Bill to the House.

On the motion of Mr DELZOPPO (Narracan), the debate was adjourned.

It was ordered that the debate be adjourned until Tuesday, November 12.

APPROPRIATION (1985–86, No. 1) BILL

(Budget Debate)

The debate (adjourned from October 15) on the motion of Mr Jolly (Treasurer) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

Mr HARROWFIELD (Mitcham)—This is the fourth Budget of the Cain Government, a Budget that more than any other Budget illustrates the progress that the Government has made in developing an adhesive economic policy in this State and in implementing the economic reforms on which the Government was elected in 1982.

Before addressing some aspects of the Budget in detail, I wish to comment, more out of sadness than anger, on the contributions made by members of the Opposition on the Appropriation Bill. The contribution by the honourable member for Brighton was sadly lacking in terms of a positive analysis of the economic policy in this State. His contribution was a fairly detailed critique of the Budget from the point of view of the Opposition—and that is an appropriate step to take for an Opposition—but it lacked any positive indication of Liberal Party policies should it be elected to Government.

The speech of the honourable member for Brighton was similar to the speech made last year by the honourable member for Balwyn in criticism of the Budget, except that last year the honourable member for Balwyn at least attempted to put forward an alternative set of policies. No alternative policies were forthcoming in this year's contributions from the Opposition. That says a great deal about the capacity of the Opposition to participate in any meaningful way in the debate on the economy which is so fundamental to the future of the State. I do not wish to dwell on that point except to make the observation that the Opposition has a responsibility not just to criticize but to put forward alternative policies.

This Budget, in line with the previous three Budgets brought down by this Treasurer, indicates the tremendous advances in the way in which the economy of the State is being run. Gone are the days when a State Budget was simply a book-keeping exercise which responded to the financial circumstances of the day. For much of Victoria's history, the State Budget was pretty much a non-event and was really an accounting of the dollars and cents of the day and an attempt to cut the cloth to meet the financial circumstances of that day. The present Government has made tremendous progress in advancing beyond that point.

The Labor Party consistently argued in opposition, and has continued to do so in government that budgetary policy offers some exciting challenges to a State Government. It offers the prospect of doing more than just talking about balancing the books; it offers a State Government a chance to influence the course and the direction of the State's economy.

The Labor Government has never accepted that a State Government is powerless to do anything about the way in which a State economy performs; it is not just a case of leading the economic policy of the Federal Government, a State Government has a positive role to play in managing the economy. From the very first Budget brought down by this Government in 1982, the Victorian Labor Government has indicated a commitment and has undertaken stimulatory policies designed to tackle the immediate problems of
unemployment and, through the creative use of the capital works programs, it has been able to do a great deal to ease the short term unemployment problem.

The Government has embarked on an ambitious program of job creation. Over the past three and a half years the Government has been highly successful in putting Victorians back to work. I trust that the Opposition will concede that point, although from reading the speech of the honourable member for Brighton, it is evident that he was grudging in that respect.

Having taken on the challenge of trying to influence the State economy, the Government moved a step beyond that in the current Budget to the point where one State Budget cannot be seen in isolation from the Government’s other economic strategies. Each annual appropriation is now a reflection, and very much an integral part, of a longer term economic strategy that has been developed by the Cain Government.

In commenting on last year’s State Budget, Kenneth Davidson wrote in the Age:

referring to the economic strategy—

... does underline the Government's approach to day-to-day economic management. Within the limited resources available to the State Government there has been a genuine attempt to spend discretionary outlays in line with maximizing Victoria's long-term chances.

If that comment were true in respect of last year's Budget, it is even more appropriate this year because the 1985-86 State Budget is very much a reflection of the longer term goals established by the Government in the economic strategy. That strategy was introduced in April last year by the Government in the belief that having addressed the immediate economic issues—the immediate need to tackle unemployment and to re-establish the employment base of this State—it had a longer term responsibility to build a future for the Victorian economy. It is the first time any State Government has taken on the ambitious task of building a framework within which an economy can grow over the longer term—a major innovation by the Cain Government. That approach is now beginning to bear fruit.

I remind honourable members that the strategy comprised two distinct components: First, an all-embracing objective of creating an economic environment for both the public and private sectors which was conducive to long-term economic growth and development. The Government was not singling out any one industry or sector but was attempting to create the climate within which growth and development could proceed. The second aspect of the strategy involved identifying and focusing Government policy specifically on areas where Victoria enjoys competitive strength. In those areas it will enable the Victorian economy to expand into interstate and, hopefully, international markets. That is not merely a short-term exercise, but one that outlines the projected growth path of the Victorian economy over at least the next decade.

Even though the strategy has been in place for only eighteen months, the Government can justifiably claim to be well advanced in its implementation. The results are already there. Honourable members can see some of the benefits in the Budget now being debated. In terms of the first component of the strategy—that is, the creation of a favourable climate in which both the public and private sectors can operate—the Budget is consistent with the strategy adopted over the past three and a half years. As I have already mentioned, the Government gave initial impetus to employment growth, and that impetus was successful. We have at all times brought down Budgets that were designed to provide a catalyst to growth and development in Victoria.

The Government recognized the need to pump prime the economy initially through the capital works program and through the public sector to provide employment opportunities
that would not otherwise have been available. This Budget has been successful in achieving those objects.

One must be careful not to overheat the economy and to ensure that the private sector is given the scope to expand its own activities. This Budget, by modifying increases in capital works expenditure, is giving the private sector the opportunity of expanding and building on the economic recovery in this State that the Government has helped to achieve.

Victoria leads Australia in terms of economic performance. The unemployment rate in Victoria of 6·2 per cent on latest statistics is more than 2 percentage points below that for the rest of Australia. In economic growth, Victoria has grown by 5·5 per cent in the past twelve months, which is above the Australian average of 5 per cent.

The benefits are obvious in that private business investment has increased by 9 per cent in the past year compared with 3 per cent nationally and the growth of dwelling investment in Victoria in 1984–85 is 22 per cent compared to 14 per cent in Australia as a whole. Those major indicators show that the Government has been successful in restoring a favourable economic climate within the State.

The private sector is now aware that the Government has established a much stronger base on which recovery is occurring. The Government is giving the private sector the opportunity of expanding its activities and of building on the impetus that the Government has given. That confident environment has been attributed to the Government which also recognized in its economic strategy the need to moderate cost pressure on the private cost sector.

We recognize that a Government can provide disincentives to business and the private sector to expand if its own demands for revenue raising are excessive. It is the record of this Government that it has gone to great lengths to moderate the increases in its own revenue measures. This is often overlooked in the hurly-burly of political debate, as we heard from the honourable member for Brighton in his earlier contribution.

I refer now to the Budget Papers. Table 9.2 on page 165 indicates the average increases in public sector unit charges to the business sector. It sets out the increases in electricity charges in the present financial year of 3·9 per cent as being the lowest increase in at least six years and is significantly lower than was achieved by the previous Liberal Government. It compares with a 15·8 per cent increase in the final year of the Liberal Government. That is what the Government has achieved in relieving the burden of electricity prices in the private sector. Similarly with gas charges, although the increase this year is subjectively slightly higher than appeared last year, the increase for both those years has been significantly lower than the increases evident under the previous Liberal Government. The same situation applies with Board of Works rates.

With respect to public sector unit charges to householders, the Government has made a conscious attempt to moderate the impact of those charges on both the business community and on householders. It has been affected by the latest economic statistics from the Bureau of Statistics on the consumer price index, as indicated in table 9.4 on page 166 of the Budget Papers. This table shows an increase in the Government charges component of the consumer price index for Australia of 7·7 per cent and a corresponding increase for Victoria of 2·3 per cent.

That is some one-third of the increase that applied nationally. The score is on the board for the Government’s endeavours to moderate cost pressures on the business community and on households. The Government has also attempted in each of its Budgets to provide some relief to business through the revenue side. That is undertaken once again this year by a range of tax cuts that are an integral part of providing an incentive to the business community to expand its activities.

For example, the Government had abolished stamp duty on WorkCare premiums. It has given a full rebate on WorkCare premiums and pay-roll tax for apprentices and other
approved trainees. The Government further increased the pay-roll tax exemption limits to apply to small business. In each of its Budgets, the Government has been able to increase the exemption limits, in many cases well beyond the rate of increase in the consumer price index. That represents real tax relief to the business community. In this Budget, the Government also abolished stamp duty on residential tenancies.

Apart from the over-all determination of the Cain Government to moderate increases in major charges such as those for electricity and gas and Board of Works rates, it has also provided specific tax cuts in the Budget that will benefit all sections of the economy, especially the business community.

The third component of the economic strategy involved in creating a favourable economic climate within which growth can occur relates to the introduction of the WorkCare package. Of all the reforms of the Government, the reform of workers compensation is probably the most profound and the most important in a long-term sense. It has to be said that workers compensation was an issue that was put into the too-hard basket by past State Governments. It is a complex issue; there is no question of that. The Government, and especially the Treasurer, deserves the credit of all honourable members for examining that tough issue and credit must go to the Treasurer for working his way through the complexities of workers compensation reform.

The results are there to see. The Government has been at least able to maintain benefits to compensation victims and, in the process, it has been able significantly to reduce the premiums payable by business in insuring against industrial accidents and other health problems in the workplace. Therefore, the WorkCare package is a vital component which was identified in the economic strategy and which is being carried through by the Government.

The Government also recognizes that part of the creation of a favourable climate in which business can operate involves reviewing the regulations that apply to the economy, especially the business community. The Government had adopted a constructive approach to regulation review. In the economic strategy document the Government spent some time identifying the needs for review.

It must be said that the approach of the Cain Labor Government has been in stark contrast to the lack of activity by the former Liberal Government in rationalizing and reviewing regulations. Some fairly superficial attempts were made by the previous Government to tackle the problem. Honourable members no doubt recall the efforts of the honourable member for Polwarth when he was Minister for Economic Development. He conducted a phone-in where members of the public had a chance of making complaints about excessive bureaucracy and red tape. That stunt lasted for a couple of days and not much occurred after that. As the honourable member for Werribee interjects, it did not achieve anything.

It is important to examine the Report on Regulation Review in Victoria, which was prepared in 1982 and which showed up the deficiencies of the previous Government's efforts to deregulate Victoria.

The Regulation Review Unit report stated:

that the regulatory system developed by previous Victorian Governments—

(a) varied considerably according to the policies and resources of the regulating agency;

In other words, they were inconsistent. It continued:

(b) had no systematic and standardized guidelines for preparation of regulations in the different agencies;

(c) did not require consultation with interested parties;

(d) was subject to limited Parliamentary scrutiny;

(e) had no systematic method of review, consolidation, reprinting or of public accessibility;

(f) allowed for significant overlap of regulations and regulatory responsibility; and

(g) did not require any explicit consideration of the costs and benefits of regulatory activity . . .
Members of the Opposition have spoken about deregulation, but one should reflect on those comments and on the lack of activity and constructive interest by those members when they were in government. That approach is in stark contrast to what the Labor Government has done. For example, legislation was introduced to revoke all pre-1962 regulations that could not be specifically justified. The Government went through the exercise of saying, "Unless we can put forward a compelling reason for retaining regulations, they should cease to exist." That is now in legislative form.

The Government has also established a time-table for abolishing all post-1962 regulations unless that same justification process can be followed. The Government established the Regulation Review Unit, under the capable leadership of Mr Robert Miller, which will have responsibility for the carriage of the systematic review of regulation in Victoria.

The Government elected in a constructive and positive manner to review regulations governing the economy and to provide some assurance to the business community that it is fair dinkum about regulation review. This is in stark contrast to the record of the Liberal Party when it was in government.

The second component of the economic strategy related to the development, or exploitation, of competitive strengths enjoyed by the economy, and the list of achievements is already impressive. The Government has made considerable progress in developing Melbourne as a commercial centre. For example, it established a second board on the Melbourne Stock Exchange. The Government upgraded the role of the Corporate Affairs Office and improved access to overseas financial markets.

The State Bank is now recognized as a dynamic organization which is seeking to provide tremendous assistance to the development of the Victorian economy. It is significant that that institution has been targeted by the Opposition to be sold if it has the chance. Victorians should be proud that the Government has been given a "AAA" rating for the purposes of overseas borrowing. That puts the economy, Victoria and the Government at the top of the list of growth economies in the world.

**Dr Coghill**—Queensland wouldn’t even get one.

**Mr Harrowfield**—As the honourable member for Werribee interjects, Queensland would be lucky to get an "A" let alone a "AAA" rating. I am sure that members of the Opposition would agree with that statement, or at least their colleagues in Queensland would.

The Government has made tremendous progress in developing the industrial skill base which has been demonstrated in the Budget by resources allocated for the development of the technical and further education sector of the economy. For example, the Government has allocated an additional $26 million in recurrent funding for TAFE colleges. This will allow for a large increase in the apprenticeship intake and for training associated with work-study positions in the Youth Guarantee Scheme. The Government continues to commit resources to expand the industrial skill base in Victoria.

I have already mentioned the tremendous incentive business has received by the reduction in workers compensation premiums through the introduction of the WorkCare package and by the Government’s continued increase in the exemption limits for pay-roll tax.

This financial year the Government has provided funds for an additional 1500 places in Victorian tertiary institutions. The Government is showing its bona fides in developing the individual skills of its work force.

The Government is continuing to develop the tourist potential of the State and, of course, it has successfully tackled the complex issue of the establishment of the Alcoa of Australia Ltd project in Portland. That development will provide an important impetus
to the Victorian economy, not just in its own right but also because it is a sign of confidence in Victoria.

I refer honourable members to a comment made by Kenneth Davidson, economics editor of the *Age*, on 25 September 1985, the day following the Budget, who said:

Over the past three years the Cain Government has created a structure in which the natural competitive strengths of the Victorian economy have been encouraged to flourish.

There is no reason why, with continued good management by the Victorian Government and with reasonable luck at the national level, that Victoria cannot once again become the richest state in the Commonwealth.

That clearly sums up the tremendous progress the Government has been able to make in implementing its economic strategy.

In conclusion, four achievements can be claimed in the economic strategy established by the Government. Firstly, it builds on the initial recovery that the Government generated in the Victorian economy. The Government, during its first two years of government, was able to restore some of the employment loss that occurred under the previous Liberal Government and it is now in the business of charting a course for the Victorian economy over the coming decade that will ensure the continuation of Victoria's role as the leader of the economic recovery and employment growth in Australia.

Secondly, it can be fairly said that the economic strategy provides an ongoing direction and consistency to Government policy. It is the means of a sense of purpose in the decisions the Government takes. Government decisions can be related back to the framework of the economic strategy. It must be said, and I do not want to be too critical of our predecessors, that that is in sharp contrast to the ad hoc policies of which the previous Government was guilty. The economic strategy means that the private sector has a long-term path to follow because it knows where Government policy is heading, and it can make investment decisions and plan ahead with confidence and some certainty.

Thirdly, the strategy has provided additional resources to allow for the implementation of strategies that the Government believes are important. The Government has developed a social justice strategy and it has created resources for the implementation of that strategy. The successful implementation of the strategy document, as reflected in the Budget, indicates significant increases in youth employment, health and education.

Finally, the economic strategy is a devastating rebuttal of the nineteenth century examples that one hears from conservative elements in our society, who constantly seek to play off the public sector against the private sector. The Government strategy clearly makes the promise that both sectors of the economy have a vital role to play. They do not need to be played off against each other or promoted at the expense of each other, because they relate in an important way with each other. The achievements of the public sector and the Government are being translated through to the private sector.

I commend the Government for having adopted this approach to economic management and I commend the Treasurer and the Government for including in this Budget an ongoing commitment to that strategy through the specific allocation contained in the Budget.

The Budget indicates continued support for the Victorian economy that will ensure that this State leads the economic way for the whole of Australia.

Mr Hayward (Prahran)—The Treasurer, in his Budget speech, spoke at some length about the Australian and Victorian economies. I shall make some comments on those two economies.

The Australian economy is now on a knife edge. A critical flashpoint will occur at some time in the first six months of 1986. I do not say that lightly, but after extensive consultations with business economists, international economists, academic economists and as a result of studies undertaken by the Opposition in the last few weeks.
The sparks that will bring the Australian economy to flashpoint are twofold. Firstly, the Australian inflation rate is at least double that of its major trading partners. The Australian inflation rate next year is expected to be in the order of 8 per cent; Australia's major trading partners are enjoying inflation rates of less than 4 per cent.

The second spark that will bring the Australian economy to flashpoint is the rapidly growing overseas debt, which, in 1984-85, took 33.6 per cent of our exports for interest and repayment charges. One can compare this with the figure of only 13.1 per cent four years earlier.

The real problem for the Australian economy is the attitude of the international financial community. The discussions that I have had during the past few weeks, with some as late as yesterday, indicate that the international financial community is beginning seriously to question the medium to longer-term health of the Australian economy.

I said that the flashpoint for the Australian economy will occur in the first six months of 1986. The real risk in that period is of a further run on the Australian dollar which, if it occurs, will have catastrophic effects upon the Australian inflation rate.

Today the House heard comments about the economic strategies of the Victorian Government. It is my understanding that the Labor Governments in Canberra and Victoria have been depending for growth upon what one might term a combined public sector led recovery and consumer-led recovery. However, this has involved high borrowings, which have undermined the confidence of the international foreign exchange markets in the Australian dollar. This, in turn, has led to high interest rates to protect the Australian dollar. The irony is that high interest rates are deterring local consumption expenditure and business investment.

The real catch 22 situation is that if there is a relaxation of what one might term the "firm monetary policies" currently being followed by the Australian Government and the Reserve Bank, we can kiss goodbye the Australian dollar rate with consequences for inflation and wages policies that are incalculable.

If the House looks at the history of the Australian currency during the course of this year, it will see that there was a massive devaluation of the Australian dollar of approximately 20 per cent in several slides. That devaluation had a beneficial effect upon Victorian manufacturing industry by substituting local products for imports. However, a further devaluation will have exactly the reverse effect.

In other words, because imports have become more expensive, this provided a short-term competitive advantage for locally manufactured products in the Victorian manufacturing industry, much of which is oriented towards consumer products, and gave a short-term boost to the Victorian manufacturing industry. However, consumer demand and confidence is already beginning to falter and one can see evidence of this in the fact that the growth in retail sales in Victoria is lagging behind growth in retail sales for the rest of Australia. The statistics show that and one can learn it from discussions with both manufacturers and lending institutions.

From discussions with Victorian manufacturers on forward investment in the manufacturing industry, it appears that some investment is currently occurring but that investment is mainly in technology to reduce the labour force. Each year there is a net decline in the number of people employed in the manufacturing industry and capital investment is mainly being used for that purpose. These comments are backed up by comments made by the lending institutions, which say that very little new capital investment in the manufacturing industry is being used to increase over-all capacity and very little is being used for export capacity.

There is statistical evidence to indicate that consumer demand and confidence is already beginning to falter in Victoria. One critical point is that a weakening of the Australian dollar plus higher inflation, which are both in prospect in the next few months, together with the concern for job prospects because of the general "demanning" process in Victorian
manufacturing industry, will deal a further body blow to consumer confidence and to local demand and Victorian manufacturing industry will feel the first chill winds of a deep winter for the Australian economy.

One can therefore look towards the first half of 1986 with some concern. However, the most important thing is to be positive and constructive. We must not talk down the Australian economy, nor the Victorian economy, nor the prospects for the Victorian manufacturing industry. We must look forward with a degree of vision to its prospects, which will be very much in the export markets. For many Victorian firms the prospects in the future are to export or perish because there is a real risk that consumer demand will decline in Victoria in 1986.

The Victorian Government has made only a token gesture in showing leadership and encouraging exports. By creating a new bureaucratic morass of people who know nothing about industry in the Department of Industry, Technology and Resources, the Government is actually hindering exports by pestering firms for irrelevant statistics and by tying up business people in unproductive meetings. Having said that, I do not want to be personally critical of either the Minister, who I believe is attempting to come to terms with these problems in a conscientious way, or with the staff of the department. However, it is a tragedy that this new bureaucratic structure has been set up and staffed by well-meaning people who, unfortunately, know nothing about business or exports.

We must look at the key elements in exporting. I shall not attempt in the short time available to give a comprehensive review of all these elements, but I shall give specific illustrations pertaining to the manufacturing industry and the services industry and the ways in which the Victorian Government can help those industries in their export efforts. However, although the Government should give leadership and facilitate exports, fundamentally the task remains within the industry itself.

From time to time there is a tendency to say that the Victorian manufacturing industry is finished and has no great prospects for the future. That is a lot of rubbish! It is true that there is a process of demand going on in the industry and this process will continue; each year there will be a progressive net reduction of the number of people employed in the manufacturing industry. The numbers have fallen from approximately 30 per cent of the workforce to less than 20 per cent and the forecast is that it may go down to 10 per cent or even less. Leaving that unfortunate aspect aside, the manufacturing industry will play a key role in Victoria's future and it must play a key role in exports.

One example of the key elements that are necessary to open the doors to export growth and development for Victorian firms is design. I have previously spoken about this matter in the House, but it is so critical that it requires further attention. I gave an example that graphically illustrates what this is all about—the plastic BYO wine bottle carrier that is currently being exported to 42 countries around the world. This is being successfully exported, not because it is high tech but because it is a good functional design. It shows that one does not need high tech to successfully market a product overseas. That is an example of good design but, sadly, there are insufficient similar examples in Victorian industry. The Victorian Government is not significantly encouraging good design among small and medium sized firms.

It is true that, through the Budget, the Government has allocated $71 000 to the Industrial Design Council of Australia. I believe that is a relatively meagre amount in comparison with the major significance of design. What is more, unfortunately that amount is being used primarily by the council on the administrative aspects of its activities, and it produces little or no beneficial impact upon the design capabilities or performance of small to medium-sized Victorian firms.

Therefore, it is important to be positive, constructive, to look to the future and consider what the Government can do to show leadership and to provide examples, rather than becoming involved in the things that bureaucrats cannot do as well as businessmen; in
other words, there is no point and no sense in bureaucrats attempting to become involved in the day-to-day business activities of Victorian firms.

I am not attempting to provide a comprehensive plan or program of what the Government should do in the design area, but I will give an example of the type of thing it could do. The Government could immediately commission the preparation, by non-Government design groups, of ten case studies of successful export ventures of small to medium-sized Victorian firms.

The best way for people to learn is by example; the Victorian Government could follow up those studies by sponsoring export workshops based on the case studies. Other small to medium-sized Victorian businesses could learn from the experiences of the successful firms in the area. The workshops could be conducted by a non-Government group; and if they were conducted well, people would pay to attend the workshops, and the whole project, including the case studies, would be self-funding. If they were well produced, the case studies would become best-sellers in Australia and also throughout the world.

That is one positive way in which the Victorian Government could help design and thus help the manufacturing industry export.

I turn now from the manufacturing industry to another area that shows good growth prospects, and that is the area of services and of knowledge. The Victorian Government must also encourage innovative ventures in the export of services. Again, without trying to give a comprehensive blueprint in this area, I will use an example. One of Victoria's greatest resources is knowledge; what is more, there is an enormous thirst for knowledge in South-East Asia. I personally experienced that in my own time in South-East Asia; there is a thirst for Australian wine in South-East Asia; and there is a thirst for Australian-based knowledge as well.

I wish to give an example of a positive and constructive approach that the Victorian Government could take in this area, because previous speakers, who have made thoughtful and worth-while contributions to the debate, have stated that it is necessary to always give positive examples.

The Victorian Government could call for tenders for the first non-Government funded university in Victoria. I should like to provide the House with some background about this suggestion. Firstly, that institution should be located in a provincial centre. Students of such an institution should pay full fees, but there should also be scholarships available for a number of students from the local area.

The aims of this new university should be twofold: firstly, it should provide education for fee paying students from overseas. It would also provide education by an extension program which is already in existence in some universities in Australia, such as Deakin University. A model already exists, of which honourable members would have knowledge and about which a television program was produced, which was developed by the Western Australia Institute of Technology. The knowledge would be provided by videotapes and written backup material, which would be sent to students in, for example, Singapore, Djakarta, Manila and other major centres in South-East Asia.

This extension program would have two other elements. Each week-end a local person appointed by the university would conduct teaching sessions for the students in Singapore or other such Asian centres. The other elements is that the university would run a week-long live-in seminar on location at the university in Victoria once a year.

The big criticism of that approach is that it would not maintain standards. However, there is a simple way of dealing with that question. To maintain standards, this new non-Government funded university would be required, at least in the initial stages, to have subject examinations set and marked by any other established Government-funded university in Australia—and not necessarily by only one university; for example, arrangements could be made for one university to deal with one subject and another university to deal with another subject and so on.
I am attempting to give a constructive example of how the Victorian Government could encourage the export of services and knowledge from Australia in a way that would require virtually no expenditure of taxpayers' funds for that purpose.

I now move on to the types of actions that Victorian firms could take in helping their export efforts. No significant increase will occur in Victorian exports without a new creative innovative approach to the export of products and services. It will not be possible for us to make significant advances in the export area by just using the same old types of products and doing things in the same old way. I do not believe it is possible for us to successfully compete in South-East Asia, for example, on consumer goods that are manufactured in those countries in high volume and with lower wages costs.

The key to increasing export potential is creativity and innovation. The experience in Victorian firms shows that the most successful firms—and I could provide the House with numerous examples—are small to medium-sized firms that adopt a creative and innovative approach.

For example, there is a firm that is involved in the provision of navigation light systems for small harbours, ports and estuaries in South-East Asia. The firm is successful because it is very creative and innovative. Its design does not involve high technology, although it involves electronic technology. Such a firm goes to countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia and so on, and works closely with the local port authorities in designing navigation lights for the port or estuary. It produces the system and installs it and provides continuous service.

The reason that that firm can do that in competition with other firms and suppliers in North America, Europe and Japan is that it is prepared to take the trouble to tailor-make the products in a practical but innovative way. I believe this is the key to export and improved productivity in Australia generally.

For a number of years I have been watching with interest the National Institute of Labour Studies at Flinders University. This group was fundamentally an economic group examining economic factors. After an in-depth study into productivity, the group recommended that, in addition to the usual methods of new technology, higher investment and so on, a key element is to improve workers' attitudes and to achieve a greater degree of commitment between the workers and the firm.

This does not happen by rhetoric alone. It is essential for the future of Victorian firms that workers be given the opportunity of becoming partial owners of firms or at least of participating in profit sharing schemes. In other words, the success of exports will depend on small firms and the most successful small firms will be those which involve their workers to some degree in joint ownership or equity participation, and thus become more personally committed to the objectives of the firm.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr HAYWARD—I do not know what ideological connection this has; it is just good common sense. Certainly, if I have any say in the preparation of the policies of my party, it is something I will be advocating. I believe it has been in accordance with the fundamental policies of my party over a long period.

The critical element is the implementation of a high degree of worker commitment and involvement. This is fundamental to the approach of the Liberal Party, which is the greatest supporter of small business and self-employment in Australia. It is a great supporter of sub-contracting systems which involve self-employed people and it is a great supporter of close links between a firm and its work force.

As time progresses, the concept of employment as such will become less significant. The important concept in the future will be of people working closer together rather than being merely employed. It is absolutely essential to facilitate the opportunity for workers to participate as equity owners in the firms at which they are employed.
Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Hayward—I would certainly like to see these ideas publicized. We do not have the benefit of the media unit or the Ministry of Truth, as it is called. However, I do not wish to get into party political type arguments. It is often a problem to put forward innovative ideas and get coverage in the media. The Liberal Party receives very little attention from the media for this type of debate.

In conclusion, for many Victorian firms it will be a question of export or perish. The Victorian Government has dragged its heels in the export area. Its attempts have been unprofessional and meagre. It has shown no real leadership in this area.

It is time for the Government to be positive, creative and visionary—if it is capable of that. It must do it in a way which is not at a cost to the taxpayer. It is all very easy to spend millions of dollars, as the Government is doing, on bureaucratic structures. It is throwing taxpayers' money around.

The key to this problem is to have a creative and innovative approach, and to show leadership without spending the taxpayers' money. If that is done, the Victorian manufacturing industry has a tremendous future. However, if Victoria continues in the bureaucratic fashion established by this Government, I fear for the future of the manufacturing industry in this State.

Mr Pope (Monbulk)—This is the fourth Budget that I have had the pleasure of addressing. Indeed, this is one of the greatest Budgets Victoria has witnessed and it stands alongside the other three Budgets brought down by the Cain Government.

I refer initially to an article by Mr David Broadbent in the New Analysis section of the Age of 25 September 1985. The article which is headed, “Labor makes sour sweet, leaving Libs with nothing to beef about,” states:

The fourth budget of the Cain Government is not only one of the most optimistic and confident economic statements by a state government, it may also prove to be politically clever.

Where the Liberals spoke of cutting back on the size of the public sector, the Cain Government is now promising to produce the same result by increased public sector efficiency and productivity.

Where the Liberals spoke of one-off public sector cuts wrought by razor-gangs, the Cain Government is promising a continuing review of all public sector services.

Where the Liberals spoke of freeing the market place so that private enterprise can get on with competing and producing, the Government is claiming to have reduced industry costs through its reform to the workers' compensation scheme.

By keeping any tax increases pegged to the level of increases in the consumer price index, the Government has taken much of the sting out of charges that this is a high-taxing administration.

This article by Mr Broadbent appeared in the Age the day after the Budget was handed down. What it really states is that the Liberal Party is bereft of policy and ideas.

Mr Williams—Mr Acting Speaker, I direct your attention to the state of the House.

A quorum was formed.

Mr Pope—the argument by Mr Broadbent encapsulates exactly what occurred in the House when the major speaker on the Budget, the honourable member for Brighton, who is the shadow Treasurer, spoke last week; he made a subterfuge for about an hour and a half on the Budget, and on not one occasion did he put forward an alternative economic policy on behalf of the Liberal Party. Previous shadow Treasurers, from both parties, have always put forward coherent alternative economic strategies or alternative Budgets. However, not one word of an alternative economic strategy or Budget was forthcoming from the honourable member for Brighton.
I can excuse the fact that the honourable member is reasonably new to this House and it is the first Budget that he has had to speak on as that spokesperson for the Liberal Party, but one would have thought that other shadow Treasurers or the Leader of the Opposition would have given him some assistance. One honourable member should not speak just to the Budget, but should put forward an alternative Budget.

It is unfortunate that that did not occur. Perhaps when the change in leadership takes place—which all honourable members understand is fairly close at hand—those who are in the power play, be it the honourable members for Hawthorn or Polwarth or the honourable member for Kew—who has, as I understand it, thrown her hat into the ring—will put forward a position where the shadow Treasurer could inform the House exactly what is the economic policy of the Liberal Party.

Honourable members heard from the honourable member for Brighton a criticism of the Budget which included no constructive comments. Even in his criticism, the economic indicators the honourable member used were not true to form. I do not know whether he was using statistical lies—everyone knows that statistics can be used in whatever way one wishes to use them—because the Australian Bureau of Statistics figures for the financial year 1984–85 paint a different picture to that painted by the honourable member for Brighton.

Some of the best economic indicators are statistics relating to employment, unemployment, inflation, industrial disputes, housing rates and car registration. The honourable member for Brighton gave a conglomeration of economic indicators jumbled about in such a way to make them appear to be an impressive criticism of the Victorian economy. I shall refer to the reality of the Australian Bureau of Statistics figures.

Honourable members are aware that Victoria has done exceedingly well in employment statistics since 1982. Looking specifically at the 1984–85—the last financial year—statistics indicate that the growth rate of employment in Victoria was 2 per cent. In other States such as the one controlled by the National Party, the figure was 1·6 per cent. Even the most recent figures on employment for the twelve months to September 1985 indicate that 56 300 jobs were created in Victoria. That is an employment growth rate of 3·2 per cent compared with a growth rate of 2·6 per cent for the rest of Australia. Full-time employment among teenagers increased by 4 per cent in Victoria compared with an increase in Australia of 1·8 per cent.

Although it is obvious that the economic policy of the Victorian Government has brought about the excellent employment growth, part of the credit must also go to the Federal Government for the introduction of the prices and incomes accord. That has played a major part in bringing about a good economic climate for employment prospects. It has been one of the success stories of the 1980s in the economics of Australia.

Despite that, in a press release on 21 February 1983, the temporary Leader of the Opposition, Mr Kennett, totally rejected the accord. Headed “Hawke–ACTU Accord job death knell” the release stated:

The Victorian Opposition Leader, Jeff Kennett, has expressed alarm for the future of Australia’s young people if the Federal Labor Party gets the opportunity to implement the income/prices agreement to be ratified by Bob Hawke and the A.C.T.U.

He said: “The copy of the agreement that I have read has filled me with fear and trepidation for the future employment opportunities of the young people of this country.

There would simply be no new jobs at all.”

“This agreement, if Bob Hawke got the opportunity to impose it, would condemn private enterprise to an indefinite period of stagnation. There would be no expansion of business and industry, no new products and no new jobs. Existing jobs would be thrown into jeopardy, because industry in stagnation is forced to retrench.”
That statement was made just prior to the Federal election in 1983 when the Federal Labor Party came to power and the prices and incomes accord was put in place.

What has occurred since then is that more than 400,000 jobs have been created, yet the Leader of the Opposition stated that the accord would be a death knell for jobs and that no jobs would be created. The honourable member for Brighton did not mention employment as an economic indicator. Apparently he does not regard it as such!

In the year 1984–85, Victoria's unemployment rate was 6.4 per cent compared with a national average of 7.9 per cent. As honourable members would know, the figures for the September quarter indicate a 2 per cent difference. The unemployment position in Victoria is far better than in any other State. That has been brought about by successive Budgets introduced by the Treasurer and the Cain Government since it came to power in 1982.

In the 1984–85 financial year, inflation in Victoria decreased by 40.8 per cent. The average decrease for Australia was 37.7 per cent. Only Western Australia had a larger decrease in inflation than Victoria during that period.

Statistics for industrial disputes indicate that, in Victoria, the working days lost for 1000 employees decreased by 7.1 per cent compared with a decrease of 2.8 per cent for Australia as a whole. Everyone knows how, in the past three and a half years, industrial disputes have decreased markedly in Victoria because of the good work of the Cain Government, especially the work of the Ministers who have been responsible for industrial affairs.

The honourable member for Brighton was quite selective when discussing the issue of housing rates. He decided to use private residential building approvals and non-residential building approvals figures to justify his argument. The Australian Bureau of Statistics figures on housing rates indicate that an increase of 23 per cent occurred in Victoria in the 1984–85 financial year. That is compared with the national average of 13.7 per cent.

In 1984–85, car registrations in Victoria increased by 12.7 per cent compared with the national average of 11.7 per cent. If one listened to the honourable member for Brighton, one would believe everything was going extremely bad for Victoria. However, that is not borne out by any of the figures I have put forward.

On the issue of the increase in taxation receipts proposed for 1985–86, the honourable member for Brighton was again quite selective. I shall quote from the published figures which indicate that the percentage increase in taxation for New South Wales was 8.4 per cent and 7.2 per cent in Queensland. Even then, the honourable member for Brighton would have us believe that the figure in Queensland was only 6.7 per cent. Quite selectively, the honourable member decided to exclude the mining royalties in his figure of taxation receipts in Queensland but, at the same time, he included the brown coal royalties for Victoria. That is another example of his rubbery figures and total distortion of economic indicators. In South Australia, the percentage increase in taxation was 7.3 per cent, in Western Australia—which had the lowest increase—it was 6.5 per cent; Tasmania had an increase of 10.6 per cent and Victoria had the second lowest increase of 7 per cent.

That was not implied in the estimates produced by the honourable member for Brighton. The use of selective economic indicators by the honourable member is an example of the negative attitude of the Opposition. It is part and parcel of the reason why the shadow Treasurer, the honourable member for Brighton, did not produce an alternative Budget or an alternative economic strategy. The economic indicators show that Victoria is leading the economic recovery and has been doing so since 1983. That fact has not been evident to the honourable member for Brighton who has tried to distort the facts with his rubbery figures.

The media responded to the Budget the day after it was introduced. The Age editorial of 25 September 1985 stated:

It has been a time-honoured tradition in Australian politics that the first budget after an election is brutal. The post-election budget is the one in which the Government does all the nasty things it wanted to do earlier, but
delayed so the electorate would not exact revenge in the ballot box. It is the striking departure from that tradition which makes the fourth Cain Government budget so remarkable.

The editorial concluded:

The Cain Government is entitled to feel pleased with this Budget. It has generally managed the economy well in the past three years, and this Budget testifies to its moderation and competence.

The honourable member for Brighton used rubbery figures to condemn the Budget, yet he did not produce an alternative because there is no alternative to continuing the present economic growth. The Cain Labor Government has shown the way to economic recovery, as was illustrated by the figures of the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Not only did the Age editorial speak glowingly about the fourth Cain Budget but so did the economics editor of the Age, Kenneth Davidson. On the same day he stated:

Over the past three years, the Cain Government has created a structure in which the natural competitive strengths of the Victorian economy have been encouraged to flourish.

There is no reason why, with continued good management by the Victorian Government and with reasonable luck at the national level, that Victoria cannot once again become the richest state in the Commonwealth.

That article sums up all the various critics of the Budget. Victorians received a Budget in a non-election year which is deemed to be responsive to the needs of the economy and of Victorians generally, and that is necessary to maintain the present economic growth.

I have already indicated that the reason why the honourable member for Brighton did not produce an alternative Budget or an alternative economic strategy was that perhaps the Leader of the Opposition did not indicate that he should produce an alternative. The Leader of the Opposition may not have given that direction to the honourable member for Brighton, because he is under threat as Leader of the Liberal Party. The honourable members for Hawthorn, Polwarth and Kew are after his scalp and are looking forward to taking over the leadership. The next few weeks will be interesting.

Over the past few years, the Leader of the Opposition has made some interesting comments with which I shall deal. The Leader of the National Party is said to support the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the National Party is one of the most conservative politicians in Victoria and, although I do not embrace his conservative philosophy I know that on most occasions he is a man of honour, yet he supports a man who has called for a compulsory national civic service scheme to give young people a sense of direction and purpose. That was the Leader of the Opposition's answer to the problem of unemployment in Victoria.

I have already quoted a press release put out by the Leader of the Opposition in February 1983 which quoted him as saying that if the prices and incomes accord were brought into existence, it would be the death knell of employment opportunities for the young. He should tell that to the 230 000-odd people who have received jobs since the accord was implemented. He asked that the Federal Government consider introducing a means test on family allowances. How does that scheme sit with his colleagues on the Opposition benches and with the Leader of the National Party? The philosophy behind the scheme would perhaps be considered by members of the Labor Party, but I wonder how the Leader of the Opposition's colleagues would deal with it.

In the climate of the resignation of the Governor of Victoria and the sense of priority of the Leader of the Opposition with the visit by members of the Royal Family, I ask honourable members to consider that the Leader of the Opposition offered a visit to a Royal reception as a prize in a contest for his constituents. He actually raffled that trip! That same man stated that only about 17 per cent of those who are on the dole were genuinely unemployed. The Liberal Party, National Party and Labor Party combined to vote against him in the House. That is all on the record.

I could trot out various quotes of the Leader of the Opposition. I shall touch on a couple more instances. Prior to my entering Parliament I understand that members of this House
at one stage were asked to buy jade bracelets. The Leader of the Opposition went around
the hallways of Parliament trying to sell jade bracelets to fellow members of Parliament.
He believed they were real jade so he put up the price and must have sold them to Liberal
Party members. He also turned up to a Parliament House Christmas party dressed as a
waitress—that was appropriate. There was also the time when his Afghan hound followed
and bit a boy. The Leader of the Opposition said that the dog had to be trained better so
that it did not bite Liberal Party voters. This is the person who wants to be the next
Premier!

Opposition members have now wisened up and one hears rumblings in the hallways
that they are about to dump him. When one considers what the Leader of the Opposition
has done, one realizes that it is no wonder his party members want to dump him. He is
causing embarrassment to Opposition members. Most honourable members—I dare say
even the honourable member for Swan Hill—were in the House when the Leader of the
Opposition delivered his 1984 Budget speech. He delivered a 30-minute dissertation on
the Budget reply condemning the Premier for not having invited him to a football turn.
He wanted to know why he was not invited to the Essendon—Hawthorn football function
in the Premier's office.

The Budget reply of the honourable member for Brighton this year, which ran for one
hour and a quarter, or whatever, contained rubbery figures but not one phrase or word
offering an alternative Budget. However, at least it was better than the dissertation of the
Leader of the Opposition asking why he was not invited to the football function in the
Premier's office. I hope his contribution to the Budget debate this year will be better than
his contribution last year. The reality is that for four successive Budgets the Treasurer of
Victoria has put forward a Budget that has led all other Australian States in their economic
strategies and this is borne out by the economic indicators and the fact that Victoria is
leading Australia as the greatest economic success after inheriting a mess in 1982.

Victoria was in the middle of a depression in 1982 and had suffered droughts and bush
fires, yet Victoria is leading Australia after three Budgets by the Cain Government. The
fourth Budget has now been presented. It will follow exactly the same directions as the
previous Budgets and will result in the types of economic indicators that I have outlined.
Unfortunately, the Leader of the National Party and other National Party members were
not here when I made those comments. I am sure they could not refute the actual economic
indicators that have emerged. After another twelve months when the fruits of this Budget
are claimed by all sectors of the community, I shall be standing here once again in
September or October 1986 indicating that not only is Victoria leading the way in Australia
but that it is also improving our position considerably in each successive Budget of each
successive year.

Mr WILLIAMS (Doncaster)—I deplore the speech I have just heard. It is not in
accordance with the Standing Orders of this House and it will go down badly in the eastern
suburbs. As a former municipal officer, the honourable member for Monbulk knows full
well how dissatisfied all the municipalities in the eastern suburbs are with the activities of
the Cain Government and its refusal to answer letters or to give any information about
the way local government is asked to pick up the casualties of the present economic
policies emanating from Canberra and Spring Street. It is about time the honourable
member for Monbulk stopped pouring criticism on personalities and looked after his own
electorate because I warn him the next time around it will not be as easy.

Mr Harrowfield—You interjected on his maiden speech, Morrie!

Mr WILLIAMS—Yes, and I apologized for it. In my opinion the great heroes of our
past are the radicals who served in this Parliament from 1871—the first, an Irishman,
Gavan Duffy of the 1870s, to Sir Alex Peacock whose party was taken over by the
conservatives in 1917. They were of the great era in Victorian Parliamentary democracy
when Victoria led the world with progressive measures, unlike the sorts of Budgets that
have been handed down in recent years which, in my opinion, are reactionary, conservative
Budgets. They are not Budgets for the little man and the 400 000 Victorians engaged in
small businesses which employ fewer than ten people. It is a shame and a disgrace to us all.

Approximately 1 million Victorians are on the poverty line, but nothing has been provided in the Budget for them. What about the 60,000 youngsters looking for work, the 32,000 people on the waiting lists for Government housing loans and the 25,000 people on the waiting lists for Ministry of Housing homes? The most scandalous of all is the plight of the hundred thousand young Victorians who cannot finish their education. Unlike all other Western societies, such as North America and also Japan, where 80 to 90 per cent of students reach the equivalent of Year 12, in this State less than 30 per cent reach that level. That is a grave indictment of the so-called workers' Government.

In real terms education spending will be cut by 5 per cent over the next three years. This means that up to 1000 fewer teachers will be provided. This is especially the case in areas of special needs education and integration of the disabled, disadvantaged and migrant children into normal primary school classes. It is no wonder teachers are on strike! Hundreds of schools in the eastern suburbs are losing experienced staff because their numbers are falling below 270. I understand this is not nearly as bad a problem in the western and northern suburbs. If the honourable members for Mitcham, Monbulk, Box Hill, Warrandyte and other eastern suburban seats think they will be sitting on the Government side of the House after the next election, I have news for them.

I shall deal with law and order. In the City of Doncaster and Templestowe 1000 homes will be burgled this year. My figures are up to date. The middle-aged and elderly in my city are being terrorized by drunken louts. At a function I attended the other day the wife of an experienced policeman in his fifties told me that her husband has been invalided out of the Police Force because of strain.

The stress on members of the Police Force these days is intolerable. No wonder they had to issue the recent famous advertisement about policemen going to their deaths because of the Cain Government. In my city, I want to see every home protected by the Neighbourhood Watch scheme. There were nine meetings last year and only 5000 out of 30,000 homes are to be protected under this scheme. Due to staff shortages, no more Neighbourhood Watch meetings will be held until well into the next year. It is a terrible indictment that 500,000 Victorians have experienced at first-hand the trauma of household burglary. That must stop.

Approximately 200,000 people, mainly the young, the elderly and the poor, cannot rely on public transport. No trains run on time, none is safe and clean and none, as in other major cities of the world, is staffed by officials walking up and down the trains to prevent vandalism. Not even the buses in the electorate that I represent run on time.

Approximately 30,000 people are waiting for hospital beds. Nearly 50,000 mentally ill in the State are condemned to seventeenth century conditions. As a member of the Social Development Committee, I saw the appalling conditions at Willmere Hospital; I was shocked to the core. Gaols in this society are an absolute disgrace. Those are the sorts of things the temporary Labor members for the eastern suburbs should be worrying about.

The Treasurer's Budget speech does not give enough emphasis to the fact that inflation is still a central problem of the Australian economy. Of course, the cause of inflation is spendthrift Governments. Both the Commonwealth and the State Labor Governments will have to create a compelling sense of urgency in the community about the critical continued rapid decline in the value of the Australian dollar, the standard that forms the basis of all business and personal transactions. Without a strong Australian dollar, both here and abroad, Australia can get only deeper into the economic mire. Living standards will fall further and jobs will be harder to get.

It is no wonder that the Japanese say that Australia is not a Third World country, but a Fourth World country. By the end of the twentieth century, if Australia does not come to its senses, it will be a fifth or sixth world country. This is a disgrace for a country that has
the greatest volume of resources in the ground and elsewhere and has the best climate in the world. Double digit inflation is still a real possibility next year despite the view of people like Kenneth Davidson, an Age economics journalist. I do not give two-bob for his economics. I prefer the economics of the business editor, Mr Terry McCrann.

Inflation is a terrible weapon. All it does is to help the rich, the tax avoiders and the unscrupulous. It grinds the poor into the ground. It encourages businessmen to be crooks. In my opinion, the only way a private enterprise system can continue is to have honest businessmen who value their functions highly. That is what good societies are about. If we are going to be run by crooks we may as well have socialism.

The great mass of decent, responsible small businessmen with limited means have no collective muscle to fight those businessmen who seem to have great friendships with members of the Labor Party who bail them out of trouble from time to time. I have referred in this place to how one transport tycoon gets a wonderful run. He never has strikes in his establishment. It is no wonder that certain gutless types in the retail trade ensure that it is his trucks that carry their products and makes sure that he runs their warehouses.

Inflation strikes deadly fear into the hearts of elderly citizens. Interestingly enough, one cannot have a true welfare state unless one has a stable currency. That should be the first priority of the Labor Party. I am glad the Minister for Water Resources is nodding his head. He is a true Labor man, not one of those pseudo conservatives who run the Labor Party in cohorts with those tycoons in the business community to whom I have referred. Tax evasion, and so on, has reached plague proportions in this country. I thought the Italians were bad enough—about 25 per cent of their economy is on the black market. It is about 15 per cent in the United States of America, and Australia is not much better.

The Labor Party has betrayed its own philosophy and the philosophy of the great Liberals of the past who believed men of property should be taxed—those who own land. The estimated site value of real estate in Australia has soared from $2000 million in 1910 to $150 000 million this year. Who owns most of it? The men who head the top 200 in business magazines—most are overseas millionaires.

Australia has about 50 multi-millionaires whose personal wealth exceeds $1000 million each. Those are the people the Labor Party ought to get at, and the Labor Party ought to get at those people through land tax. Land tax has remained virtually constant over the past seven decades. It is about 2 per cent of the gross national product. Contrariwise, taxes are heavy on the pay-as-you-go taxpayer and small businessmen who use enterprise and who cannot afford to employ expensive tax avoidance lawyers.

Consumption taxes are a burden on the poor and they push up prices. Taxes on enterprise and consumption have risen from about 5 per cent of the gross domestic product in 1910 to more than 30 per cent today. That is what the Labor Party should worry about. That is why I believe the Budget is a regressive, reactionary Budget and not worthy of the great men of the Labor Party of the past and of the great free enterprise days of the Liberal Party.

The State Government appears to be obsessed by easy options. The Treasurer has the audacity to say at page 13 of Budget Paper No. 2:

The Government sees the expansion of tourism in Victoria as a significant contributor to economic growth during the remainder of the 1980s.

The Government is clutching at straws if that is all the hope it can offer. According to the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs, tourism accounts for a mere 50 000 out of 1-75 million jobs in this State. One can treble it or improve it many times and it still will not halve the unemployment in Victoria. The entertainment taxes proposed by the Federal Government will damage tourism in Victoria. Melbourne has a wonderful reputation for its restaurants. If those restaurants are unable to cut their overheads,
tourism will be affected. To persuade tourists to come to this State and to Melbourne restaurants, plenty of businessmen will be needed at those restaurants.

More than 70 per cent of overseas visitors spend at least one night in New South Wales. Queensland attracts 55 per cent but Victoria attracts a mere 33 per cent. For all its vaunted casino, Tasmania attracts only 2 per cent and the Northern Territory, despite its casino, does not attract even 1 per cent of overseas visitors. I was surprised to read in the newspapers that Premier Wran is advocating the introduction of a casino in New South Wales.

It is all very well for the honourable member for Monbulk to talk about changing Leaders of the Liberal Party; the leadership may well change in the Labor Party if Bill Landeryou, the honourable member for Doutta Galla in the other place, can organize the numbers to get himself reinstated in the Ministry. As sure as night follows day, once Bill Landeryou is in power again, there will be a casino in Victoria.

I want to remind the House of what the experts say about casinos. Former Assistant Police Commissioner David Powis, who for seven years was the operational head of London’s metropolitan police criminal investigation division and an expert witness before the casino inquiry, believes that eventually casinos will be introduced into Victoria. He is adamant that organized international casino gambling will bring Victoria only trouble. He is quoted as saying, “You see, they do not have to obey the rules”. Mr Powis maintains it is impossible to separate international casino gambling from organized crime.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fogarty)—Order! Is there anything in the Appropriation Bill that refers to casinos?

Mr WILLIAMS—There is, Mr Deputy Speaker. I draw your attention to the fact that the Treasurer has placed a great deal of emphasis on tourism, which goes along with casinos. I am most concerned to increase expenditure on the police vote. That is why I want to draw the attention of the House to the problems casinos would bring to the State.

Mr Powis maintains it is impossible to keep the crooks out of casinos. According to Mr Powis, a casino would provide an income cash flow to the very worst people in the world.

Mrs TONER (Greensborough)—On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. Although the Appropriation Bill allows a broad debate which can touch on almost anything, there is no suggestion in the Bill of money for a casino.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fogarty)—Order! I do not uphold the point of order. Although it is a wide-ranging debate, I suggest the honourable member for Doncaster is travelling too wide in his comments and I ask him to return to the Appropriation Bill.

Mr WILLIAMS (Doncaster)—If the Government believes it will get out of the economic mire by tourism, I am suggesting that the next thing that will happen will be that someone will decide that a casino is needed in Victoria to attract visitors from overseas.

Despite some of the good intentions in the Budget for the private sector, it will do little, if anything, to assist the private sector to expand through investment and employment, especially in the most vulnerable area of manufacturing. That great Victorian, Barry Jones, the Federal Minister for Science, who, regrettably appears to have so little influence in his own Cabinet, has to pay his own way to attend an overseas conference that is of enormous importance to Australia.

That is unlike the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting junket held in the drug capital of the world, the Bahamas, where, over the past fortnight, there have been all sorts of beat-up press stories about the great “El Presidente” of Australia persuading the rest of the British Commonwealth to do something about South Africa.
If you had listened to the radio this morning, Mr Deputy Speaker, you would have heard the British commentators saying that “El Presidente” roared like a lion but his actions were like those of a mouse and that the “Iron Lady” of the United Kingdom was just too good for our “El Presidente”.

Mr Barry Jones has made it quite clear that Australians have shown an incapacity to develop products that sell overseas. He says that protection has led to an insular and isolated state of mind and deplorable record in the export of high technology. Those are the comments of one of the greatest minds in any Parliament of Australia.

Australia is now 21st out of 24 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development countries in annual per capita value of high technology goods exported. The value of Australia’s exports is only $73 per head of population compared with an OECD average of $503 and a Swiss figure of $2300.

Sweden, with a population half the size of Australia’s population, has thirteen times our annual exports per capita. Australia believes it is a great export nation, but compared with Sweden, it is a piker.

Australia has the oldest technological plant in its manufacturing of any OECD country and the smallest number of trained engineers—7 to every 1000 process workers. This is due to two factors: firstly, excessive taxation on honest businessmen, and secondly, a lack of funding for apprentices. If Australia cannot expand its export production, it cannot employ apprentices. It is a vicious circle.

Approximately 70 years ago Victorians were the wealthiest people in the world. With other Australians we are now eleventh in the OECD lead, and falling very fast. Japan has overtaken Australia and we will soon be behind Singapore.

Asian countries are getting all the benefits of fast economic growth on expanding export markets. All of the money that is being expended by the Ministry for Industry, Technology and Resources to try to foster export growth will prove to be a will-of-the-wisp because Australia will not be able to keep pace with the Asian countries that have so many advantages over Australia. In Asia people work longer hours and there are no such things as long service leave and all of the other labour on-cost loadings. I do not believe the cost of workers compensation insurance in Victoria will be cut in half. However, even if the cost is halved, labour costs in Victoria and Australia will remain way above the labour costs in South-East Asian countries, with which Australia has to compete on the export market.

Far from obtaining additional export markets, Australia will be lucky to hold its own in export trade, especially in light of the conditions of consumer goods industries in Victoria which are subject to the ravages of export competition. Only the other day a major white goods industry was forced to the wall in Sydney because it could not compete with products from other countries.

It is interesting to note the way in which Victoria is being forced to rationalize its manufacturing activities in slow-growing even declining overseas markets. The real job growth areas in Victoria at present regretfully are community services—welfare, education, tourism and so on and not in the area of real production. The number of jobs in agriculture and manufacturing is falling. Jobs are being created in all these peripheral service industries. If jobs are not created in the area of real wealth, how will Australia earn enough overseas exchange money to fund the overseas debt?

There has been an enormous increase in the internal and external debt owed to finance companies, the parent companies of which are located overseas.
McDonald's Family Restaurants chain is an honest, enterprising concern that does a great deal for young people in society. However, all of their profits are repatriated overseas. That typifies the real worries of this country which is failing to produce in the areas of agriculture and manufacturing. Even in mining it is becoming more difficult for Australia to compete on the overseas markets with countries like Brazil, due to high labour costs and industrial unrest. Too often supply cannot be guaranteed to overseas countries because of strikes in the mining and transport areas and on the wharves.

They are the sorts of things to which the Labor Party and the Labor Government should be giving attention. How can we compete on overseas markets with overseas competitors who seem to have an edge on us in everything, including access to cheap capital, when so much of our resources have gone into consumer goods, housing and other non-productive activities? Interest rates in this country have soared to the highest level since 1817. There is no way in which small and medium-sized businesses can make profits if they have to borrow at those rates of interest; they are unable to renovate or upgrade their equipment.

The standard of management in this country leaves much to be desired. It is all very well going to management schools and obtaining academic degrees. That is not what good management is about. The best managers are those who have remained on the shop floor and who know what is going on; not those who are always reading books and going to seminars to find out how to obtain tax deductions and all the rest of it.

While Victorian firms are being forced to rationalize and retrench and are cutting in the wrong places by doing away with research, development and export promotion, our living standards and our economy will be in a continual decline. In my view, the Treasurer and his advisers are living in a fool’s paradise, if they believe the economic strategy they propound in Budget Paper No. 2 will restore Victoria to its former glory as the manufacturing jewel in the Crown.

I hope much more attention will be paid by the back bench of the Labor Party—people who have come up the hard way, the former trade union officials; not the schoolteachers; not the economic lecturers; not the lawyers; not the socialists——

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr WILLIAMS—I very much enjoy watching the honourable member for Dandenong on the television screen. Like me, he is a bit of an old-time wowser who thinks seriously about the problems of modern society—the fact that there is too much drinking and too much immorality in our society.

An Honourable Member—Too much eating.

Mr WILLIAMS—None of us are perfect.

Mr Maclellan—One is; the Premier is perfect.

Mr WILLIAMS—The Premier may be, but I am not perfect. There is more of the old-time radical than of the conservative in my bones; and it saddens me to see the heirs of the men who started the Australian Labor Party after the shearers' strike, men such as that great socialist stonemason, George Elmslie, the first Labor Premier of this State, who was...
Premier for only a month in 1913. Men such as he should be leading the Labor Party in the modern era. If it has to be the Honourable George Crawford who leads the party, good luck to him.

Mr W. D. McGrath (Lowan)—After the honourable member for Brighton and the Leader of the National Party had made their contributions to the debate, the next speaker from the Government side was the honourable member for Werribee. In his opening sentence he said:

The Opposition has failed to honour the tradition in this Parliament of using the Budget to present a credible alternative economic strategy.

I would say the credible economic strategy in the first instance for any reasonable organization would be to come to terms with its debt. Budget Paper No. 2 reveals at page 113 that it is estimated that Victoria’s Government and statutory authorities will have a debt of $17,249 million by the end of the current financial year, an increase of $1,727 million or 11.1 per cent over the debt a year earlier. That debt has risen from $11,088 million to $17,249 million since 1981-82, that is, by 55.5 per cent.

The Government tells honourable members that these are outstanding economic times. If I, in good economic times, allowed the debt on my farm to blow out by 55 per cent in that period, I would be told by my financial institutions that I was out of business, or down the tube, as the honourable member for Warrnambool says, and I believe that would be the view of most people operating in private enterprise. Yet honourable members are led to believe that the Government has a great economic policy.

The honourable member for Werribee said in his contribution that the Opposition had not been able to come up with a credible alternative economic strategy. I ask you, Mr Acting Speaker: If you were running a business, would your economic strategy not be to try to come to terms with your debt?

What has that debt done for the Victorian community? It has to be placed on the employed people in this State; that is where it must come to bear. The Bureau of Statistics figures indicate that Victoria has 1,811,500 employed people. Divide that into $17,250 million, and the result is a debt for each employed person of some $9,500. Just to service that debt will cost each of those employed persons approximately $1,200 a year without any repayment of the debt.

That is only the Victorian debt. On top of that, we have an enormous debt running its head off at Federal level, and nobody wants to come to terms with that problem either. It is obvious that we are living beyond our means. It is time Governments in this country came to terms with this increasing indebtedness rather than allowing the debt to run out by 11.1 per cent, as occurs in the current Budget.

In the Budget, in a roundabout way, we have tax cuts of approximately $34.9 million; but, against that, Government expenditure is increased by $885 million. That is why this debt is increasing further. It is about time the Government came to grips with this major problem of living beyond its means.

Many honourable members would say that the State is dependent upon agriculture. The honourable member for Monbulk spoke about the drought ending in 1983 and about the bush fires that ravaged this State. Those two major economic problems were faced mainly by the rural community, fairly and squarely, and with little Government assistance.
The rural sector turned the economy around. An extraordinary wheat harvest occurred in 1983-84 when approximately 18 million tonnes of wheat were harvested. That kick-started the economy and helped people to obtain employment in the service, retail and manufacturing industries. The harvest benefited agricultural prospects and, with wool and dairying, it helped to motivate the economy.

Recently all has not been going well in the agricultural sector. The only thing that has saved it is that the value of the Australian dollar is low in overseas terms. Australia is able to sell wheat, wool and other rural products on overseas markets in a favourable economic situation because the value of the $1 has decreased against overseas currencies. On the one hand, that assists agriculture, but, on the other hand, it does not assist because the imports on which Australia depends are more expensive.

Although some people say it is advantageous for the agricultural sector if the value of the $1 is low, it is not good policy because Australia must compete with overseas markets for exports and pay higher prices for imports. Oil for energy is a prime example.

I shall direct the attention of the House to the importance of the agricultural sector in this country. Agriculture employs approximately 1 million people either directly or indirectly. It has export earnings of the order of $10 000 million a year and produces 90 per cent of all food requirements in Australia. It is undoubtedly one of the linchpins of the nation and yet the Government gives agriculture a low priority throughout the Budget.

The increase in the Budget allocation to the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs is 2.7 per cent. The average increase to other departments is 8.7 per cent. One can see from that that agriculture is an extremely low priority of the Government.

Agricultural pursuits cannot afford the interest rates of 18 to 21 per cent currently being charged by commercial institutions. Agriculture can no longer support the world parity pricing policy for oil. That policy was introduced by conservative Governments at the Federal level, but the Hawke Government has continued it for some four years. The Hawke Government has done nothing to try to come to terms with the policy.

Agriculture cannot afford to support increases in grain rail freights nor can it afford to pay the public authority dividend tax that has been imposed on the Grain Elevators Board. The board is a farmer-owned facility that has not used any Government funds since it was established. If the board borrowed money, it repaid it. However, over the past three years, the Treasurer has hit the board for $13.5 million through the public authority dividend tax. The Treasurer should try to justify that to the rural community.

Today the Minister for Transport announced that the charges for the Grain Elevators Board would increase by 5 per cent a tonne on wheat and 7 per cent on barley. That is an over-all increase in charges of $4 million. That is about the same as what farmers are paying in public authority dividend taxes this year. The Minister should try to tell the farmers that that percentage increase is not used to ensure that the public authority dividend tax is paid. I would like to see the Minister try to convince the farmers of that.

The charters of the Rural Finance Commission and the State Bank must be widened, and that can be done only by the Government. The Government must help alleviate some of the debts currently facing many of the farmers. I shall speak about some of the farming
communities in the north-western part of Victoria which are facing a difficult year for the third time in the past four years. If honourable members earned less than the average income for three years out of four years, they would be in financial difficulty, and that is the situation in which farmers in the north-western region find themselves. That is why the charters of the Rural Finance Commission and the State Bank need to be widened so financial assistance and arrangements can be made to keep farmers on their farms.

I have mentioned world parity prices with regard to agriculture, and I shall now refer to petrol prices. Last week I conducted an assessment of fuel prices—charged at the bowser—between Melbourne and Horsham. At Melbourne bowser, petrol was available for 47·9 cents; at Ballarat it was available for 49·9 cents; but in Horsham it was available for 59·9 cents. The prices surveillance policy of the Government is supposed to maintain a uniform price for petrol across the State. Under freight subsidy equalization, there should be a difference of not much more than 1 cent a litre between metropolitan and country prices. However, last week the difference between metropolitan and country prices was as much as 12 cents a litre.

What has the Government done about the problem; does it try to come to terms with the pricing of petrol? Not at all! The Government believes if the price is right in the metropolitan area it does not matter what the price is at country bowser. The Government allows country people to pay 59 cents or 60 cents a litre and forgets about them. Despite that, the Government states that it is concerned about country people.

I shall now refer to the allocation of funds for housing. I am pleased that the allocation has been increased, as I am sure all honourable members would be. Last Friday it was pleasing to have the Minister for Housing visit the electorate I represent to open a private house which represents a new concept in underground housing. I hope the Minister was impressed by the visit.

The housing budget prepared by the Ministry of Housing indicates that there is an increase of some $225 million—13·2 per cent—over the 1984-85 expenditure. Of that total, $166 million is provided by the State Government. That increase is pleasing.

I hope that money will be disbursed on an even, Statewide basis rather than emphasis being placed on providing public accommodation in the metropolitan areas.

In the electorate I represent, Horsham is the area in greatest need of further welfare accommodation. A report was prepared by Jos Velthuis, chairman of the welfare committee of the City of Horsham, and Anthony Amor, a welfare officer, which sets out the waiting list of applicants for Ministry of Housing accommodation in Horsham. The list comprises 18 applications for two-bedroom accommodation, 75 applications for three-bedroom accommodation, 1 application for large family accommodation, 3 applications for shared accommodation, 5 applications from childless couples, 9 applications for Darby-and-Joan units, 45 applications from lone persons and 15 applications from Aborigines. That is probably typical of most country areas similar to Horsham.

I have two graphs which I seek leave to have incorporated in Hansard.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Stirling)—Order! I remind the honourable member that before proposing to have such material incorporated he should obtain the permission of the Speaker.

Leave was granted, and the graphs were as follows:
NUMBERS OF MINISTRY HOUSES IN PROVINCIAL CITIES IN WESTERN VICTORIA 1973 - 1984
NUMBERS OF FAMILIES ON WAITING LIST 1973 – 1985
Mr W. D. McGrath—I shall make sure that in future I discuss the matter with the Chair before I ask that material be incorporated in Hansard. I thank you, Mr Acting Speaker, for your indulgence.

The graphs show what has happened in the past twelve years with housing in the Horsham area. The first graph shows State trends in the construction of Ministry of Housing homes. The two lines on the graph indicate the general trend and the trend of Horsham accommodation. The second graph shows the number of families on the waiting list, a subject to which I referred earlier.

It is important that the Ministry of Housing allocates funds equally across the whole of Victoria. The current Minister for Housing is a fair man and through his Ministry I am sure he will try to achieve the best trends for country Victoria. After listening to his remarks last Friday when he visited country areas, I realized he had some degree of sympathy for country people.

I shall now deal with water resources. The Government often speaks about major development programs or State development programs. Recently the National Party supported a Bill for the establishment of a National Tennis Centre. That is a good State development proposal. In return it desires to see some State development projects taking place in the country.

One of the most important State development projects that could be undertaken would be the commencement of the pipeline for the Wimmera-Mallee water supply, which is currently a major water supply system circulating by an open channel system through the Mallee and Wimmera areas from the storages in the Grampians. The system has been in operation for more than 70 years. One has to give tremendous credit to the engineers and other people who constructed the system with the limited technological advances and mechanization available at that time. That system enabled the movement of water throughout the whole Wimmera-Mallee area.

Despite all the advances in modern technology since then absolutely nothing has been done to improve the reticulation of that water. If the Government wants to pick up and run with a valuable State development project, this would be an excellent opportunity. The State Government supports the program and the feasibility studies undertaken by the Rural Water Commission demonstrate that it would be advantageous both from an environmental and an economic point of view.

This year the Rural Water Commission has allocated $220 000 to make a start on planning for the scheme near Lake Tyrrell, which is in the area represented by the honourable member for Swan Hill. That honourable member may also address this matter. This valuable project will bring about the conservation of a valuable water resource as well as overcoming salinity problems, which are serious problems faced by the agricultural industry.

When the former conservative Government was in power at the Federal level, a high priority in its water resources program was the commencement of stage 1 of the Wimmera-Mallee water supply system. It is up to the State Government to convince the Federal Government that that project should have a high priority as a State development project. The Federal and State Governments should join together to allow the program to get under way.

The transport allocation has risen by 7.3 per cent. On reading the Budget Papers one must ask whether the funds are being spread out in the field or whether, as is the case in so many areas with this Government, the funds are being swallowed up by the Public Service and the bureaucracy.

An examination of the Budget Papers reveals that the allocation for corporate services is to rise by 18.7 per cent. However, if we are to overcome the over-all indebtedness of the economy, Government spending should be cut.
A further examination of the Budget Papers reveals some interesting comparisons. The allocation for metropolitan roads is up by 10.3 per cent, whereas the allocation for country roads has increased by only 5.5 per cent. Once again this is indicative of the low priority this Government applies to country people.

Last week a motion was moved criticizing the Government for increasing grain freight rates by 6 per cent. Budget Paper No. 4 states that:

The objectives of the freight services program are to provide effective services with maximum efficiency, and to price them so that each commodity traffic makes a positive contribution to the STA’s net revenue . . . progressing towards 100 per cent cost recovery, including appropriately allocated capital charges.

The aim is to bring about a 100 per cent cost recovery. I suggest that the wheat industry has already reached 100 per cent recovery. I am worried by the words “including appropriately allocated capital charges”. If the Minister for Transport speaks in the Budget debate I hope he will outline how he intends to appropriately allocate capital charges into the freight charge component when he is setting freight rates for country Victoria.

Road freight transport now amounts to approximately 15 000 million tonnes-kilometres, which is increasing by 6.5 per cent annually. In a previous Budget discussion paper prepared by the former Minister of Transport it was stated that 94 per cent of all freight in Victoria was carted by road. That amounts to 197 million tonnes of freight being carried by road. Some 6 per cent or 12 million tonnes is carried by rail.

If country people are to be hit by increasing freight charges by the State Transport Authority, there will be a further decline in the tonnages carried by V/Line, which will not help the over-all situation. To attract business, V/Line and the State Transport Authority must be competitive in the market-place. V/Line does have the mechanism to be the most cost-efficient mode of transport in this State.

Recently the Chairman of the Grains Division of the Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association, Mr Michael Cock, said that farmers should take the option of carting one load of wheat by road to the seaboard terminal and taking back to their farms their superphosphate requirements. That would produce a downturn in the amount of tonnage available to the State Transport Authority for V/Line to carry. That would have a damaging effect on V/Line’s operation.

The only reason why the Chairman of the Grains Division has made that recommendation is that the Minister for Transport was not prepared to understand the climate in the wheat industry in rural Victoria and did not listen to the Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association of the State Transport Authority when he imposed a 6 per cent freight increase last week. There is no doubt that the industries that will get Victoria up and running will be tourism, agriculture, building and secondary manufacturing industries. If those industries are doing well and making a profit—in the main they are in the private sector—entrepreneurs will further invest in the economy of Victoria. If industries are not subject to ridiculous Government taxes and charges, they do well.

If those industries are doing well, particularly the building industry which is a higher employ of labour, the retail and service industries in toto will naturally follow on and do well because the private sector creates the wealth and growth. If one wants long-term jobs, opportunities and growth, the private sector must supply it.

If the Government continues to bolster up the public sector, there will be an increase in taxes and charges to support it. The private sector must be given support to generate influence and wealth in the economy. Governments must encourage this initiative and give it support.

I do not believe that was reflected in the Budget delivered by the Treasurer one month ago. Again the Government has supported the public sector. This will result in an increase in Government borrowings to support the public sector; that indebtedness will be serviced by an increase in Government taxes and charges. The Government should not head in
that direction if it hopes to have a vital economy, with encouragement for all people to get out and do better.

Mr NORRIS (Dandenong)—I am proud to support the first Budget brought down in this historic 50th Parliament and the fourth brought down by the Cain Labor Government. I am pleased to make my contribution as the honourable member for Dandenong, bearing in mind that I succeeded the Treasurer in that seat. I offer the Treasurer the congratulations of my constituents and of the Dandenong district.

The Treasurer is a famous and well-respected son of the Dandenong district and people living in that area are justifiably proud of him. The fourth Budget keeps Victoria steady on that path charted by the Treasurer. He has steered Victoria from a position of depression and gloom that prevailed before the Labor Party was elected in 1982, as a legacy of 27 years of Liberal rule, through four Budgets to a position of unrivalled prosperity and growth.

Unlike the previous speaker, I believe the figures contained in the Budget demonstrate that Victoria is leading the other States of the Commonwealth in every area of economic growth one cares to mention. The figures speak for themselves and cannot be denied. If I may use the sporting parlance, we have come from boiled lollies to chocolates. Most of the credit for Victoria's success must be given to the magnificent contribution made by the Treasurer. He must surely go on record as being one of the most talented and respected. Victoria has a true visionary of Labor Party philosophy and the Budget is another tribute to his outstanding ability.

The Treasurer stated at the commencement of his second-reading speech:

Victoria can look to the second half with a great deal of optimism.

The 1985-86 Budget is framed to sustain the new wave of growth and prosperity in the State.

The past few years have seen a massive turnaround in the fortunes of this State.

In the early 1980s Victoria lagged behind the rest of the nation.

In the past two years this has been reversed, and Victoria is back in its rightful place—at the heart of economic change in Australia.

The Government is helping to provide the environment for rapid increases in private investment in the State.

The implementation and further development of the State's Economic Strategy is essential for Victoria to retain its position as the economic pacesetter of the nation.

This is further evidence that Victoria is back in its rightful place at the economic heart of Australia. I cannot remember a Budget that has received such universal acceptance. There have been plaudits from all sections of the community, especially from sections which would normally support the Opposition. One example is the Age editorial, which stated:

The Cain Government... has generally managed the economy well in the past three years, and this budget testifies to its moderation and competence.

That statement is typical of the reaction of the responsible Victorian economic community.

Reflection is good for the soul. Honourable members should cast back their minds to the parlous state Victoria was in when the Labor Party came to office. I realize that members of the Opposition do not want to hear this, because they were in power for 27 years, which is a long time. However, they would agree, in their more truthful moments, that the Liberal Party reached the stage where it was in a lack lustre situation. Members of the Liberal Party were tired, dispirited and had run out of ideas and steam.

Mrs Toner—And they lost!

Mr NORRIS—And the Liberal Party lost. The Labor Party won government because it promised to take Victoria back to the great position Victoria once held. It was called by Sir Henry Bolte the jewel in the Liberal Party crown, but unfortunately, through a lack of policies, energy and vigour, the Liberal Party allowed that jewel to become tarnished and tatty. Victoria had become the sick man of Australia. The vital and vigorous "get up and
go" which was part of Victoria has well and truly gone. Victoria was clapped out and on
the ropes. An exodus of investment capital and population commenced. What an
inheritance the Labor Party received!

Nevertheless, the Labor Party was equal to the challenge. It has the policies, the talent
and the ability to stop the slide, and has done so. The Cain Government has pulled this
great State around and has set it on course. In three and a half years, just into its fourth
Budget, Victoria is the envy of the Commonwealth. Victoria is where it is all happening
again, thanks to the Cain Labor Government and the economic wizardry of the Treasurer.

Only last week that conservative organ, the Bulletin—the same edition that has the
former Governor on the front page, which received most of the headlines—contained an
excellent article written by Tim Duncan and headed “Marvellous Melbourne makes a
startling comeback”. All Victorians should read that article because it makes one’s heart
beat proudly to be a member of the State. The article stated:

Government and administration are remarkably healthy in Melbourne.

This is contained in the Bulletin, hardly ever noted for supporting Labor Party policies. It
continued:

The Cain Government has gone about its work with timely sense of local chauvinism, and indirectly its impact
has been to boost morale in Victoria’s capital.

For those who were anxious about a local economy which stagnated for 10 years, the government produced a
10 year economic strategy.

For those who were worried that Melbourne should retain its key financial and corporate strength, the
government redefined Melbourne as the commercial capital of Australia, published a glossy booklet to that effect,
and bluntly told the stock exchange that the time has come for the establishment to pull its finger out.

Melbourne’s skyline is rapidly changing again, but without the farcical landmark competitions of yore.

Unfortunately, that categorized the reign of the Liberal Party in its latter stages. When it
became desperate, the Government would decide to hold another landmark competition.
The article continued:

Victorian Treasurer Rob Jolly has won enormous respect in circles which disagree with him politically for the
enthusiasm with which he has sold the city and the state.

I did not believe I would read an article like that in a conservative magazine such as the
Bulletin.

Mr William interjected.

Mr Norris—I advise the honourable member for Doncaster to read the article as I
am sure he would find it extremely interesting. I know that he has a broad and open mind
and that he would see the truth in Tim Duncan’s article.

Once and for all the tag that Labor might have its heart in the right place but could not
handle a chook raffle is gone forever. That ghost has been laid to rest because one thing
this Government is noted for is sound, responsible economic management, a keynote of
the Government’s success. That is acknowledged both by labour and capital.

The Government will achieve a growth rate of 4·5 to 5 per cent which will produce
45 000 jobs. Unemployment is still the Government’s main target, even though Victoria
has the lowest unemployment rate in the Commonwealth. Victorian unemployment is
still too high. The Government is not satisfied with its magnificent performance and it
aims to create an extra 45 000 jobs, as I indicated earlier. All honourable members will
agree that unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, is a disturbing aspect of
today’s lifestyle. The luxury of past generations is gone. People are no longer able to flit
from job to job until they find something suitable. Those days are gone for ever. I believe
there will always be a residue of unemployment.
In today's world the pressures on youth are horrendous, as all honourable members would agree, and the $11.3 million set aside in the Budget for the creation of 1250 work study positions is particularly well received in the electorate I represent. The introduction of the Youth Guarantee Scheme, a scheme for all Victorians between the ages of fifteen and eighteen years, is of great benefit to the community.

Housing is an important priority in my electorate. The Government's record is the best in the Commonwealth. The figures speak for themselves. Government expenditure on housing during the past four Budgets has been remarkable. In the 1985-86 Budget, $324 million has been directed to public housing, a 13.2 per cent increase over last year's expenditure. That is a remarkable effort considering the massive amounts of funding injected into public housing during the first three Budgets of the Cain Labor Government. Currently, Victoria is experiencing a level of dwelling construction activity not seen since the early 1970s. Last year approvals were 30,997, 65 per cent greater than the 1981-82 figures, the last year of the former Liberal Government. Over a five-year period funding has increased by 155 per cent. The Labor Government is anxious to do more in the area of housing because shelter is the basic necessity of any society. I assure honourable members that it is very high on the list of priorities of this Government.

The previous Minister of Housing and the present Minister for Housing are extremely capable men and the House can rest assured that the portfolio is in good hands.

Community services is another area of vital importance to the people of Dandenong. The Government has allocated $248 million to this area, an increase of 5-6 per cent. The foster care program has been expanded through an increase in foster care payments and supervisory fees. An additional eleven positions are being created in regional foster care programs.

Child protection is another important area for the Government and a number of measures have been introduced. An additional $200,000 has been allocated for the creation of five new counselling services to be operated by non-Government community organizations. I support financial counselling wholeheartedly. The Dandenong community is fortunate to have the Dandenong Credit Union Co-operative Ltd, which runs an efficient and valuable financial service, not just for members of the co-operative, but also for anyone else who requires advice. For parochial reasons, I should like to see a proportion of the Budget allocated to the electorate I represent, which would increase the services available from the co-operative.

The youth accommodation and support scheme is an important project. I congratulate the previous Minister for Community Welfare Services for the support that she gave me when I was the honourable member for Noble Park in setting up a PACT—personal attention and care by a team—project in that area. The then Minister for Community Welfare Services directed me to the Broadmeadows area where the PACT program was operating and the people with whom I was associated were so impressed by that program that we introduced a similar program in the Springvale area. The former Minister was very helpful to us. I can report to the House that the PACT program is alive and well and is still operating in Springvale.

As honourable members would be aware, the PACT program is a non-residential program in which an adult person is selected by youth in the local community and is recruited to provide intensive support and care on an agreed basis. It is almost like an individual who is prepared to volunteer his or her services to act as a friend, counsellor and guide to youth in trouble with the law. As was pointed out to us, it is like having a personal probation officer. The adult person is paid $5 an hour—not a lot of money for the effort and time put into that work but, as we were informed at Broadmeadows, there is never a shortage of volunteers. All honourable members should be delighted about that because it reveals a tremendous source of goodwill and support in the sometimes brutal society in which we live. Many people are prepared to assist community schemes and offer their services above
and beyond the call of duty. I am particularly pleased that this non-residential program is under way.

With regard to health, the Budget Papers say that the State and the Commonwealth will participate in a matching agreement in the campaign against drug abuse at a cost of $6.2 million in 1985-86. The campaign will be a major attempt to encourage all Australians to understand better the problems associated with drug abuse. The Commonwealth will provide more than $400,000 to continue work on drug education programs.

I serve on the Westernport Drug and Alcohol Service and, as other honourable members who serve on similar groups within their electorates will know, this area is still vastly underfunded. The drug summit brought this dreadful problem in the community to public notice but we should not lose sight of the fact that the major drug problem in this country is, and continues to be, alcohol abuse. I should like to see that emphasis underlined.

I know hard drugs grab the headlines, and hard drugs such as heroin and the like are horrible but they are a minority of the drug problems. The vast drug problem is alcohol abuse but I do not believe the Australian public have or ever will accept that fact. Until alcohol is recognized as a drug of addiction causing more devastation than all other drugs put together, we have a battle.

The statistics on alcohol are amazing. Seventy-eight per cent of all violent crimes occur as a result of alcohol abuse. A survey held by Dr Bartholomew in Pentridge Prison on long-term prisoners showed that 92 per cent had been affected by alcohol at the time of their crimes. One in three marriage break-ups is as a result of alcohol. Then there is the road toll; one in five hospital beds is occupied by persons suffering from alcohol-related illnesses. The list could go on ad infinitum. If those statistics were applied to heroin abuse, 500,000 people would be marching up Bourke Street demanding the politicians' blood. Because those figures are related to the socially accepted drug of alcohol, it is difficult for one to say these things without being labelled as a wowser. I hope the issue of alcohol abuse is not pushed into a corner by the hard drugs issue; as horrific as it is, it is a minority drug problem. I am sure all honourable members will agree that this is the case in their electorates, especially among teenagers.

The Government must be congratulated on its "No Buts" campaign but, as I have said to the Minister, we are tackling the soft option. The world is abounding with reformed smokers; we have them all over the place. We have a Cabinet of reformed smokers, except for one. The "No Buts" campaign is a laudable campaign because nicotine is a ghastly drug, but it is the soft option. I want a "dry-out" campaign aimed at alcohol abuse. I have suggested it before and I shall suggest it again. Honourable members could set the tone when this campaign is held by closing the Parliamentary bar for one week.

Also mentioned in the health appropriation is the Government's participation in the program against acquired immune deficiency syndrome. A few weeks ago there was a debate on the Health (Blood Donations) Bill. Some excellent contributions were made by members of the Opposition. This is an area in which there is absolute unanimity and I am happy that it has been mentioned in the Budget. The Government will spend $4 million in a joint program with the Commonwealth to combat the spread of AIDS. I do not know whether $4 million will be enough, because, as mentioned in that previous debate, it is certainly the plague of the millenium.

In the United States of America there have been 13,000 diagnosed cases of AIDS and, of these, 6,000 are already dead; doctors hold no hope for the others. Six thousand deaths over four years is not as alarming a figure as the nearly ten times that number who are killed on the highways in the United States of America each year, but the trend lines are grim. The number of reported cases doubles every twelve months.

That is something we must certainly cope with in Australia. In an earlier debate there was a good suggestion by a member of the Opposition for an interparty education committee and I hope the Minister for Health has taken that suggestion on board. Unfortunately, the
statistics suggest that eventually there will be a panic and the Government must be ready for that, but the $4 million allocated in the Budget is a good beginning.

Another point in the health budget is the funds provided for the intellectually disabled and psychiatric services area. There are possibly very few votes in mental health and mental retardation services but honourable members could not help but be impressed by the dedication and commitment of the parents of constituents who are suffering mental illness or retardation. Honourable members, I am sure, do all they can for these people. I note in the Budget that an additional 56 staff positions have been provided for State-run psychiatric centres. I am pleased that one of those is the Dandenong Psychiatric Centre. I pay tribute to that centre; the staff are most helpful and compassionate. I have the highest admiration for Dr Leonard, Matron Gardner and the staff. I have had the pleasure of sitting on the committee at the psychiatric centre and I have been honoured to have such a dedicated and committed centre within the electorate I represent. There are 20,000 mentally disabled people in the Victorian community.

The sitting was suspended at 6.28 p.m. until 8.5 p.m.

Mr Norris—As I was saying before the suspension of the sitting, the capital works budget for the intellectually handicapped has increased by 60 per cent, injecting new funds into the Community Residential Unit Program.

I am proud to have within the electorate of Dandenong an organization called the Westernport Residential Accommodation Committee, which has worked extremely hard; most of the members have handicapped children themselves. There are now five residential units open in the area, and I am happy to announce that another is about to be opened.

I shall use the time remaining to me to comment on the arts. I say with some sense of pride that Victoria is again the centre of artistic activity in this country. This Budget has certainly maintained a steady allocation for the arts, although it asks for a little more restraint when it comes to flagship companies, such as the Melbourne Theatre Company.

More money is being allocated to community arts, of which I am completely in favour. The Government possibly faces a difficult program regarding the arts with the opening of the Victorian Arts Centre, and the massive recurrent costs involved in the running of such a centre; companies going into the centre naturally want an increase in their budgets, which they received, but they must now hold them at that level.

The difficulty being faced in Melbourne is that there is a plethora of performing arts centres and theatres. We have the magnificent performing arts centre in St Kilda Road; we have the Concert Hall and we have three theatres. We also have companies such as the Melbourne Theatre Company, which is moving out of the Athenaeum. Therefore, we will have the Athenaeum, the Russell Street Theatre, Her Majesty’s Theatre, the Comedy Theatre—which has been opened and closed—the Princess Theatre just across the road from this place and, of course, the Regent Theatre, which will also become another white elephant.

The difficulty being faced by the Government with these performing areas is what to do with them, and that is a problem to which the Government must certainly address its mind. Melbourne is over-endowed with theatres. However, as regards arts generally, all honourable members would agree, as would anyone else who picks up Saturday’s Age and examines the entertainment pages, that Melbourne has a program on any day one cares to mention equal to anything in the world. I defy anyone to say that there is any city of the size of Melbourne that has as wide a variety of entertainment, from classic right across the scale, as does Melbourne.

All Victorians should be conscious of that fact, and they should be very thankful for it. The Australian Opera is in trouble at present. The Government has withdrawn its funding of $125,000 that it normally allocates to the Australian Opera and has made an allocation to the Victorian Opera, which is an opera company equal to anything in Australia. If any honourable member has not seen any productions by the Victorian Opera, I suggest that
he or she should do so. It is a superb company and, again, something of which we can be proud.

I am honoured to stand here as the honourable member for Dandenong and support the Budget. Once again, I extend my congratulations to the Treasurer. As an article in the Herald stated, this is:

A neat piece of housekeeping.

All the right figures are there and they are all heading in the politically appropriate directions: real growth is tipped to rise by between 4.5 and 5 per cent and unemployment might dip below 6 per cent.

I support the Budget.

Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—In speaking on the Budget debate, I want to first of all refer to that section of the Budget which deals with the allocations of money to the Parliament and, in fact, the way in which the Budget of the Parliament is actually used.

I believe the Premier's attempt today to have what I refer to as the "Farmer tapes" played in Parliament, as such, is in reality a grotesque attempt to pervert the course of justice.

The whole legal profession and the great mass of Victorians who believe in fair play will be outraged because the Premier, who has a degree in law, has tried to misuse Parliament to interfere in the processes of the law. As I say, Mr Speaker, the Premier has been admitted both as a barrister and as a solicitor of the Supreme Court of Victoria. In other words, he is an officer of the court; and no one knows better than he, or should know better than he, the importance of those tapes to the legal action upon which I have embarked.

The Premier and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Mr Mathews, have set out to try to do something for their little mate on the Bulletin. Mr Cain and Mr Mathews are trying to use Parliament to give an advantage to a self-confessed Labor Party activist who has been sued by me for libel.

The writs have been issued and the safekeeping of the tapes, which are with my lawyers, has been guaranteed by them and that guarantee has been given both to the Age newspaper and more recently to the Bulletin. The tapes have in no way been tampered with and the writ will proceed to hearing in the Supreme Court as fast as the Bulletin and Mr Farmer will allow.

Mr Remington—What has this got to do with Parliament?

Mr KENNETT—It has a great deal to do with the operation of Parliament, and a Budget deals with the operation of Parliament.

The SPEAKER—Order! The Leader of the Opposition should not be distracted by interjections. I shall handle those.

Mr KENNETT—My solicitors regard the tapes as important to my case, as I believe any citizen would agree, let alone a solicitor who has supposedly had the training that the Premier has had.

Dr VAUGHAN (Clayton)—On a point of Order, Mr Speaker, on the last occasion that the Leader of the Opposition made a speech relating to the Budget, it was about a reception for a football team held in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. On this occasion I fail to see the relevance of his remarks as they are before the House now.

The SPEAKER—Order! Will the honourable member commence again? I could not hear what he was saying.

Mr Cooper interjected.
The SPEAKER—Order! I am warning the honourable member for Mornington for the first time to cease interjecting.

Dr VAUGHAN—I shall repeat my remarks: on the last occasion that the Leader of the Opposition spoke during a Budget debate, he commented upon a reception held for a football team in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. On this occasion I am having difficulty in relating his remarks to the Bill before the House and I ask you, Mr Speaker, to rule on the relevance of his remarks.

The SPEAKER—Order! I shall rule immediately on the point of order. I am having no difficulty whatsoever in seeing the relevance of the remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition. He is dealing with allocation of money for the Parliament. Although he is stretching the patience of the Chair to some extent, he is still in order.

Mr KENNNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—Over almost three years now, the Premier has consistently indicated that he would not interfere with the due processes of the law in the administration of his Government and the Parliament, yet today honourable members have seen the most despicable attempt by the Premier and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to so interfere.

Today, these two gentlemen have launched a series of florid tirades within the “coward’s castle” safety of this Chamber. In terms of the allocation of funds, the actions of the Premier and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services are demeaning to Parliament and to themselves.

The Premier’s actions are not just demeaning; they are also hypocritical. Last Friday the Premier told the media that his little mate’s story in the Bulletin was “rubbish” and if Government members do not accept my word, they can take the Premier’s own words on the matter. The relationship between the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Mr Farmer goes back to the heady days when they were together in Canberra. The Minister was a Labor staff member and that says enough about the Minister’s involvement in all of this—he is doing something for his little mate.

The legal processes of Victoria were put into place by Parliament. The Premier has continually said that he would never interfere with the due processes of the law, and yet today he saw fit to use this place to promote his own political purposes and to once again throw to the wind the standards that he is prepared to apply to himself with regard to Nunawading, but he wants to apply a totally different set of standards when it comes to my pursuit of natural justice.

I have said publicly before that I have nothing to hide in those tapes; but, given that they are important to my case—as assessed by my solicitor and others—the most appropriate place for those tapes to be judged is in a court of law. It is quite obvious that the standards that the Premier demands of himself and his own Ministers are not the same standards that he would want us to be judged by. If the Premier, trained in the law, is serious about standards, he ought to fully understand the importance of those tapes to my case.

Further I can guarantee that after the tapes have been heard and following the debate today—and I am sure that this will take place sooner rather than later—I shall not be requesting a secret hearing or a closed session because the tapes should be heard by the public at large.

I congratulate the Treasurer and the Government on the improvement in the presentation of the Budget Papers. That is not to say that the Opposition agrees with anything contained therein because there has been a massive attempt by the Treasurer to justify his own mismanagement, and he utilizes statements and figures to his own advantage rather than to the advantage of the honest representation of the Government’s actions towards the people of Victoria.
Reviewing the economic background that has surrounded Victoria under the Labor Party for the past few years, there is no doubt that since the first Labor Budget was brought down in 1982, Victoria has seen the Australian economy come out of a recession that was determined by three major factors: first, there was the worldwide economic improvement after a lacklustre period.

Mr Remington interjected.

Mr KENNETT—We will get to you any time you like.

Secondly, improved primary production has returned to this country, up until recently, with the completion of what was one of the most disastrous droughts in this country and, thirdly, there is a much more rational and reasonable investment approach, particularly in the resources areas.

Although it has produced some short-term problems for some industries, the Federal Labor Government's policies of deregulating the banking and finance industries have given the business community a more realistic basis for investment in the future.

There is no doubt that Victoria has benefited like the rest of Australia from these bold approaches, and the Opposition does not hesitate to recognize and to give credit where credit is due. The Opposition sees the deregulation of the banking and finance industry as a positive step for this country.

The over-all economic improvement must therefore be attributed to facts that are largely outside the control of this Government. However, there is one aspect of the Government's activities in terms of trying to manipulate the economic environment, of which no one will ultimately be proud, and that is the way the Government has pump primed the Victorian economy. Such pump priming over the past three years, while stimulating the economy in the short term, is without doubt socially and economically irresponsible in the long term.

Labor's pump priming of our economy has been done by dramatically increasing the taxes and charges of industry and business within this State, although it is the people in the business sector, especially in small business, who are the producers of employment and the creators of wealth who have suffered and will in the future suffer most.

In a non-productive manner, the Labor Party has imposed imposts on those that we look to generally to provide the real wealth creation in this society. More importantly, Labor's policies are directly aimed at what were traditionally their supporters—the low income and middle income earners in this State. The so-called profit and reported profits of many businesses currently have been a result, not so much and isolatedly of their own doing, but of the Labor Government's pump priming of the economy. In short, many so-called profits have come directly from the community's payment of higher taxes and charges and massive Government borrowings. That must ultimately be paid for by the community.

The housing sector, which participated in the economy's improvement generally, has started to dramatically taper off. All one has to do is to examine the figures. The reason has nothing to do with the Government in Victoria, but it is because of the changes in the Federal Government's allowance and concessions to first home buyers. Victoria's minimal dependence on the ending of the resources boom and the marked recovery in the rural sector after the drought, have all helped Victoria in avoiding the wide fluctuations in the various industries on which the economy is measured.

There is no doubt that total private investment remains on paper reasonably strong. That is because of two major projects: continuing investment in the Bass Strait oil exploration area and the Alcoa project. There is no reason to believe there are any new signs of confidence in Victoria's economy by those in charge of investment decisions.

Mr Cathie—Walk around the city and open your eyes!
Mr KENNETT—It is one thing for the Minister for Education to say, "Walk around the State and have a look at the cranes". We all know it is one thing to talk about projects and to build office space, but there is not much value if there is no economy, no confidence and no one producing the wealth—because the construction of buildings for office space in themselves does not create new jobs. The incompetence of the Minister for Education can be measured only by his own inane interjections.

Private consumption has weakened and the rural sector today is not nearly as strong as it was twelve months ago. The Premier today, in trying to discard the impact of the Federal Treasurer’s budgetary effect, indicated that he was not concerned about the loss of jobs in the restaurant industry or in the motor vehicle industry. It was one of the most pathetic responses I have heard in defence of Victorians and their jobs in a long time.

We know from the latest figures—and I can understand the Premier is not wanting to read them or to be kept up to date; very much like he does not want to be honest and open in terms of his involvement in the Nunawading by-election—that motor registrations are down by 11 per cent.

On the figures that the Premier should have had, if he had been doing his job properly, the indication is that in the restaurant industry alone, of 130 restaurants surveyed almost 1000 employees have already lost their jobs. The sad thing is that those jobs have been lost by the low and middle income earners and, more importantly, by unskilled and semi-skilled labourers and most of them youth. The Premier had the effrontery to stand up here today and wash his hands of it again as though it was of no consequence.

The indicators here in Victoria are not good. If we examine the outlook for Victoria for the next twelve months or more, the first indication is that it will be difficult to maintain the same rate of growth that has been achieved over recent years or to come anywhere near the Australian average.

An Honourable Member—We will be above it.

Mr KENNETT—The resources investment is temporary and tied up in only two projects.

The next point is that the Government stimulus is not a permanent solution and is too costly for the taxpayers of this State in the long term. One cannot continue to pump prime. The Minister for Education and the Minister for Health have proved that clearly in their statements over the past few days; whereas they continually gave in to union pressure in the health and education areas when they were first elected in 1982. They are saying today that they cannot afford to do it. We congratulate them for saying it, but we criticize them for the past three years giving into their Labor unionist friends to buy union support, because the industrial trouble being faced today has not just happened, the seeds were sown over the years. The Government is trying to go out into the public area and say that it can no longer afford it. The Government set it running; with its friends it prime pumped the economy and now it must live with it.

People in this state who are continually paying higher taxes and charges expect the money to be spent on the delivery of a good health system and on the education of their children. The Minister for Education must accept responsibility for the activity of his predecessor and the Government over recent years.

Mr Cathie interjected.

Mr KENNETT—Mr Speaker, the only thing that the Minister for Education can be sure of is that his successor will not come from his side of politics. The people of Victoria are sick to death of the way in which the Government has sold out their rights to a reasonable health service and a good education.

Go and speak to the parents today. It is no use this Minister saying, "We disagree with the unions". It is too late. The Government has caused the trouble and must live with it because it has tried to pump prime. The Government has spent more than it can afford
and it has borrowed more than it can pay back. Whenever pressure was put on the Government, it has given in. Now the Government is saying that it cannot afford it. It cannot blame the public and it cannot blame the teachers; it has the responsibility.

Mrs TONER (Greensborough)—On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I understand that Standing Orders provide for the Chair to be addressed, rather than the Minister.

The SPEAKER—Order! I will uphold the point of order.

Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—I can understand the honourable member for Greensborough being sensitive. She understands what it is like to be a member of Parliament in any seat in this State at the moment and have parents coming to her and asking why children are being so disadvantaged at this time of the year. She cannot give an honest answer because the Government has continually sold its soul to buy votes.

The next area in the outlook for Victoria is our manufacturing votes which remain high, but above the normal average levels of the rest of the community. One must ask the question whether they will hold up. Growth in Bass Strait revenues, stamp duty and payroll tax are still strong but they are against the interest of real growth and against the interests of those who wish to create wealth and, most importantly, against the interests of those who wish to provide jobs.

Mr Gavin—Nonsense!

Mr KENNETT—The honourable member for Coburg interjects that that is nonsense. The only valid contribution he has made to Parliament is to leak information to the media to suit his own purposes. It is a pity that more members of the Labor Party do not understand and have no compassion for those in our community who are employed and want to retain their jobs, for those who are unemployed and want jobs and for those who are being educated and who expect jobs in a civilized society, and that we, as adults, and members of Parliament can work together to provide opportunity. There is no way this Government is doing that.

The Opposition is happy to believe there are obvious solutions. They start with introducing a set of programs—that we will be enunciating between now and the next election—which clearly will improve the State's competitiveness with other States by lowering taxation levels and charges.

I thank the Minister for Education for nodding his head in agreement; he must be aware of the impact that lowering those charges will have. Let us face facts: Victoria is falling behind most other States in some of the fundamental areas, and that can only cripple investment in this State. A Liberal Government will improve the supply of infrastructure through greater efficiency in providing Government services.

So many areas of Government administration and public services could be more efficient. I shall mention some. The former Minister of Health has already fouled up the health system. He had to be moved from that portfolio, and now private consultants are employed to review the transport system and to try to improve it. The former Minister made a mess of health services in only two and a half years. There must be something fundamentally wrong if, in two and a half years, the Government cannot accept that, after employing thousands of bureaucrats, its public services are rife.

The former Minister of Health has totally destroyed the morale of the health system. His successors are unable to cope with the problems he has created. Will he now, as Minister for Transport, destroy the public transport system? The Minister destroys these public systems as if he means to do it. People are leaving the Ministry because the Minister has no concept of man management. He wishes to run the whole show himself. He does not delegate responsibility because he believes that he knows all the answers. The public know what he did to the health system in the State and what he will do to public transport.

There must be more emphasis on education and training which are important not only to our young people today and to those who for one reason or another are retrenched and
wish to continue to be productive, but also as a potential to export skills interstate or overseas. I refer in particular to those countries to Australia's immediate north. If Victoria is to have a future, it must utilize its information, education and training skills. The Liberal Party would certainly do that.

A Liberal Government would exploit national advantages in services, particularly for small business. How often has one heard the Government express concern about small business? How often has one seen the actions of the Government being diametrically opposed to its verbiage in the Budget? For example, I refer to the Residential Tenancies Bill which has been introduced. No measure could be more dangerous to investment in the State or to those who either choose not to or cannot afford to own their own homes.

The Government is acting against the interests of every small business investor and the people who are desperately in need of housing accommodation. Last night I attended a function at which the Premier was also present and was approached by a small business investor who commented on the fact that his rates had increased by 80 per cent, yet the Government had promised not to increase rates by more than the consumer price index. That is unacceptable if one wishes to maintain and continue growth in the retailing and trading sectors of the community. The Government is not interested in small business. It came into office on the backs of small business people and it will go out of office in the same way. The Government has lost sight of the people who originally elected the Labor Party to government. The sad thing is that the Government knows that is true, yet does nothing about it.

The Liberal Party, which in opposition believes firmly in realigning the economic strategy of the State, when in Government will ensure that growth in Government spending will be slowed down. It believes that individuals are better equipped to manage their lives than we, as politicians, are to dictate how they should run their lives. If one is serious about increasing economic growth one must reduce Government spending and Government borrowing.

It is all right for back-bench members of the Government to laugh behind their beards but I assure them that the Government increased its borrowings last year more than any other State in the Commonwealth of Australia. That will lead to citizens paying considerably more in future. The Government cannot keep taxing and borrowing if it does not have the capacity to pay. I challenge the Premier or any other Minister or back-bench member of the Government to indicate one other major investment in the State, apart from the Alcoa of Australia Ltd aluminium smelter at Portland, and the development in Bass Strait, which had anything to do with this Government. There is the small development through IBM Australia Ltd in Wangaratta, but there is not one other major investment in industry by the Government.

Mr Fordham—What about Alcoa?

Mr KENNETT—I have already mentioned Alcoa of Australia Ltd. I know the Deputy Premier is growing old, but I mentioned only two major investments, that in Bass Strait and that of Alcoa of Australia Ltd in Portland. Victoria desperately needs a Government that is prepared to slow down Government expenditure and restrict Government borrowing. The State can no longer afford this Government because it does not have the capacity to generate wealth.

It is also important that the Government—if not the Labor Government then a future Liberal Government—does not increase taxes at a faster rate than the gross domestic product. It is madness to allow that to happen. A better basis must be laid for improved long-term performance than the basis which the Government has laid, which is short-term political gain. That attitude may be fine during an election campaign, but it is not responsible and does not provide a basis on which the State and the community can come together to provide opportunities for those to whom we owe opportunities in future.

I refer in particular to Victoria's elderly citizens who have worked all their lives to give all of us the opportunities we have today, and to those young members of the community
who look up to us for leadership, not just as politicians but also as parents and mature members of the community. We are failing, and this Government is failing, to take into consideration the real needs of the community not only today but, more importantly, in the long term.

After the next State election I look forward to leading a Government that is not prepared to compromise the long-term interests of the State and its people. I have no doubt that Victorians are starting to see the Government for what it is: a Government of double standards and hypocrisy, and, more importantly, a Government whose public perception has been maintained by the viciousness and ferociousness of the Media Unit that supports the Premier. The public is now seeing past that image and wants a fair deal. It wants to be considered by a caring Government. The next Liberal Government will give people just that.

Mrs TONER (Greensborough)—I must admit—

Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the honourable member for Greensborough is aware of the customs of the House. I ask her to address the Chair.

The SPEAKER—Order! I uphold the point of order.

Mrs TONER (Greensborough)—Thank you, Mr Speaker. I must confess that the speech made by the Leader of the Opposition was even worse than his speech on the Budget last year. Last year he spent 10 minutes telling the House about his disappointment at not being invited to attend the reception for the Essendon Football Club. This year he spent a third of his time devoting himself to disclaimers about his interview with Richard Farmer. I must admit that honourable members are pleased that the Leader of the Opposition clearly indicated last week that he was repeating once more his assertion—that the Liberal Party, under his leadership would not block Supply. He also indicated that his definition of Supply included appropriation Bills.

He also proceeded to say that he had never been involved with a scheme with the Governor to oust the current Government. We were pleased to hear that. He indicated that that was a fiction of which Jeffrey Archer would be proud but we believe the privileges of members of this House are extremely important and significant. If he is able to disclaim the matters raised by the journalist in the Bulletin, I hope that at 2 o'clock tomorrow afternoon the tape will be played so that honourable members are able to confirm that that intention was never stated.

Mr A. T. Evans—You could never be Governor!

Mrs TONER—I take up the interjection of the honourable member for Ballarat North who intimated that I shall never be Governor. I do not want to be Governor. I was elected this year to serve the people of the Greensborough electorate and it is my intention to do so for this term of four years and for many terms to come. I have a significant contribution to make to this Government over the years. I also believe that as the Senior Vice President of the Labor Party, I am a highly political figure and, as such, would not be appropriate to hold the position of Governor. In addition, nobody has asked me, and if they did I would say, “No”. Those comments should dispose of the myth that is being perpetuated by the honourable member for Ballarat North and other evil people from the Opposition side of the House.

I shall return to the Budget which the Opposition has not cared to address. It was rather distressing that the Opposition put forward no alternative economic strategy. The shadow Treasurer is a new man who has been in the job for only seven months. He is not experienced. In addition his colleagues who have followed him in this debate have set a similar example by not addressing themselves to the Budget. If the speech of the Leader of the Opposition tonight was part of the three weeks of concerted attack on the Government, I must say it was a weak attack indeed. He alluded to the exporting of skills overseas. He said that he wanted more education in Victoria but he would export those
skills. He also talked about manufacturing industry. He did not recognize the wine industry, although he should have recognized it because he experienced the pleasures of the authentication of the wine industry over dinner. Consequently he should have given some recognition to improvements in that industry.

The Victorian Government has based its economic policies on sound economic theory and good management. It has clear objectives that are part of a continuum of the ten-year economic strategy. When we came to government in 1982 people were leaving Victoria in droves. At that time members of the Opposition and the National Party were glad to retreat to the Opposition benches for a period in order that the Labor Party could set the State in order, and indeed we have done that. It was a difficult task. I remind honourable members of the strategy that the Treasurer put forward in the Budget. The strategy of the previous Budget was to provide a sharp stimulus to the Victorian economy to assist in lifting Victoria from a deep recession. Further, the intention was to restore the financial viability of the Budget in the face of major long-term deficits which had been inherited from the mismanagement of previous years.

The Cain Government proceeded and pushed for strong economic growth. In recent times we have been able to move in a different direction from that stimulus. The effects of the stimulus have been observed and we are now in a situation in which the strategy can be changed for 1985–86. The new directions are confirmed in this Budget so that the emphasis is now in four main areas, including continued restraint in recurrent expenditure to make room, within a policy of no increases in the over-all tax rate, for high priority revenue or expenditure. In hearing the National Party, particularly the honourable member for Ripon, I was surprised that he did not seem to understand—

Mr Jasper—The honourable member for Ripon is the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, a member of the Liberal Party.

Mrs TONER—I meant to refer to the honourable member for Lowan. I should have known better because the Lowan electorate is where my home town is situated.

The Budget contains selected revenue reduction measures and expenditure initiative measures which support the economic strategy. Further, the Budget demonstrates restraint in capital expenditure. It was necessary in the early years of the Cain Government to stimulate the economy by significant capital expenditure. It is now important that private enterprise takes up the initiative and picks up the impetus the Government provided in its first term of office.

The Budget is important as it contains expenditure in areas of identified social need. We have been able to move in this direction because of good economic management. In areas such as the Youth Guarantee Scheme, health, housing, accident prevention and compensation, police and corrections, the extent of the increases has been quite significant. I am confident that in the time ahead we will see the result of that first term of good planning. The Budget brought down this year was better received than any Budget in my memory. That includes other State and Federal Budgets. It was a surprise as normally it is expected that a tough Budget is brought down after an election and less severe Budgets in the following years. However, because of the good management of the Government we were able to maintain all those commitments and the Budget was well received by the media. The Age editorial of Wednesday, 25 September is headed, “Budget’s lure to business”. It praises the Budget and states:

The budget indicates the Government’s concern not to crowd out growth of the private sector through excessive borrowing or taxation. The net debt of the Government and its authorities is a little more than $17 000 million, or 27·9 per cent of the state’s non-farm gross domestic product. By comparison, the net debt in 1971 represented 46·5 per cent of GDP.

That was the period during which our opponents were in government.

The Age indicated that one surprise announcement is the plan for Government departments and agencies to be required to increase their productivity by 1 per cent this
financial year and by 1.5 per cent a year thereafter. I do not regard that as surprising. One
has only to examine the good management of the Government and the way in which it
has planned its priorities. It has ensured proper budgeting arrangements. Kenneth Davidson
of the Age praised the Budget highly with the by-line, "Victoria to become rich again", and he pointed to the very wonderful initiatives in the Budget.

The Labor Party does not expect praise from Peter Cole-Adams all the time, but he
indicated that Victoria's position had been achieved by good luck. It was not just good
luck but good management. He remarked that somehow or other the Garden State in the
1980s has come out on top of the pile. About five years ago when he was packing his bags
for an extended tour of the United States of America, he said that Victoria was doing very
badly indeed. That was in the era of the Liberal Party Government. After 27 years in office
the Liberal Party was a tired, decrepit, weary Government.

Journalists have recognized the fruits of this Government's good management. The
Government's record on unemployment has been praised particularly. Victoria's
unemployment rate has fallen to 6.2 per cent and, although that cannot be considered
entirely satisfactory, it is 2-3 per cent below the unemployment rate of the rest of Australia.
It is a very good record and it is a result not only of the Victorian Government's initiatives
but also of its Federal colleagues and the trade unions who have been party to the prices
and incomes accord. The consequence of the co-operation between the State and Federal
Governments is the initiatives of the Victorian Government. Victoria is out performing
every other State.

I refer again to the State's non-farm gross output for 1985-86, which is expected to
increase. The honourable member for Forest Hill interjects with sexist comments and
implies that no woman has any understanding of good economics and good management.
His comments are typical of his party.

Mr RICHARDSON (Forest Hill)—On a point of order, I was not being at all sexist; in
fact, I was being very personal.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fogarty)—Order! There is no point of order.

Mrs TONER (Greensborough)—Whether or not the honourable member for Forest
Hill was being sexist, I remind him that people in glass houses should not throw stones.
One of the reasons for the Liberal Party's poor economic management, and for the
meanness of the Liberal Party in Victoria, was its failure to include women of talent in its
Government.

The honourable member for Brighton succeeds a much more knowledgeable and effective
former honourable member for Brighton, Mrs Jeanette Patrick. She was never
included on the front bench of the Liberal Party whilst it was in power. The Liberal Party
now has only two women Parliamentarians whereas the Labor Party has fourteen women
Parliamentarians. Any good Government needs to call on all the resources and talents of
the people in the State. The Cain Government has aspired to do so and has achieved a
good result. The Labor Party encompasses people from all walks of life and, consequently,
it is able to call on varied expertise.

The Budget is the best Budget delivered within my memory. The honourable member
for Hawthorn interjects that I am being selective. I have been in Parliament almost eight
years and I remember the presentation of Budgets by the previous Liberal Party
Governments. They were printed in little documents so that it was difficult to establish
information. Nothing is hidden in the presentation of this Budget. The information is
available for all to see. It is information of which the Government can be proud.

Members of the Cain Government can take pride also in the time and energy spent on
straightening out the mess of the former Liberal Party Governments and the way in which
the Cain Government handled the difficulties it experienced as a result of that in its first
term of Government. I assure the honourable member for Malvern, who is interjecting,
that I am far more likely to be back in the Ministry than he ever is likely to be in a
Ministry. I have referred to the difficult time that the Government had and the suffering it experienced in its first term of office as a result of the previous Government’s policies. In addition, Victoria was suffering a massive drought. Honourable members will remember the subsequent bush fires that devastated Victoria.

I hope the next four years will pass without those acts of God and without those disasters that were inflicted upon Victoria. Despite these difficulties in its first period, the Government set itself on a very healthy course and I hope nothing will interrupt the course of the next three decades, because the Government has shown a dramatic improvement in Victoria’s welfare.

The honourable member for Hawthorn interjects that the Government is an eternal optimist. Members of the Cain Government are eternal optimists. It was the pessimism of the former Liberal Party Government that inhibited any imaginative economic development in the State. It has been the creativity of the Treasurer and of the Labor Party Ministers that has enabled growth in the State. Members of the Labor Party are eternal optimists and I hope we may ever continue to be so.

One can be optimistic when one has examined the Government’s successes and the co-operation it has had with the people of the State. It is not only the optimism of the Government but also the optimism of the people of Victoria. There is a completely different feeling throughout the State. Several years ago, it was a negative feeling. It is true that difficulties will be encountered periodically. Industrial difficulties will always exist for any Government that has been in government for any period. Nevertheless, there is a feeling of optimism, a recognition that the Cain Government is a good Government and that is has managed well.

The Government’s economic strategy is emerging as a strong supporting factor in the economic growth of the State.

The Government has committed itself to taxation restraint, and tax relief is provided for in the Budget. However, that has not inhibited significant social developments in employment, and I refer especially to the Youth Guarantee Scheme.

It is pleasing to note that the creative input of the Cain Government has been picked up by the Federal Government. The Cain Government introduced the employment initiatives program and the Federal Government followed on with the Community Employment Program. Both of those programs are aimed at enhancing the capacity of people to be employed.

The Youth Guarantee Scheme, which to some extent has been emulated by the Federal Government, is an important initiative that was one of the significant policies promoted at the last State election campaign.

It appears the Opposition has forgotten that Victoria has the lowest rate of teenage unemployment in Australia. However, much more needs to be done to ensure that young persons have greater access to training and to more jobs. In that area the Government has been singularly successful. The Government has responded to the Kirby and Blackburn reports on the needs of young persons to have more opportunities for training and more jobs.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fogarty)—Order! The honourable member for Malvern is interjecting. I want the Clerk to note that this is the last warning I will give the honourable member.

Mr Williams—Mr Deputy Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the House. A quorum was formed.

Mrs TONER—The Youth Guarantee Scheme is one of the major initiatives contained in the Budget. All honourable members would be interested in the welfare of young persons in that vulnerable age group of fifteen to eighteen years. All honourable members
would be pleased to note that every young Victorian is guaranteed opportunities for education, training, full-time employment or a combination of education and training.

Some educationalists do not understand that there needs to be a change in the emphasis of education as a result of the current situation. Partly due to technical and further education facilities, Victoria has a higher retention rate of students in schools than do other States. Approximately 54 per cent of young persons in Victoria remain in education until the end of secondary school, as opposed to approximately 50 per cent in other States. The Government is to be commended on that retention rate.

I commend the Government on an excellent Budget. I am proud to be part of the Cain Government which has produced such a Budget. I regret deeply that the Opposition has presented no credible alternative Budget. It has brought forward nothing. I thought it was a requirement of an Opposition to come forward with an alternative package.

When the Labor Party was in opposition it enhanced the Westminster system by being a credible Opposition. However, these days there is no input from the Opposition, which appears to be waiting to return to its traditional power base. However, it is not that easy because the Opposition has to come up with sound propositions before it can gain government. It was not the Liberal Party which lost office; it was the Labor Party which won office by putting forward credible policies. I am proud that in this Budget the Government has demonstrated its capacity to carry out those policies.

Mr PERRIN (Bulleen)—As one of the newer members of the House this is the first occasion on which I have had an opportunity to discuss the Budget Papers. It is not a pleasant task to examine those papers and to discover the story they tell.

It appears to be my burden from time to time to follow the honourable member for Greensborough in debate. I shall refer to some of the comments the honourable member made.

Victoria has the unenviable distinction of being the highest taxed State and having the worst inflation rate.

There are many economic indicators which show that Victoria is not the best economically performing State. Victoria has a high spending Government that is prepared to buy votes. I shall refer to that wasteful expenditure.

The Government has a high borrowing policy and is prepared to mortgage future generations. The Government has a reputation of selling off the assets of the State. Who could forget when the Government tried to sell off a dam? That was one of the most outrageous propositions I had ever heard of. No other State or country would attempt to sell off one of its water storages.

The Government is running up debts all over the State. I refer to the deferred liabilities in compulsory third-party insurance. The State Insurance Office has run up debts that totalled $1600 million as at June of this year. Those debts will have to be paid for by future generations of Australians.

The one clear thread that has run through all of the Government’s Budgets is the short-term nature of its decisions. The Government does not think past the following financial year.

A burden is being placed on future generations. Members of the Government are fond of rhetoric, but they are not good at action.

A different path could have been taken by the Government for this Budget and Victoria could have gone in a different direction. The majority of Victorians wanted to keep inflation and taxes down, but the Government has created crises in all sorts of fields and has then paid money to settle these crises. That is the standard \textit{modus operandi} of the Government.
The despicable situation exists in the health area where 25 700 people are on the waiting lists of hospitals for operations. Those people are in pain. They have paid their taxes, they want an operation but they cannot get it. Not one member on the Government side has referred to health, it appears that they do not want to discuss that subject. Yesterday, the nurses in Victoria were on strike but no mention was made of that by honourable members opposite. Doctors have withheld their services at various hospitals and emergency procedures have been withheld. For example, the casualty section of the Royal Melbourne Hospital was closed by a dispute.

Another crisis area is housing. The Government does not have a good record in providing public housing and during the four years that this Government has been in office waiting lists for public housing have increased from 17 000 to 24 000. That is not a record of which to be proud.

The crime rate in Victoria is increasing. Prior to the 1982 election a promise was made to the people of Victoria that the Police Force would be increased by an additional 1000 men but that has not occurred. Even to this point in time the increase in the number of police has not increased to anywhere near that figure. That is a broken promise. The Neesham report which has just been published calls for more police and I will be interested to see whether the Government puts the recommendations contained in that report into practice.

In transport, the trains do not run on time and there has been no increase in services. There has been a massive increase in the transport bureaucracy—a massive 645 per cent increase in the administration of transport over the past four years. The trains are still not running on time. In the past few days the accounts for V/Line and the Metropolitan Transit Authority were released and those accounts show losses for which the Government is responsible. If one wants a clear indication of why the chief executive of the Metropolitan Transit Authority is leaving that authority, that is it.

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fogarty)—Order! The honourable member for Geelong should cease interjecting.

Mr PERRIN—Today the three teacher unions were on strike for the first time since the Government came into office. The majority of teachers belonging to the Victorian Secondary Teachers Association and the Victorian Teachers Union, who are mainly involved in the primary school area, had the common sense to stay at school and keep the schools open. No mention has been made by the Government about that strike. Members of the Government ring their hands and are upset about these strikes, but when it comes to putting their words into practice nothing happens. Over the past few years the Government has thrown money at the teacher unions and now that it has stopped the teachers are upset and are withdrawing their labour. The majority of teachers have decided not to abide by the recommendation of their union and have not gone on strike. That is good for the people of Victoria.

I remind honourable members that a former Premier of this State, the Honourable Lindsay Thompson, is reported in today’s Herald as having made the salient point that he believed it was the role of teachers to lead their students and to show them by leadership what needs to be done in future. That is leading by example. It is interesting to note that at least some teachers are taking his advice.

When I began my speech I stated that Victoria was the highest taxed State in Australia, and that is true. I seek leave to have incorporated in Hansard a document headed “Table 1”.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! Has the honourable member shown the table to the Speaker?

Mr PERRIN—Yes, I have.
Leave was granted, and the table was as follows:

**Table 1**

**SIZE OF STATE GOVERNMENT 1984-85**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Taxation from Own Sources per Head of Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>$1,147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.S.W.</td>
<td>$1,069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.A.</td>
<td>$1,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>$958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.A.</td>
<td>$956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>$907</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Variation between Victoria and Queensland is 26.5%)


Mr PERRIN—The table shows the size of State Government for 1984-85 and compares all of the State Governments in Australia during that year. To the discredit of Victoria, Victoria is the highest taxed State per head of population. There is a difference of 26.5 per cent between the highest taxed State, Victoria, and the lowest taxed State which is Queensland. That says something about the policies of the Government and makes it clear that Victoria is the highest taxed State in Australia.

After four years of Cain Government the taxation revenue has increased by 72.9 per cent, which is far in excess of the rate of inflation; in fact, it is double the rate of inflation. The taxation increase in this State alone will be 10.6 per cent or 2.6 per cent in real terms because the Budget estimates inflation to be at 8 per cent. If one takes an inflation rate of 8 per cent it is significant that that is about double the rate of inflation for the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development countries, our trading partners in Japan, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and France. If one examines the inflation rate—and we have to compete with them on the international market—Victoria’s rate is about double—which makes our ability to trade overseas that much more difficult. When one considers the sinking dollar, the Australian dollar is down to about 70 cents and that will place pressures on the economy. That demonstrates what four years of the Cain Government has done for inflation.

I remind the House of some increases in taxation that have occurred over the past four years. There has been an increase in the rate of pay-roll tax and in stamp duty on land transfers of approximately 90 per cent and a stamp duty has been placed on chattels when a person sells a house. There has been an increase in land tax and an additional surcharge on land tax over $936,000. There has been an increase in petrol tax. Everyone in the community has to pay petrol tax.

Tobacco tax has been increased; a new tax has been imposed on the Board of Works, the Gas and Fuel Corporation and the Grain Elevators Board; another entirely new tax is the financial institutions duty.

Mr Jolly—Are you going to take it off?

Mr PERRIN—The Liberal Party has promised to rescind that. A clear election promise was made, and the removal of that tax would benefit the entire community.

Prior to the 1982 election, the Labor Party promised that taxes would not be increased; yet honourable members find new taxes and increases all along the line. The Government now promises that increases in taxes and charges will be kept below movements in the consumer price index. The result is interesting to see, especially in relation to the Board of Works charges. The message I am receiving from my constituents is that most of them are receiving bills indicating increases that are well above the movement of the consumer price index. People are in fear of increases in the future.
If that were the only matter we had to worry about, that would be enough. However, there has also been waste, and I am particularly concerned about the levels of waste. I refer to a letter I received dated 7 October from the Returned Services League, a copy of which I understand was sent to all honourable members. I shall read to the House some of the grants that have been made to community groups, and honourable members can judge for themselves how useful those grants have been. Grants have been made to: Action for World Development, $38 644; International Development Action Group, $36 066; the Congress for International Co-operation and Disarmament, $65 664; the Australian Union of Students, $54 014; Radio 3CR, $18 503; here is the beauty—the Latrobe Valley Art Resource Collective, $86 324 to establish a school for clowns, and I would suggest that that certainly was not taxpayers' money that was spent well; the CEP Workshop on Women, $20 915; the Victorian Association of Peace Studies, $19 088; Pax Christi Resource Centre, $79 808; one that will obviously draw a response from honourable members opposite—the Gay Publications Collective, $70 762; Correct Line Graphics, $52 518, and that body is associated with the Gay Publications Collective.

Mr SHELL (Geelong)—On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, I ask the honourable member to identify the document from which he is reading.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fogarty)—Order! The honourable member identified the document prior to making his submission. However, while I am on my feet, I shall take the opportunity of requesting members on the Government benches to desist from unruly and disorderly interjections.

Mr PERRIN (Bulleen)—Grants were also made to: the Friends of the Earth, $146 000 and $50 172; the Food Justice Centre, $62 513; the Student Press Project, $230 000; Open Channel, $31 097; the Gay Publications Co-operative Limited, $32 121; again, the Correct Line Graphics, $16 919.

Those grants were all of doubtful benefit to the community. If those funds were channelled back to the community in tax cuts, the community would benefit rather than just a few friends of the Australian Labor Party.

Reading further in the letter one notes large payments to the trade union movement, a movement that is well financed as it receives substantial funds from its own sources and does not need taxpayers' money. Those grants were to: the metal workers union, $40 000 for extra staff; to the Victorian Trades Hall Council, $81 957, $174 414, $15 120, $88 785, $8000, $17 000, $2500, $28 000; the Victorian Teachers Union, which has been out on strike today, $108 000; the Ballarat Trades and Labour Council, $32 287; the Trade Union Information Centre, $300 000; and the Australian Railways Union, $7500. Those grants are to me a sure sign that the Government is prepared to waste taxpayers' funds.

There has been a massive increase in the bureaucracy with the employment of an additional 13 500 public servants and a 645 per cent increase in the transport bureaucracy, as well as the massive increase in the use of consultants that was clearly outlined by the honourable member for Brighton. Honourable members can note that money has not been well spent in this Budget or in previous Labor Budgets.

It is interesting that the Treasurer and others on the Government benches say that this is a Budget of restraint. I invite honourable members to examine the figures. The Government says that a productivity cut of 1 per cent will be made across all departments, and that will be increased to 1.5 per cent in the future. The Government is talking about an early retirement scheme for its employees, but no one has given costings of that to the Victorian consumer. The Government talked about taxation incentives. A miserly $27.95 million, which represents 1-3 per cent of the total Budget, is supposedly devoted to tax cuts. Most of it is accounted for by the $25 million reduction in stamp duty on workers compensation insurance premiums, but I ask: how much in interest will the Government gather from the WorkCare premiums that will be put in place? The Budget outlays have increased by 10-6 per cent. I should like to hear the Government's definition of restraint. I cannot see any indication of restraint in that evidence.
The Government is prepared to sell off all the assets it can get its hands on. I refer the House to page 36 of the report of the Auditor-General for the year ended 30 June 1985, where he says in relation to the sale of transport assets:

The amount received in 1984–85 totalled $59·8 million.
In 1983–84 it was $299·6 million.

The reduction of $239·8 million in the proceeds from the sale of the assets was due largely to the reduction in the availability of assets to sell.

In other words, the Auditor-General was telling the Parliament that the Government was running out of assets to sell. Honourable members should take note of that. His report continued:

In contrast there was an increase in borrowings by transport authorities from $113·1 million in 1983–84 to $352·1 million in 1984–85 to finance their capital works.

The Government has finished selling off the assets and is now on a borrowing kick. It has sold everything it can get its hands on and there is nothing left, so it has gone on a borrowing spree. That is the information that has been made available to Parliament by the Auditor-General.

I remind honourable members that there are many economic indicators. The economic indicators prepared by the honourable member for Brighton reveal that all is not bright and shiny in the State of Victoria. I seek leave to incorporate in Hansard a document headed "Table 2".

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fogarty)—Has the table been referred to the Speaker?

Mr PERRIN—Yes, Sir.

Leave was granted, and the table was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retail sales increase 12 months to 31/7/85</td>
<td>12·1%</td>
<td>7·5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor vehicle registration increase 3 months to 31/8/85</td>
<td>3·4%</td>
<td>(1·9%) Decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private sector residential building approvals increase year ended 31/8/85</td>
<td>(3·1%) Decline</td>
<td>(6·0%) Decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private sector non-residential building approvals increase year ended 31/8/85</td>
<td>62·1%</td>
<td>34·2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lending increase by major banks 3 months to 31/7/85</td>
<td>24·7%</td>
<td>18·7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sector employment increase quarter ended June 1985</td>
<td>1·7%</td>
<td>3·7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market sector employment increase year ended 30/5/85</td>
<td>2·6%</td>
<td>1·7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Summary of graphs 1 to 6 as presented by the member for Brighton on 15/10/85

Mr PERRIN—I do not wish to deal with the table further except to say that the statistics provided by the honourable member for Brighton clearly demonstrate that all is not rosy in the Victorian economy. It is worse than that. Opposition members have already spoken about the high inflation rate and how it is double that of our Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development partners. Members of the Opposition have spoken about how the Australian dollar has been deflated and how the effects of its drop in value have yet to be felt in the Victorian community.

I remind honourable members that interest rates on home loans are at their highest ever, with bank interest rates at 13·5 per cent. In 1982 bank interest rates were less than 10 per cent. That does not represent a good performance by the Government.
The people of Victoria are unhappy about paying these high interest rates on their mortgages. When one examines the total interest paid on borrowings one gathers that the total interest payment in Victoria compared with other States is well above the total level of population. In other words, Victoria has the highest level of interest on borrowings of any State.

If one summarizes the economic performance of the Government, without any shadow of a doubt, one finds that the public sector is growing at the expense of the private sector. Consumption expenditure is growing and this is denying investment expenditure. This is not particularly good for the State.

I turn now to the State debt. I do not intend to discuss what is contained in the Budget Papers. I shall examine the total State debt from the Budget and non-Budget sectors. The Opposition has calculated the debt as at 30 June to be $25,292 million, which works out at $6170 per head of population. That is a shocking situation and that amount has been built up by more than 50 per cent since the Labor Government has been in office.

Future generations will have to pay the high interest rates back to the lenders. That is the type of performance that will have a severe impact on the Victorian community in the near future, if it is not already doing so.

I have already disclosed the fact that there are record undisclosed losses in various organizations. The accumulated losses of the State Insurance Office are $1600 million. There are deficits in almost all Public Service superannuation funds. These moneys must be paid by someone. The workers compensation system for Government employees has been a pay-as-you-go system since June 1984. According to the Auditor-General, the fund liabilities have built up to $341 million. The Government introduced the WorkCare program, which will run up enormous unfunded debts for the State which future generations will have to pay.

Worse than that, the Auditor-General has thought it necessary again to refer in his report to unsatisfactory financial performance. I refer to Schedule B on page 68 of the Auditor-General's Report of June 1985, which sets out clearly the level of foreign exchange losses in the State which last year alone amounted to $373 million.

Prior to that the accumulated foreign exchange losses were $70 million. It is of tremendous importance to the Auditor-General that all these losses have not been picked up in the books of the Department of Management and Budget or in the books of statutory authorities, such as the State Electricity Commission.

Recently I had the misfortune of examining the State Electricity Commission accounts for the year ended June 1985. The accounts show the accounting changes that have been made in the books of that organization. If those changes had not been made, the commission would have made a loss. Accounting changes were made so that the commission could last year pay a dividend of $70 million to the State Treasury. It is interesting to note that last year's Budget allowed for $126 million worth of revenue from the commission.

I should have loved to have been a fly on the wall at the meeting of the Treasurer, and perhaps the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources, and representatives of the commission when they spoke about the huge reduction in State revenue. There is a hell of a difference between $126 million and $70 million, which was all the Treasurer got through the dividend from the commission. This will have a further impact on the borrowings of the commission.

I have been very unhappy about the way in which the Budget Papers have been presented. I have recently studied the Budget Papers from British Columbia in Canada and the Budgets of those countries provide information that is not provided in Victoria. Firstly, they have balance sheets. Secondly, they have accrual accounting, which means they pick up all the costs. They have disclosures of borrowings on both Budget and non-Budget sectors. They project both debt and tax levels and make a clear distinction between...
recurring and capital expenditure, which is something one could not say for this Government.

Had the Liberal Party won the last election there would have been a tax freeze for one year. There would have been a freeze on all energy charges until June 1986. There was a real need for tax cuts; there was not a need for a 10.6 per cent increase in taxes. There was a need for restraint and, with the election of the Liberal Party, the community would have got it.

The Victorian economy has a manufacturing base and we need export-oriented businesses and import-substitution businesses. The people of Victoria wanted a people-oriented Budget with productivity savings used to reduce the taxation levels, which are too high considering the type of debt and interest payments future generations will have to meet.

Mr J. F. McGrath (Warrnambool)—I join the debate to represent the electorate of Warrnambool. I take the House back four months to 24 June, when honourable members will remember the demonstration of 35 000 to 40 000 farmers who met on the steps of Parliament House and marched through the city. The farmers were expressing their desperation and their desire to achieve something that would give them lifestyles that were equal to but no better than the lifestyle of anybody else, brought about by economic returns.

The following day an article in the Sun said:

The farmers of Victoria arose and marched on the City of Melbourne yesterday. They took it over in a cheerful coup.

This was no desperate peasant revolt with bloody pitchforks, slashing scythes or plunging dagging shears.

Instead, it was victory by 35 000 voices chanting “fair go.”

Everyone would agree that the demonstration of the farmers was creditable and passive, even though their situation was—and still is—desperate. Someone was heard to say later in the day, “We just don’t want things to get any worse; we just want a fair go”. That is a fair enough request from anyone living in this State.

In his response on the steps of Parliament House, the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs is reported in the Age as having said that he believed the farmers were “the backbone of the economy of this State.” He is further reported as having said:

“I want you to know I support this rally”, he said. “It’s an opportunity to promote some understanding of the importance of rural industries to Victoria.

“It’s quite clear city people don’t have enough understanding of the problems.

“Very few people understand that you get almost no return for the capital you put in and most people don’t understand the problems of the overseas markets and the cost-price squeeze you are in”, Mr Walker told the rally. “I understand that because I have moved through the rural communities and I have seen the problems you are having”.

Unfortunately, when the Budget was brought down, agriculture suffered badly at the hands of the Treasurer. The agriculture budget increased by 2.7 per cent, which in real terms is a reduction of 5 per cent. The Budget will be remembered as the occasion when Victoria’s struggling rural economy was cut adrift and country Victorians were left to fend for themselves by the Cain Labor Government.

Honourable members should remember that Victoria’s primary producers, particularly dairy farmers, are now in the heavy production period of their season. They do not have time to take their grievances into the public arena or to the Government. When the season is over—if the rains do not come as expected, the season will be over sooner than in other years—farmers will be faced with a declining income and with increasing overhead debts, particularly interest rates. Many people in north-eastern Victoria are in desperate need of financial assistance to get them through this time of enormous reduction in income and rising costs.
If farmers were able to index commodities, their situation would be much better than it is today. They do not have that facility available to them, but commodities such as power and fuel are indexed and are continually rising. Despite the fact that the volume of Victorian rural exports increased by 19.5 per cent in 1984-85, farming returns are estimated to have declined by 47 per cent. The forecast for 1985-86 is not much brighter.

Many country Victorians are in enormous difficulty because of interest payment commitments on farms and are facing reduced incomes because of soaring overhead costs.

Earlier in the debate the honourable member for Lowan referred to petrol prices. When one considers the commuting distances of people living in the country, one realizes that petrol is a vital commodity. In the metropolitan area petrol can be purchased for as low as 46.9 cents a litre, as I witnessed in the western suburbs today, yet in country Victoria people are paying 59 cents a litre. Whenever country Victorians travel, they must use private vehicles because they do not have access to public transport facilities that metropolitan people have through the Met system. Farmers are trying not only to make a living but also to survive: they are surviving, not living.

The Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs told the gathering on the steps of Parliament House that he saw the plight of the farmers and recognized that they were vital to Victoria. It is disappointing that primary producers have suffered a 5 per cent reduction in real terms in the Budget allocation. The Budget does nothing to attempt to arrest the declining rural economy in 1985-86. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs has been singled out for excessively harsh treatment. Last year the staff of the department was reduced by 120 personnel. Surely a department that must be considered significant to the well-being of rural Victoria and the primary producer should not be so shabbily treated.

It is obvious that, with a further reduction of 5 per cent in real terms, the department will consider a further reduction in personnel, which will again reduce services to country Victorians. Although this year's Budget Papers do not make a similar announcement about staff cuts, one can assume a staff reduction will occur, although one does not know the number.

Another issue of concern to the electorate of Warrnambool involves the inadequacy of the Warrnambool police station. This has been an ongoing saga for ten to fifteen years. Police officers, charged with the responsibility of providing a society free of criminal activity and violence, are forced to work in sub-standard conditions. I was interested to hear the long dissertation of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services last week when he spoke about the new police stations the Government is building in country Victoria. The Minister would remember that he made a commitment to some people associated with the police station in Warrnambool that when the Labor Party was elected in 1982 he would ensure that Warrnambool had a new police station.

Warrnambool does not have a new police station. It is now spread over four locations. What a terrific set-up for a provincial city of 23,000 people and substantial properties in surrounding farming districts. Some policemen are 6 or 7 kilometres from Warrnambool and others are spread around three locations in the city. These policemen are expected to co-ordinate the activities of crime prevention and keep peace and harmony in society.

The Government has not done anything to address farming problems and has not attempted to foster the morale of the Police Force in Warrnambool. I am sure that police officers stationed in Warrnambool are bitterly disappointed that they have not heard that the Government intends to draw up plans and proposals to build a police station. The Government has not even taken that step.

The local council stated that it is prepared to close off Gillies Street which the current police station fronts, to provide sufficient room to locate the complete police facility in that location. However, even that offer has not generated any activity by the Minister to provide plans and proposals for a new police station in Warrnambool. Because of the...
importance of the image in the community of police being able to fight crime and associated activities, the Government should review its priorities and provide country Victoria with some of the facilities that members of the Police Force and public servants working in those buildings see their metropolitan brothers and sisters being awarded.

Another problem I raise concerns the State Electricity Commission funding and severe cutbacks in overtime and personnel available for maintenance and the extension of industrial and commercial power to some developments to the west of Warrnambool. I shall deal mainly with a specific commercial development now on the drawing board which was supposed to be opened on 11 December 1985.

The organization was advised by the State Electricity Commission that because of reductions in funding it is not able to provide the facility with power until March 1986. That is not acceptable. This commercial venture planned to move from one facility, a facility no longer available to it after 11 December, into another facility to obtain what must be the best two or three weeks of trade for that period.

A similar situation exists with a take-away chicken outlet. It is preparing its facility for the Christmas holidays but it too, cannot obtain electric power until March 1986.

When funding cuts are made consideration should be given to words often heard around the House, “economic development”. The Government often talks about the economic development of Victoria, yet here we have people who are prepared to invest in Victoria but who are restricted by the lack of electric power, something that should be mandatory for an area like Warrnambool.

The honourable member for Greensborough mentioned youth unemployment, and all honourable members are concerned about youth unemployment, but here are businesses that would employ fifteen youths in one instance and eight youths in the other that are unable to obtain power from the State Electricity Commission, thus denying these young people employment over the Christmas period.

The Warrnambool Surf Life Saving Club has a concern about ongoing funds, as do all surf life saving clubs in Victoria. The City of Warrnambool has an enormous influx of visitors over the Christmas period, as do many coastal towns and cities. The main beach of Warrnambool is used extensively by visitors to the town and their lives are in the hands of the Warrnambool Surf Life Saving Club, which does a magnificent job. The club is a voluntary organization, but it is now no longer possible for it to service the beach in the manner demanded for reasonable levels of safety. In the past some funding was available from the Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation, along with private sponsors who have supported surf life saving clubs over many years. The British Petroleum Company of Australia Limited has been a magnificent sponsor of surf life saving clubs and has contributed many thousands of dollars to these organizations.

Because of its enormous contribution to tourism, as well as sport and recreation, I believe the Ministry of Transport, the Victorian Tourism Commission and the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands should assist in the ongoing viability of this valuable service, not just for Warrnambool but also for other coastal areas serviced by life saving clubs.

It is a disturbing experience to witness a drowning or near drowning. Life savers are professionals who are qualified to do the jobs they do. Honourable members, as representatives of their constituents, have a responsibility to provide a safety mechanism that ensures that people enjoy their holidays without the fear of getting into difficulties in the surf, perhaps by some careless act or through ignorance.

The Phillip Migrant Hostel at Maribyrnong will stop operating in 1986. That prospect is causing considerable concern in Warrnambool, as in other areas of country Victoria. Many country students have to make a decision to come to Melbourne to further their education because of the lack of opportunities in their own regions. The Warrnambool
Institute of Advanced Education is a magnificent facility that provides excellent courses, but it is restricted in the number of courses it can provide.

Students who wish to go outside the parameters of the courses provided at the institute have to come to Melbourne, in most cases. One of the fears they have concerns adequate or appropriate accommodation. That is certainly a fear their parents express when the students leave home for the first time. Their parents are concerned about the environment in which they will live, the food they will eat and the supervision they might receive. The Phillip hostel has been a relief to parents of country students because the services provided have been excellent. The hostel has tremendous support, almost double its capacity. Students and administrators were happy with the operation of the hostel. Students paid $65 a week and honourable members must bear in mind that their Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme allowance is low and in many cases they fall back on their parents for financial assistance.

It is a trauma for country students to leave home for the first time because of the change of lifestyle. Appropriate and adequate accommodation at a reasonable price should be available to alleviate the financial pressures that fall, for the most part, on the parents. It is disgraceful that the Government is considering the removal of this facility for country people. I urge the Government to make alternative options available for country students in 1986 because many of them are now facing final examinations and they have a fear hanging over them about where they will be accommodated next year. That is not conducive to good study and good results.

The Purnim Primary School, which is in the electorate I represent, is a two-room school catering for a country community. The school council is concerned about adequate fire safety within the building. There is only one exit from the school, through a door at the end of the school. Children have to come out of both rooms into a passageway and then proceed down that passageway to the exit doors. The school is located in an area that has a high risk of fire during the summer period and the school council is concerned because it received a response from a Government department indicating that no funds were available for alterations to the school.

Secondly, and importantly, there are many schools in Victoria in the same condition, which is not a reason for allowing that criterion to exist. Thirdly, we have not so far had a traumatic experience involving bad fires at our schools. I do not think that is a justified response to a genuine problem. A handicapped Aboriginal boy who is in a wheelchair attends the school and the school council is extremely concerned about his ability to get out of the premises in the event of a disaster. If the Education Department allocation will not at present allow problems of fire safety to be addressed perhaps the Budget should be reconsidered so that something can be done about child safety, which should be a priority.

I turn now to the funding of a group within the Police Force called the Delta Task Force. Although it is still in existence, it is much smaller than it was originally. Those who work in the field of drug abuse, prostitution, and especially in the field of caring for our youth know that many of our youth are subject to abuse by paedophiles, homosexuals and adults involved in child prostitution and they believe the Delta Task Force was effective in stamping out many of these problems.

Unfortunately, the Government some time ago made a decision to reduce the funding to this valuable unit within the Victoria Police Force. I spoke recently to a person involved in fieldwork in this area and some of the stories he told me would astound honourable members. There are many honourable members who are not aware of what goes on in the streets of our cities, especially in the streets of the City of Melbourne.

When one hears of the abuse of boys aged 9, 10, 12 and 13 years by people who are obviously well-to-do because of the way in which they go about their business, one realizes that Parliament and the Government have a responsibility to ensure that the Delta Task Force is restored to its original strength. I have brought to the House this week—I hope it will be tabled in the morning—a petition from the City of Warrnambool bearing the
signatures of 3800 people who believe strongly in the restoration of the original Delta Task Force.

That is something that the Government could make a priority in this year—International Youth Year, a year in which we have heard about drugs and associated problems—to protect children aged from 8, 10 or 12 years. Surely we have that responsibility. I urge the Government to reconsider funding the task force so that it can go on with its work and serve as a source of encouragement to the people working in the field.

The housing situation in the electorate of Warrnambool is of continuing concern because of the growth of numbers on the waiting list. At this stage, with 360 to 370 people on the waiting list for various types of housing, it appears that the number is increasing. The Government must address the development of units in Warrnambool, such as those in many other centres, to house the ageing. There is a need to provide accommodation for elderly people so that they will be encouraged to move out of their three-bedroom homes making them available for low income families who are currently on the waiting list for accommodation.

The electorate has been delighted with the Government grant of $200 000 for a new art gallery in Warrnambool. Work on that project has just commenced and it is hoped that that will be completed at an early date. It is also delighted with the funding for the transfer of nurse training from the Warrnambool and District Base Hospital to the Warrnambool Institute of Advanced Education, a move that has enormous support from everyone involved in that sphere. The people of Warrnambool appreciate those considerations.

Miss CALLISTER (Morwell)—I never fail to be amazed by the hypocrisy of the opposition parties when they claim that the Labor Government is spending too much money. I have been keeping a running costing of requests made by them during the debate on the motion for the adjournment of the last sitting through other mechanisms, many are for funds for their electorates. My conservative estimate in the last sessional period was approximately $2.2 billion for works and services in their electorates.

This sessional period is shaping up to be one of similar proportion and it will probably be that by the end of the year there will be requests for approximately $9 billion on top of what electorates they represent will receive through the Budget.

Miss CALLISTER—At the end of the year I shall make available to the House a document substantiating that statement. If these requests were met it would require an increase in taxation at State level of approximately 200 per cent and I ask the shadow Treasurer what he has dreamed by way of increased taxes and charges that would enable him to foot the bill for the requests made by his colleagues.

During the election campaign, the Liberal Party proposed a significant increase in the price of petrol to finance some of its proposals but beyond that it has been silent. Tonight again they will not be silent on funding for works and services in their electorates.

I remind honourable members of the position the State was in when the Cain Labor Government took office.

I refer particularly to the Latrobe Valley. The cold hard fact is that the over-all economic situation was moving in reverse at a rapid rate. The lack of growth was plainly a disaster scenario for the Latrobe Valley, the economic heart of which, of course, is based on the power industry and electricity sales. It does not take an economic genius to understand that, if negative economic growth is occurring, that is quickly felt in the valley through reduced demand for electricity.

What was the Liberal Party’s legacy? In its last term of office, it presided over massive power price hikes. In a document that the Labor Party released during the last State election entitled, “Latrobe Valley: the next 4 years”, it identified the increases that have occurred in average terms and in real terms. I shall quote some figures to illustrate what
the picture looked like in the Liberal Party's last term of office. In 1979–80, there was an average 11.7 per cent increase, which, in real terms, was 3.9 per cent. In 1980–81, it was plus 14.6 per cent; which represented a 4.6 per cent increase, in real terms. In 1981–82, there was an average 19.7 per cent increase, which, in real terms, was a massive 10.3 per cent hike.

Mr Cooper—Mr Acting Speaker, I direct your attention to the state of the House.
A quorum was formed.

Miss CALLISTER—If the pricing policies of the Liberal Party had continued in 1982–83, there would have been an average increase of about 27 per cent in that year. Obviously, these sorts of price increases were driving industry out of the State, to such an extent that there was a rapid plunge in job growth, and I shall return to that subject later.

It was bad news for fellow Victorian workers and for the work force of the Latrobe Valley, not to mention low income earners and household consumers generally. If the trend had continued, it would have spelt disaster, in capital letters, to the Latrobe Valley and to my electorate.

Added to that situation was the Liberal Party's total inability to negotiate a suitable power pricing agreement with Alcoa of Australia Ltd. When the Labor Government came to office, that process had been put on ice and, when it took the helm, it had to set to, as a matter of priority, to renegotiate power pricing arrangements and other arrangements in connection with the Alcoa project. That major achievement of the Cain Labor Government has now commenced and employs about 1800 construction workers. Also, the first potline will be completed in November 1986; and, of course, many other job flow-ons are occurring because of the construction and manufacturing work taking place off the site.

In summary, the situation under the Liberal Government looked incredibly bleak for the Latrobe Valley. The bust after the boom was shaping up to be absolutely massive. However, fortunately, the Liberal Party was not re-elected in 1982 and a Cain Labor Government was put in its place as a result of the wisdom of Victorian voters.

What were the Labor Government's first priorities in terms of the Latrobe Valley and the Victorian economy generally? The Labor Government immediately set to work to reverse the power price hikes that had taken place under the Liberal Government. In this context, I shall quote the comparative situation that has emerged under this Government, which is in stark contrast to the experience of the last three years of Liberal Government. In 1982–83, there was a real increase in the price of power of 4 per cent, or an average increase of 15 per cent in current $1 terms. In 1983–84, there was a real decrease of 3.3 per cent; in 1984–85, there was a real decrease of 3.2 per cent; and in 1985–86, the figure will be 2 or 3 per cent below the expected inflation rate.

Obviously, the Labor Government's achievements in that regard show the importance to workers in the Latrobe Valley of having a Labor Government. Reductions in the real price of electricity have revived the competitiveness of our main industry, the power industry.

The impact of all this can be seen on stimulated new industry and job growth elsewhere in the State which, as I said, means jobs in the Latrobe Valley as well.

Another achievement of the Labor Government has been the continuation of the Loy Yang project, which has been proceeded with, whereas under the Liberal Government there was every possibility that that project would be stopped. If the Liberal Party would not have stopped it, I have a suggestion of what it would have done. I suggest that the former Liberal Government had its eyes on closing the Hazelwood power station, which employs more than 1000 workers.

At the time of the election, when the Labor Party announced its four-year promises for the Latrobe Valley and agreed to promote the plant life extension program of Hazelwood, the Liberal Party spokesperson on energy, the honourable member for Portland, said that
it was merely a payoff to standover men. That statement stands on its own and indicates—or at least provides a strong hint of—what the Liberal Party would have done with the Hazelwood power station.

We are thankful for the wisdom of Victorians in returning a Labor Government in this State for a second term of office to consolidate and build upon the excellent economic record and foundation that it laid in its first term of office.

I return to my initial point, that State Labor Governments have framed great prosperity and economic growth for Victoria. Victoria leads the nation in virtually every economic aspect. I should like to point out a few details that graphically illustrate that point. For example, job growth in Victoria since the lowest period of the recession in April 1983 has been 14.1 per cent, whereas the figure for the rest of Australia was only 9.8 per cent of job growth.

Victoria has the lowest unemployment rate in Australia—6.8 per cent compared with an average of more than 8 per cent in the other States. Housing starts in Victoria last year were 23 per cent compared with a national figure of 13.7 per cent. Honourable members can glean from those figures that Victoria is leading the nation, and the current Budget will enhance that position of national leadership that has emerged under the Cain Government and Jolly Budgets.

The Budget especially emphasizes youth. It provides significant resources to get on with training and job opportunities for young people in accordance with the Labor Party's election promise, and the Government intends keeping faith with young people and their families by honouring its obligations in that regard.

I draw attention to the following facts: in 1984-85 Victoria had the highest apprenticeship intake in this State since the 1977-78 record, with an increase of 27.6 per cent last year. There was a 25.5 per cent reduction in youth unemployment between July 1984 and July 1985—three times better than the rest of Australia is doing.

Victoria has the lowest youth unemployment rate in Australia but the Government wants to do even better, and I shall explain how it will do better. Victoria had a 6.1 per cent growth in new jobs between July 1984 and July 1985, whereas the rest of Australia had a decline. The Government announced 575 work study positions in August 1985 and will announce a further 850 work study positions to be filled by the end of 1985.

Voluntary early retirement, which was part of the associated strategies related to the Youth Guarantee Scheme, is progressively being implemented as a policy. I note that this has recently been negotiated in relation to employees of the Gas and Fuel Corporation.

I shall now deal with further actions the Government will take to meet its obligations under the Youth Guarantee Scheme. It will provide more relevant and attractive school courses and structures following on the Blackburn report, and increase the number of higher education places. The Budget provides for extra places in tertiary institutions to fulfil that promise.

An Honourable Member—Get excited.

Miss CALLISTER—Honourable members opposite do not find this exciting, but then they never do find the topic exciting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! The honourable member should ignore disorderly interjections by members of the Opposition.

Miss CALLISTER—It is obvious that members of the Opposition never find the topic of youth exciting. They have chosen to take a glib attitude towards youth.

All that young people would have received under a Liberal Government would have been a short sharp shaft. They would have received from foot and mouth a diet of words, words, words. That is a very poor substitute indeed for jobs, jobs, jobs and training. That is what young people want. Fortunately, the Liberal Party was not elected—we were.
I turn to specific items which are of relevance to my electorate. In the regional policy statement for the Latrobe Valley, the Labor Government stated that it would fund important regional projects on a needs basis. This year the Budget includes $3·6 million for development works. As honourable members are aware, the development works are monitored and submitted to the Latrobe Regional Commission, a body set up by the Government to ensure that local regional input is real and meaningful to overcome the problems involved of a remote central government carrying out decision making.

The projects approved include $60 000 for the Mitchell House Hostel in Morwell, an important service for senior citizens. That contribution builds on previous funds from the State Government to that project. A $15 000 contribution has been approved for the Latrobe Valley airfield master plan. Funds for important roadworks have been approved, including a contribution of $150 000, to upgrade Hazelwood Road which has borne a lot of stress associated with the development of the Loy Yang power station. Traffic management works in Traralgon have received $160 000 and, in Morwell, $128 000.

A little outside the central Latrobe Valley, but in an area which nevertheless makes an important contribution to the area and a recreational outlet is the Lake Narracan camping facility, for which the Government has approved $20 000 for its improvement. The Walhalla historical restoration project has received $80 000 which will enhance the tourist potential of Walhalla and thereby generate economic activity based on tourism for that township and surrounding townships.

A community resource centre in Traralgon has had a $240 000 contribution approved by the Government. That centre has been widely welcomed by community service agencies in Traralgon.

In line with the theme, International Youth Year, $220 000 has been approved for the development of a youth hostel in the Latrobe Valley. Funds have been set aside for job generating projects, such as the household services program, which has attracted some $15 000. The proposal for that project was put forward by the Latrobe Valley women's cooperative to create extra employment possibilities for women in the area.

The Labor Party promised to continue with stage 3 of the Yallourn TAFE college at a total cost of $8·8 million.

The SPEAKER—Order! The time appointed by Sessional Orders for me to interrupt business has now arrived.

On the motion of Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources), the sitting was continued.

Miss CALLISTER (Morwell)—The Budget provides a funding flow which will enable the completion of stage 3 of the college in November 1986. I stress that the Latrobe Valley has a highly skilled work force and the Government intends to keep it that way. The overall determination of the Government in this regard is reflected in the Budget with technical and further education receiving a funding boost of 13 per cent.

The Labor Party promised that Churchill would have a post-primary school and it has set about ensuring that that becomes a reality. The Budget provides funds to advance those works and services for those leaving primary school in Churchill and the surrounding districts. When completed, the post-primary school will be one of the best in Victoria. A lot of thought and community consultation has gone into the preparation of the plans. The school will be established close to the Gippsland Institute of Advanced Education and the leisure centre at Churchill. The Shire of Morwell will participate in the provision of library services so that duplication of library resources will not occur.

The school will represent a magnificent asset for the people of Churchill and a wonderful addition to the quality of education that young people in the electorate I represent can expect.
The Labor Party promised a continuing regionalization program of Government departments. I am pleased to inform the House that the Ministry of Housing in Morwell now has a full complement of staff. Health regionalization will bring approximately 100 additional people to the Latrobe Valley which will, through salary expenditure, generate jobs in the retail sector, the housing industry and so on.

I have stressed the economic side of the regionalization of health services, but it will also mean that the bureaucracy connected with decision making in relation to health services will be much closer to the people and more accessible to them.

A continuing regionalization program has been occurring within the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands. That will result in greater regional accessibility to the department and will result in more salaries spent in the area.

A long list of regionalization programs has been adopted by the Government. I refer to the transfer of staff taking place in V/Line and the proposed development of V/Line freight centres, such as the one at Morwell. The list continues in terms of improved rail, road, housing and social sector services. In its regional policy statement, the Government promised that boom gates would be installed at Tramway Road, and I am pleased to indicate that they will be completed in 1986.

The Government promised to establish a branch of the Office of Corrections in the Latrobe Valley. That has been done and the office is operating from the old diamond cut premises in Morwell.

The Government also promised that child maltreatment services in the central Gippsland region would be improved and I am pleased to announce that the Minister for Community Services has approved the appropriate funding to enable child protective services to be established in the area. I take this opportunity of thanking the Central Gippsland Maltreatment Action Group for the extensive background work it undertook in developing a submission to justify why the region should be one of those that received such a program early on.

The Government promised a full regional office of the Legal Aid Commission of Victoria in Morwell. That promise has been met and a full-time service operates from the town.

In the recreation field, the Government promised further development of the Thomson River canoe trail, and that has been done. The Minister for Sport and Recreation, along with other honourable members, attended the opening ceremony and the project has been widely commended by canoeists and those interested in river safety.

The Government promised improved emergency car services for homeless youth and it will allocate additional resources to provide short-term accommodation in times of crisis.

In conclusion, the Budget is within the Government's election promises of no over-all increase in the real tax burden for Victorians and, as the Treasurer said in his opening statement in the Budget speech:

Victoria can look to the second half of the decade with a great deal of optimism.

Mr CROZIER (Portland)—Early in his Budget speech, in fact in the second sentence, the Treasurer assured honourable members that this Budget is framed to "sustain the new wave of growth of prosperity in the State". Towards the end of his speech, the Treasurer further stated that the Government "is committed to providing the environment for private enterprise to flourish." He went on to say:

However, the private sector is the key to meeting the growth challenge.

The Opposition agrees with the rhetoric but it does not agree with the reality. As my colleague, the honourable member for Brighton, the shadow Treasurer, has pointed out, a proper analysis of the increase in State taxes and charges demonstrates that for the fourth successive year there has been a real increase in this area. Indeed, the aggregate for such
increases in the four years of Labor Government has amounted to no less than 72.9 per cent, which, on any reasonable analysis, is a massive increase.

I also find it disappointing, as do my colleagues on this side of the House, that there is scant reference in the Treasurer's speech to the plight of our rural industries. Apart from an allocation for salinity control and a further rather obscure reference to the allocations for the establishment of a proposed rural affairs office and for what is described as improvements to export marketing by our primary industries, I can find no reference to the rural sector.

This is all the more serious in view of the grim backdrop in which our primary industries now operate. In the much-vaunted publication *Victoria—The Next Step*, recognition was given by the Premier and the Government to the fact that Victoria is a major source of agricultural products, and that the State's contribution is well over 20 per cent of Australia's rural output, which means 20 per cent of the 40 per cent of our total export earnings as a nation.

Therefore, it is still a major contributor to the nation's export earnings. Very little recognition has been given by the Government to the serious cost price squeeze that continues to affect the operations of our rural industries.

In spite of the fact that the gross value of rural production has increased from some $6000 million in 1975-76 to $11 500 million in 1981-81 and $14 500 million in 1984-85, the share of the farmer has declined. The Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association and the National Farmers Federation have been at pains to point out to both this Government and the Federal Government that in spite of all the resourcefulness, stoicism and determination of our farmers, this cost price squeeze is inflicting grave harm on them. We cannot take the farmers' continued production for granted because their continued viability is at stake.

One of the few areas in which the Opposition believes the State Government is justified in increasing the numbers on the public pay-roll is in the Police Force. I remind the House that prior to coming to office in 1982 the Australian Labor Party made a much publicized promise that if it won office it would increase the size of the Victoria Police Force by 1000 in its first term of office. The actual strength of the Victoria Police Force in December 1981—some months before the Cain Government came to power—was about 8050. In October this year the strength of the Police Force was around 8700. The target for September 1986, when one takes on board the additional allocation in the Budget of some $37 million to increase the strength of the Police Force, will mean that the 1982 target will still not be met.

To achieve the target which the Treasurer has indicated, it must be realized the Police Force will have to recruit and train approximately twelve squads of 27 each—that is, a net 27 after wastage—in the coming year. The Victoria Police Force loses about 360 personnel each year through deaths, medical retirements, ordinary retirements and resignations. Therefore, on a reasonable analysis the minimal net recruitment to the Police Force will need to be some 684 to reach that net target and allow for the normal wastage.

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Turning more specifically to the Budget allocation to the Police Force and precisely to Program No. 582, items Nos 372 and 373, which deal with equipment, I ask the Minister for Police and Emergency Services whether provision has been made in that program for some of the equipment that is clearly needed by the police. I refer in particular to the issue of bulletproof vests. One is reminded of the tragic and notorious episode that occurred at Noble Park recently where, had those operational policemen all been wearing that protective equipment, the tragic injuries suffered by Sergeant Stooke would not have occurred.

Honourable members should be reminded that one of the operations policemen was wearing such equipment and, although shot at close range, did not suffer injuries which would otherwise almost certainly have resulted in his death. I ask the Minister for Police and Emergency Services when, and if, he responds to my comments, to inform the House
whether there is provision for that item of equipment. I also ask him whether it is the
intention of the Government and the Minister to include in that item the issue of long
batons. The civil libertarians, the bleeding hearts and the screamers of the ideological left
will, no doubt, respond predictably to any mention of that equipment. However, as Police
Forces in other States have discovered, in the hands of trained personnel a long baton is a
far more effective piece of equipment than the short baton currently issued to Victorian
policemen. Members of the Police Force say they want them and I believe they have good
reasons for saying that.

I refer the House to Program No. 582 which should cover police housing, but I am
unable to determine whether there is any specific allocation for police housing. There is a
substantial increase under building and civil engineering, including maintenance, from
$12 million to $19.3 million.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Dr Vaughan)—Order! I ask honourable members to show
the honourable member for Portland the courtesy to which he is entitled.

Mr CROZIER—Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. There is a significant need in many
areas of Victoria to increase police residential housing, nowhere more than in the electorate
that I represent. The town of Portland has an acute shortage of police residences, which is
reducing police morale and effectiveness. Six residences are now occupied by the inspector,
senior sergeant, three sergeants and a constable, but 26 other members of the Police Force
based in Portland have to find their own accommodation. That is not an unusual situation,
but with the level of rents currently applying in Portland it is unusual because of the
revival of the Alcoa project.

On a visit to Portland police station in the winter recess of Parliament this year, the
Minister for Police and Emergency Services, was told that the Police Force was understaffed.
Portland was having enormous difficulty in attracting officers to fill vacancies, largely
because it was generally realized that the average rent of $160 for a three-bedroom house
was a significant penalty for most young policemen, as it would be for many professionals.
That housing shortage is also impacting, and the Minister for Education, who is at the
table, would be aware of the position regarding recruitment of suitable teachers for Portland
schools. This serious problem has been addressed by police officers in the area and certain
alternative solutions have been proposed. To my knowledge the Minister has not responded
to their proposals.

The four alternatives suggested to the Minister and discussed with him during his visit
were, firstly, that the Victoria Police Force purchase additional Government premises for
occupation by personnel attached to Portland police station; secondly, that rental subsidies
be provided to personnel not able to be housed in Government premises; thirdly, that the
incentive of low interest finance be provided for personnel to purchase their own dwellings
in Portland; and, fourthly, that an adjustment or amendment to Determination 62 (6) be
made to make allowance for property in purchasing an average dwelling.

If this problem is not addressed, the police situation in Portland will deteriorate at a
time when the workload is increasing. I ask the Minister for Education, who is at the table,
to convey my comments to his colleague, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.
All is not well in the Police Force as has been evidenced in recent weeks, principally and
dramatically by a mass meeting of Victoria Police Association members on 15 August
when approximately 2000 members voted unanimously to pass a vote of no confidence in
the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. If he is to retain his credibility, he has to
lift his game. The vote was not just over the retirement package about which he has been
tardy in responding to police and on which he has not yet come up with specific proposals
that are acceptable to them. The Government must recognize that the Police Force is
under increasing strain in a society increasingly prone to violence. Stress in the Police
Force is a real factor. Victorians must recognize that policing is a particularly hazardous
and stressful profession and due recognition must be given to it.
I shall deal with two items on page 214 of Budget Paper No. 3 on the office of Governor. I raise a matter for comment by the Treasurer or Premier under Program No. 601, item 101, travelling and subsistence. Payments to the office in 1984-85 amounted to a modest $9458, but I note the estimate for 1985-86 is $31 000. I wonder whether recent events have played any part in that estimate, although I doubt it because I presume the estimate was framed well before the disgraceful events of earlier this month. An even more intriguing comparison under works and services expenditure is that the allocation for Governor-Works, under item 5000 in 1984-85, was $156 434. The estimate for 1985-86 is $435 000. Perhaps the mild and light-hearted comments of Lady Murray, to which our paranoiac Premier took so much exception, apparently may have borne some fruit, which is particularly ironical in the present circumstances.

I refer now to Program No. 726, item 3519, the rebate to the State Electricity Commission of Victoria in respect of electricity supply to Alcoa of Australia Ltd at Point Henry under the flexible tariff deed, which is in the section of Treasurer. Some honourable members may recall that the identical item last year under Program No. 276, item 3620, was given an estimate of a mere $6-5 million. The actual expenditure turned out to be $15 381 600. Even more interesting is that the estimate for 1985-86 is $25 600 000. Most honourable members will recall the strident rhetoric when the Alcoa project was announced in 1979 and the further bout of rhetoric when the enabling legislation was debated in Parliament in December 1980, nearly five years ago. The theme of the rhetoric was that the then Liberal Government was giving Alcoa a subsidy and that the subsidy would be provided by State Electricity Commission customers of this State. Some of that expansive and totally spurious rhetoric is on record.

The irony is that the electricity supply agreement negotiated and signed when my colleague, the honourable member for Benambra, was Minister for Minerals and Energy in March 1981, contained no subsidy whatever. Indeed, the power supply under that agreement was the published maximum demand industrial tariff, M5; the only such published tariff available to a large industry in the whole of the Commonwealth.

However, the then Leader of the Opposition with his Parliamentary colleagues in full cry indulged themselves in all sorts of expansive rhetoric, such as describing Alcoa of Australia Ltd as "a rapacious multi-national" and did their best to torpedo this project.

The final irony, after much protestation surrounding the announcement at the end of July last year that finally there would be an agreement between the Government and Alcoa of Australia Ltd, appears at page 6 of the publication *Victoria. The Portland Aluminium Smelter. The Government Statement*, which states:

> The complete set of arrangements are then strongly justifiable on commercial and financial grounds. There can be no suggestion of subsidies being provided by the Government to the joint venture in any way.

The only way that statement can be reconciled with the Budget figures I have just quoted is simply on the hypothetical hope, which I share, that in the long run in the life of the smelter possibly the "overs" will balance the "unders" and the whole flexible tariff arrangement—and indeed, the other arrangements to which this Parliament and the Victorian community are not privy—will ultimately prove satisfactory.

As announced at this time, there were thirteen agreements; yet only three agreements were made public. The agreement about which Parliament has the most information is the flexible tariff agreement.

Mr Coleman—the community does not know about selling the product!

Mr CROZIER—that is right, and Parliament does not know what the arrangements are about the purchase of aluminium nor the details of the actual price deal.

For the purpose of this explanation I wish to have incorporated in *Hansard* the Government’s own formula for the flexible tariff, as shown on page 28 of the Government’s statement, and table 4.1, which appears at page 29, entitled “Impact of Flexible Tariff Arrangements”.
I have consulted with the Speaker and the Treasurer and they have no objection to the inclusion of that formula and table. 

Leave was granted, and the formula and table were as follows:

Actual Tariff payable = \( x + y \left[ \frac{\text{US Spot Price (June 1982 dollars)} - \$US936}{\$US764} \right] \)

where:
- \( y \) = capital cost component of the base tariff for the current tariff year.
- \( x \) = operations and maintenance component of the base tariff for the current tariff year.

US Spot Price = average spot price of aluminium for the previous quarter as published in Metals Week deflated to June 1982 dollars by the US Consumer Price Index.

\$US936, \$US764 = parameters of the formula (that sum to \$US1700) which give the required relationship between the flexible tariff and the aluminium price based on a reference price of \$US1700.

**Table 4.1**

**IMPACT OF FLEXIBLE TARIFF ARRANGEMENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spot Market price for aluminium (June 1982 dollars)</th>
<th>Actual Tariff Payable(a) in 1984–85 (December 1985 dollars)</th>
<th>c/kWh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1300</td>
<td>1.721</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1500</td>
<td>2.195</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1700</td>
<td>2.669</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>3.143</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2100</td>
<td>3.617</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) The actual tariffs can be compared to the base tariff of 2.669 c/kWh (in December 1984 dollars).

Mr CROZIER—The critical importance of this flexible tariff arrangement is germane and basic to the actual rebate of $15,381,600, which is really a subsidy in this financial year, and the $25.6 million which it is estimated will be rebated in the coming financial year. Honourable members should be fully aware that this flexible tariff arrangement applies at the moment only to the three potlines at Point Henry. When the first potline for the Portland smelter comes on line towards the end of 1986—if it goes according to schedule—unless the price of aluminium picks up considerably, an escalation will occur in this item because of the extraordinary power deal that the Government gave to the Alcoa company. Perhaps I should really say that the Government gave to the company and itself as a joint venturer, but it is important to understand this item of the Budget.

I inform the Minister for Education, who is interjecting, that I have been closely associated with the product from the outset and I welcome the fact that the project is going ahead. I am at pains to point out that the criticism levelled at the previous Liberal Party Government has now rebounded on the present Government and all those wasted months following the project grinding to a halt could have been put to use had the Labor Party Government accepted the arrangements that were in place when it took office.

After the agreement to which I referred was signed by the honourable member for Benambra, who was then the Minister, Alcoa of Australia Ltd threatened to renege on the
Agreement. The Cochrane formula was put in place by the present Government. The flexible tariff as it was then proposed by the Government reads:

\[
\text{Actual Tariff payable} = x + y \left[ \frac{\text{US Spot Price (June 1982 dollars)} - \text{US}\$ 936}{\text{US}\$ 764} \right]
\]

where:
- \(y\) = capital cost component of the base tariff for the current tariff year.
- \(x\) = operations and maintenance component of the base tariff for the current tariff year.

\(\text{US Spot Price}\) = average spot price of aluminium for the previous quarter as published in *Metals Week* deflated to June 1982 dollars by the US Consumer Price Index.

\(\text{US}\$ 936, \text{US}\$ 764\) = parameters of the formula (that sum to \(\text{US}\$ 1700\)) which give the required relationship between the flexible tariff and the aluminium price based on a reference price of \(\text{US}\$ 1700\).

I have made a recent calculation because, again, it is quite material to the situation. The actual price for aluminium has declined considerably below the base price. It should be realized that the actual price for the whole formula is predicated upon a base price of \(\text{US}\$ 1700\) in June 1982 terms. On Thursday last week I took some figures out and the spot price of aluminium was \(\text{US}\$ 1058.21\) per tonne. If one applies the formula and relates that figure to today's price, it brings the figure back to some \$940. Today's spot price is even lower.

Mr Coleman—It is \$890.

Mr CROZIER—I have a figure of \$971 and my colleague says \$890. One can imagine what that does to the power price, the actual price paid by reference to the Government's table in the document from which I have quoted. The lowest price quoted in table 4.1 at page 29 is \$US1300. This is why one can look forward to a \$25.5 million transfer or rebate.

This very Government that berated the former Liberal Party Government and me for negotiating a deal that would subsidize Alcoa from the consumer, has created this by not subsidizing Alcoa from the consumer but, through the State Electricity Commission of Victoria, from the taxpayer. This has an even more dramatic effect when one starts to talk of equity, and the Premier announced with much fanfare that the First National Resource Trust recently had taken a 10 per cent equity. That was good news, particularly for the shareholders, as Mr Terry McCrann, the astute business editor of the *Age*, pointed out in an article published in the *Age* of Tuesday, 3 September 1985, headed, "Investors to scoop cream from a taxpayers' cow."

It states:

There are two keys to understanding the great appeal which the First National Resource Trust offers investors seeking an interest in the Portland smelter—and together they write a damning epitaph to the unholy convolutions of the Cain Government over the price of power to the smelter.

I do not have time to take the House right through the calculation but I shall endeavour to summarize it in a couple of minutes. Basically, the reason why Mr McCrann reaches that conclusion, which is totally correct, is that a correlation of the power pricing formula with the exchange rate means that unless the price of the metal reaches the base price of \(\text{US}\$ 1700\) in June 1982 dollar terms to give the "unsubsidized power price" of 2.669 cents a kilowatt hour in 1984 dollar terms, and unless the Australian dollar vis-à-vis the United States dollar rises to well above 80 cents, this is likely to be an excellent investment. The equity is based on the Australian dollar and therefore there is no problem with the exchange rate here although the power price is predicted and determined by the price of metal in United States dollars, and the assumption, which is clearly spelt out in the document, is that the average relationship of the Australian dollar with the United States dollar will be 90 cents over the life of the agreement. If one takes those two calculations together, it means that the taxpayers of this State will continue to subsidize the power price. The metal will be sold in United States dollar terms and the equity is in Australian
dollars, so the downside risk is minimal. It will occur only if there is the coincidence of an Australian dollar price of over 80 cents to the United States dollar and a long-term depressed price for the metal.

Mr GUDE (Hawthorn)—I shall commence my contribution to the debate by referring to a quotation of Edmund Burke in 1780, when he addressed the House of Commons saying:

Taxing is an easy business. Any projector can contrive new compositions, any bungler can add to the old.

We have seen some contriving and some bungling in the Budget. The key Budget measures affecting business, focus on the reductions in stamp duty, pay-roll tax, and land tax although the major expenditure initiatives emphasize increased activity in youth guarantee programs, the police and health areas. The key measures of the Budget are designed to achieve economic growth of approximately 4-5 per cent to 5 per cent, increase private investment by approximately 12 per cent and reduce unemployment to 6-5 per cent, all laudable goals to be seeking.

The ultimate test of the Government’s strategy will be whether its economic forecast for Victoria will eventuate. One of the crucial estimates is a 12 per cent increase in private sector investment, which is nearly double the forecast for the rest of Australia. We must ask ourselves whether that is a real expectation; I suggest that it is not. It is a most unreasonable expectation and for that reason the Budget will prove to be a failure. If the predictions are not borne out, the Government may find a need to return to the interventionist policies that characterized its previous Budgets.

The Labor Government has continued its excesses in spending. This year the Government will spend more than $10 000 million, which is an increase of 66 per cent over the past four Budgets. The money will be derived from increased tax revenue, which has increased by 72-9 per cent. The business community, the small business operators, private citizens and families have had to meet that cost.

By contrast, the level of prices as measured by the implicit deflator of State non-farm product has risen by only 36-3 per cent, which includes an increase of 7-8 per cent forecast for the 1985-86 financial year. In other words, by the end of this financial year, the Government will have presided over an increase in total taxation revenue exactly twice the rate of inflation.

In respect of borrowings, the Auditor-General is having difficulty in determining the total extent of the State debt. The Opposition has continually asked the Treasurer to disclose that figure. The honourable member for Brighton has consistently and persistently raised that matter with the Government in the House and constantly the Government has chosen to sidestep the question. It is obvious the Government has something to be ashamed of which it wishes to hide.

By the end of the 1985-86 financial year it is projected that the State’s net debt will be $17 249 million, which will be an increase of 55-6 per cent in three years. That is not something of which the Government should be proud.

Victoria’s State schools are being crippled by disputes and strikes. The quality of education is being questioned by the community. More and more parents are taking their children out of the State education system and putting them in the private education system. I am proud to have been educated in the State education system. However, many parents believe the standards of education and discipline are better in the private education sector. The Government ought to be ashamed of what is happening in the State school sector and it should do all it can to remedy the situation.

In no way do I criticize the present Minister for Education because he has not held that portfolio for very long. The honourable gentleman is doing his level best to seek a change in the State school system but that change is overdue.
There has been a massive increase in the size of the bureaucracy running the public transport system. Both the previous Minister of Transport and the present Minister for Transport have increased the cost of central administration in the transport system by an unbelievable 645 per cent. It is not difficult to realize where the Government's job creation scheme lies. It certainly does not lie in making the trains, trams and buses run on time.

The public transport system is running at an increasing loss. The Government has little to be proud of after having spent a fortune in advertising the Met but to what extent? Trains, trams and buses are still running late, time-tables are still unreliable and the community is becoming increasingly disgruntled and disaffected with the way this big spending Government is wasting the taxpayers' money on public transport.

Total expenditure on public housing has increased by more than 150 per cent. Let us examine the other side of the equation, which is that, in the past four years, waiting lists for public rental accommodation have increased from approximately 17,000 to 24,000. The Government spent a heap; another way of putting it is that it has wasted a huge amount of money.

The Victorian taxpayer who has the money spent for him by the Government is not obtaining value for money. Increasingly, more people are seeking a place in rental accommodation. However, the opportunity does not exist for them to obtain that accommodation. Despite the fact that desperate shortages in accommodation exist, many flats and units sit empty for six months or longer, and the granny flat scheme—

The ACTING SPEAKER (Dr Vaughan)—Order! The House seems to have come alive since I last brought it to order. I shall try again. I ask the honourable member for Hawthorn to proceed, without interruption.

Mr Gude—I can speak from experience in this respect, because I have taken inspections into the Bell Street area of Ministry of Housing accommodation in the electorate I represent, only to find that much of that accommodation has been vacant for months and months, yet there are people in my electorate desperately seeking that sort of accommodation. I do not blame them for not wishing to be accommodated in some of those places, because they have been run down to a disgraceful condition. Despite the fact that there has been a major increase in the housing allocation, there is a whole range of accommodation administered by the Ministry of Housing that ought to be demolished because it is in such a disgraceful state.

Let us see where some of our taxes have gone in the health area. One would have thought, with all the money that has been spent in the health area, that there would have been a decrease in the waiting lists, but there lies Victoria's greatest crisis. The nurses have revolted; the doctors have revolted; and people have been waiting and waiting to have pain-relieving surgery carried out, such as hip replacements and the like.

There are approximately 91 intensive care beds in Melbourne, and yet only 63 are open. This Government claims to care about people; worse still, it claims to have a mandate! What a joke; what a charade; and what a disgrace! The Government has none of those things.

The Labor Government has found millions of dollars for expensive new bureaucrats. Now, further waste is planned on new district health councils, but money is not available to open new empty hospital beds or to restore intensive care beds.

The situation is the story of a dog chasing its own tail; it is the story of the bureaucracy growing bigger, so that it can obtain funds to grow bigger again.

I now turn to some of the community concerns and refer honourable members to the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce Journal of September 1985. Before any honourable member on the Government side interjects, I make the point that, when it suits him, the Premier is quite prepared to quote the support he obtains from the Melbourne Chamber
of Commerce when he goes to Europe and other places. Now let him listen to the words of that chamber and its advice on the Budget. The editorial at page 11 states:

The Government’s instincts seem to be to add more regulations and more regulators specifically aimed at curbing business freedom—particularly in the areas of labour and consumer affairs.

The Government has more and more regulations. I am quite happy to make a full copy of the Journal available to the Minister for Housing, who is at the table. If he takes the time to read it, he might learn something, and perhaps he may assist people by making available a larger allocation in the next financial year.

I now turn to some of the specific examples given by the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce in regard to the Government’s industrial relations expertise. The editorial states that that expertise has:

... not inspired public confidence.

The Liberal Party knows that, but the Government does not. The article continues:

Specific examples of the Government’s industrial relations expertise have not inspired business confidence. The costs to the community of the settlement worked out with building unions at the Arts Centre, the delay in completing the Loop, the non-appearance of Melbourne’s articulated trams and the shameful fate of the firm which transported the light towers to the Melbourne Cricket Ground, are all more powerful in shaping the businessman’s view of the Government’s management credentials in this area than any number of apparently favourable statistics on labour unrest.

The Opposition and the community are well aware of the number of disputes that exist in the community at this time and they will be totally unforgiving for the way the State Government and its Federal counterpart have turned their backs on a third generation small business in Melbourne, namely, the Dollar Sweets organization.

We have heard a lot about the performance and effectiveness of the industrial relations task force. That is another failure, another charade. I refer now to assistance to industry for which $51 million has been allocated for industry assistance schemes in this Budget. That might sound like a reasonable amount, but let me examine how that $51 million is being spent or wasted. For example, a great deal is said about the commitment of the Government to technology—that is the new theme, the catch cry which sounds good in the electorate but the rhetoric is not backed by commitment. The commitment to technology is up to $250,000, a measly amount, for the establishment of a co-operative venture linking together current fragmented centres of expertise. What sort of assistance will that give to technology in this State? The allocation in support of a scheme to allow access by industry to “state of the art” telecommunications connection equipment standards is up to $150,000. That is a charade. The allocation for leasing the latest Australian made computer integrated manufacturing equipment and to help establish an Australian computer integrated manufacturing/development facility is $250,000—that is for selected “one offs” and will not appease anything of any worth for the business community.

I now refer to the allocation of $350,000 for the Small Business Development Corporation. That is the extent of the commitment by the Government to small business in Victoria. The amount allocated to the Geelong Regional Commission of $1.8 million is four times that amount and is an absolute waste of money. The same criticism applies to the Albury-Wodonga Corporation and the Latrobe Regional Commission allocations.

The Government is starting to make a play of its new-found concern in the area of export markets promotion. The Government has finally realized that if the manufacturing industry is to have a chance of survival it has to be more cost effective on the international market. The Government therefore has allocated $4.8 million for export market promotion and development activities which ought properly to be the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government. That is not something for which the State Government should have to use Victorian taxpayers’ funds or, even worse, to reallocate funds provided to it by the Commonwealth.
I next refer to the allocation to decentralization. In real terms that allocation has decreased by 8-3 per cent. An interesting situation exists where the Government is turning its back on decentralized Victoria. I invite honourable members who represent rural provincial seats to pay close attention to the way in which senior members of their party are reallocating funds and resources because those funds are not going to rural and provincial centres. The figures do not lie. Business people in country areas are well aware that the Government has turned its back on them.

Honourable members ought to be concerned about various areas of works and services such as community services where one might have expected a fairly heavy involvement in the pre-school child development programs. However, the total works and services expenditure in that area is reduced. I remind the Government that this area deals with the youngest of those people involved in learning.

Turning to education, works and services expenditure is again reduced. I regularly visit schools in my electorate, such as the Hawthorn West Primary School, which is in a disgraceful situation. Young people there are being threatened with a fire risk situation in a school where the toilets are somewhat less than sanitary and, in fact, ought to be condemned. The Government shows no interest, notwithstanding that the school has consistently tried over a long period to obtain a reasonable priority from the regional education office. I pay tribute to the Minister for Public Works. The moment the matter came to his attention, he acted on it. I trust that his initial goodwill will not be lost and that the appropriation will reflect a reward in that area.

In the health care area, works and services expenditure in the long-term institutional services area have been reduced. I refer here to expenditure by institutions and societies registered under the Hospitals and Charities Act. Here again one sees a reduction in the Government’s commitment to works and services.

Another interesting area is youth, sport and recreation where works and services expenditure is down from $7.5 million to $4.5 million. The same sort of general pattern can be seen in the transport area with a reduction in the allocation for works and services.

Victoria is probably the heart of Government-owned enterprise in Australia, to a disproportionate extent by the standards of other States. This appears from the Government’s financial estimates for 1984-85, which show that the Victorian Government deficit for the combined Budget and non-Budget sectors represents a high 35 per cent of all State Governments deficits, as compared with only 23-6 per cent for New South Wales.

Looking at the way in which the Government is moving towards a corporate State, the only way in which it will be able to meet its payments and its other ambitions is to tax the family man and the small businessman even more. I have no doubt that the Treasurer and the Government will be capable of doing that when they find—as they inevitably will—that their excessive hope for private sector investment growth of 12 per cent is not achieved. In other words, high taxes are built into the corporatist objective. Any reprieve because of an impending election would be only temporary.

The Government’s objective, in line with its general corporatist philosophy, is to have an expanded public sector as an indispensable ingredient. This year’s Budget is a fraud. It proposes moderation, contrary to its true intentions. Public sector employment has expanded by 13 500 on the Government’s own figures—as I said earlier, bureaucracy gone mad. The people who pay for that will be the ordinary people in the community.

The first step towards reducing the size of the public sector should be through restraint in government. It will not be achieved by the excesses of the present Government.

There would be a significant increase in program budgeting if there were a change of Government in this State. The Liberal Party would be looking for effective and efficient auditing at all levels, but on examining the Auditor-General’s report, it appears that that is not now happening.
Parliamentary scrutiny should be broadened to ensure results. Far too often things occur outside the scrutiny of this place. I do not know how many honourable members have taken the trouble to read the number of regulations that have come through their offices since the commencement of this Parliament. I believe 300 to 400 regulations have gone through this Parliament without the scrutiny of any one of us; they have been handled by the Executive. I wonder whether the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources is aware of the detail of these regulations and whether bureaucrats know exactly what is contained in them. The community does not know, but then it is the last to know although it is the first to be penalized.

Handouts to political pressure groups should be stopped. Under the present Government, excessive handouts have been made to “friends” to an extent that has never happened before. Some of those friends are not friends of the Liberal Party. We certainly do not include the gay liberation movement as part of the friends of the Liberal Party nor do we regard them as friends of the community. We do not believe there is any advantage in wasting Government funds in that area.

Tax cuts need to be implemented to take the State forward. Land tax should be tackled. If ever there has been an issue in the electorate that has caused concern to private citizens with small businesses, it is land tax. Many small businesses are going to the wall because of land tax. It is not the only tax that is biting into them; it comes on top of other excesses in the taxation area.

A Liberal Government would review public authority dividends. The Leader of the Liberal Party made that commitment prior to the last State election, and he did not make it lightly. It is an area in which the Liberal Party is vitally concerned.

The financial institutions duty is another anacronism. It is an unjust tax, especially as it applies to the savings of pensioners and children. This duty is about taxing people for putting money in the bank. The Liberal Party will return enterprise into the hands of Victorians.

I conclude by restating my opening remarks that taxing is a very easy thing to do. Any projector can contrive new compositions and any bungler can add to the old. Projection and bungling epitomizes the present Budget.

On the motion of Mr ROWE (Essendon), the debate was adjourned.

It was ordered that the debate be adjourned until next day.

**STATE ELECTRICITY COMMISSION (AMENDMENT) BILL**

The SPEAKER announced the presentation of a message from His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor recommending that an appropriation be made from the Consolidated Fund for the purposes of the State Electricity Commission (Amendment) Bill.

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources), pursuant to Standing Order No. 169, moved for leave to bring in a Bill to make further provision for borrowings by the State Electricity Commission and for other purposes.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

**AMBULANCE SERVICES**

The SPEAKER announced the receipt from the Legislative Council of the following resolution with which they desired the concurrence of the Legislative Assembly:

That, notwithstanding the recommendations of the Public Bodies Review Committee contained in its final report presented to this House on 30 October 1984, pursuant to section 4p(5) (b) of the Parliamentary Committees Act 1968 this House resolves that the bodies listed hereunder shall continue to exist:

1. Ambulance Service—Melbourne
2. Ballarat and District Ambulance Service
3. Central Victoria District Ambulance Service
4. East Gippsland Ambulance Service
5. Geelong and District Ambulance Service
6. Glenelg District Ambulance Service
7. Goulburn Valley Ambulance Service
8. Latrobe Valley District Ambulance Service
9. Mid-Murray District Ambulance Service
10. North-Eastern Victoria District Ambulance Service
11. North West Victorian Ambulance Service
12. Northern District Ambulance Service
13. Peninsula Ambulance Service
14. South Gippsland District Ambulance Service
15. South-Western Victoria Ambulance Service
16. Wimmera District Ambulance Service

It was ordered that the message be taken into consideration next day.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (RATING APPEALS) BILL

This Bill was returned from the Council with a message relating to an amendment.
It was ordered that the message be taken into consideration next day.

ADJOURNMENT

Catalytic converter equipment—Wangaratta police station—Forsyth Road overpass—Child
care centre in City of Waverley—Mulgrave Primary School—Liquor licensing of clubs—
Officer Cadet School, Portsea—Drugs—Sussex Heights Primary School

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—I move:
That the House do now adjourn.

Mr CROZIER (Portland)—I direct a matter to the attention of the Minister for Police
and Emergency Services. As honourable members are aware, from 1 January next year, all
new petrol engine passenger vehicles will be required to abide by the new emission
standards and run only on unleaded petrol. To effect this, the vehicles will be equipped
with catalytic converters. One of the problems with such equipment and the unleaded fuel
is the hot exhaust fumes. I am sure the Minister can readily comprehend the problem of
hot exhausts.

The exhaust is sometimes so hot from a vehicle equipped with a catalytic converter that
such vehicles are not allowed in some forests in the United States of America because of
the fire risk. I also understand that representations have been made to the Minister by at
least one municipality in western Victoria and, no doubt, municipalities in other parts of
the State have expressed concern to him about the potential increased fire risk.

As the Minister is well aware, western Victoria is one of the most bush-fire prone areas
in the world and is also one of the most fire conscious. The Minister and his colleagues
should also be aware, as they have been reminded often enough in recent months, that the
terms of trade of our major rural industries have now deteriorated to a level of crisis.
Therefore, the last thing that country people want is any additional threat to their livelihood
and well being, notwithstanding that such threat is foisted upon them ostensibly to improve the urban environment.

Therefore, I ask the Minister to give the House and me an assurance that all the technical aspects of the design change have been properly evaluated and the fire risk thoroughly assessed.

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley)—I direct to the attention of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services the need for renovations and repairs to the Wangaratta police station. For the benefit of the Minister and the House, I shall provide a background to the matter. In September 1982 the Minister visited Wangaratta after he had been the Minister for Police and Emergency Services for only a short time. The appalling conditions in which the police at the Wangaratta police station had been operating were drawn to his attention.

Over a number of years I have made extensive representations to former police Ministers about the condition of many police stations in the Murray Valley electorate. Action has been taken to raise the standard of police stations throughout the electorate. The Wangaratta police station could best be described as a rabbit warren. The Government recognized prior to 1982 that the station needed to be upgraded. When the Minister inspected the police station some minor renovations had been undertaken and an air-conditioning system had been installed.

In earlier years the police station had only a limited number of police officers, but in later years it was upgraded to become a 24-hour police station. Now more than 40 police officers operate from the station. In 1982 the Minister recognized that work needed to be undertaken to upgrade the station to a reasonable standard because it serves as headquarters of “W” district in north-eastern Victoria.

The Minister visited the complex this year and examined renovations being made to the court house—the court house and the police station in Faithful Street are considered to be one unit. The Minister will be aware that $800 000 is to be spent on renovations to the court house so that it will adequately service the needs of north-eastern Victoria, with the development of a further court in the complex.

In 1982 the Minister assured me that further action would be taken. The Minister inspected the station again in 1985 and recognized that it needs to be raised to a reasonable standard. I realize that funds have been provided by the Government to improve police facilities but the problem is that the action that should have taken place at Wangaratta has not taken place. While the court house is being renovated, major renovations should also be made to the police station. One must also consider the planned development of a new police station complex in Wangaratta in the future. Although I applaud the sentiments of the Minister in recognizing the need for a new complex in the future, immediate renovations need to be made to the existing premises so that they can be brought up to a reasonable standard.

For the time being the police look forward to the future completion of the new police complex. I ask the Minister to indicate when renovations will be made to the present police station and when work will begin on the future development of the 24-hour police station at Wangaratta.

Dr COGHILL (Werribee)—The matter I raise for the attention of the Minister for Transport concerns the traffic conditions that apply to vehicles leaving the Geelong Freeway to enter Hoppers Crossing. The Minister would be aware that it is rare in Victoria for traffic to make a right-hand turn from a carriageway of a freeway to exit into a town area. The vehicles that leave the right-hand lane of the freeway then proceed a short distance to a set of traffic lights from which they make a 90-degree right-hand turn across a railway crossing to enter Hoppers Crossing.

The rapid growth of Hoppers Crossing during the past few years has led to a tremendous increase in the amount of traffic turning at that intersection and because of the proximity of the railway crossing it is now common for the traffic to bank up from the traffic lights...
back towards the freeway. This creates a traffic hazard. Plans have been foreshadowed for many years for the construction of an overpass for Forsyth Road, which will ultimately relieve the traffic problem. The overpass will enable traffic heading towards Hoppers Crossing to avoid that intersection and the problems that are created there.

For the first time the Minister for Transport has set a target completion date for the construction of the Forsyth Road overpass. Previous Ministers have been unable to do that. The present Minister for Transport has indicated that he expects the construction of the overpass to be completed by 1989. In the meantime there are serious traffic problems. On many occasions recently, particularly during peak hour on a Friday afternoon, traffic can be banked back from the traffic lights right to the freeway carriageway.

Honourable members and the Minister would be well aware of the dangerous conditions that are created by that build-up of traffic for both travellers on the freeway and those making the right-hand turn from it because often cars are stopped on the freeway awaiting the opportunity of passing through the intersection controlled by lights. Will the Minister carefully examine what can be done to alleviate this traffic problem? Is it possible, given the available funding from Commonwealth sources, to advance the construction timetable for the completion of the Forsyth Road overpass? Pending that completion is it possible to manipulate the traffic light signals at the intersection or to improve traffic management in other ways to reduce the amount of traffic that banks up?

The build-up of traffic is dangerous for traffic travelling to Hoppers Crossing, traffic continuing into Werribee and traffic on the Geelong Freeway. All road users are being placed at increasing risk because of the high volumes of traffic attempting to turn at the intersection. It is in the interest of all road users that urgent action be taken to relieve the dangers faced by road users.

Mr PESCOTT (Bennettswood)—I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Ethnic Affairs, who is the representative of the Minister for Community Services, concerning a child care centre for the City of Waverley which was part of a shared Federal–State responsibility announced before the last Federal and State elections.

The child care centre has been completed and stands idle in the electorate of Bennettswood and the City of Glen Waverley because, despite a massive injection of funds for the centre, no provision has been made for any staff to operate it. I ask the Minister to refer the matter to the Minister for Community Services to see whether she can inform the Waverley council when the State Government will provide funds so that this expensive centre can operate.

Mr E. R. SMITH (Glen Waverley)—I raise a matter with the Minister for Education concerning the Mulgrave Primary School. The relocation of this school has been a matter of continuing discussion for some time. It is currently situated in Wellington Road and the school council wants it moved further away from the busy intersection to Gladsworth Drive.

The honourable member for Springvale announced at a school council meeting last year that he had received advice from the then Minister of Education that:

All planning is in anticipation that the new school will be ready for occupation for the 1986 school year. As the accommodation is now defined, the Regional Office is currently preparing the brief for Facilities Branch.

The local school council is strongly concerned about the matter. I have visited the school and am aware that the Minister has queried whether the school council is firm in its resolve to keep the school at the current site or to move it. The school is in portable classroom facilities because the original building was burnt down.

The situation at the school reminds me of when I was working as a reporter for Sir Frank Packer in appalling conditions for the *Sydney Daily Telegraph*. Sir Frank suggested that the reason why newspapers such as the *Times* and others like the *Telegraph* were of
such a high standard was that they were produced in the worst offices. Similarly, the Mulgrave Primary School is conducting its education within the worst facilities one could imagine, yet the atmosphere at the school is tops. The children are happy and the staff go about their business in a most professional manner. Because of the condition of the facilities, a good product is achieved, but the parents and school council want better conditions for their children. They are sick and tired of what they call the bungling that has been going on.

I shall refer to a media campaign being launched by the school council. Last Tuesday a telegram was sent to the Minister and a reply was requested by Friday. This is the attitude of the school council contained in its press release:

The “SQUEAKY CLEAN” image of the Victorian State Government may have again been tarnished.

In a document released by the Minister for Education—Mr I. Cathie it was announced there would be funding for another primary school to be constructed in his electorate; namely PATTERSON LAKES. However there was no announcement of funding for MULGRAVE PRIMARY SCHOOL.

This close knit community which relies on Mulgrave Primary School to educate their children have for four years been endeavouring to have a new school constructed.

A letter from the former Minister of Education is then mentioned. It continues:

Since that date the project deteriorated into a series of mistakes, oversights and forced reassessments. Additionally, the School Council has not been offered the courtesy of being kept regularly informed as to the progress of this project.

There was a letter from Mr Cathie advising that tenders were to be called for but this too should be questioned as the closing date for acceptance of tender was October 6th 1985. The tender still has not been finalised and again the school community has been left in the dark!

The campaign is a last resort by the school council. The way in which these professional parents have handled the matter has not only surprised me but has also surprised their contacts in the media. I came in at the end of the issue. They are mounting a campaign that will be embarrassing for any Government. I ask the Minister to consider the issue as a matter of urgency because the school council and parents—the people who are the voice behind the issue—are extremely angry, concerned and worried about the future education of their children, not because what they are receiving in school at present is not good, but because they see injustice being done in the future to their children when comparing the facilities available to children in schools of other areas nearby. I call upon the Minister to take up this matter urgently.

Mr Rowe (Essendon)—The remarks I address to the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources relate to the provisions of the Liquor Control Act as they apply to sporting clubs, particularly the provisions that require sporting clubs that are renewing liquor licences or liquor permits to apply the rules and law of equal opportunity in the operation of those clubs. Honourable members will be aware that it is two years since Parliament enacted the provisions of the Equal Opportunity Act which made it unlawful for any sporting, social or service club in Victoria, which operates either on Crown land or with financial assistance, either directly or indirectly from the State Government or a municipality, to discriminate on the grounds of sex, marital status, disability, race, religion or politics.

It has come to my attention that two bowling clubs in the Essendon electorate discriminate against women. By way of application to those clubs, namely, the Essendon Bowling Club and the Moonee Ponds Bowling Club, women are discriminated against by being denied membership. Both of the clubs would come within the ambit of the Equal Opportunity Act as they both operate on Crown land and are both subject to the receipt of financial assistance from the municipality of Essendon. They would receive indirect assistance through the provisions of the Cultural and Recreational Lands Act.

Since 1984 when the Liquor Control Act was amended, all clubs seeking to renew their liquor permits or liquor licences must comply with the provisions of the Equal Opportunity Act. I understand in the next few days, by 31 October, approximately 1000 sporting clubs
in Victoria will receive documentation from the Liquor Control Commission on the renewal of sporting club permits. The commission has a small number of staff. My understanding from reading the Act is that the onus is on the sporting clubs to indicate that they comply with the provisions of the Equal Opportunity Act.

My inquiries reveal that the Liquor Control Commission sees its role not as an advisory role but as a semi-judiciary role. I should like the Minister to ensure that sporting and social clubs that receive renewal notices in the next few days also receive advice from the Liquor Control Commission on the provisions of the Equal Opportunity Act.

These clubs should be brought up to date on legislation that has been enacted by Parliament. It is not good enough for clubs not to be aware of the Act and, more importantly, it is not good enough for a major agency such as the Liquor Control Commission not to inform sporting clubs of their obligations.

I have drawn the attention of the two clubs in Essendon to the provisions of the Act, but it is a good opportunity for the Minister for Sport and Recreation and the Government to take action through the commission to ensure that all sporting clubs whose permits are being renewed are cognizant of the regulations.

Dr WELLS (Dromana)—I refer my comments to the Premier through the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. The training unit at the Officer Cadet School at Portsea is to be transferred, following a decision of the Fraser Federal Government to develop a combined services training college, the Australian Defence Force Academy, in Canberra.

It has been common knowledge for some time that the training unit would move at the end of this year. The current rumours, which have been around for some time, are that the Army health school at Healesville will be transferred to the school at Portsea. The best that I can ascertain, again through rumour, but with some substance to it, is that when the Army health school is situated at Portsea it will require only the buildings and not the land. The land area is some hundreds of acres and that has been offered to the Victorian Government and is under consideration by the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands.

I am reliably informed by rumour that a temporary caretaker corps will be left there until March 1986 before the Army health unit is sited at that location. No one knows what is happening.

When that unit closes, approximately $3 million per annum coming into the area will cease to be. When that is multiplied by a factor of five for recirculation, some $15 million a year will be removed from the area. This is the second time in two years that this has happened, because for other reasons the British Petroleum Co. of Australia Ltd site at Hastings closed recently.

It will remove a considerable number of employees from the area and will affect housing, schools and especially businesses in the area, yet the community does not know what is happening.

It is inconceivable that Federal and State Governments should continue to go on and on for so long without coming to a decision.

Mr Fordham interjected.

Dr WELLS—I say to the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources, who has just scoffed, that it must be a relatively straightforward issue to decide what is happening. The block appears to be at State Government level and that is the reason I have raised this matter.

Recently, the Federal Minister for Defence declined to meet a deputation from the area on this matter. The local community can obtain no satisfaction from the State Government.

The matter is of significant State importance and I ask the Premier when we might expect a decision on this matter that affects the lives of people and the long-term planning
of a part of Victoria. It is essential that a proper decision be taken as soon as possible. I respect the Government for taking time to make a responsible decision, but there can be no rational reason why that process should be delayed for so long.

Mr WEIDEMAN (Frankston South)—The Peninsula Road Trauma and Safety Committee has invited the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to a function on 16 November which will be the culmination of Road Safety Week, and which I understand the honourable gentleman will attend. The Minister will be aware that because of the activities both of the committee and of the police, the Mornington Peninsula has the best record in regard to road accidents.

Recently, Assistant Commissioner (Traffic) Baker commented on the fact that drug-related traffic offences have increased from 60 to 120 offences in one year. The Minister also will be aware that a person was apprehended at Rosebud for illegally producing amphetamines. It has been said that, because of Victoria's coastline, illicit drugs, including marijuana, are easily available to young people in the community.

With the assistance of Assistant Commissioner (Traffic) Baker, I urge the Minister to comment on the drug-related accidents that occur in the community. The Peninsula Drug and Alcohol Dependence Committee is concerned at the increased use of both hard and soft drugs—heroin, amphetamines and marijuana. This is related to the enormous increase in the number of fatalities that have occurred as a result of traffic accidents—from 17 to 27, then to 35. I request the Minister to give this matter his considered attention.

The SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Syndal has 1 minute.

Mr COLEMAN (Syndal)—The matter I raise for the attention of the Minister for Education concerns roofing at the Sussex Heights Primary School, which is under review by the Public Works Department. Several contractors have inspected the roof for which the replacement cost is estimated to be $30,000. The regional office has readvertised those contracts and has now suggested that the roof be patched up at a cost of $3000.

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

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—The honourable member for Essendon referred to the implementation of equal opportunity provisions enacted by Parliament and the need for all Government authorities and departments not only to take heed but also to get behind the spirit of the legislation. I commend the honourable member for bringing it to my attention and for his continuing vigilance on the matter. I know he is concerned that the words of Parliament and of the relevant statute are not just words but are put into practice by the relevant departments and agencies.

The honourable member brought this issue to my attention recently and I have since discussed the matter with officers of the Liquor Control Commission. I am pleased to inform him that the commission is in the process of advising all relevant clubs of the requirements of the Act concerning equal opportunity and of the obligation of those clubs to pay heed to those statutory changes.

I believe it is a most desirable and commendable step by the commission and it is only proper that it should take this action. I shall keep the honourable member informed of the response that is received on this matter. If he wishes to refer to any particular clubs, I shall be pleased to assist him in ensuring that they adhere to the laws of the State.

Mr MATHEWS (Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—The technical matter to which the honourable member for Portland referred is not one which has previously come to my attention. I shall have the inquiries he suggested made and come back to him with the information he seeks.

The honourable member for Murray Valley referred to the need for either a drastic improvement in the existing police station at Wangaratta or the construction of a new station. I agree with his analysis wholeheartedly. The Wangaratta police station represents one small part of the enormous legacy of sub-standard accommodation that the
Government inherited from its predecessors. The Government has made great inroads on the backlog of sub-standard police accommodation and further progress will be made in the course of the current year.

As part of this year’s program, a number of minor measures will be taken to increase the comfort and efficiency with which the police are able to go about their business in the present Wangaratta police station. However, it seems likely that no wholly satisfactory resolution can be achieved within the confines of the existing building and the need for a new station must be faced.

The police already have a 10-acre site in Wangaratta but two alternatives have presented themselves which now require consideration. Certainly the Bachelor’s Green site would be more convenient from the police point of view and it would be much more conducive to police efficiency in the interests of the Wangaratta community. There is also the question of the site that has been offered to the police by a local bowling club, which envisages a change in its present premises.

I shall take to heart what the honourable member has said. As he said, I have already visited the police station on two separate occasions and satisfied myself of the need for work to be done. I shall seek an early decision as to when it is likely that a new police station can be constructed on one of the three sites I have mentioned and whether the time that will elapse before that new construction can be carried out will justify the expenditure of still further public funds on further upgrading the existing premises.

The honourable member for Frankston South raised an issue of widespread concern, namely, the rise in the incidence of drug-related road traffic offences, fatalities and road safety incidents generally. I am aware of the remarks that Assistant Commissioner Baker made recently on this subject. Unfortunately, the matter is by no means simple from a technical point of view. The development of adequate analytic machinery to undertake the complicated fractionating processes required to separate out the presence of various drugs in the bloodstreams of offenders is one of which it is as yet not possible to be completely confident.

I have drawn the attention of the Police Force to a number of computerized devices that have been developed for this purpose in the United States of America and the evaluation of that equipment is in hand by the breath analysis people within the Police Force. I hope it will be possible for some decisions to be made on those matters shortly.

The honourable member for Dromana raised the question of the future of the Commonwealth accommodation currently being occupied by the Portsea Officer Training School; I shall raise that matter with the Premier and obtain a reply for the honourable member.

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—The honourable member for Werribee raised the problem of the right-hand lane turn from the freeway into Hoppers Crossing and the fact that traffic can bank up on the freeway overpass. This is a matter of concern for the honourable member for Werribee and the community he represents. I shall take up the matter with both the Road Traffic Authority and the Road Construction Authority and advise the honourable member accordingly.

Mr SPYKER (Minister for Consumer Affairs)—The honourable member for Bennettswood referred to a vacant building which could be used as a child care centre in the City of Waverley. He inquired about adequate staff being provided for that centre.

The Minister for Community Services in another place has a real commitment to child care facilities. The honourable member should recognize the hard work the Minister has put into her portfolio. I shall take up the matter with the Minister to determine whether the difficulties can be resolved as quickly as possible.

Mr CATHIE (Minister for Education)—The honourable member for Glen Waverley referred to the issue of the relocation of the Mulgrave Primary School away from a busy
intersection. The honourable member indicated that the current facilities are poor and that tenders are about to be closed at that relocation. I shall have the matter investigated to determine the position on temporary accommodation being provided for the commencement of the school year.

The honourable member for Syndal referred to the Sussex Heights Primary School and the need to replace the roofing on that building. In re-letting the contract, the parents of children at the school are concerned that the roof be fully and properly replaced rather than repatched. I shall investigate the matter and refer it to the region for further report and recommendation.

The motion was agreed to.

*The House adjourned at 12.18 a.m. (Wednesday).*
Wednesday, 23 October 1985

The SPEAKER (the Hon. C. T. Edmunds) took the chair at 11.5 a.m. and read the prayer.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

NUNAWADING BY-ELECTION

Mr RICHARDSON (Forest Hill)—I refer to the Premier’s misleading proposition that the campaign activities of the Labor Party secretariat are separated from the activities of his Government and his Ministerial advisers and staff. Will the Premier now deny that roles were played in the Labor Party’s Nunawading election campaign and its arrangements and content by his principal press secretary and Director of the Government Media Unit, Mr Ken Hickey, the principal Ministerial adviser to the Premier, Mr Michael Salvaris, the Ministerial adviser to the Premier, Mr David Withington, the director of insurance policy in the Department of Management and Budget, Mr Ian Baker, and by the Ministers for Conservation, Forests and Lands, Community Services and Employment and Industrial Affairs and members of their staff.

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I indicated yesterday that the guidelines that were laid down in respect of Ministerial advisers and Opposition staff, so far as I am aware, have been complied with. So far as any members of the public sector are concerned, they have a role to play in the political process, if they see fit. Their rights have been made very clear and they may pursue those rights as long as they desire.

HOW-TO-VOTE CARDS IN NUNAWADING BY-ELECTION

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS (Leader of the National Party)—I refer the Premier to the bogus anti-nuclear how-to-vote card handed out by the Labor Party at the Nunawading by-election on 17 August. Was the Premier aware of the existence of this card prior to 17 August, election day? The answer required is, “Yes” or “No”.

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I have already made the position clear so far as this matter is concerned. I answered the question of the Leader of the National Party yesterday and I have nothing further to add. He knows very well what the situation is. He knows a complaint was made and that it is being examined along with five other complaints in four electorates. That process will proceed.

He also knows, and I have made it very clear, that I am not taking it on myself to conduct any investigatory role in this matter.

ALLEGATIONS IN THE “BULLETIN”

Mr ROWE (Essendon)—I ask the Deputy Premier, in his capacity as Leader of the House, whether he can inform the House of the outcome of discussions with the Leaders of the other parties with reference to the matter raised yesterday in question time of making available tapes for the House to be played at 2 o’clock this afternoon.

The SPEAKER—Order! I advise the House that I intend to call the Deputy Premier, but I also have made arrangements to ensure that if this event is to occur technical facilities have been provided to ensure that all honourable members will be able to hear tapes being played.

It is a most unusual set of circumstances for the Speaker to be involved in. The House is a House of the spoken word of individual members and we are dealing with a novel area. I have given the matter a great deal of thought during the past 24 hours and, if the
tape recording is to be heard, I have been assured by my staff that facilities will be available to ensure that all persons will be able to hear what occurred.

I have also issued an instruction that there will be no recording of the tapes except by Hansard and that the media and any other persons who wish to record these tapes will be prevented from doing so.

Mr MACLELLAN (Berwick)—On a point of order, I suggest that the question asked by the honourable member for Essendon is out of order. It does not relate to Government business.

The SPEAKER—Order! The point of order is not upheld. The honourable member asked a question of the Leader of the House with respect to the running of the House, and I believe it is in order.

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—Yesterday I undertook to consult with representatives from each of the other parties and I have done so. The Leader of the National Party told me of his willingness to support the making of time available at 2 p.m. today for the playing of the tapes. I commend him for his openness on the matter.

Mr Ross-Edwards—Subject to Mr Kennett's agreement.

Mr FORDHAM—I also approached the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, in his capacity as Leader of the Opposition, and we have now spoken on five occasions since yesterday. On each occasion he has passed on to me that a decision has not yet been made but that the Opposition wished all options to be kept open on the matter up to and including 2 p.m. today.

I appreciated your remarks earlier, Mr Speaker, that arrangements have been made for the recording equipment if the Leader of the Opposition sees fit to make the tapes available for consideration by the House. I have also had electronic recording equipment made available just in case there was a shortage.

I asked the Deputy Leader of the Opposition what type of cassette was used for the original tapes so that we could ensure that the right electronic equipment would be available. Again, I was advised to keep all options open. We have done just that and a considerable range of cassette and reel-to-reel tape recording equipment is available. The equipment is all there and available for the Opposition!

At this stage I anxiously await the decision of the Leader of the Opposition as to whether he will take up the opportunity that will be made available to him. I assume that in the end he will agree, and the reasons why—

Mr Whiting interjected.

Mr FORDHAM—I thank the honourable member for Mildura for his interest in this matter and I should be happy to respond that last week, when referring to some earlier tapes in the American context, the Leader of the Opposition said that the action itself was quite unacceptable and that, where the most senior publicly elected person in the United States of America got into trouble, was when he tried to cover up.

Mr PLOWMAN (Evelyn)—On a point of order, Mr Speaker, my understanding is that question time is for honourable members to direct questions on Government administration to the responsible Minister. The debate by the Deputy Premier on this question is making a farce of question time and I believe you, Mr Speaker, must rule that question time should be for honourable members to direct questions to Ministers about their responsibilities and that administration of the House is a different matter altogether.

The SPEAKER—Order! I uphold the point of order. I ask the Deputy Premier not to debate the matter but to respond to the question asked.
Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—In conclusion, in response to the honourable member’s question, I indicate that the Government stands by its commitment yesterday to make time available to the Leader of the Opposition if he sees fit. It is in the interests of the Leader of the Opposition and in the interests of the House, given the circumstances, that he should come clean on this matter and make those tapes available today.

The SPEAKER—Order! I should also advise the House that under Standing Orders and Sessional Orders it will be necessary to have a resolution of the House concerning the playing of tapes. The House is its own master and it would be necessary for a motion to be put before the House before the matter could be resolved.

VICTORIAN ECONOMY

Mr KENNELLT (Leader of the Opposition)—I address my question to the Premier and refer to his confession yesterday that he is ignorant of the substantial job losses now being caused in the restaurant, hospitality and vehicle sales industries as a result of the Hawke-Keating tax package. I ask the Premier: in view of the thousands of job losses, how will the Government fulfil promises made by the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs that he will use the hospitality industry to provide jobs under the Youth Guarantee Scheme?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I do not accept the premise upon which the Leader of the Opposition based his questions yesterday and today. Anyone who is prepared to draw conclusions from the sort of data floating around, and from an industry that is far from disinterested, is a fool.

An Honourable Member—An irresponsible fool.

Mr CAIN—Yes, an irresponsible fool. No objective analyst would accept that sort of data from that source so soon after the tax package and then draw some causal link between them. I cannot think of any member of this House, except the Leader of the Opposition, who would be so foolish and so lacking in logic, objectivity or reason to do it. It is absurd.

It has been recognized by a number of responsible people in industry, with whom the Government confers on a regular basis—and as recently as last Monday—that it is far too early for anyone to draw such a conclusion. However, the Leader of the Opposition goes off on his own, running that sort of line, with no factual support.

Mr Kennett—I don’t care.

Mr CAIN—the Governor of the Opposition interjects that he does not care. This Government has cared about jobs and the economic development of the State for the past three years in a way that was unknown before it came to office and the results speak for themselves.

Yesterday I informed the House what the labor force statistics demonstrate in terms of employment increases and unemployment decreases. I also indicated what the capital investment figures demonstrate in some detail, but these things do not happen by accident. They were the result of State and Federal Governments setting on a course to restore the economic growth of this country and this State, and that is what is occurring.

The Federal Treasurer, Paul Keating, and the Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, had the courage that was lacking in early years to tackle the tax question. Honourable members know about the inequities that were built into the tax system, which were perpetrated year after year by all the interest groups that dominated the thinking of previous Governments in that area.

The Government has a new approach; a determination to make the burden of tax more equitable for those who are able to bear more of the burden. However, those who have been cheating the system for years have been stopped.
The Leader of the Opposition has an implied criticism of that. What I say is: give a fair chance to those initiatives and changes proposed by the Federal Government and wait for the results before drawing any such conclusions.

The tax package is based upon the premise that taxation laws and the incidence of taxation can contribute to continuing economic growth. That is at the heart of the package. Some people want to pick out selective aspects of the package and then, upon falacious reasoning, as I have said before, denounce the whole package. That says volumes about the Leader of the Opposition's lack of reasoning capacity and understanding of the wider issues.

The Government supports the Federal Government in what it has been doing to ensure the growth of the country. Victoria is doing it better than anywhere else, as the Leader of the Opposition knows. The Government supports a more equitable tax package.

STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE

Mr STEGGALL (Swan Hill)—Will the Minister for Police and Emergency Services confirm that he or his Ministry is considering the recommendations of a working party to effectively downgrade the status and role of the State Emergency Service by withdrawing its professional staff and regional officers?

Is the Minister aware that such a move would jeopardize the standards, performance and the very existence of that organization, and will the Minister table the report of the working party?

Mr MATHEWS (Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—I thank the honourable member for Swan Hill for his question. The Government inherited a State Emergency Service which had been shamefully neglected and underfunded by the previous Liberal Government for the ten years since its inception in 1974-75.

The Government has made considerable efforts to upgrade the resources available to the State Emergency Service with the result that the service is now better off than it has ever been. Nevertheless, the Government recognizes the need to introduce comprehensive counter disaster arrangements in which the personnel of the service would have a key role to play.

The report to which the honourable member refers has been prepared by a working party set up under the Readiness Review Committee of the Disaster Services Council. It has been signed by all members of that working party, including those drawn from the State Emergency Service. The report is endorsed by the Readiness Review Committee and will be shortly considered by the Disaster Services Council. When that exhaustive process of consultation has been completed the outcome will be presented to the House in the form of proposed legislation.

PORTLAND ALUMINIUM SMELTER

Mrs GLEESON (Thomastown)—Can the Premier inform the House whether the Portland aluminium smelter has moved from the construction stage of development to the operational stage?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I am pleased to advise the House that there have been further developments at the Portland aluminium smelter. As I indicated only a week or so ago, the first potline is now 58 per cent completed and approximately $605 million has been expended on the project.

Last week the first operational workers as opposed to construction workers were employed at the site.

They are employees who will be engaged in the production of aluminium at the Portland smelter. The thirteen operational employees started work a week ago and a further 67 will be on the job in these capacities before the end of the year.
By the end of next year, there will be some 450 operational employees engaged at the smelter for duties on potline 1 and that will commence operation hopefully on 1 November 1986. Potline 2 will be operational in mid-1988.

The honourable member for Mildura laughs; he would not have laughed if he had seen the burden that was placed on the Government's shoulders in regard to this project when it came to office in April 1982. It would have been easy to walk away and do nothing about it. I repeat that it required a creative and diligent approach from the Government to get the project restarted. It is an approach that has seen the Government win through despite a range of obstacles that have been put in its way by a variety of persons and organizations. The Portland project is a symbol of the revolution in the fortunes of this State that have occurred through the 1980s.

**HOW-TO-VOTE CARDS IN NUNAWADING BY-ELECTION**

Mr I. W. SMITH (Polwarth)—I refer to the fact that the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs received payment as a member of the Government at all times and in all circumstances during the Nunawading by-election, including when he was campaigning in that by-election and I ask: when did the Minister first become aware that the Labor Party was involved in the planning, printing and distribution of a bogus how-to-vote card on behalf of the Nuclear Disarmament Party?

The SPEAKER—Order! I find some difficulty in allowing the question. It is asked in respect of the relationship of a Minister with a political party. There has been a series of questions related to the same set of circumstances that have been allowed and so I intend to allow the question, but there is some difficulty in the question with respect to what is the Minister's relationship with a political party.

Mr CRABB (Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs)—It is remarkable that the honourable member for Polwarth should somehow consider it strange that a Cabinet Minister should be involved in a by-election campaign. I am a vigorous campaigner during State and by-election campaigns and I will continue to be so, although I am aware that the honourable member for Polwarth is less than vigorous. Indeed I am pleased that he has woken up. As to the question, I believe it has been adequately dealt with by the Premier on a number of occasions.

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—On a point of order, I refer to the previous question and I respect and accept your decision, Mr Speaker, on its admissibility. Your opening comment that there has been a series of questions around that fringe is undoubtedly correct. I believe it would be in the interests of honourable members on both sides of the House for the matter to be clarified and I commend to you for your consideration, so that you may report back at a later stage to the House, specific guidelines on an issue of this sort.

Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—On the same point of order, I submit that in fact the activities of Ministers of the Crown and members of Parliament who are by the Premier's definition, "holders of public office", are matters that should be scrutinized by Parliament. We have seen, Sir, for a number of weeks that the Government, led by the Premier, has not been prepared to answer simple questions about their activities. I submit to you, Sir, that the fact that the Government and the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs are not prepared to answer these questions can do nothing but raise doubt in the public's mind as to their involvement in what was a pretty shabby deal.

Mr RICHARDSON (Forest Hill)—On the same point of order, Mr Speaker, the fact is that there is no point of order. The Deputy Premier did not raise a point of order that is admissible as a point of order according to the Standing Orders, according to precedent or according to May. What the honourable gentleman did was to make a speech, and an impertinent speech at that, to the Chair; a speech in which he displayed great disrespect for the Chair and attempted to direct the Chair to take a certain course of action.
The SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Forest Hill is now doing exactly what he is accusing another honourable member of doing. I am allowing the honourable member to speak on the point of order raised by the Deputy Premier, but I do not intend to hear wide-ranging discussion on other matters.

Mr RICHARDSON—Thank you, Mr Speaker. The fact is that the honourable gentleman did not raise a point of order that can be sustained by any of the traditions, precedents or Standing Orders of this House; nor can it be sustained by May.

The SPEAKER—Order! Since I have been in this House it has been the practice to raise points of order about procedures or other matters. I rule that the point of order raised by the Deputy Premier is in order because the honourable gentleman sought action on my part concerning my later advising the House on a matter that affects the good running of this Chamber. I intend to take that action.

NUNAWADING BY-ELECTION

Mrs HIRSH (Wantirna)—Can the Minister for Police and Emergency Services advise the House what action is being taken following allegations concerning the involvement of mountain cattlemen in the Nunawading Province by-election?

Mr MATHEWS (Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—I believe the House—

Mr B. J. EVANS (Gippsland East)—I raise a point of order, Mr Speaker. I submit that questions must be concerned with matters of Government administration and I suggest that the activities of the mountain cattlemen have nothing to do with Government administration.

Mr MATHEWS (Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—On the same point of order, the matter is the subject of police investigation on the reference of the Chief Electoral Officer.

The SPEAKER—Order! There is no point of order. As I heard the question, the honourable member for Wantirna sought information in respect of action that has been taken by the Minister regarding this group. Therefore, the question is in order.

Mr Whiting—The Premier would not answer his question!

The SPEAKER—Order! I also advise the House that I pointed out yesterday, and I intend to do it again now, that Standing Order No. 108 does not allow an honourable member to make imputations against other honourable members in this Chamber. There is only one way in which I should entertain such remarks, and that is by a substantive motion.

Mr MATHEWS (Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—Yes, Mr Speaker, I am able to say that the skeletons are now coming out of the Liberal Party cupboard with some frequency. The Liberal dirty tricks that were being perpetrated during elections that have taken place within the last twelve months are coming to light in droves.

There was the matter that was raised yesterday of the bogus “Save Prince Henry’s Hospital” card; there was a card in Gippsland that the Leader of the Opposition wished he had authorized, but did not; and, of course, there is the so-called mountain cattlemen issue in the Nunawading by-election—the issue of the bogus mountain cattlemen who were stooges of the Liberal Party.

I believe the House and Victorian community in general are very deeply indebted indeed to the honourable member for Wantirna for the thoroughness with which she has looked into the matter and for the extraordinary information that her inquiries have now brought to light. The situation is that, during the last—

An Honourable Member—Don’t get off your horse!