The SPEAKER (the Hon. C. T. Edmunds) took the chair at 11.7 a.m. and read the prayer.

ABSENCE OF MINISTERS

The SPEAKER—I advise the House that the Premier will be absent during question time today as he is attending the funeral service of the late Police Constable Angela Taylor; and that the Minister for the Arts will also be absent from the House today.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY BORROWINGS

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West)—I refer the Minister for Transport to his allegations in this House last week that the Auditor-General was in error in criticizing the escalating use of Metropolitan Transit Authority borrowings to cover operating costs. Is the Minister aware of a statement by the authority’s board expressing serious concern that it is being forced to finance all capital works as well as significant operating costs from borrowings and leasings; and is it not a fact that the authority and the Auditor-General are right, and that it is the Minister who is wrong?

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—This matter was answered quite extensively last week by the Premier, the Treasurer and me. There is nothing further to add. As I stated last week, discussions are occurring between the Ministry of Transport and the Auditor-General, and they are continuing.

FLOATING OF THE AUSTRALIAN DOLLAR

Mr HANN (Rodney)—In his joint capacity as spokesman in this place on agricultural matters, I ask the Treasurer whether he is aware that the decision of the Federal Government to prop up the Australian dollar, rather than allow a free float of the dollar, is causing the extremely high interest rates that are placing enormous pressure on the rural community in Victoria. If so, will the honourable gentleman make representations to the Federal Government to bring about a change of that policy whereby there will be a free float of the Australian dollar so that interest rates can drop significantly?

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—As all honourable members will be aware, since the Federal Government made the decision to float the Australian dollar, there has been a significant devaluation of the dollar in relation to both the United States dollar and other important foreign exchanges. Information I received today indicated that, although the Australian dollar is relatively strong against the United States dollar, there was a continuing depreciation against other exchange currencies. When one assesses the impact of the Australian dollar on the international competitive position of Australian firms and the agricultural sector, it is necessary to take into account not only the United States dollar but also other international currencies.

Since the Federal Government took that decision and since this Government introduced reforms to workers compensation, a marked improvement has occurred in the competitive position of business organizations, including farms. Obviously the farming sector has been adversely affected not only by the international market but also, as was pointed out during the debate last week on the Mallee crisis, the climatic conditions.

I have had discussions with the Federal Treasurer with respect to interest rates, and the policy of the Federal Government is not only to achieve high economic growth rates but
also to create the conditions under which interest rates can fall. If one examines the financial market position over the past two or three weeks, one will see hopeful signs in the area of interest rates; both semi-Government bond interest rates and Treasury bond interest rates are on the way down. I am hopeful that that impact will begin to flow to other sectors of the economy and achieve a reduction in interest rates.

The Government supports policies that generate increased economic growth, increased jobs, low unemployment and create conditions to achieve reductions in interest rates.

VICTORIAN WOMEN'S TRUST LTD

Miss CALLISTER (Morwell)—Will the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources, representing the Premier, inform the House what progress has been made towards establishing the Victorian Women's Trust Ltd and whether grants are now to be made available?

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—The Victorian Government donated $1 million to establish the Victorian Women's Trust Ltd as part of Victoria's 150th anniversary celebrations. The Government received enormous support from the community for what was seen as an extremely important initiative.

The trust will provide a perpetual source of funds for projects aimed at improving the status of Victorian women. I am pleased to inform the House that at 12.30 today the Premier will officially launch the trust at the State Bank.

The first round of grants has already been advertised, and, not surprisingly, more than 60 applications have been received. That is an indication of the significant interest that the development of the trust has attracted within the community. In May this year the first round of allocations will be made, and some $50 000 has been set aside for this group of projects to be assisted.

In addition to the funds provided by the Government, there has been significant interest by a number of other groups willing to contribute to a trust of this sort and with its aims.

I am pleased to inform the House that the Australian and New Zealand Banking Group Ltd trust has agreed to provide $20 000 to fund projects. A number of other bodies are being contacted and I believe further assistance will occur.

The trust is able to accept bequests and donations from the community which it will use to invest and fund projects within the ambit of the trust activity. The Government believes eventually the annual interest from the capital sum itself will total more than $1 million which can be provided for projects within the State.

The women's trust is the first of its sort within the country and one of the few throughout the world. It will be seen as a pacemaker for trusts of this sort, both in this country and elsewhere. The Government believes it is an important initiative and it will help to redress the imbalance, which it inherited when it came to office, that was so clearly weighted against women in Victoria.

The Government is proud of its record in this area and, while the National Party and Liberal Party scoff at developments of this sort, they will continue to remain in opposition where they should remain for the foreseeable future.

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE IN MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT

Mr STOCKDALE (Brighton)—I refer my question to the Minister for Transport. Moving on from the Minister's embarrassment at borrowings being used to cover operating costs in the transport area, I refer the Minister to inaccuracies in public estimates and I ask the Minister whether total capital expenditure in the transport portfolio will increase this year by 2·9 per cent, as indicated in the Budget Papers, or whether it will increase by a massive 11·1 per cent as stated by the Ministry.
Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—The final picture for the outturn on capital works will depend on the various projects that are under way being satisfactorily completed by the end of the year, as the honourable member would be aware.

The Metropolitan Transit Authority and the State Transport Authority are both running slightly under their estimated capital expenditure for the year, but naturally they are seeking to ensure that those jobs are carried out that the Government believes are necessary to improve the system.

The Road Traffic Authority fell behind in the Fairway area and it has put those resources into its road safety capital program to ensure that its capital expenditure is spent on roads.

Mr STOCKDALE (Brighton)—On a point of order, Mr Speaker, not only is the Minister debating the issue, but he is debating an issue that is not the one in question. The question is which of two estimates is correct.

The SPEAKER—Order! There is no point of order. The Minister, in my view, was not debating the issue, although if I am allowed to make a comment, he did seem to be wide of the mark in respect of the subject, but it has been the practice of the House, since I have been in it, that Ministers may answer questions without notice in any manner they choose.

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—I was pointing out that in terms of capital expenditure programs it is expected that the Road Construction Authority will meet its commitments. There was a concern that local government would not be able to spend its contribution, particularly of Australian Bicentennial Road Development Fund moneys. Considerable work has been done by the Road Construction Authority and local government, particularly local government engineers, to ensure that works do progress. Apart from a shortfall of small proportions in the capital budgets of the State Transport Authority and the Metropolitan Transit Authority, the announcements made in the Budget Papers will be met.

OIL PLATFORM CLOSURES IN BASS STRAIT

Mr WALLACE (Gippsland South)—Can the Treasurer explain to the House the effects on the Victorian Budget of the closure of two more oil platforms in Bass Strait as a result of the downturn in the petroleum industry?

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—I understand that the honourable member is referring to the recent decision by Esso-BHP to close down some platforms because of the import parity pricing and excise policies of the Federal Government.

As I understand the position, the impact on the Budget this year and next year of that decision will be minimal because of the nature of the platforms that are being closed down. If Esso-BHP had taken another decision, it certainly would have had a much greater impact on Victorian Government revenue.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESTRUCTURING

Mr SHEEHAN (Ballarat South)—I ask the Minister for Local Government to inform the House of the situation concerning the options paper for the potential restructure of Ballarat councils and when that paper will be released.

Mr SIMMONDS (Minister for Local Government)—The options paper for the Ballarat and Colac segment was released today by the Local Government Commission. The timetable for the commission's activity is that: the options stage will be from March to May 1986; the time for the formal inquiry will be between May and July 1986; and the decisions will be made between September and November 1986, allowing elections on the new boundaries to be held by August 1987.

I commend to honourable members the work of the commission in providing such detailed data on the segment, which includes illustrations of communications networks,
school bus routes, Telecom traffic and a number of options which are available for
consideration, which will ensure——

Mr Leigh interjected.

Mr Shell—Pay attention!

The SPEAKER—Order!

Mr SIMMONDS—Like all other honourable members, the honourable member for
Malvern may obtain a copy of the options papers by request from my department. I hope
it will not be necessary for me to read the entire paper into Hansard.

I commend the commission on the work it has performed. This is an options paper on
the first of the segments arising from the Statewide survey. I refer honourable members to
the need for restraint by the municipalities involved in projects which could be only
described as not in the best interests of local government.

The Shire of Buninyong, for instance, has informed me of a proposal to expend some
$350,000 as a first stage of a contemplated $700,000 project. I advised the shire that I
considered its proposal to be somewhat premature in view of the impending decisions on
restructure in that municipality.

The City of Chelsea and the Shire of Stawell have also made similar suggestions about
fairly massive expenditure on facilities. It would be inappropriate at this stage for taxpayers’
and ratepayers’ money to be expended unnecessarily in these circumstances. If all
municipalities in Victoria had regard to the restructure program they would view their
initiatives in those areas with similar concern.

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE IN MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT

Mr STOCKDALE (Brighton)—I address yet another question to the Minister for
Transport, and I direct his attention to the fact that the question concerns inconsistencies
between estimates, rather than inconsistencies between estimates and actual expenditure.
The Minister does not seem to know the difference!

Can the Minister inform the House whether capital expenditure by the Road
Construction Authority is estimated to fall by 3-3 per cent, as the Budget documents
suggested, or whether, in fact, it will increase by a massive 27-9 per cent, as the Ministry
has asserted?

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—In terms of expenditure on road funding, if the
honourable member had been present at the Melbourne Town Hall yesterday morning, as
were two of his colleagues, he would have understood that the State’s commitment this
year was to maintain road funding in real terms, despite the decision by the Commonwealth
Government to reduce funding under the Australian Land Transport Program.

A significant effort has been made by the Road Construction Authority in conjunction
with local government to ensure that those funds that have been made available—the
additional funds from State sources—have been spent in the most efficient way.

As I mentioned earlier, some concern was expressed that grants or allocations to local
government would not be spent this year. After some hard work by a special project team
from the Road Construction Authority, and also a special exercise with particular local
government engineers, that level of expenditure the Government has undertaken to carry
out will be met. There will be a continuing developing of roads, particularly in urban
areas, which is so essential for urban arterial roads. As the honourable member for
Gippsland West, I am sure, is aware, there will also be continued development of major
country roads.

It is the Government’s commitment to maintain expenditure on roads. I can give
another example; under the Australian Bicentennial Road Development Fund, States are
required to ensure that they commit themselves to matching the Commonwealth commitment. In that area, Victoria is now somewhere in the order of $50 million in excess of the requirement and the Federal Minister for Transport, Mr Morris, has made it clear in correspondence with the Government that Victoria is more than meeting its commitment. Because we believe roads and road safety are important, we will continue to meet those commitments.

**ASSISTANCE FOR ATHLETES IN COMMONWEALTH GAMES**

Mr STIRLING (Williamstown)—Can the Minister for Sport and Recreation advise the House what assistance his department is providing to Victoria's top athletes in this year's Commonwealth Games?

Mr TREZISE (Minister for Sport and Recreation)—This year, 1986, is a big year for Australian and Victorian sport because it is the year of the Commonwealth Games to be held in July in Edinburgh. The Government has allocated $40 000 as the Victorian contribution to the Commonwealth Games fund. The Government is also employing fifteen sports promotion officers. The first ten were employed when they came home from the last Olympic Games and could not find employment. They were employed by the Department of Sport and Recreation, and that ten has increased to fifteen.

In addition, the department is providing $205 000 to various teams in conjunction with the RESI Statewide Building Society, the William Buckland Foundation, TAA, the Australian Sports Medicine Federation, the *Sun* and the Sports Performance Network. A total of $205 000 will be allocated to various athletes under the following schemes: “The Squad”, the Victorian Sports Aid Foundation; the Victorian Junior Sports Aid Foundation; the Victorian Disabled Sports Aid Foundation; the Victorian Veterans’ Sports Aid Foundation, and the Country Athlete Assistance Scheme.

At this stage five members of “The Squad” are to receive specialist assistance to help their sport. That number will be increased to ten and those athletes in “The Squad” will receive $5000 from the RESI-Statewide Building Society, an airline ticket from TAA, sports science service from the Australian Sports Medicine Federation and the department’s sports performance network to assist them to attain their maximum ability and performance in the Commonwealth Games. We look forward to Victorians doing well in the forthcoming Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh.

**STATE TRANSPORT AUTHORITY**

Mr GUDE (Hawthorn)—I refer the Minister for Transport to the annual report of the State Transport Authority which shows that the target set by the Government for 1984–85 for the State Transport Authority was to employ a total of 13 630 people but there was an actual employment of 14 204. I ask: did this excess cost in the order of $12 million; why was the target not achieved and what staffing targets has the Minister laid down for the State Transport Authority and the Metropolitan Transit Authority for 1985–86?

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—I thank the honourable member for his question. What has occurred over recent times has been the turning around of a situation that existed over a long period when there was additional employment in this area. The Government, when introducing the Budget for 1985–86, said increasing attention needed to be given to all aspects of transport and other departmental funding.

As a result of the steps that were taken at the time of the last Budget, on the latest information available to me I advise the House that the Metropolitan Transit Authority and State Transport Authority employment had reduced by approximately 880 since last August. We expect a further reduction between now and the end of the financial year.

That has not been achieved easily and it means that for the first time in quite a while we are able to keep our expenditure budget within the limits set by the Treasurer. I expect that that performance will continue in future years and that people will see that public
transport deficits are not rising in real terms, as has been the experience of Victorians over the past decade.

Other areas of expenditure are also being tackled. The Government is examining all aspects of expenditure, not just the area of Australian Railways Union members or members who are engaged in the operation of trains. Authorities have been told that they also must have projects to reduce the number of senior managers within those authorities.

The Metropolitan Transit Authority has set a target of a 10 per cent reduction during the next eighteen months and a similar target has been set for the State Transport Authority.

The Government is ensuring that people have a public transport service that does not have continuing increases in costs. That is clearly the view that the Premier and the Treasurer have put forward, and I am carrying out those undertakings.

**ISOLATED FAMILIES IN EAST GIPPSLAND**

Mr B. J. EVANS (Gippsland East)—I refer to discussions by the Minister for Education with representatives of the Isolated Children’s Parents Association held in east Gippsland recently and I ask what proposals the Minister has under consideration for improving the daily travel allowance for parents of isolated children that has not been increased or adjusted in 30 years.

Mr CATHIE (Minister for Education)—Last week in Bairnsdale, I met representatives of the Isolated Children’s Parents Association and I am concerned about the difficulties faced by people, especially those in more remote areas. A whole range of solutions exists and I discussed some of the solutions with those people because I am prepared to examine proposals in our budgetary arrangements in an endeavour to assist in some way.

One of the schools involved has only three students attending it. I do not believe we can provide a viable education, with all the resources that are essential in the modern era of teachers, equipment and a reasonable social mix for children, in a school of three students.

Mr B. J. Evans—Which school is that?

Mr CATHIE—Gelantipy. The three schools in that area are Buchan South, Gelantipy and Buchan. One of the options I discussed with that association is the possibility of bringing those three schools together and providing a transport system that will ensure that all the children now attending them will be properly serviced.

A difficulty faced by one of the isolated families is that the local shire considers that the last 20 kilometres of the road are not suitable for use by a bus. Complex issues that must be resolved are involved, and I shall seek to resolve them in terms of the discussions that I had with those representatives.

**TRAINEESHIP PROGRAM**

Mr KIRKWOOD (Preston)—Can the Minister for Labour inform the House of the numbers of people currently involved in the traineeship program and provide details of the next developments?

Mr CRABB (Minister for Labour)—I am always delighted to answer a question from the honourable member for Preston and I am also delighted to inform the House that the first private sector traineeships to be developed in the nation have been developed in Victoria. The traineeships are a consequence of an agreement between Coles Myer Ltd, Woolworths Ltd and the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association, under which 1000 traineeships will be established in the retail industry.

I agree with Mr George Polites, the Chairman of the National Task Force on Traineeships, who said that this was a landmark for the success of the new training system in the private sector. The employers and the union should be commended for having taken this substantial
step forward in providing a system of traineeships that will be an appropriate and continuing means of assisting young people in the transition from school to the work force.

We have, in Victoria, as honourable members are aware, pioneered the development of work-study positions, which are similar to the traineeship positions. Over the past twelve months, 1250 work-study positions have been provided in the public sector and these will be converted into traineeship positions as we come to the end of the twelve months and during the ensuing financial year.

The retail traineeships will offer twelve months' training and experience in various areas of retail operation. In filling the positions, priority will be given to sixteen and seventeen-year-olds who have not completed Year 12 and trainees will be paid at the relevant award rates for time spent on the job. That is in contrast to the Opposition's solution, which was to halve the award wage of young people. Appropriate allowances are being provided to the trainees and to the employers of the trainees. As well as that, the Victorian Government will be providing exemptions from pay-roll tax and workers compensation premium payments in relation to the employment of the trainees.

In addition to that landmark project that has resulted from the agreement between the retailers and the union, we have also appointed 130 trainees to traineeship positions in the Victorian Public Service as one of our first steps in increasing the proportion of school leavers who are employed in the Victorian public sector. I am tempted to blame the Opposition for what has occurred over a period of years but I guess it happened in a lot of other places as well. None the less, the Opposition, when in government, did nothing to change the process and there was a dramatic rundown in the number of school leavers being employed by the Public Service and statutory authorities. The Government is strenuously endeavouring to change that situation so that there is a far higher degree of intake from schools rather than an intake at mature age.

With the success of the traineeship, apprenticeship and work-study programs a number of other problems have been drawn to our attention, including the difficulty that many young people find in gaining access to the many excellent programs. This has meant that in some of the programs it has proved difficult to find young people to fill the positions that have been created, which seems largely to have come about because some of the established processes, such as the Commonwealth Employment Service, have, frankly, not been acting adequately to find the appropriate number of young people. Consequently, we have in recent months been funding and developing projects in country Victoria and in the suburbs to enable young people to be contacted in their own communities.

Mr RAMSAY (Balwyn)—On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the Government is again breaching your rules in asking a question seeking extremely wide-ranging material. The Minister has been providing the House with a lengthy Ministerial statement and it has taken him 6 minutes to answer the question so far. This is a breach of the rules that apply to question time.

The SPEAKER—Order! A reply of 6 minutes is nowhere near a record in this place. I do not uphold the point of order. The question was specifically asked in a form that required detail and there is no way the Minister can handle the question except in the manner he is handling it.

Mr CRABB (Minister for Labour)—I was asked what the next steps were to be and I thought the honourable member for Balwyn would have been vaguely interested in what the Government was doing to solve the problem of unemployed youth, who became unemployed while he was the Minister for Labour and Industry in a previous Government!

I was about to point out some of the steps the Government is taking. The Government is in the process of developing projects run by people in various communities that can assist young people in finding access to jobs. I specifically wanted to mention a project in Mildura to which the honourable member for Mildura has provided considerable assistance. There is also a project taking place in Melton in conjunction with the Rotary club and this
Paper

has received considerable assistance from the honourable member for Derrimut. There is a young people's access program in Geelong and the honourable members for Geelong West and Bellarine have provided considerable assistance in its development.

Finally, in Morwell we have converted a program to be steered towards assisting young people in gaining more access to jobs and, in that regard, the honourable member for Morwell has been of considerable assistance. If honourable members are aware of programs in their electorates that could be of assistance to the Government in helping young people to find access to job creation and job training programs, I invite them to contact my office and I shall see what can be done.

PAPER

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

Town and Country Planning Act 1961—
Sherbrooke—Shire of Sherbrooke Planning Scheme 1979 (Rural Areas)—Amendment No. 29.

APPROPRIATION MESSAGE

The SPEAKER announced the presentation of a message from His Excellency the Governor recommending that an appropriation be made from the Consolidated Fund for the purposes of the Water (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill.

SENATE VACANCY

The SPEAKER—I have received the following message from His Excellency the Governor:

The Governor transmits to the Legislative Assembly a copy of a despatch which has been received from the Honourable the President of the Senate notifying that a vacancy has happened in the representation of the State of Victoria in the Senate of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Your Excellency,

Pursuant to the provisions of section 21 of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution, I notify Your Excellency that a vacancy has happened in the representation of the State of Victoria through the death of Senator Alan Joseph Missen on 30 March 1986.

Yours faithfully,

DOUGLAS McCLELLAND
President of the Senate

Mr FORDHAM (Deputy Premier)—I move:

That this House meets the Legislative Council for the purpose of sitting and voting together to choose a person to hold the place in the Senate rendered vacant by the death of Senator Alan Joseph Missen, and proposes that the place and time of such meeting be the Legislative Assembly Chamber on Wednesday, 7 May next at six o'clock.

The motion was agreed to.

It was ordered that the foregoing resolution be transmitted to the Legislative Council with a message desiring its concurrence therein.

COGNATE DEBATE ON BILLS

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—By leave, I move:

That this House authorizes and requires Mr Speaker to permit the second reading and subsequent stages of the Supply (1986–87, No. 1) Bill and the Works and Services (Ancillary Provisions) Bill to be moved and debated concurrently.
Mr HANN (Rodney)—I believe, for the purposes of the record, the Minister should at least explain the reasons why this is to be done because, in the past, the Supply Bill has always been debated as a single Bill. I understand there is a technical reason, but I believe it should be placed on the record.

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources) (By leave)—The only reason I did not refer to it is that it has already been put on the record by the Treasurer. When he introduced both Bills he outlined the technical grounds and that is the simple reason why they have been brought forward in this way.

The motion was agreed to.

PETROLEUM (SUBMERGED LANDS) (AMENDMENT) BILL

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources) moved for leave to bring in a Bill to amend the Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Act 1982 and for other purposes.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

ROAD CONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY (LANDS) BILL

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—I move:

That I have leave to bring in a Bill to authorize the Road Construction Authority to acquire certain recreational lands and for other purposes.

Mr MACLELLAN (Berwick)—I wonder whether the Minister, in the interests of saving the House any embarrassment, could indicate what recreational land is involved in the Bill.

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport) (By leave)—The proposed legislation would clear the way for the acquisition of certain lands required for the C3 arterial link. I shall be more than happy to ensure a full briefing for the interested members of other parties and especially for the honourable member for Malvern.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

SUPPLY (1986–87, No. 1) BILL AND WORKS AND SERVICES (ANCILLARY PROVISIONS) BILL

The Order of the Day for the resumption of the debates on the motion for the second reading of these Bills was read.

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—I declare these Bills to be urgent, and I move:

That these Bills be considered urgent Bills.

Approval of the motion being put was indicated by the required number of members rising in their places, as specified in Standing Order No. 105 (a).

The House divided on the motion (the Hon. C. T. Edmunds in the chair).

| Ayes | 43 |
| Noes | 34 |
| Majority for the motion | 9 |
AYES

Miss Callister
Mr Cathie
Dr Coghill
Mr Crab
Mr Culpin
Mr Ernst
Mr Fogarty
Mr Fordham
Mr Gavin
Mrs Gleeson
Mr Harrowfield
Mrs Hill
Mr Hill
Mr Hockley
Mr Jolly
Mr Kennedy
Mr Kirkwood
Mr McCutcheon
Mr McDonald
Mr Micallef
Mr Norris
Mr Pope
Mrs Ray
Mr Remington
Mr Roper
Mr Rowe
Mr Seitz
Mrs Setches
Mr Sheehan
Mr Shell
Mr Sidiropoulos
Mr Simmonds
Mr Simpson
Mr Spyker
Mr Stirling
Mrs Toner
Mr Trezise
Dr Vaughan
Mr Walsh
Mr Wilkes
Mrs Wilson

Tellers:
Mr Andrianopoulos
Mr Cunningham

NOES

Mr Austin
Mr Brown
Mr Coleman
Mr Delzoppo
Mr Dickinson
Mr Evans
(Ballarat North)
Mr Evans
(Gippsland East)
Mr Guic
Mr Hann
Mr Hayward
Mr Heffernan
Mr Jasper
Mr John
Mr Lea
Mr Leigh
Mr Lieberman
Mr McGrath
(Warrnambool)
Mr Maclellan
Mr Perrin
Mr Pescott
Mr Plowman
Mr Ramsay
Mr Reynolds
Mr Richardson
Ms Sibree
Mr Steggall
Mr Stockdale
Mr Tanner
Mr Weideman
Dr Wells
Mr Whiting
Mr Williams

Mr Kennett
Mr Crozier
Mr Ross-Edwards

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—I move:

That the time allotted in connection with the Bills be as follows:

For the remaining stages of the Bills until 11.30 p.m. this day.

I can understand the muted response from the Opposition to the more than generous time allotment proposed by the Government. It represents an allotment of a further 9 hours for this routine debate on Supply.

The reality is that over the past four years the average time provided for the Supply debate is half the time allotted in the motion. It has been less than 9 hours, so it is a generous gesture of the Government to allot 9 hours for debate of the Supply Bill. It should not take anywhere near 9 hours, and I should hope that it does not take 9 hours.

I have taken this step as a result of the disgraceful behaviour last night when three former and deposed shadow Ministers tried to upstage and embarrass another shadow
Minister during debate on a Bill. I have moved this motion to prevent similar shenanigans in the House today. The time allotted is more than sufficient for a Bill of this sort and the sooner the House gets down to debating the Supply issue, the better.

Mr AUSTIN (Ripon)—It is an absolute disgrace that this miserable Government has limited debate on these very important legislative measures to a few hours of one day. It is even worse when the House will be debating cognately both the Supply Bill and the Works and Services (Ancillary Provisions) Bill, as both these measures are extremely important. The time limitation imposed for debate means many shadow Ministers who have responsibilities in important Government areas will not have the opportunity of debating those issues.

The Government claims that over the past four years debate on Supply has been limited, but the Government should refer back to when the Liberal Party was in office to determine how long debates on Supply issues should continue.

Parliament is limited further in this autumn sessional period to a sitting of seven weeks, which in its entirety amounts to only 21 days of sitting for six months of the year. Somehow the Government is frightened to spend much time in Parliament and it is showing its complete and utter irresponsibility to the people of Victoria.

The Opposition maintains this is a disgrace and the Government ought to be condemned for limiting debate under these circumstances.

Mr HANN (Rodney)—I record the very strong objection by the National Party to the length of time set aside for the debate. In his argument for restricting the debate on Supply, the Deputy Premier claimed it was an important Bill, but the key functions of Parliament in a democratic system are, firstly, to respond to legislation enacted in Victoria and its effect on the community and, secondly, to oversee the actual collection of taxes and their redistribution by the Government through its various agencies. Supply is one of two occasions when all members of the House can make contributions to debate on the actual expenditure of funds under the Parliamentary system.

It is of grave concern to the National Party that the autumn sessional period already is restricted to only 21 days, over seven weeks, which is a very short period for an autumn sessional period. At this rate, this year will set a record for the shortest time Parliament will be sitting in the time I have been a member of Parliament, as the Government is considering resuming sittings late in September and it is well known that the Premier does not wish Parliament to sit in December.

The other disturbing aspect is the refusal of the Government to allow its own party members to contribute positively to any debate in Parliament. On many occasions the Government has refused to allow its party members to contribute effectively and, therefore, has prevented the democratic processes from operating. Obviously, the Deputy Premier will again be restricting members of the Labor Party from contributing to the Supply debate.

The National Party is extremely concerned at the refusal of the Government to allot sufficient time in which to debate Supply issues. The autumn sessional period could be extended to a sitting of Parliament after the May school holidays, continuing into June. There is no reason not to do so. If the Government is sincere in its desire to govern it should extend Parliamentary sittings for 1986.

The Government has curtailed the opportunity for opposition party members to debate general issues also, because Standing Orders issued at the commencement of the Parliamentary session restrict the scope of debate on General Business motions.

The Supply Bill is one of the few occasions when honourable members are able to raise a range of issues that are of concern to their constituents. I reiterate the grave concern of the National Party at the Deputy Premier's actions in restricting debate on Supply to a very short period.
The motion was agreed to.

The debates (adjourned from April 8) on the motion of Mr Jolly (Treasurer) for the second reading of these Bills were resumed.

Mr STOCKDALE (Brighton)—The Supply Bill enables Supply for the first five months of the 1986–87 financial year and the total amount provided is $3 791 975 000. The Opposition will not oppose the Bill. However, the Bill covers the next financial year and the Budget will not be introduced, of course, until September, so the Bill raises the question of both the quality and quantity of stated Government expenditure across its proposed programs.

The Bill reflects yet again the high-spending, high-taxing and high-borrowing policies of the Victorian Labor Party Government. In his second-reading speech, the Treasurer said that he would refer to the macro-economic and aggregate Budget context in which the Supply Bill is introduced. He referred to the general expectation that growth in the Australian and Victorian economies was expected to moderate in 1986–87, and this would lead to a deceleration in the rate of growth in the Budget revenues from State sources.

The Treasurer referred to pressure on State revenue from two sources: first, from that slowdown in the over-all growth in the Australian and Victorian economies and, second, specifically the losses of revenue from decisions of the Commonwealth Government on the falling import parity price of crude oil.

As yet another example of the fluctuating estimates of the costs of that decision, the Treasurer in his second-reading speech put the cost at $150 million, having originally stated that it would be $100 million for a full year and having subsequently increased it to $120 million—it appears every time the Government mentions this issue the amount increases.

The Treasurer also addressed the possibility of further pressure resulting from the Commonwealth Government’s failure to increase the real value of grants to the States, to which I shall refer later.

Although it is difficult to tell from the utterances, especially of the Premier and the Treasurer, Victoria, in fact, is part of Australia and the problems Victoria faces are substantially the same problems that Australia, as a whole, faces. The present economic difficulties in Australia ultimately come back to two factors: first, a cost structure which is high relative to those of Australia’s trading partners; and, second, to excessive Government spending. Those two factors are closely interrelated.

The symptoms of that economic disease are relatively high inflation, compared to our trading partners, high interest rates and the devaluation of the Australian dollar to which the Treasurer referred in question time this morning.

Mr Speaker, I seek leave to incorporate in Hansard one of the tables I showed to you this morning.

Leave was granted, and the table was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 International Economic Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mr STOCKDALE—The table refers to three areas involving Australia and other Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development countries. The first column refers to the consumer price indices for 1985 showing the percentage change; the second column refers to the short-term interest rates as at December 1985; and the third column refers to long-term interest rates as at November 1985.

This is the latest data available from the OECD as a reliable international comparison and adequately reflects the relative disadvantages experienced by Australians, Australian business and particularly the trade-exposed sector. It illustrates that in general terms Australia’s inflation rate in 1985 was double that of the remainder of OECD countries. It also illustrates that our short-term interest rates as at December 1985 were some 10 percentage points higher than all bar one of the remaining countries. The long-term interest rates convey a picture of Australia paying a substantially higher cost for funds than do other OECD countries. The figures are clearly set out in the table.

It is pleasing to note that since the end of 1985, the period covered by this data, a steady fall in interest rates has occurred in Australia, and that is welcomed by the Opposition. I should also point out two important points about current interest rates. The first feature is that they are still high by historical standards and relative to the remainder of the world.

Last Friday short-term interest rates as defined in the table stood at 13·8 per cent and Treasury bonds for a period in excess of five years stood at 12·09 per cent. Therefore, Australia has had historically high interest rates in the last year. Comprehensive and authoritative data is not available but I am sure honourable members would not dispute my assertion that, although interest rates have declined in Australia, they have also declined in overseas countries. Australia still has a relative disadvantage when one considers the cost of obtaining funds. The high cost structure and high cost of money are disadvantages for Australian business.

The second feature is that high interest rates in Australia reflect the deliberate policy of Labor Governments, particularly the Federal Government, to prop up the Australian dollar to prevent renewed erosion of international confidence in the dollar, which would create a further reduction in the value of the Australian dollar on international money markets. The Australian dollar is being artificially propped up by the Government maintaining high interest rates.

The victims of high interest rates in Australia can blame deliberate Government policy. There has been an upward movement in the Australian dollar in recent times, and overnight the news on international currency markets is that the Australian dollar has firmed to a point higher than it has been in the past twelve months. These recent gains reflect falls in the currency of other countries, particularly the fall in the US dollar, more than any renewed respect for the Australian economy on international markets, so the basic problems remain.

I shall now turn to the Treasurer’s statements on the economic situation in Victoria. Perhaps the most important single social and economic indicator is the level of unemployment. Many claims have been made by the Government over the past four years

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Consumer Price Index: 1985 % Change</th>
<th>Short-term Interest Rate: Dec., 1985 % (1)</th>
<th>Long-term Interest Rate: Nov., 1985 % (2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>+5·7</td>
<td>11·17</td>
<td>9·7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEC</td>
<td>+5·0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>+4·6</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


(1) Yield on three-month Treasury Bills.

(2) Yield on long-term Government bonds, five years or more.
that its policies have been directed towards generating employment and reducing unemployment. Measured against the standard established by the Government, Victoria's performance has been appalling.

The Treasurer likes to boast that Victoria has the lowest unemployment rate in Australia. I point out to the House that Victoria traditionally has had Australia's lowest unemployment rate not only in the three years preceding the election of the Labor Government but also over a much longer period. Victoria has had the lowest, or been amongst the lowest, unemployment rate in Australia. When the Labor Party came to office Victoria had the lowest unemployment rate in Australia. In April 1982 Victoria's unemployment rate was 6·1 per cent—no other State or Territory had a lower unemployment rate at that time. Victoria then, as now, had the lowest unemployment rate in Australia.

The Treasurer, unfortunately, is not so fond of stating how the unemployment rate compares with what the Government inherited in 1982. In April 1982 Victoria had an unemployment rate of 6·1 per cent. Today, on the lastest indicators for February 1986, Victoria has an unemployment rate of 7·4 per cent. In case I am accused of having a seasonal bias in those figures, I place on record that in February 1982 Victoria's unemployment rate was 6·6 per cent, so unemployment has increased from April 1982 by 1·3 per cent, which is a substantial increase.

The Government has also boasted that its policies are directed towards generating youth employment and reducing unemployment. Honourable members have all heard about the much vaunted Youth Guarantee Scheme. Again the Government has expressly set up a test of the efficiency of its economic management and the value of its economic performance. As with unemployment generally, where the Government chose a specific group comprising fifteen to nineteen-year-olds, if one considers that group, one recognizes that Victoria has performed abysmally compared to the remainder of Australia.

In February 1985, 40,800 fifteen to nineteen-year-olds were unemployed in Victoria. In February 1986—I am using these figures because they are the latest available—Victoria had 46,600 young people unemployed, which is an increase of 14·2 per cent in one year. The picture was the reverse for the remainder of Australia. In February 1985, 153,400 fifteen to nineteen-year-olds were unemployed and in February 1986 there were 142,100 young people unemployed. Whereas for Victoria there was an increase of 14·2 per cent, for the remainder of Australia there was a decrease of 7·4 per cent for that year.

The same picture emerges if one compares 1982 and 1986, again using February to remove any seasonal bias. In February 1982 Victoria had only 38,000 young people unemployed, which was the legacy of the previous Liberal Government. What have the policies of the Labor Government achieved in the following four years? In February 1986, 46,600 young people were unemployed, which is an increase of 22·6 per cent.

Far from achieving a commendable objective, the Government's rhetoric has been just that because it has not achieved a reduction but a 22·6 per cent increase in the number of unemployed fifteen to nineteen-year-olds in Victoria.

In respect of the rest of Australia there has not been a reduction, but the increase has not been of the same order. In February 1982, 120,500 young people were unemployed in Australia whereas in February 1986 the figure was 142,100. That is an increase of 17·9 per cent in Australia compared with an increase of 22·6 per cent in Victoria. That is the most important single indicator of the social effect of the failure of Labor policies. This is Labor's new poor, excluded from the work force of Victoria.

The Premier has boasted of the Governments' social justice strategy. How can the social justice strategy be a source of comfort for Victorians who are in need and who are the victims of the policies pursued by the Government, when its record in relation to its previous area of concentrated attention, the Youth Guarantee Scheme, is so abysmally poor? The reality is that there have been jobs in the public sector, but there have not been
jobs in the private sector on the same scale. Labor's policy involves creating jobs in the bureaucracy for Labor cronies who are qualified to take up the new, highly qualified positions, in many cases positions requiring tertiary qualifications. The real social injustice is that "evil" working upon Victoria's young who are not in a position to compete for those jobs and who have not gained access to the work force on an equal footing.

Social justice demands not glossy brochures, not high blown rhetoric, not expensive advertising campaigns, but jobs for Victorians and particularly jobs for Victoria's young people.

Those are the symptoms of a country living beyond its means, a country which is now regarded by the rest of the world as living beyond its means; these are the symptoms of the failure of Labor policies. The Labor Party boasts that Victoria is leading Australia. In this instance the claim is true: Victoria has the most profligate spending Government in Australia and the lowest achieving Government in terms of reducing unemployment. Under the present Government Victoria has been a major contributor to Australia's economic ills.

Honourable members must now recognize that Victoria has a share of national responsibility to introduce responsible economic management and to achieve expenditure restraint instead of hollow rhetoric about restraint. The Opposition supports the present Government's attempts to obtain a fairer deal for Victoria in the division of Federal revenues that are distributed to the States. The Opposition supports the Government in its representations to the Australian Loan Council and the Grants Commission and when in government undertook similar work to that the Government has recently undertaken to obtain a fair share of Federal revenue for Victoria. However, it rings hollow when the Treasurer and the Premier proclaim that they represent a Government of restraint, but then seek to have the Commonwealth excuse the States, and in particular excuse Victoria, from the need to impose expenditure restraint. It is forgetting that the taxpayers who pay directly to the Victorian Government are the same taxpayers who pay Victoria's share of the Commonwealth revenue.

Although Victoria is entitled to a fair share of what is paid to the Commonwealth, it is in the national interest that the Federal Government indulge in real restraint in expenditure and that the State Government follows that lead. So far as the Victorian Government seeks to put pressure on the Federal Government to preserve promises to increase real expenditure in grants to the States, it is running counter to the national interests in effective expenditure restraint.

Moreover, Victoria has set a lead in the area of profligate expenditure. In 1981-82—the last year of the Liberal Government—the Victorian Government spent $6058.5 million. In 1985-86 the Labor Government will spend $10,056.8 million, an increase of 66 per cent. During the same time inflation, as measured by the implicit deflator of State non-farm product, has increased by only 36.3 per cent, so that net outlays have been increasing under the Government at nearly twice the rate of inflation. During the same time, State taxation has increased by 72.9 per cent. I seek leave to incorporate table 2, in *Hansard*, showing the basis on which the calculation of increases in State taxation has been made.

*Leave was granted, and the table was as follows:*

**Table 2**

**Victorian State Taxation Revenue 1981-2 to 1985-6 ($M)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1981-2</th>
<th>1985-6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State taxation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Taxation (as per Budget Papers)</td>
<td>1945-9</td>
<td>3025-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown coal royalty</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public authority dividends etc.</td>
<td>110.1</td>
<td>410.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mr STOCKDALE—The table indicates that State taxation has increased by 72·9 per cent. On a per capita basis Victoria now is the highest taxing Government in Australia. I now seek leave of the House to incorporate in Hansard table 3 dealing with the State per capita taxation.

Leave was granted and the table was as follows:

Table 3

State Per Capita Taxation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1985-86 (Estimate)</th>
<th>$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vic.</td>
<td>845</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.S.W.</td>
<td>827</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD.</td>
<td>550</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.A.</td>
<td>647</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.A.</td>
<td>682</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tas.</td>
<td>566</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Government Financial Estimates, Australia 1985-86 (Catalogue No. 5501.0)

Mr STOCKDALE—The table is based on figures issued by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. It indicates that Victoria’s per capita taxation for every man, woman and child is $845. New South Wales has the closest figure of $827 and the remaining States have rates of per capita taxation substantially below the rates in Victoria and New South Wales. It is important to note that the States with lowest per capita taxation are Queensland, which has a National Party Government, with a rate of $550, and Tasmania, which has Liberal Party Government, with a rate of $566. That is lasting proof of the parties to which the people of Victoria can look if they wish to have genuine expenditure restraint and genuine tax relief. It is the non-Labor side of Australian politics, particularly the Liberal Party, that the Victorian and Australian communities can look towards if they want to see the runs on the board for low taxation.

The Victorian Budget Papers also disclose a massive increase in State borrowings during the term of this Government. Budget Paper No. 2 for 1985–86 indicates a net debt in Victoria in 1981–82 of $11 088 million. In other words, the debt accumulated by Victoria during the whole of its history was $11 088 million. Yet by 1985–86 according to the estimates published by the Treasurer himself, the State’s net indebtedness will have increased to $17 249 million, an increase of 55·6 per cent and an increase in the last year alone of
11.1 per cent. That reflects that even the massive tax grab of this Government has been insufficient to finance its extravagant expenditure patterns. It has needed to blow out substantially the level of borrowings in this State on an unprecedented scale.

The net debt of the public sector is defined as gross debt less financial asset and net of the transactions within the public sector. The figures that I have referred to are indicated in the Budget Papers as excluding important areas of public debt. The figures exclude public sector superannuation funds, the State Bank, the State Insurance Office, municipalities, water authorities and Government equity in the Portland smelter.

An examination of the total indebtedness of the Victorian public sector as a whole would have to include the statutory authorities. It indicates an even more massive increase, even though figures are available only until the end of 1984-85. Estimates for 1985-86 would be so perilous as to be virtually worthless to the House. I seek leave to incorporate in Hansard table 4 which reveals the Victorian public debt between 1981-82 and 1984-85.

Leave was granted, and the table was as follows:

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victorian Public Debt 1981-82 to 1984-85 ($M)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public debt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government debt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indebtedness under the Financial Agreement, to the Commonwealth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indebtedness under other agreements, to the Commonwealth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public debt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indebtedness of semi-Government authorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State indebtedness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Mr STOCKDALE—The table indicates that in 1981-82 the State public debt was $13,050 million. By 1984-85, only three years later—and not counting the past year—the Victorian public debt had increased to $24,032 million, which is an almost incomprehensible increase in only three years—an increase of 84.2 per cent. During that time the level of inflation has increased by only 36.3 per cent.

There is, and there can be, no disagreement that Victoria faces a situation in 1986-87, which will require tight expenditure restraint. Indeed, the Premier was reported in the Australian on 3 March 1986 as saying so. I quote from the Australian:

The Victorian Premier, Mr Cain, yesterday became the first State leader to foreshadow tough budgetary action to counter loss of revenue because of the petrol price cut.

The Premier goes on to discuss the severe pressures on the Victorian Budget. Again, on 10 April 1986, the Treasurer was reported as using highly colourful language under the heading, “Budget will be pruned to the bone, says Jolly”. The article read:

Spending would be pruned “to the bone” in the Victorian budget, the Treasurer, Mr Jolly, said yesterday.

The figures I cited earlier show that, if the Victorian Government is a convert to expenditure restraint, it is indeed a very recent convert.

In addressing the 1985-86 Budget, we pointed out that the Budget was predicated on growth assumptions of 4.5 to 5 per cent for the Victorian economy. It is now generally accepted that those growth estimates will not be achieved and that growth is likely to be closer to 3.5 per cent.
The budgetary problems brought about by the Commonwealth's decision in relation to oil prices and by pressure resulting from expenditure restraint at the Federal level are likely to be only aggravated by the fact that in framing last year's Budget, the Government relied upon inflation-geared taxes and the harvest of excessively optimistic growth estimates to fuel what were expenditure programs which we described then as a missed opportunity for the State of Victoria. It excused itself from addressing the need for legitimate and real expenditure restraint in framing the current year's Budget.

The Commonwealth Labor Government has also been a profligate spender. In its first two years in office the real growth in Government outlays averaged more than 7 per cent per annum. It is now reaping the whirlwind of its reliance on inflation and growth to fuel high spending and irresponsible policies.

None the less, the Commonwealth did adopt mechanisms to maximize the benefit of its new-found faith in expenditure restraint.

When it adopted the Liberal policy of expenditure restraint, to the bare extent that it did so, it put in place mechanisms which would maximize the benefit of its new-found faith.

In May 1985 the Federal Treasurer introduced a mini-Budget. He introduced a program of expenditure cuts which involved reductions from the forward estimates for the following year's Budget. Those cuts totalled $1.25 billion.

The timing of that exercise was absolutely vital to the national interest. By introducing that mini-Budget in May 1985, the Federal Treasurer allowed the benefit of his conversion to expenditure restraint to be reflected across the full year's expenditure program for 1985–86.

By having failed to shoulder its fair share of national responsibility, the Victorian Government has saddled the State with an unacceptably high level of growth in expenditure in this current year's Budget but that is no reason to do the same thing in relation to the next financial year, the 1986–87 year. There is an opportunity now for the State Government to take a leaf from the book of the Federal Government and to pass on the benefit to the Victorian economy from the beginning of the next financial year and not simply from the date on which Budget initiatives can be introduced.

The Treasurer said that Victorian expenditure will be cut to the bone in the 1986-87 Budget but the problems are here and now; the solutions are available now.

If the Government is serious, it should be in a position now to nominate areas for expenditure restraint.

Can it be suggested that this Government and this Treasurer are to wait until September to require the departments to do the work necessary to achieve the very restraint that he talks about so fulsomely and so colourfully now? If he is serious, that work should have been done already and, if it has been done, the Government can now nominate areas for expenditure restraint.

The Treasurer has emphasized the carry-on nature of the measure now before the House. In his second-reading speech, the Treasurer said:

Spending during this period, the Supply period, enables the continuation of those ongoing programs in the period of expenditure for up to five months and no new policies are introduced during this time.

In the explanatory memorandum to the Supply Bill, the Treasurer caused this to be printed:

In calculating the Supply provision included in the Bill for each program, no new policy initiatives involving additional expenditure have been included.

It is clear that no new initiatives are reflected in the Supply Bill, but that is not enough.
The Federal mini-Budget shows that there is no immutable principle supporting those statements of the Treasurer locking the State in for the first five months of next year to the profligate spending program the Government has mapped out in the current Budget. If expenditure is to be cut to the bone, why wait until September or October of 1986?

The Treasurer uses dramatic phrases. The Treasurer can now show whether this is yet again hollow rhetoric. He can demonstrate the limits of the Government's commitment. The Opposition calls upon the Treasurer to act now and to introduce a mini-Budget to cut expenditure from the beginning of the 1986–87 year so that the Victorian economy, community, business, unemployed, the other victims of Labor policy, those who are suffering social injustice at the hands of the Government and the poor who have had no remedy can gain from a Budget which is structured from the beginning of the financial year to meet the proper priorities for expenditure and to cut back in areas where the Government has unnecessarily squandered taxpayers' money.

The Opposition calls firstly for the Government to introduce a responsible expenditure program in the form of a mini-Budget designed to have effect over the whole of 1986–87. The other commitment of the Federal Government designed to restrain its expenditure was the trilogy commitment given by the Prime Minister.

The Federal trilogy was: firstly, that there would be no increase in tax revenue as a proportion of gross domestic product in 1985–86 and over the life of the Parliament; secondly, that there would be no increase in Government expenditure as a proportion of gross domestic product in 1985–86 and over the life of the Parliament; and, thirdly, that the Commonwealth Government deficit would be reduced in money terms in 1985–86 and would be reduced as a proportion of the gross domestic product over the life of the Parliament.

The Federal May 1985 mini-Budget was designed to facilitate fulfilment of the trilogy commitment. The Opposition now urges the State Government to adopt a responsible approach to public sector management in Victoria.

The Opposition urges the Government to adopt a financial trilogy for Victoria. So irresponsible has the blow-out and expenditure been since 1981–82 that it is no longer enough for Victoria to simply maintain the present position. It is necessary for the Government to restore the position which had been achieved by the previous Liberal Government in 1981–82 and, accordingly, the Opposition seeks a commitment from the Treasurer in this debate that the Government will adopt the following trilogy commitment in relation to Victoria's finances: firstly, that net Government outlays will be restored to the percentage of State non-farm gross domestic product achieved in 1981–82; secondly, that State taxation will be restored to the percentage of State non-farm gross domestic product achieved in 1981–82; and, thirdly, that public indebtedness will be restored to the proportion of State non-farm gross domestic product achieved in 1981–82.

I seek leave to have incorporated in Hansard table 5.

Leave was granted, and the table was as follows:

Table 5
Victoria: A Financial Trilogy Commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>1981/2</th>
<th>1985/6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Non-Farm Gross Domestic Product (1)</td>
<td>39 180.2M</td>
<td>61 824.4M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure as a percentage of Non-Farm GDP (2)</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Taxation as a percentage of Non-Farm GDP (3)</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mr STOCKDALE—This shows, firstly, the basis upon which the commitment would be given, which is estimates of the State’s non-farm gross domestic product. As the House would be aware, such figures are not officially published but they can be inferred from the Victorian Budget Papers. As I understand, they are estimates prepared by the Department of Management and Budget for the Treasurer.

They show that in 1981–82 Victoria’s non-farm gross domestic product was $39 180-2 million. In 1985–86 the inferred figure is $61 824-4 million. That is the measure against which expenditure, taxation and indebtedness ought to be put, just as in the Federal arena comparable indicators have been put against gross domestic product.

That is not a task which requires of the Government any more restraint than was already being exercised by preceding Liberal Governments. The table shows that as a percentage of State non-farm gross domestic product in 1981–82 net Victorian Government outlays were 14 per cent. Under the present Government, on the basis of the 1985–86 Budget Papers, that figure has risen to 15·7 per cent.

State taxation as a percentage of non-farm GDP was 5-1 per cent in 1981–82 and has increased to 5·5 per cent in 1985–86. As I have previously indicated, public indebtedness data are not available for 1985–86, so that table reflects the position to 1984–85 and it shows that public indebtedness as a proportion of GDP was 33·3 per cent in 1981–82 and has risen dramatically to 43-8 per cent under the present Government only to the end of 1984–85.

If the Government does not give the trilogy commitment that has been sought in this debate today, it will demonstrate beyond any doubt whatever that its standard of restraint cannot meet the standard that was actually observed by the preceding Liberal Government, and the people of Victoria will know that when the Treasurer talks about restraining expenditure, when he talks about being a Government of restraint and when he talks about cutting expenditure to the bone, he is not prepared to adopt the standards that were observed by the previous Liberal Government. The people of Victoria will see which of the major political parties is the profligate spender, which is the high taxer, and which is the big borrower; the record will speak for itself.

The Opposition challenges the Government to show that it is serious when it talks about expenditure restraint and to restore the position which was the legacy of the former Liberal Government. This is not a time when the debate is about an avowedly socialist Government on the one hand and an avowedly free enterprise Government on the other hand each in a different term of reference. The Labor Party has moved to the ground that the Liberal Party has long occupied but it has done so only on the level of rhetoric.

The call for a trilogy commitment is an opportunity for the Government to show that it has moved to the position of being a Government of genuine restraint and responsible economical management, as was its predecessor the Liberal Government. It is no longer entitled to put its hand into the pockets of the taxpayers of Victoria, to go on committing the children of the present generation of Victorian taxpayers to mounting debt, and it has agreed that this is the case.

The Government is now acknowledging the force of what the Liberal Opposition has been saying at the Federal and State levels in this country—for the past four years in the
case of Victoria and three years in the case of the Federal Government—that Victoria and Australia can no longer afford high-spending, high-taxing and high-borrowing government. This is an opportunity for the Government to meet the challenge, and the Opposition calls upon the Government to give that trilogy commitment and show that it is engaged in more than hollow rhetoric.

Mr AUSTIN (Ripon)—I rise to join in the debate on the Supply (1986–87, No. 1) Bill, which comes before the House at this time every year. The Bill seeks $3791 million to meet the recurrent expenditure and works and services for the first five months of the 1986–87 year.

The notes accompanying the Bill indicate that so far as recurrent expenditure is concerned the figures are based on salary and wage rates as at 20 March 1986 and existing operating cost levels. The notes also stress, and the honourable member for Brighton made this point, that no new policy initiatives are to be introduced between 1 July and 30 November and, as the honourable member for Brighton pointed out, this is an opportunity for the Government to put its money where its mouth is and show that it is fair dinkum in moving towards cost cuts.

There is to be no change in the pattern of spending for the first five months of the new financial year. The figure of approximately $4 billion in the proposed legislation is to be spent in less than six months and, therefore, in a full year it can be expected that the total bill will be somewhere between $10 billion and $12 billion. That is an indication of the high and increasing cost of the Government.

This supports the claim that the Government is the biggest spending, the highest taxing and the biggest borrowing Government of all the States of Australia, and on a per capita basis it has the highest level of public debt.

Recent figures indicate that Victoria has not only the highest taxing but also the biggest borrowing Government per capita in Australia. If one considers the situation in New South Wales one finds that this financial year the borrowing in that State on a per capita basis will be at the rate of $505. The borrowing in Victoria will be $754 for every man, woman and child.

That figure outlines the difference between a Liberal Government and the Labor Government. A Labor Government is committed and forced by those within its ranks to be a big spending Government but, unfortunately, that expenditure is almost exclusively in the public sector. A Liberal Government would be committed to restraint, to less regulation of business and certainly to less regulation of the personal lives of all Victorians. It would also be committed to a reduction, in real terms, of taxation and Government charges.

Turning to agriculture, the Bill seeks approximately $44·6 million to cover recurrent and works and services expenditure under the four main programs for the five months beginning 1 July of this year. The Supply notes indicate that the amount sought by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs does not strictly reflect the full year's cost of administering that department because included in that bill is the amount covering the expenditure for the Rural Finance Commission to assist in rural adjustment. It also includes the cost of running the Office of Rural Affairs.

That leads me to the rural predicament; some call it a rural crisis—which it is and has been—but as a crisis cannot last for ever we ought to consider the hardship in rural areas right across Victoria and especially in some segments of it.

The hardship in the rural scene ought to be seen as affecting not just the farming community but also small businesses and people from all walks of life who live within the rural arena.
For more than a year, attempts have been made to inform the urban population of just what is occurring in country Victoria, to give them some idea of the extent of the hardship that rural people are undergoing.

Great rural industries are in jeopardy and that has been shown by the rallies and demonstrations taking place in capital cities right around Australia and also, more recently, the demonstrations that took place in Geelong and Portland.

The crisis that exists today for the farming community will be a crisis in the city in the near future if something is not done to turn around the direction in which we are going. The call for assistance is not just for the benefit of farming families. Ultimately, if that assistance is not given, the living standards of the whole of the State will be affected.

It must be understood that the problems facing country people today are not confined to matters outside the control of Governments. They are not just the results of the actions and policies of the European Economic Community or of the American farm Bill. At least half of the problems afflicting the farming community today are Government inspired.

If one examines what took place between 1981 and 1985, one finds that farm costs increased by 41 per cent while prices for farm products increased by only 8 per cent. The wages accord and the wage indexation existing today protect part of the community but farmers have to bear the full cost of all the wage increases.

To give an illustration of how one segment of the farming industry is affected by such costs, let us examine what takes place and compare farm costs now with those of twenty years ago. If we take the prime lamb industry, twenty years ago a prime lamb was worth approximately five pounds or $10 in today's currency. At that time a stationhand working 48 hours a week was paid $32 a week, and therefore, it would take three prime lambs to pay the weekly wage of a stationhand, or, in other words, 150 lambs a year.

In the present crisis a farmer is likely to receive an average of $16 for each of his lambs. The stationhand working a 40-hour week—and some of them work less than that—would be earning $230 a week. In other words, it would take fourteen lambs to meet the weekly wage cost of that employee, or 700 lambs for a full year. In many cases that would be as many lambs as a farmer or a farm would produce for the twelve-month period.

Since 1980 wheat prices have declined by 25 per cent, wool prices by 13 per cent, dried vine fruit prices by 64 per cent and vegetable prices by a staggering 73 per cent, and during that same period rates and taxes have increased by 38 per cent, electricity by 29 per cent, freight costs by 11 per cent and interest rates by a massive 45 per cent.

Looking from another point of view at the disastrous financial situation facing farmers, one finds that, in the 1970s, for every farm dollar held by banks or for every farm dollar paid across the counter into the banking system, the banks returned 55 cents in the dollar by way of farm loans. In 1986, for every farm dollar held by the banks, $3.09 goes out in farm loans.

Recently, as the House is aware, the Leader of the Opposition, the honourable member for Syndal, the Honourable Robert Knowles from another place and I visited the Mallee, which has been heavily hit by poor seasons and low prices and is suffering great hardship. We visited that area at the request of the people in the area.

While visiting the area, a commitment was made that the Liberal Party Opposition would try to come up with some positive suggestions on a non-political basis in a co-operative way with other political parties.

There are 600 farms in that area, and between 50 and 100 of them are in a very serious position. That means that approximately 12.5 per cent of farmers in that area will find it very difficult to recover from their debt level and get back into viable positions in the future.
It ought to be stated, so that the gloom and doom is not too great, that some farmers in the Mallee are still in sound financial positions and I am sure that they will remain that way in the future and ride out the present depressed state of the industry.

Other farmers have never been in debt but, because of the poor seasons, high costs and low prices, they are in some danger of going into debt for the first time. These farmers, along with those who fall into the 12.5 per cent category, ought to be monitored carefully as they are in dire straits, also. The Government has a real responsibility not only to look after the 12.5 per cent in dire straits but also to look after those people who are doing slightly better than that and who, with some Government assistance, can maintain viable operations.

Some people are sceptical about whether the Mallee is worth supporting and whether it should continue producing grain at a time when the world is seen as overproducing wheat and other grains. I refute that suggestion very strongly indeed.

Thirty-six per cent of the wheat grown in Victoria is grown in the Mallee and what is even more important is that that wheat is of a very high quality. That high quality helps to sell the wheat grown in the less favourable parts of Victoria—those wheats that would otherwise be far more difficult to sell on the international market.

In producing that high quality wheat there is no bonus for the Mallee wheat farmers, because they receive the same price per tonne as those who produce wheat of a far lower quality.

As a result of that visit to the Mallee, a twelve-point plan was introduced to impress upon the Government that there are some steps and measures that the Government can take to assist farmers in the area. It is unfortunate that all that came out of the proposals was heavy criticism by the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs. He addressed himself to only about two of the twelve points and ignored the others.

In reference to the 008 telephone number recommendation and the use of that number for offices of various Government departments, the Minister said that that had already been done. What had in fact been done was that it had been extended to the Office of Rural Affairs and to the Rural Finance Commission. The Opposition is suggesting that it should apply to all Government agencies and that the private sector should also be encouraged to extend its support for the system.

The sitting was suspended at 1 p.m. until 2.7 p.m.

Mr AUSTIN—Prior to the suspension of the sitting, I was referring to the visit by the Leader of the Opposition, the honourable member for Syndal, and the Honourable Robert Knowles and me to the Mallee area which resulted in some positive recommendations for the Government to consider. I referred to the disappointment that I think all Victorians would feel at the fact that the Government took those recommendations as being politically motivated and criticized the idea of the Opposition trying to assist in overcoming some of the problems of the Mallee farmers. That was most unfortunate, and I am sure my disappointment is shared by those people in the Mallee who invited the Opposition to go there and to whom these honourable members spoke about the various positive suggestions that the Opposition put. Those people agreed with the Opposition's suggestions as being worth-while initiatives.

The Supply Bill sets out the amount that is allocated for salaries and related costs in respect of each of the main programs. In the case of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the salaries and related costs amount to $24.18 million out of a total allocation of $3791 million under the Bill; in other words, the amount for salaries and related costs is approximately 63 per cent in the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

It is obvious from the Bill that the staff cuts introduced in that department by the Minister and the Government will continue. The Opposition would have no complaint
about Government restraint, but it has real complaint about a Government that is discriminatory in introducing those measures. The Liberal Party, when in government, is committed to cutbacks in the public sector—in Government and semi-Government authorities and qangos and in the number of committees and consultants that it will employ. However, the Liberal Party believes those cutbacks should occur across the board and should not be discriminatory in one area, as they have been in the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs under the present Government. Honourable members should understand that the total allocation to that department for the twelve months is of the order of $100 million less than the allocation to the Ministry for the Arts.

Enormous increases are taking place in almost every other area of Government responsibility and in almost every other Government department. Despite that, the Government continues to reduce funds for agriculture.

The Bill includes salary claims for officers employed within the Office of Rural Affairs, and that leads me to comment on matters that should be of real concern to that office. I refer to Government discrimination against rural people. In the case of grain freight rates, last year, an increase of 6 per cent occurred at a time when the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs recommended that the increase should be less than 6 per cent.

Much has been said by the Government about the increases that took place under the administration of the former Liberal Government. I point out that when the grain industry was in great difficulty at the end of the 1970s, no increases in grain freight rates took place. After that, a catch-up situation existed, but that was at a time when the price of grain was increasing and when costs were lower. In other words, at that time, the industry could afford it.

Last year's increase of 6 per cent was an increase on an already high base. There is a great difference when one compares that with what took place under the Liberal Government.

The Government has failed to meet its commitment made before the last State election in relation to the dairy industry. The Government was full of what it was going to do to assist that industry; however, as soon as the election was over, the Government wiped its hands of dairy farmers and has taken few initiatives ever since. During the period before the last election, the Government was discriminatory in its use of the Police Force.

The Government is discriminatory in the way it is handling meat inspections. The Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs has set his sights on trying as quickly as possible to meet the Government's objective of achieving a 1 per cent cut across all Government departments, and he believes the handing over of the responsibility for meat inspections will save some $2 million. If that were the case, that would be well and truly over and above the 1 per cent cut. The Minister is completely ignoring the detrimental effects that such a move would have, especially on industrial relations. It is easy to play with figures and suggest that the meat producers of this State might be better off under another scheme. However, in doing that, one completely ignores the fact that the State system is far more efficient.

It is unfortunate that the Minister is trying to undermine the opposition of the Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association to that change in a way that will make it extremely difficult for the association to work with the Government. On behalf of the people it represents, the association has a responsibility to try, where possible, to work with Government.

The Government has discriminated against the mountain cattlemen in removing what is part of the heritage of the State and the nation by continually cutting back the grazing leases that have traditionally been available to the cattlemen.

A perfect example of discrimination is the cost recovery target the Government has set itself with regard to transport. The Government wishes to recover 100 per cent of the rate for grain freight but wishes to recover only 50 per cent for urban services. That is purely
political because there are only a limited number of grain freight users whereas there are thousands and thousands of voters who commute daily using the trains of the suburban rail system.

There is discrimination in the municipal rates that are borne by country people, especially by the farming community. That burden is disproportionate. More evidence of Government discrimination is the transfer of the administration of the Grain Elevators Board from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs to the Ministry of Transport and the $5 million imposition on that board through the public authority dividend tax. The Grain Elevators Board is not funded by Government—it is funded by the industry. As I have stated before, when the Liberal Party is returned to Government, it will remove that imposition.

The increases in Grain Elevators Board handling charges have forced many grain growers, who now find themselves having to pay approximately 36 per cent of the returns from their wheat in freight and handling charges, to embark on a policy of farm storage. That means they must purchase a suitable vehicle to cart the grain. Therefore, the over-all farm debt is increased. The use of that method is quite understandable because it will cut back costs in the long term; however, it has meant a high outlay of capital.

A further discrimination is the restriction of car allowances to departmental and regional officers. If farmers have a health problem with their stock, they must now drive to the town to pick up the appropriate officer and take him to their farms. That is unfair and could be dangerous in the case of an outbreak or threat of an outbreak of an exotic disease.

The transfer of field officers and regional centres from country towns is another discrimination. The Government is removing officers from small country towns with the consequent effects on entire communities.

There is further discrimination in the failure of the Government to ensure that secondary teachers take up their positions in country schools. Court houses have been closed around country Victoria with complete disregard for the fact that country people must travel long distances to reach major centres. Honourable members have witnessed the closure of some country hospitals and the effect that has had and, more recently, we have seen the threat of possible closure of some one-man police stations.

The Government has an unparallelled level of borrowing. In the four years that the Government has been in office, the public debt has increased by $5161 million. At 30 June last year, it had reached a staggering $17 249 million. The Government has mortgaged the future of the State and the future of our children and grandchildren.

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS (Leader of the National Party)—Mr Speaker, I had to defer my speech because I attended a funeral this morning. The understanding was that I would follow the speech of the honourable member for Ripon.

The SPEAKER—Order! With the indulgence of the honourable member for Geelong, I call the Leader of the National Party.

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS—I appreciate the indulgence of the honourable member for Geelong. The National Party supports the proposed legislation. During my time in this place the National Party has always supported Supply Bills. Regardless of the political flavour of the Government of the day, there has never been any question of the National Party not supporting Supply Bills.

The Premier, in the early days of his Government, was nervous about the Supply Bills. He said how terrible it would be if anyone refused Supply. The problem was in his mind and was not a real problem. After four years the Premier realizes that although the National Party does not make any promises about the passage of Supply Bills, it stands on a good record in its handling of these Bills over the past few years.

Mr Wilkes—I am glad you are not considering voting against it.
Mr ROSS-EDWARDS—The National Party has not considered voting against the measure, but it does not commit itself for the next 100 years. It has every right to refuse passage of the Supply Bill under the Constitution.

Mr Wilkes—You will treat each Supply Bill separately?

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS—Yes, but one adopts a pattern over the years. The Supply (1986–87, No. 1) Bill provides both for recurrent and works and services expenditure requirements for the first five months of the 1986–87 financial year. The amount sought is approximately $3·8 billion, which consists of $3 billion for recurrent expenditure and the balance for expenditure on works and services.

As is the normal practice, debate on the Bill will give honourable members the opportunity of considering the direction of Government spending programs and the associated adequacy or otherwise of particular expenditure outlays. I repeat what I have said many times before, and I make no apology for the repetition, that the Cain Labor Government is the highest spending, biggest taxing Government in Victoria’s history and, I suggest, in Australia.

I wish to quote a few facts for the benefit of the Minister for Housing. Since the Cain Labor Government took office, taxes and charges have increased by over 70 per cent. The current expenditure has increased from $5053 million to $7861 million, a blow-out of nearly 56 per cent. Since 1981–82, total expenditure has increased from $5408 million to $9713 million for 1985–86, an increase of 79 per cent.

The State debt continues to grow, as the honourable member for Ripon pointed out. Since 1982 the net debt of the Victorian Government and statutory authorities has risen from just over $11 000 million to $17 239 million, an increase over a four year period of 55·5 per cent. Between 1982 and 1986 the State Budget has risen from $4·9 billion to $11·64 billion, a massive increase in Budget sector outlays.

The honourable member for Brighton referred to figures taken from the Australian Bureau of Statistics for 1984–85 and I shall refer to them. After I have referred to those statistics I shall refer to the latest figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics for 1985–86, which were embargoed until 11.30 this morning.

The first category of the Australian Bureau of Statistics figures for 1984–85 is the total taxes, fees and fines per capita. The figure for Victoria was $796.77 per head, the highest of all States of Australia. The second category is employers pay-roll tax per capita. Victoria’s figure was $578 per capita, the second highest State figure throughout Australia behind New South Wales. The third category is taxes on property per capita. Victoria’s figure is $179 approximately; again, the second highest State in Australia behind New South Wales. For the category of taxes on the provision of goods and services per capita, Victoria’s figure was $170 per person—by far the highest of any State in Australia. The lowest State was Queensland with $49.48. The fifth category is taxes on the use of goods and performance of activities. Victoria’s figure was $168.9, the third highest State in the Commonwealth behind New South Wales, which had $184 and Western Australia which had $185.

A moment ago I indicated that the 1985–86 Estimates from the Australian Bureau of Statistics were released for publication just before lunchtime today. These figures show the forward estimates for this year and are a further illustration of Victoria’s dreadful performance in terms of receipts for State taxes, fees and fines. The total receipts from taxes, fees and fines in 1985–86 will be $3521 million. This represents $859 for every man, woman and child. The figures I referred to contrast with the situation in Queensland where the comparable figure is $563, a difference of approximately $300 per person. That is how much less a person would pay in taxes and charges if he lived in Queensland. The Government never ceases to criticize the Queensland Government but people pay much less in taxes, with no petrol or tobacco taxes the Queensland Government has taken the course of a low tax route. It is a question that the Government must address itself to in the months and years ahead.
The per capita cost to every Victorian from taxes, fees and fines imposed by the Cain Labor Government has risen from $797 in 1984–85 to a projected $859 for 1985–86, an increase of $62 per person for the past twelve months—over $1 a week in extra State taxes per man, woman and child during the past twelve months. Again, in 1985–86 Victoria will top the Australia-wide poll for receiving the highest amount of revenue per capita from taxes, fees and fines. That is not a record of which the Treasurer should be proud. The Treasurer has topped the class in no uncertain manner as the highest taxing Treasurer in Australia and the situation is getting worse at an alarming rate.

The question that has been asked of me by every Treasurer is: "What would you do and where would you cut the expenditure?" I have some suggestions on where I would cut costs. The 1 per cent productivity cut should be thrown out the door. The Government cannot do that in Health Department Victoria or in the Police Force, especially since the bomb attack.

Certain departments do not require just a 1 per cent productivity cut, but a massive cut. The first department that comes to mind is the Ethnic Affairs Commission. The ethnic community should be made part of the greater Australian community and should not be encouraged to be separate from the rest of Australia.

Certainly, they should be proud of their backgrounds and cultures, but they should be treated like old-time Australian social or sporting clubs. If they wish to form clubs, they should do so on their own initiative. They should not be paid to do so by the Australian Government or, on this occasion, the Victorian Government.

Can honourable members imagine the Government of the United States of America encouraging groups of people to organize themselves to live together? The Government in that country wants to make them Americans in the real sense of the term, and the Victorian Government should concentrate more of its efforts on making new Australians more a part of the Australian community. Their cultures and traditions are precious to them, and I can understand that. However, they should take their own initiatives to preserve those cultures and traditions.

The Ethnic Affairs Commission has gone mad with the expansion that has occurred. It has created an administrative nightmare.

I now turn to the Department of Sport and Recreation. I remember when a sport and recreation section was established in the Local Government Department during the term as Premier of the Honourable Rupert Hamer. A small section of that department dealt with sport and recreation matters, and it was a wonderful initiative. That department confined itself very much to making decisions and passing funds on to local government to spend. There is no more efficient way of having money spent, particularly in the sporting and recreation area, than allowing local government to administer it. Whether the Department of Sport and Recreation should be cut out as a department is another question, and I hesitate to go that far. However, much of the administration that takes place in the department could well be carried out by local government.

The Department of Sport and Recreation has many fine officers, but the administrative burden has become too great. There is room in that department to make very substantial savings, and I say that without any criticism of the public servants concerned.

One of the great causes of waste in all Government departments throughout Australia, whether they be under a Liberal Party, National Party or Labor Party Government, is the production of publications. I often wonder who reads them. They flood across one's desk by the score every week. I know they assist in boosting the ego of the Minister concerned. In the days of the Honourable Brian Dixon and some of the former Ministers of the Liberal Government, there was a competition as to whose photographs appeared most frequently in publications, and a couple of the current Ministers are not too bad in promoting themselves, either.

Mr Wilkes—Name them!
Mr ROSS-EDWARDS—Some of them are good friends of mine, and I should hate to mention their names. Publications are a promotion for Ministers in most instances, and that is ridiculous. The removal of the public relations and the media backup services that are required for the production of publications could well result in a saving of money, and that should be considered.

However, the real savings could be made in the area of public transport in this State. The Government transport section in Victoria has 4000 employees in excess of today's requirements. At $20 000 a head or thereabouts, the salary bill comes to almost $112 million a year. If the Treasurer had some courage—and he says that the Government will lose some $150 million in petrol tax revenue—it would not be a bad idea to start saving money in that area. It has been suggested that if some changes took place in the transport system of this State, about 7000 employees could be shed—and this could be the best news of the day for the Treasurer—which would amount to a saving of some $196 million a year.

The proposal could involve the greatest fight that has ever occurred in the transport area. If it is necessary to shut down the railways for a week or two, or even a month or so, that should occur. It is no good to pussyfoot around, as occurred last week, and give handouts of $150 to each employee and say, "Be good boys", because they will cause trouble the next month and the month after that.

This Government should show courage, as did the Premier of Queensland, Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, who took positive action with the electricity unions, and there has been no industrial trouble in that State since then. The Victorian Government will have to take on the unions in this State. There are far too many employees in the railways. If Victoria is to have an efficient transport system, it is up to the Government to show the lead.

I am quite certain of the advice that I give the Treasurer when I say that the Government would have the whole-hearted support of the Victorian community in taking that action. Victorians are sick of being left waiting on the station platforms and paying high fees for an inadequate service. There has to be a showdown. No one minds paying employees what they deserve and what they are entitled to receive. However, it would be preferable to have 7000 fewer employees, with remaining employees being paid more, with no-strike provisions in their awards, than the current situation.

Obvious savings are available to be made in this State, but I am not confident that the Government will take note of my remarks, because I do not believe it has the courage to take the action I have suggested. That is a pity, because there are some good Ministers in Cabinet. Unfortunately, however, Cabinet as a whole is controlled by the organization and does not have the freedom that a conservative Government could exercise if it had the will to do so.

The Government has so far failed to come to grips with the very significant losses accumulated through the State Insurance Office third-party motor car insurance system, and that deficit will have to be made up through Government funds at some stage.

Last year it was revealed that the loss of the State Insurance Office could be as high as $679 million and that the accumulated losses could reach $1761 million. The Government is yet to realize any details of a so-called review of the third-party insurance system. I bring this matter to the attention of the Treasurer, and I am glad that he is at the table. The Treasurer made a statement on 31 October last year—and some Government backbenchers might take some notice of that statement because the Treasurer is a white-haired boy so far as they are concerned.

Mrs Toner interjected.

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS—One honourable member says that he is not. On 31 October last year, the Treasurer said:

A detailed review of third party is already well advanced and the Government will be taking some major decisions in the next few months.
That is what the Treasurer said on 31 October last year. That was six months ago. He said that a detailed review of third-party insurance was already well advanced and that the Government would take some major decisions in the next few months. Six months later, honourable members are still waiting for action from the Treasurer.

Mr Jolly interjected.

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS—When will it come? I know interjections are disorderly, but there is a deafening silence in the Chamber when one asks when a statement will be forthcoming. Will it be soon?

Mr Jolly interjected.

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS—I suggest that honourable members do not take notice of Government statements. The statement to which I referred was made by one of the more responsible Ministers of this Government. What has he produced in the past six months? He has produced absolutely nothing.

Mr Brown—Rhetoric!

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS—That is a very good interjection. The Treasurer has produced rhetoric but he has taken no action.

Mr Jolly interjected.

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS—Conservative Governments will have to live with it, too. Interjections are disorderly, and I do not intend to be sidetracked by them.

I now refer to the Treasurer’s notes accompanying the Supply Bill, which allude to the Government’s claim that it expects to lose $150 million as a result of the decline in the price of crude oil. Of course, a loss of an amount in that vicinity was inevitable, because this State has been leaning very heavily on oil revenue in the composition of the Budget. In that statement, the Treasurer also said that no new taxes are proposed and that existing taxes will not increase by more than the increase in the consumer price index. They are the undertakings the Treasurer has given.

Mr Jolly interjected.

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS—I shall try to ignore interjections, but it is difficult because I am worried about this matter. The undertaking that existing taxes will not increase above the level of the consumer price index was given by the Premier and the Treasurer.

Mr Jolly interjected.

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS—No; the Treasurer said that the taxes would not be increased to a level above the increase in the consumer price index, and the honourable gentleman cannot get out of that statement. I hope the Government does not go out searching for new forms of taxes to recoup the money it will lose as a result of the decline in the price of crude oil. It has only one other choice, and that is to cut down on the waste and inefficiency that currently occurs in Government expenditure. I have given examples of areas where there is plenty of room for major savings in Government expenditure.

It will be interesting to see where the Government makes its cuts, if it makes any at all. As I said earlier, the 1 per cent productivity cut will not apply to health, and I support that proposition. The Government said that the cuts will apply to the Police Force. I warn Government back-benchers that the Government will back off on that proposal, and so it should. Anyone who has had an association with the Victoria Police Force over the years has tremendous respect for its efficiency.

The Victoria Police is the best Police Force in Australia. It is not just money that makes a good Police Force: powers are necessary. Unnecessary amounts of money are spent because the Government will not give the police the powers that the Chief Commissioner of Police, Mr Miller, wants. He has begged the Government to give the police greater
powers which will result in a better Police Force. Those powers include the power to take names and addresses; powers relating to line-ups and the power to take fingerprints. When I was a boy, the police did those things, but nowadays they cannot. I know Cabinet wants to give the police these powers but certain left wing back-benchers who are controlling the Government, together with the left wing members of the Labor Party, do not. It is a sad day because if those powers were given to the police money would be saved and more people would be brought to justice.

In the Heywood and Madill murder case, if the police had had the right to take fingerprints the amount of time and money spent on that case would have been reduced. Those dreadful murders took place in the area represented by the honourable member for Benalla and me.

Earlier in the debate, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said that the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs had suffered far more than the 1 per cent productivity cut. No department has been so savagely treated as that department, especially when one considers that at least 40 per cent of this country's export income comes from agriculture.

The Government has cut the allocation to the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs to the bone. Over the years this department has been first class but its hands are now tied so that it cannot provide the necessary service to primary producers in their hour of need. I hope that the back-benchers of the Government will visit the north west of the State to see at first hand how desperate is the situation. It is all very well for the honourable member for Richmond to interject, but he gets a handout of $186 000.

Mr Sidiropoulos—It was $166 000.

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS—An amount of $83 000 was given by the State Government and an amount of $83 000 was given by the Federal Government, which was then taken back by the Federal Government. The honourable member then received an interest-free loan but the honourable member for Richmond will not stand up in this place and talk about that matter.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fogarty)—Order! I ask the Leader of the National Party to return to the Bill.

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS—The honourable member will not stand up in this House and explain the position because he has been told by his superiors not to do so.

Mr SIDIROPOULOS (Richmond)—On a point of order, the Leader of the National Party said in his speech that it was a handout. I object to that statement. It was not a handout. I ask him to withdraw that statement.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! There is no point of order. It is an explanation and if the Leader of the National Party appreciates that it was incorrect, then he should correct it.

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS (Leader of the National Party)—Of course, it did not go to the honourable member for Richmond, I accept that; it went to one of his favourite enterprises of which he was a member. It did not go to him personally.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! I ask the Leader of the National Party to return to the debate before the House.

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS—The National Party supports Supply. I hope the debate this afternoon and this evening will present constructive criticism of the Government's program for the year ahead. The National Party will keep any major comments until the debate on the incoming Budget. I sympathize with the Treasurer who has some challenges ahead of him because revenue is down, perhaps by $150 million—it will not be much below that figure—and the Treasurer will have to make desperate cuts.
The only advice I can give the Government is that Cabinet should show courage and make its own decisions and not be dominated by the socialist left wing of the Australian Labor Party.

Mr SHELL (Geelong)—I am pleased to join the debate on the Supply (1986–87, No. 1) Bill. The people of Geelong are extremely pleased with the Cain Labor Government and its economic strategies for Victoria. That was fairly well demonstrated by the return of five Government members at the last election.

It must be remembered that, when the Labor Party took office in 1982, Victoria was on an economic downward trend so the Government had to take action. The Government took action and stopped the downward trend.

International Harvester Australia Ltd, Geelong, was reeling in 1982 because of decisions being made in Detroit. The Geelong Regional Commission tried to find a private sector buyer for the Geelong plant but could not, so, under the auspices of the Geelong Regional Commission, the Government purchased the International Harvester plant for $10 million and helped to create the Geelong Agricultural and Engineering Company in which the Government holds a 20 per cent equity.

The Geelong Agricultural and Engineering Company has fulfilled the spare parts program and contracts of the International Harvester company and has shown initiative by designing and building a machine that is somewhere between being a bobcat and a shovel.

The current project is the development of a clone of the MG-TD car. I refer to an article that appeared in the Geelong Advertiser on 14 June 1986 under the headline, “The wraps are off a brand new old-timer,” which states:

A return to the heyday of sports cars could spell millions of dollars for the Geelong Agricultural and Engineering Company and spin-off industries.

The first re-created prototype of the classic convertible MG-TD sports car, assembled at GAEC’s North Shore plant, was launched by the acting Premier, Mr Fordham, at the Geelong Performing Arts Centre yesterday.

Mr Fordham, who is the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources, took time out to sit behind the wheel of the gleaming red MG on display in the GPAC’s foyer before taking it for a spin to Eastern Beach.

Mr Fordham said the “innovative enterprise” would provide 200 jobs in Geelong and an additional 600 in Victoria when the cars were in full production.

The car, which will sell for about $20,000 is a Marshall Car Company (Australia) Ltd project.

It combines the famous and stylish body of the 1949–53 MG-TD Sports 2000 car series with Nissan’s 1986 hi-tech components.

The car will be assembled at the GAEC grounds—the former headquarters of International Harvester.

200 km/h top speed

The car has a new two-litre engine, which will be used in Nissan’s 1986 car range, high fuel economy, a five-speed gearbox and a top speed of 200 km/h.

Mr Fordham said there were 26 prototypes currently under construction and over the next year 3000 of the cars would be assembled at the plant.

“The State Government has facilitated this project through the Victorian Economic Development Corporation which holds a 20 per cent equity in it and has secured a loan of more than $2 million to enable the Marshall Car Company to enter commercial production.” he said.

He said the company hoped to produce a further 12,000 cars each year for overseas assembly in the United States, Europe and Japan.

Mr Leigh—Mr Deputy Speaker, I direct your attention to the state of the House.

A quorum was formed.

Mr SHELL—The MG car project will provide 200 jobs in Geelong and the Government is pleased to be associated with that project through the Geelong Regional Commission. That commission constantly comes under attack from the Liberal Party but performs an economic development and planning role for the City of Geelong.
Prior to the Cain Government coming to office, a new north wing of the Geelong Hospital was promised by the former Liberal Government during election campaigns in 1973, 1976 and 1982.

All that Government could do during that twelve year period was to spend $200,000 in pulling down the old wards and digging a hole in the ground. When the Cain Government was elected, it had to consider whether the rebuilding of the north wing was a viable project. It decided that it was viable but when it came to examining the hole in the ground it was found that it was only half a hole and it had to be extended to allow for the building of the north wing. The erection of the north wing is on schedule and within budget and it will be opened in June this year.

In considering Supply and Budget matters, we cannot divorce ourselves from the actions of the former Liberal Government. Faulty administration allowed money in the form of cheques to lie around in the Motor Registration Branch for four to six weeks. That lost interest for the Government and caused an increase in taxes that should not have occurred. The former Liberal Government, without consultation with any interested party, built the Melbourne underground rail loop, the World Trade Centre and the West Gate Bridge— and charged the people of Geelong to use that bridge.

The debts of the previous Administration were a disgrace. Proper consideration was not given to whether projects would serve the community or become mere classic monuments.

Prior to the Cain Government obtaining office in 1982, the unemployment rate in Geelong was 13.5 per cent. Within the first term of the Labor Government, that was reduced to 8.5 per cent, a drop of 5 per cent. That was partly due to the immediate action taken by the Government to create employment opportunities. Local government bodies in Geelong and elsewhere realized that under the Cain Administration something positive could be done for cities and municipalities.

Mr Brown—The local government bodies are still there, are they?

Mr SHELL—They certainly are and they will be for a long time to come. There is no doubt that local government is here to stay and will play an even more important role in our community than it now does.

Three major projects in Geelong were undertaken using employment initiatives program grants. The first is the adventure playground at Seagull Paddock opposite the Ford factory in Geelong. It is an adult playground that uses the skills of International Harvester Australia Ltd employees. It is becoming a tourist attraction in the area. In the City of Geelong West, the reconstruction, redevelopment and prevention of erosion of the western beach cliff area on the bayside was undertaken. In the City of Newtown, the newly created Wood/Leach passive gardens are opposite to and complement the Ballaing Sanctuary. City councillors have informed me that they are so pleased with the work done and the workers involved that when that program ceases those workers will be included in the council's staff.

In 1982, the building industry in Geelong was depressed. Builders were going broke and facilities were not being provided to the community. Schools were affected by the inaction of the previous Liberal Government. At every school one visited, people were crying out for maintenance or complete upgradings of their schools. The Manifold Heights School needed a complete upgrade. Its administration had requested it for twelve years but nothing had been done. The Cain Government provided a complete upgrade for the school. In 1982, the Liberal Party candidate, Mr Michael Henderson, and I visited the Herne Hill Primary School and saw that weatherboards on the school building were rotted. The school was a hotbox in summer and a refrigerator in winter. It was either so cold or so hot that neither students nor teachers could operate effectively. Under the Cain Government strategy, that school was restored and now provides a comfortable environment for teachers and students.
The Bell Post Hill school was similarly upgraded last year. Ashely school was commenced by the former Liberal Government and the Cain Government had the pleasure of completing that work. The Geelong Swanston Street school had a stairway that had been condemned and held classes in an upstairs storage area. It was not until the honourable member for Bellarine took the matter in hand that repairs were made. The Liberal Government had done nothing about it. The Cain Government, under its Budget strategy, was able to complete these capital works programs, which stimulated the building industry in Geelong.

With regard to the public transport system in Geelong, in 1982 one could not catch a bus because one was never sure whether it would be running. The previous Government provided a subsidy to private bus companies but services were deteriorating and people did not travel on the buses because they had no confidence in them.

When the Cain Government came to office, the Minister for Sport and Recreation, after being approached by Mr Norm Bender of Bender's Busways Pty Ltd, suggested to the Government what he considered should be done. Mr Bender was pleased with the Government's response because it was exactly what he had put forward. He said he had previously spoken to Ministers of the Liberal Government of the day but they had taken no notice of what he said.

As a consequence, bus patronage was falling. The Geelong transit system was introduced and vehicles were painted in the blue and white colours of the Geelong Football Club. The system offers a flat fare service with regular and peak hour services. In its first twelve months of operation, a 30 per cent increase in patronage took place.

With respect to the operations of V/Line and the commuter service from Geelong to Melbourne, the Cain Government inherited from the previous Liberal Government the red rattlers which were like ice-boxes in the winter and sweat-boxes in the summer. By the end of 1984 they had been replaced with tangerine cars and patronage on the line has increased each year by 6 per cent. That shows that the people of Geelong want to use the public transport system—a system neglected by the former Liberal Government.

It took 27 years to complete the duplication of the Melbourne-Geelong rail line. In 1955 electric locomotives ordered for the electrification of that line were diverted to Gippsland and consequently the people of Geelong did not receive the benefit. It took only the time between one Cain Government and another Cain Government to get action.

I shall turn now to the Liberal Party strategy for Geelong as presented at the last election. The Liberal Party as a whole is not happy with the Geelong Regional Commission and wants to divorce its development and planning roles. To do so would be folly because it would add to the tax burden of Victorian taxpayers. On 22 February 1985 the Geelong Advertiser carried the following article:

A Liberal State Government would order an immediate inquiry into the Geelong Regional Commission, its spokesman for planning and environment, Mr Chamberlain, said yesterday.

Mr Chamberlain told a group of Geelong businessmen and district councillors the role of the GRC needed to be reassessed.

He said a Liberal government would request the all-parties parliamentary public bodies review committee to investigate the powers of the GRC.

Mr Chamberlain said the committee had the power to recommend that the GRC go out of business.

He said: "I've been to Geelong many times and the first thing you detect is this love-hate relationship between the community and the GRC.

"A number of councils believe the GRC is too intrusive.

"It is taking to itself decisions the councils believe should properly be theirs."

Mr Chamberlain said it was possible the future role of the GRC would be as a regional planner and not as a developer.
He said several Geelong groups had been concerned that the GRC was competing against private enterprise too much.

However, Mr Chamberlain said that while the future of the GRC needed to be determined, it should not be seen as a criticism of its past.

"There is no doubt the GRC has a very impressive record."

It is an impressive record simply because the commission has taken on what private enterprise did not have the guts to take on. It has had success after success. When the Leader of the Opposition came to Geelong he promised the world. He spoke about the creation of a wool-scouring business in Geelong and said that the pay-roll tax rebates would be restored. He also promised autonomy for the port authority.

Mr Leigh interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fogarty)—Order! The honourable member for Malvern is out of order, out of his place and his statements are irrelevant.

Mr SHELL—On 5 February 1985 the Geelong Advertiser carried the following report:

A multi-million dollar wool scouring business, pay-roll tax rebates and autonomy for the Port of Geelong Authority were offered as election promises by the State Opposition Leader, Mr Kennett, yesterday.

During a tour of Geelong yesterday Mr Kennett said he was hoping to obtain a major wool scouring business to be established on Geelong Regional Commission land near Lara.

Mr Kennett said one important thing about the proposed project was that it would be financed with private money, with no government involvement.

Did the Leader of the Opposition mean that he would reimburse the taxpayer and the Geelong Regional Commission from the private sector for the land on which the project was to be built? In all his wisdom the Leader of the Opposition did not approach the Geelong and District Water Board to ascertain whether it could provide water for the project. The article continued:

Mr Kennett also promised to increase decentralization benefits for Geelong industry. He said pay-roll tax rebates would be restored by a Liberal Government.

By restoring those grants would the Leader of the Opposition deny existing businesses in Geelong the opportunity of funding for promotion and expansion? He ignored existing Geelong businesses. The Leader of the Opposition aired all the worn out unproven policies of the Liberal Government.

Mr Brown—Where is this in the Bill?

Mr SHELL—If the honourable member wants to question that——

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member will ignore interjections.

Mr SHELL—If the Government foolishly accepted into the Budget some of the recommendations made by the Leader of the Opposition, it would be in a mess. The Cain Government is progressive and this is where my comments are relevant to the Bill. The Leader of the Opposition promised that when he came to power he would reduce the number of Ministers from eighteen to fourteen. Where is the evidence of that? When the Leader of the Opposition appointed his shadow Cabinet he appointed eighteen members.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! The Supply Bill is rather a broad Bill, but the honourable member is making it broader than anticipated.

Mr SHELL—The adoption of the recommendations of the Liberal Party into the Budget of the Government would increase costs rather than reduce them. Not only did the Leader of the Opposition promise that he would have only fourteen Ministers, but also he promised that members of Parliament would act as secretaries to the Ministers. He did not elaborate on the cost, nor did he say whether the salaries those secretaries were
to be paid would be equivalent to Ministerial salaries. On 18 December 1984 the *Age* contained the following article:

A Liberal State Government would cut the number of Cabinet Ministers from 18 to 14 as part of its plans to change the structure and management of government.

At the same time, the Liberal Party would appoint six MPs as parliamentary secretaries to assist those Ministers with increased workloads.

Mr DICKINSON (South Barwon)—On a point of order, the article has nothing to do with the Bill. The honourable member is rambling on about a number of items.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! The point is taken; I ask the honourable member to return to the Bill.

Mr SHELL (Geelong)—Prior to the election the Liberal Party promised that it would reduce the size of the Public Service by 3·5 per cent but that it would exclude from the reduction schools—which I gather means education as well—the Police Force and hospitals, and that it would not reduce the size of the State Bank; indeed, it proposed to sell it. Where did the Liberal Party propose to make the 3·5 per cent reduction? The areas of exclusion employ the most public servants. In the education field, the Liberal Party policy was to turn back the clock and bring back corporal punishment.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! I ask the honourable member to relate his remarks to the Bill. He has plenty of scope to do so.

Mr SHELL—If the Government were to accept the policies of the Liberal Party it would add unnecessary costs to the Budget. Therefore, the Government cannot accept those policies.

The *Herald* of 2 October 1984 states:

Ah, the enlightenment of Victoria's Liberals. Next it will be cold showers for youngsters with unclean thoughts. The suggestion from Kennett's conservatives that corporal punishment be reintroduced in schools is nonsense.

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West)—On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, the comments of the honourable member for Geelong are not only of no relevance to the debate, but they also have not had any relevance for the past 7 minutes. Accordingly, I ask the Chair to assert its authority and be sure the honourable member addresses matters that at least pertain to the Bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fogarty)—Order! Generally the Supply debate tends to be broad and provides ample scope for honourable members to touch on any part of Government administration. I ask the honourable member for Geelong to relate his remarks to the Supply Bill.

Mr SHELL (Geelong)—I certainly shall relate my remarks to the Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is important that honourable members take note of what the Liberal Party had to say because of its irresponsible attitude. I shall now move to the achievements of the Government under the Cain Administration and the Treasurer, who has implemented successful Budget and economic strategies since 1982. This Government has been good for Geelong. Earlier I mentioned the reduction in the unemployment rate from 13·5 per cent in the Government's first term of office to its present level of 8·5 per cent. For those honourable members who cannot subtract that represents a drop of 5 per cent.

Jobs have been created in Geelong with the assistance of the Geelong Regional Commission and the Government. Industries have been attracted to the area—for example, the Pioneer liquids plant, the Dunlop Pulsar battery plant, the Malthouse plant at North Geelong and the Elders-IXL woolstore at Lara. The Government provided some 650 jobs in the private sector.

The Employment Industries Program stands as a monument to the creation of employment opportunities, so much so that the Federal Government adopted the same principles as the basis of the Commonwealth Employment Program. The funds provided
to that program enabled the State Government to increase employment opportunities in the Geelong area.

The budget provided by the Government for housing encouraged the private sector to have a go. Members of the Opposition may doubt that fact, so I shall quote from the annual report of the Victorian Building Societies Association. Under the sub-heading "Home Lending" it states:

The early months of 1985 saw a high level of home loan approvals being maintained by building societies, giving a record 1984–85 figure of $855·4 million approved in Victoria on 17 565 dwellings, an average value per loan of $48 700.

This average new loan value represents an increase of $8 290 over the equivalent 1983–84 figure, directly assisting families to get into their own home and take advantage of capital appreciation sooner than they otherwise could.

Total building society housing loan approvals throughout Australia in 1984–85 amounted to $3915 million, on 84 214 dwellings.

By the end of the 1985 September quarter, the effects of higher market interest rates and controls on housing loan rates had combined to cause a substantial decline in the volume of building society housing loan approvals.

For the quarter, loan approvals totalled $165·4 million, compared with $203·1 million for the June quarter.

The Government has created this environment through the implementation of its Budget strategies, and the Supply Bill is a continuation of that policy.

Ford Motor Co. of Australia Ltd has established a plant in Geelong. It is the leading car manufacturer in Victoria and in conjunction with the State Government it has been able to provide a training centre to educate people on the new technological research and services adopted by the company.

The Market Square in Geelong needed redeveloping for a long time, and that was achieved on schedule and to budget with the assistance of a State Government guarantee of $30 million. The development will attract tourists to Geelong especially during the vacation periods, such as Christmas, which in turn will help to develop Geelong.

The Government provided $3·4 million to the grain handling authority at Geelong for the installation of a rail loop receival point, which provides quick and easy access for grain trains. The 1985 report of the Grain Elevators Board states:

Included in the assets taken over by the board is an amount of $3·4 million representing expenditure by the Geelong Grain Handling Improvement Authority on a rail loop facility. This facility was constructed by the State Transport Authority and is situated on land which is partially owned by the Grain Elevators Board and partially on land which is neither owned nor leased by the board.

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

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West)—Occasionally honourable members have to listen to diatribes from members of the Government but the latest effort takes the cake. If the honourable member for Geelong wishes to make a speech about Geelong, he should deal with the problems that face Geelong and the Bill that is parked in another place, which could decimate the port of Geelong if it is enacted.

The honourable member could have drawn attention to the fact that hundreds of thousands of dollars have been squandered by the Ministry of Housing, which purchased a run-down woolstore for conversion into low rental accommodation for people on the public rental housing list. That project has never eventuated yet the purchase of the woolstore cost $300 000. It has been left to rot while people cannot find accommodation.

Two weeks ago I visited the Montpellier Primary School in Geelong. It was pointed out to me that the school needed only $1600 from the Government to employ a school crossing supervisor. That grant has the potential to save schoolchildren whose lives are put at risk when crossing a busy road, which I inspected. Do honourable members think the school could convince the Government to provide that miserly amount to protect the
lives of those children? No, it could not. If the honourable member for Geelong wishes to speak in the Supply debate about Geelong, he should have covered the issues that count.

The Government said, "We can do it better. We can do it right. Let us do it. Give us a chance". Let us consider what the Labor Government has achieved in the past four, long years for the suffering taxpayers of the State.

It has employed an additional 34 100 people on the public sector pay-roll in the time it has been in office. It has hiked up State taxes by 72.9 per cent, which is more than double the cost of living increase over the comparable four-year period. State expenditure has ballooned from $6 billion a year to $10 billion. That is an increase of more than 66.66 per cent in only four years.

As the Leader of the National Party said earlier, the State debt is now up from $11.2 billion four years ago to $17.6 billion today. That massive increase is a major burden not only on the present taxpayers but also on their children and their grandchildren.

I also refer to the crises in both the housing sector and the health sector, which was in a good condition when the Labor Party came to office. That fact was acknowledged by one of the honest Ministers of this Government, the Attorney-General, who recently blamed the record hospital waiting list on unprecedented industrial disruption in 1985. This Government said it had a special relationship with the unions. That special relationship no longer exists; they may be mates but the public can no longer accept the taxation impost and the Government's mates want more. That is where the relationship has broken down. I shall cover some of those aspects during the debate.

Fortunately, the Opposition and the media have highlighted the fact that an article compiled by staff reporters of V/Line was circulated to make the staff of that entity fully aware of some of the existing problems within V/Line. The document stated that this year V/Line had already lost approximately $10.3 million in freight revenue due to recent industrial action as a result of continuing activities of the Australian Railways Union. The General Manager, Freight Services, Mr Terry Mulligan, was quoted as saying:

We are just running around in circles.

Unhappily, we're losing those customers hand over fist, because it's essential to their livelihood that we deliver the goods when they pay to have them delivered.

He made the very telling statement:

If not, they use the roads.

Of course, they will! He went on to state:

Before November, we were running fully loaded between Melbourne and Sydney each night, and there were plans a foot to run a second.

Now we run just the one—half loaded.

He gave a very long list of the customers V/Line has lost, including Australia Post, The Target group, fifteen hotels, Biro-Bic company, CIBA, General Freight, Murray Goulburn in Gippsland, Australian Portland Cement and Blue Circle, Australian Paper Mills, ICI, and BHP, which made very public why it was taking away its freight from this system in Victoria that has let that company down so badly during the time of this present Government.

I emphasize that BHP has made clear what it regards as the gross inefficiency and maladministration that is rife in public transport in the State under the jurisdiction of the present Government. Sure, there were problems in years gone by with public transport, but never once did those problems escalate to the present level. Not only is it shameful, but also customers are still being lost to V/Line in large numbers every day of the week because of the continuing inability of V/Line to provide an adequate service.
A major reason is that this Government, which claimed it had such a close and special working relationship with the unions, now learns that its so-called special relationship is non-existent. I know from some of the documentation in my possession that on one day more than 60 trains were cancelled in Victoria and that much of that was due to industrial disputation and unrest.

The customers are saying that they will not tolerate this state of affairs any longer. They are deserting V/Line in droves. Earlier last year 60 containers of dried food were sent by rail from Adelaide to Melbourne for shipment to the Middle East, but V/Line lost ten containers before the consignment reached the docks. As a result, that firm no longer sends its containers by rail.

In another instance, it took nine days for boxes of salami to reach Swan Hill. Needless to say, the salami was unusable, and that is the kindest way to put it, when it arrived at Swan Hill nine days after dispatch when it should have reached Swan Hill that same day.

A pallet of 120 dozen stubbies of beer somehow was lost on the way to the Shamrock Hotel, Balranald. In that case, V/Line compensated the firm for the loss of the beer.

A family business shifted an average of $6000 of finished goods to Melbourne customers each day, but these goods were often delayed or lost at the Melbourne freight depot. The owner of the family business stated that the consistent inefficiency of V/Line had caused his firm to use other carriers. Small business cannot continue to use a service that is as inefficient and badly run as it is under this Government. The major customer of V/Line, the National Freight Forwarders' Association, is collectively the biggest entity that moves freight in Victoria. It stated in a telex:

We believe all Governments transport authorities ought to be concerned with the total unreliability of the Victorian rail system and we would urge you to do whatever is necessary to bring a totally unsatisfactory position to a halt.

The telex was sent to all Government party members, opposition party members and other entities in the State to highlight what is happening in Victoria at present. Collectively, the association is the biggest customer of V/Line, and it makes it clear that because of the rail system's total and continuing unreliability, as a group the association can no longer use this service.

I note also a V/Line telex reporting a meeting with shunters that failed to resolve this industrial disputation and to get the union members to lift bans and remove their picket lines, which stated that the union's actions were forcing interstate trains to leave without passengers' cars and that, as a consequence, the authority was forced to cancel the motor rail service to Sydney, Adelaide and Mildura until further notice.

Dissatisfaction with V/Line is not the fault just of the Government but of its mates in the union movement who are carrying out callous tactics that result in people who have purchased rail tickets and put their cars on the same train to be transported interstate learning on arrival that their cars were left behind and that that is their bad luck. The Government does nothing. It lets its union mates get away with it. Continually, it is the taxpayers who suffer.

Nobody has had a worse deal under this Government over the past four years than the farmers of Victoria. The Government treats them with disdain. It could not care less about them. The fact of the matter is that farmers do not matter politically to the Government. The Government does not care about farmers and does not try to accommodate them.

Only last week the Federal Minister for Primary Industry, Mr Kerin, in an attempt—albeit pathetic—to do something to overcome the rural crisis in Victoria as well as in the nation, said that one of the items the Federal Government wanted to undertake was a joint Federal-State Royal Commission into the effect on the wheat industry of transport, storage and handling, the cost of which has increased at more than twice the rate of wheat prices. It was expected that the commission would cost $3 million. The Federal Minister
expected the commission to report within a year. He proposed that within a month a commissioner would be appointed.

At least the Federal Minister acknowledges that there is a rural crisis and that there are problems. Whether or not a Royal Commission is the answer, I would not be certain, but at least the Federal Minister is planning to do something. However, in comparison to the Federal Government’s preparedness to participate in a Royal Commission, the State Government has not done a damned thing. It will give no commitment that the State will agree to it.

It is very easy to understand why the present Minister for Transport will not agree to a Royal Commission into any aspect of his portfolio. Undoubtedly, the first recommendation that would be made is that his head should be the first to roll. The State Minister for Transport should indicate his preparedness to co-operate with his Federal colleague, because it is about time he was given an understanding of the issues involved.

Almost a year ago Canac Consultants Ltd of Montreal, Canada, handed down its report on the Victorian grain handling system—the Canac report. It contained several proposals to address some of the problems involved in moving grain throughout Victoria. However, the Government has not addressed that problem but has let it lie. I predict that this Government will close at least sixteen rail lines in Victoria. I remark on one line particularly which is the subject of an internal memorandum, Horsham—Carpolac. The memorandum states:

The continued running of trains on days of high temperatures is likely to lead to similar problems experienced on 14th January, 1986.

The similar problem is that the trains will derail because that line is in such chronic condition from lack of maintenance that when it is hot the lines move a bit as the sleepers, in large measure, have had it. However, the Government addresses this problem by not running a train on the line when it gets too hot. That is the Government’s answer to maintenance problems—do not run trains when there is danger.

What a pathetic way to administer a transport system. The Government’s answer is not to move in and fix the railway line from which a train will fall off if the temperature gets too high, but to not run the train on those days.

Research has been undertaken on what should occur. In May 1986 V/Line produced a corporate plan which was to be a draft for discussion. It contained some telling points, addresses the issues in precise terms and states:

In preparing the 5 Year Plan, V/Line undertook an extensive review of the current status of the business and examined the financial outlook on the basis of past performance. This work revealed that:

Cost recovery levels for freight and passenger services are only 55 per cent and 25 per cent respectively and thus need to be substantially increased...

It then states that rates should be increased so that 100 per cent of costs should be recovered for freight and 50 per cent for passenger services. It further states:

Unless change is implemented, V/Line’s deficit will increase from $240 million in 1983–84 to well in excess of $500 million by 1988–89.

It is obvious that something must be done. Honourable members would not argue about that because it is crystal clear.

Mrs Toner—What would you do?

Mr Brown—I would appreciate an extension of time so that I could tell the honourable member for Greensborough what I would do. The corporate plan refers to several actions that should be taken, including:

Two-man crewing and improvements in the efficiency of crew utilization;

Reduced rolling stock servicing and maintenance costs;

Revised operating practices;
Reduced head office staff;
Increased train size and more extensive use of block trains; and
Rationalization of shunting yards.

The proposals included in the document impose no significant reduction in the scope of services provided to our customers and the quality of service is to be enhanced. Similarly, the interests of existing employees have been protected and the proposed reduction in V/Line's employment of 2300 people is to be achieved through natural work force attrition...

This document clearly states that the Government wants to get rid of 2300 employees from V/Line in the next five years. I do not oppose it because it should occur. The Leader of the National Party earlier used the term "featherbedding". An excessive number of staff are employed by V/Line and when heads are being knocked off the Government should commence at the top. The so-called managers who have been brought into V/Line should be the first to go, but the whole organization needs to be closely examined.

V/Line has brought in whiz-kids who, like the Treasurer, would not know dirt from clay. They might know something about administering rent-a-car franchises but they know nothing about rent-a-train. These people are responsible for selling off our trains to the Japanese. Not only do we not own rolling-stock but the small section we do own does not run. The former Minister of Transport, Mr Steve Crabb introduced an early retirement scheme because he knew people had to go. The Treasurer agreed to that scheme and together they spent $84 million hard-earned taxpayers' moneys just under three years ago.

Mr Perrin—Which the State borrowed!

Mr BROWN—Money was borrowed to assist the Government in getting rid of almost 2500 employees. After the former Minister of Transport introduced the early retirement scheme, approximately 2500 employees took it up and retired early. The admitted cost to the taxpayer was $84 million but I am sure it cost the State a lot more than that.

Honourable members might ask what has been achieved by that scheme. The Government has reduced its work force by 2500, which is terrific, but what has it done since that time? The union mates of the Government have applied pressure and every one of those 2500 people, on whom the Government squandered $84 million of taxpayers' money, has been replaced. The number of staff returned to the same level and then an additional 700 employees were put on. After that occurred the Government is now attempting to sack them. No wonder the Government's union mates are at loggerheads with it over that proposal. The unions have been screwed, done in the eye and are now retaliating. It is a pathetic situation and the taxpayers and travelling public will suffer because of what the Government has done to the unions.

The Government has no one else to blame. This incompetent Government is at fault for allowing an incompetent Minister to be at the helm of the transport portfolio. The Opposition cannot understand why it has retained him, although it is grateful in a political sense. The Minister for Transport is a political liability for the Government. It might suit the Opposition's political purposes to retain the Minister but members of the Opposition are concerned about what he is doing to the transport system and to the detriment of the State more than their own political standing. While the Minister for Transport remains in that position, trains will not run on time, there will be no peace with the unions, and disruption and continuing crisis in the public transport system will occur in Victoria.

I shall not use only my words but shall quote from the 1984–85 report of the Metropolitan Transit Authority where Mr Strouse said:

The escalating level of financing charges is now a matter of serious concern. All capital works, and several items of operating expenses including financing charges, are being financed from borrowings and leasing finance. The level of these borrowings has increased from $599 million in June 1983 to $1031 million in June 1985, and is expected to increase by a further $200 million in 1985/86. The cost of servicing such borrowings in the forthcoming years is estimated to be in the order of $97 million.
The Board notes with concern the continuing high level of borrowings required to finance the Authority's capital programme and to fund certain recurring expenses. In the view of the Board, there is an urgent need to review this funding policy and its impact on the Authority's financial results.

The Board also notes that the Government has decided to proceed with certain projects without firstly referring the matter to the Board the costs of such projects being included in the financial statements and that such costs will adversely impact on operating costs in future years.

What did the Government do to Mr Strouse for being too honest? He was sacked. Mr Strouse told the public about the crisis he foresaw in the Metropolitan Transit Authority. Only eighteen months ago he said that the authority had reached a crisis point, the Government's monetary policies were lunacy, and the authority was heading down the path of insolvency, which is known as bankruptcy in private enterprise. While the whiz-kids were borrowing without restraint, the Government believed that was the way to go.

The Treasurer is one of the few Ministers to retain his portfolio, so he cannot pass the buck, as can the current Minister for Transport. The Treasurer cannot avoid the financial squandering in which he has become involved on behalf of the Government. What has the Government done with the Metropolitan Transit Authority? In 1984-85 it converted its assets into cash by flogging them off mainly to overseas interests. The Government received $199 million in cash and now owes $375 million. That is brilliant economic financial genius, is it not? The Government received less than $200 million cash in hand while we, our children and their children owe almost $400 million because of that transaction.

The State Electricity Commission has a similar story to that of the State Transport Authority. The State Transport Authority in another sell off obtained cash in hand by flogging off assets totalling $281 million. It raised that amount, but now the State is committed to lease arrangements costing $612·4 million. It is not only the current taxpayers of the State but also their children and grandchildren who must meet that commitment. That is how badly the Government has hocked this State. Government members are squirming, but they will not take action to remedy the situation.

The first report of the Auditor-General for the year ended 30 June 1985 also makes telling comments about the sale of transport assets. The report states:

The amount received in 1984-85 totalled $59·8 million (1983-84, $299·6 million).

The reduction of $239·8 million in the proceeds from the sale of assets was due largely to the reduction in the availability of assets to sell.

Of course, the amount has been reduced. The Government has not raised as much this year because it has nothing left to flog. It has rid itself of the assets and encumbered generations of Victorians to lease commitments. Where have the proceeds of those sales gone? The Government has squandered that money. The money earned from the sale of rolling-stock that Victoria previously owned has been converted into a debt.

There are many other issues I shall highlight. It is pleasing to note that, at least after the passage of four years since the Liberal Party was in office, honourable members no longer hear the empty rhetoric referring to the former Government with the Government saying, "do not blame us". The problems of Victoria today have been created by the Labor Government. It must wear the blame for those problems, but it does not want to hear about statistical material or evidence relating to strikes or stop-work meetings.

The Government brags and claims there is nowhere near the degree of industrial disputation in Victoria today as there was under former Liberal Governments. It quotes figures issued by the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicating a reduction in disputations. However, the Government has achieved those results by paying employees for attending stop-work meetings. It is not generally known that it is a policy in the State public transport sector for employees to receive full pay for attending stop-work meetings, of which there have been more than 100 since the policy was introduced. There is no statistical data of the hours lost. Some of those meetings have continued for as long as 6 hours. Therefore, the taxpayer of Victoria is required to foot the bill for employees of the State Transport
Authority and Metropolitan Transit Authority getting together to plot against their employer, which unfortunately is the taxpayer, and to work out schemes to screw the Government a bit harder. What a policy; to pay unionists to disrupt trains!

The most current issue concerns the unions approaching the Government with a proposition concerning free travel benefits. I accept the word of the Minister for Transport who said that he flatly rejected the proposal. The proposal was to extend free travel entitlements to employees and their families, including dependent children and the like, thereby allowing them to travel free of charge anywhere in Victoria on all modes of public transport. The Minister said, “No, it is not on; we do not agree with it”.

One of the television stations sent a staff member out with the relevant piece of paper. The man asked whether he could board the tram without paying a fare and he was told, “Yes, of course you can; you have the paper, that is a union agreement and we have agreed to it”. The television station employee boarded the tram at no cost to himself. The tramway employee said to him, “I went to Bairnsdale only a few weeks ago; I went free, as our union has decided”. He was challenged by the television station employee on that basis, who said, “It is not official as the Government does not agree”. The tramway employee said, “This is a union deal”.

That event indicated clearly who is running this State. It is certainly not the Government. Only today the Melbourne Age contained a report concerning one of its staff members who made nine attempts to travel free of charge on public transport yesterday using only the edict of the unions that union members can travel free of charge on public transport. The Age staff member was able to travel five times out of nine under the agreement. I hasten to add, in fairness to the Age, that it has sent the full payment for the fares that should have been paid so that the person concerned did not, in fact, travel free of charge.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! I advise the honourable member that he has only 2 minutes.

Mr BROWN—I thought the honourable member for Greensborough had indicated that I would be allowed an extension of time, but it seems that is no longer the case. There are many other issues that I wish to highlight, but which I shall have to pursue at another time.

I do not blame the unions totally. The Minister for Transport has provoked the unions in many respects. He has accused unionists of sabotaging trains. He was quoted in the Melbourne media as saying that Australian Railways Union members had sabotaged 26 trains in the Jolimont rail yard. No wonder union members become upset when the Minister makes those sorts of statements! He also said that “Metrail shunters are using blackmail of the worst type”. The Minister claims that the workers have a special relationship with the Government, but it is some special relationship when he accuses them of blackmail!

In another media statement he told union members to think long and hard about taking industrial action in support of the follies of the Australian Railways Union. In telexes he has said that the Metropolitan Transit Authority has reneged on agreements regarding the restructure of grades, staffing levels, safety and amenities. In another statement the union indicated that its members would not wear uniforms on that day. It said it would not inconvenience travelling passengers—the public that pays the wages of its members—this time, but it wanted to highlight the inefficiencies and problems with the Government. There are other suggestions of unionists handing out leaflets to customers inviting them to complain to the Minister. No wonder the Government is worried.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! The honourable member’s time has expired.

Mrs TONER (Greensborough)—I intend to address the House on Supply, unlike the honourable member for Gippsland West who spoke about a particular issue and did not address himself to Supply. If he is the next heir apparent to the throne of the Leader of the
Opposition he may find himself on the back bench along with a number of other talented honourable members. He addressed himself only to the railways issue. I realize there have been difficulties and industrial disputations in recent times, but so far as I and my electors are concerned, what was the most dreadful rail system in Australia has been changed into an excellent rail system, particularly the services provided by the Metropolitan Transit Authority. It is a comfortable system to use. The negative approach of the honourable member for Gippsland West does not facilitate the solving of disputes which the Government is attempting to sort out.

Mr Perrin—The honourable member's speech is so enthralling that I think she deserves an audience! I direct your attention, Mr Acting Speaker, to the state of the House.

A quorum was formed.

Mrs TONER—For the first time in the history of Victoria a Government is examining, on a long-term basis, the work practices and rostering systems of the railways. The examination will address some of the difficulties that have been caused by many years of neglect by previous Administrations.

The Supply Bill, to which the honourable member for Gippsland West never referred, provides for both the current expenditure and the works and services expenditure for the next five months and represents a continuation of the commitment of the Government to sound economic management.

As occurred last year, the Bill has been presented in a program budgeting form and it is the third occasion on which this has happened, in line with the commitment of the Government to provide proper procedures for monitoring and evaluating progress in the achievement of the goals that it has set in accordance with the policies it has established over many years.

It is significant to note the major advances that have been made during the eight and a half years I have been a member of Parliament in respect of the information provided in Supply Bills to honourable members and the public. I recollect that when I first became a member of Parliament the information was very scanty. When in Opposition I used to sit next to the then honourable member for Dandenong—the now Treasurer—and we used to discuss the paucity of information and the difficulties in discovering where the then Government was heading. Therefore, I commend the Treasurer for the wealth of information that is provided in the Supply Bill.

The most important aspect of program budgeting is the obligation on Government departments to identify their objectives and to set them out on a program basis. In addition, it is the responsibility of Government departments to adhere to prescribed reporting mechanisms and to meet the requirements of the relevant Acts relating to the various public authorities, departments and institutions. Although those prescriptions existed in the days of the former Government, frequently they were not adhered to, and years often passed when the previous Government turned a blind eye to the failure of various public bodies to report to Parliament.

The Government has addressed itself in a businesslike manner to bringing about effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of Government services. The most important component of that approach is the way the Treasurer has presented papers with these Bills.

The Opposition does not appear to understand these important reforms that have been instituted. There are a number of new Opposition members present and if they studied the history of previous conservative Governments and noted the lack of information that was provided in Supply and Appropriation Bills, they would realize that under the Labor Government there has been a significant improvement in reporting mechanisms.

It is right and proper that the Government exercise considerable care in providing such information and that the Treasurer is scrupulous in providing the information because
the total amount of Supply sought is $3,791,975 million. This includes $2,943,670 million for recurrent expenditure and $848,305 million for works and services expenditure. The amounts for each program are clearly shown in the Bill and are of real benefit to honourable members in assisting them to obtain an appreciation of Government programs and goals in the next five months.

In the 1985–86 Appropriation Bill the Government made an allowance in its recurrent expenditure estimate for a 1 per cent productivity improvement factor in all public agencies. That was one component of the economic and financial management reform adopted by the Labor Government since it came into office in 1982 and it is a practice which the present Treasurer has been able to bring into play because of the information provided on the functioning of various departments.

In the 1985–86 Budget speech, the Treasurer announced that a 1.5 per cent per annum productivity improvement would be expected in public bodies from 1986–87 onward. That has been taken account of in the Supply Bill.

Honourable members who are concerned about Government services will note that the explanatory memorandum to the Bill describes why particular Supply provisions vary significantly from what may be expected in the next five months. Such changes should be thoroughly endorsed, especially the transfer from Health Department Victoria to Community Services Victoria of programs for the intellectually disabled.

It has been possible to produce structural changes which will provide for a more efficient delivery of services as a result of the program budgeting that we see before us. I mention especially the transfer from health to community services of a program providing for the intellectually disabled, which will be of great benefit in providing within particular communities the services which enable the disabled to remain in their own homes and to gain the benefit of community life and programs provided by other departments.

The explanatory memorandum also refers to the changes to the program format of the Department of Labour to better reflect the service delivery objectives of that agency. Again that is in line with the Government’s commitment in that important area and again the structural changes are facilitated by this mode of presenting the Budget to the House.

Another major change is found in the recasting of the program structure of property and services. We can see that the general thrust of a reform Government is reflected in the mode in which the Bill provides Supply for the first five months of the 1986–87 financial year is written.

I shall refer to the electorate I represent and the improvement of the services in that area. Program budgeting, which the Government has introduced so vigorously, enhances the service delivery of all departments, and that applies especially to education in the growing area I represent. I and my constituents have been fortunate to be the first participants in a new scheme whereby a school council working with a manager is building a new post-secondary school costing $9 million and that is proceeding extremely well.

In addition, the new school at Apollo Parkways is on the way. A commitment was made some years ago that a new school would be built to replace the relocatable class-rooms which were the bent of the former Government. The children can now move to permanent buildings and the residents of Apollo Parkways are grateful for that also.

These two important schools are just some among those educational facilities that have been provided within the electorate I represent along with the maintenance of various schools. Eltham High School, for many years, has suffered incredibly neglected buildings but despite that it was able to deliver an excellent program with the goodwill and hard work of the school community, the teachers and the parents. It is very much more pleasant for them with a significantly upgraded and renovated school building as they can now deliver, in a pleasant environment, programs they previously delivered with difficulty.
Recently the Minister for Education and I visited that school to look at the completion of stage 1 and the beginning of stages 2 and 3. He also visited Yarrambat Primary School. That visit was the first visit of an education Minister in 108 years. It may have been a while coming from a Minister in the Cain Government—it took four years to get there—but it had been more than 100 years—

Mr Hann—What about the former Minister; why didn't he visit?

Mrs Toner—The former Government was in office for just a short time and there were many schools to visit during that time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! The Deputy Leader of the National Party should not carry on a conversation over the table.

Mrs Toner—that was a good question; however there was a century of neglect by the conservative Governments of this little school.

The school community is pleased that it will be the next school for replacement as it is over a century old and it is surrounded by add-on buildings, which are not appropriate in this day and age. The school is pleased that it has received the commitment that it will be the next cab off the rank. At the same time parents would like the building of the new school to begin tomorrow, but the Government will not make a commitment that it cannot follow through.

We know precisely what is in the Budget and we know what is in Supply; the responsibility has been delegated to the particular Ministry and from the Ministry to particular regions. In our region we know what we are eligible to receive and although the school would like the buildings to commence tomorrow, it does know that it will be the next cab off the rank and that when the money becomes available that promise will be fulfilled. That is the *modus operandi* of the Government under the Treasurer.

With good planning, with handing responsibility over to the regions and a greater responsibility to local government, we certainly hope for and expect predictability; predictability is an important component we can guarantee with program budgeting. Without program budgeting those goals cannot be achieved.

I commend the Treasurer for the important work that he has undertaken over the past four years and the continuation and progress in the area and for the information he has provided. The amount provided for each agency is explained with clarity in the Bill. That cannot be altered by the Treasurer but only the proportions assigned to each program in the Supply Bill. That gives the element of predictability to which I have referred. We look forward to the continuation of improvement. This year the format of the Supply Bill is very much on the same line; it does differ in respect of certain non-specific appropriation matters which can be related to capital expenditure in certain areas.

There is the capacity for flexibility so that the Supply Bill matches the programs that are to be carried out during the next several months. I commend the Bill to the House; I regret the negative approach of the Opposition with regard to the Bill and its focus on specific items without addressing the Bill in its entirety as a document by which the workings of Parliament, of the various Ministries and departments can be understood, thereby bringing an understanding of what it means in regard to honourable members' own electorates and to the people of Victoria as a whole.

Mr HANN (Rodney)—As the Leader of the National Party has already indicated, the National Party does not intend to oppose Supply but that is something that is needed to be retained as an option. One might regret that decision in some respects because the people in rural Victoria are now going through one of the most serious economic crises probably since the days of the depression back in the 1930s.

The Victorian Labor Government is doing very little about this crisis. It is providing very little over-all financial relief. It seems to completely lack sympathy for the problems of rural people because it is locked into the economic philosophies and policies of the
Hawke Government, which over the past three years has ripped off something like $440 million from the rural community in direct financial assistance to the Australian primary producers.

In the recent economic package presented in Federal Parliament, the Federal Government has not seen fit to provide any new major program to overcome that situation. Interest rates are virtually at an all-time record high and this morning the Treasurer, in reply to a question without notice, admitted that the Government does not intend to do anything about the situation and espoused the usual rhetoric, as have other people for many months, that things are improving and we may see a fall in interest rates.

I am sure you are aware of the situation, Mr Deputy Speaker—because you have taken an active interest in rural affairs in the past—that many of the people in the farming community have been paying interest rates well in excess of 20 per cent. If honourable members think seriously about that, they will realize that it means that every four years—because the interest rate is closer to 25 per cent—those individuals are paying their principal back in interest.

This is an absolutely hopeless situation when one acknowledges that we are talking about loans in excess of $100,000, some being closer to $1 million. The principal is turning over in interest every four years. It is a situation with which neither the Federal Government nor the State Government has come to grips.

Recently members of the National Party had the benefit of some advice in relation to Federal economic policy. It was put to us, as the Treasurer tried to put it to the House this morning, that the economy is booming and that business is booming in the manufacturing sector. It was also put that the wages accord was working well because there have not been the massive requests by unions for increases in wages.

It was suggested that everything was fine and rosy. When we said, "What about the rural community?" This financial adviser said, "You write the rural community off because they are no longer important"—no longer important to the export scene because the export market was "flat". He did not claim that there were any bright spots around, but he suggested that the solution to Australia's problem was to boost the manufacturing sector and to build up the export trade from that sector.

That would be fine if we did not live in a regulated wage society where we provide our employees with some of the greatest benefits in the world; certainly benefits that are far in excess of countries like America, putting us really in a non-competitive situation.

There is no way that Australian manufacturers can compete with virtually any other country in the world when employees receive four weeks annual leave, a 17.5 per cent annual holiday loading and a whole range of other fringe benefits. Particularly with the range of public holidays and penalty loadings provided at present, there is no possible way that our manufacturing sector can build up any significant export trade component, and certainly any component that would provide the wealth and financial support to this country that the rural sector and the mining industry have provided.

That is one of the tragedies of the economic policies put forward by the Federal Labor Government and supported by the State Labor Government—they no longer recognize the importance of the rural industry to this nation.

Mr Kerin suggested that the Federal Government was not prepared to change its economic policies and philosophies for only 10 per cent of the economic community. He ignored the fact that that 10 per cent of the over-all economic community in Australia represents more than 40 per cent of the export income of this nation. It is an export income upon which we are dependent.

Many of our farmers are going bankrupt. In the last few days I came across a tragic example of a young chap who had been farming for something like fifteen years and had put his life savings into the purchase of that farm for more than $80,000. The farm has
gone bankrupt. He has five children and he has lost everything, largely through the drop in the commodity prices within the industry in which he was involved, but more especially with the dramatic increase in interest rates that are being charged.

He is one of many facing bankruptcy in the present economic climate. The only thing that is being offered at the moment is some sort of relief assistance to help these people get back on their feet, but it is a fairly limited form of relief.

The real tragedy of this situation is that it is beyond the control of the people on the farm. The longer we continue with these high interest rates—endorsed under the policy of the Federal Government and supported by this Government—the more people we will see in that situation.

One of the alarming things about the discussion held between members of the National Party and this policy adviser was that when we talked about the problems of rural people going bankrupt, the economists said to us—

**Mr Micallef**—We will have to nationalize the banking industry!

**Mr HANN**—We do not have to do that. The whole of the rural sector will be nationalized if the Government continues to charge interest rates in excess of 20 per cent, building up the debt and reducing the equity on those properties. Initially, the banks will own the properties but ultimately the State will own them if this situation continues.

I am sure it is a matter of concern to the honourable member for Springvale, because he obviously has some sympathy with the plight of these people. The situation of high interest rates applies equally to people in the housing sector.

I was strongly opposed to the recent decision to increase interest rates on housing loans because it only gets people into more trouble. Nobody can really afford to pay interest above 13.5 per cent on loans, which was the ceiling on housing loans. I apply that same criterion to the rural scene. I argued some years ago that in the rural scene one could not afford to pay much more than 10 per cent interest, and I believe I am right.

The most profitable period experienced in agriculture in this country was back in the middle 1970s when the interest rates varied under the rural adjustment program, from 6 per cent to the high interest rate of about 9 per cent. That was a boom period in the rural economy and it was a time when many people were able to buy their own houses.

On the subject of houses—and this is a matter of interest to metropolitan members of Parliament—once people start paying 15, 16 and 17 per cent interest on their housing loans—and in some cases it is more than 20 per cent as suggested in an interjection by the honourable member for Benalla—there is no way that these people can ever get out of financial trouble. If one stops to add up the ultimate cost of their particular dwelling, taking into account the capital cost plus the interest payments, the result is horrific. At present it is not in line with inflation, but that is the economic policy inflicted upon us by the Government.

In the discussion that members of the National Party had, it was suggested to us by one of the Federal advisers that it did not matter if people went bankrupt because the neighbouring farmer would buy the property at a much lower price and reduce the overall cost of national production. The National Party said, "What do you do about the person who goes bankrupt?" and this economist said that that was not an economist's problem, it was a social problem. It certainly is a social problem; it is a serious problem and it is a tragic situation when families cannot afford to feed their children.

At the moment some farmers cannot afford to plant their crops because they no longer have sufficient equity to borrow, to purchase the grain and the fertilizer, and to work their land.
I acknowledge that the Government shows sympathy in that situation in that the Rural Finance Commission and members of the National Party in the Mallee area—Bernie Dunn in particular, and Barry Steggall, the honourable member for Swan Hill—have managed to convince the State Government that some special loans were necessary.

The dilemma once again is that that adds to the total debt for the farmers concerned. We are going through one of Victoria's most serious economic crises. I qualify that by saying that not all farmers are broke. Certainly, some farmers are still obtaining a reasonable income but with more difficulty; however, they are still working at it. These are farmers who own their properties and do not have any substantial debt.

The situation is also slightly different in certain industries. The beef industry has been relatively prosperous although it, too, has its cycles. Even in the dairy industry, which has been through a crisis and is still in an difficult situation, some people are generating quite good incomes but, again, it tends to be those who are well established—more especially, the older farmers who do not have a large debt. The younger generation, particularly those who set out in the past five to ten years to borrow to get started, who have been prepared to use their initiative and to improve their properties, now find themselves in trouble. They budgeted, and were supported by the financial institutions, on a butterfat price of around $4 a kilogram; this year we will be lucky to get $3 a kilogram, and next season does not look much better because, despite the fact that a national marketing plan is to be introduced for the dairy industry, which will boost the return to Victorian farmers, there has been a further reduction in the export price, particularly of skimmed milk powder, mainly because of the effect of the operations of the European Economic Community. So the effects of the national marketing plan will be countered by an over-all reduction in the return.

Dealing with a couple of other industries that are facing crisis situations, the lamb industry is probably the worst single disaster. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition this morning outlined comparisons between the return on a fat lamb to a producer some years ago as against today, and the comparison is interesting. In 1950 it was possible for a lamb producer to get 12 pounds a head for lambs sold in the market. Currently in Victorian markets the highest prices producers are getting are up to $27, which would be the equivalent of 13 pounds 10 shillings; but one must bear in mind the fact that the 12 pounds related to 1950. To make it easy, compare $24 with $27 and take into account inflation in the meantime. On that basis, the fat lamb industry is going through a serious economic crisis; in fact, it is virtually a total disaster.

One matter that causes me concern in relation to the whole of the meat industry is the degree of vertical integration that is occurring, especially in the beef industry. It has, of course, already happened in the poultry industry where a small number of large processors now control the industry in this State. I know that matter is dear to your heart, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am aware that a number of producers are producing the base poultry for these combines, but, through the pricing arrangements that apply, those producers are virtually locked into something that is not much better than a wage.

My concern is that we are seeing a similar trend in the beef industry. Supermarkets are now holding many thousands of cattle in feedlots in this State and entering into the same type of vertical integration arrangement. The difficulty with that policy, and the effect on the individual beef producer, is that the supermarkets tend firstly to increase the price of store stock in the market because they buy in thousands of head of cattle as against the smaller numbers bought by the average producer; further, the feedlots are then able to meet their own demand so that they do not go into the general market-place to purchase livestock around Victoria, and that virtually takes out of the market-place a large degree of competition. If that continues to any major degree in the future, it will have a serious effect on the beef industry.

The pig industry is another good example of vertical integration. Once again, prices in that sector have been reduced because of the activities of the large combines. A very small number of combines produce a large proportion of the pig meat in our system.
The rural communities—in particular the farming associations—will have to monitor that position closely because it may be that Victoria should adopt a family farm philosophy if we are to retain people on smaller farms. If we believe in any sort of social philosophy for rural communities, and if we believe in the role of the family farm—which is still the most significant component of the rural sector—I believe Governments should examine that question very closely. Otherwise, we will add to the economic difficulties of the rural sector within Australia.

The next matter I want to deal with is the Government's policy in relation to small towns. If the Government gets away with some of its policy decisions—for example, its decisions in relation to the amalgamation of local councils and the local government restructure; in relation to regionalization of the Rural Water Commission; in relation to hospitals and the regionalization of the health system—many smaller towns could be forced to close. The classic example is Pyramid Hill where the whole municipality is under threat. If the Government proceeds with its proposal to amalgamate municipalities, the Shire of Gordon is under threat of its municipal office being moved from Boort, the other major urban centre in that municipality, with a loss of the associated personnel to Pyramid Hill.

The decision of the Rural Water Commission to establish a regional office in Kerang and to completely down grade and withdraw the services currently operated from the district office in that town is one example.

Another example is the township of Cohuna in respect of which similar recommendations have been made. Already a Local Government Commission proposal has been put to amalgamate Cohuna with Kerang, a larger shire, to close down the council and to withdraw the municipal personnel from the township of Cohuna. There is a further proposal by the Rural Water Commission to downgrade its district office there and transfer all of those personnel to Pyramid Hill.

A similar situation could apply in Rochester. Certainly it applies to the Rural Water Commission which has proposed that the bulk of its personnel be transferred to a regional office at Tatura and the district office at Rochester phased down. There is a similar threat in relation to the municipal office in that town. The danger is that an amalgamation of councils could lead to Rochester losing its municipal base.

The problems in my electorate extend across to the township of Tongala where the Shire of Deakin is under threat from the Government, and the Rural Water Commission has also recommended a downgrading of its district office there.

I could go on and on, but that is just a small number of the examples in my electorate of what could happen to many other towns throughout the State which are also under threat as a result of the philosophies and policies of the Labor Government.

I invite honourable members to consider the options that have been presented today concerning the Ballarat area. The Local Government Commission has put together a series of four options which vary from a reduction in the number of municipalities from nineteen to ten as compared with a reduction from nineteen municipalities to as few as eight. Again, if any of those options is adopted, we come back to either ten or eight municipalities in that area and the municipal base will be removed from those other municipalities that are abolished and the towns concerned will be disrupted. The professional people would be lost from those towns.

It seems to me that the Labor Government has taken a policy decision to phase out small towns, to place all of its personnel within the larger regional centres and to centre all of its development philosophy around the larger regional centres rather than the smaller towns.

That would be a tragedy because those small towns have worked hard to establish their communities and the facilities within those communities. The sporting facilities that have been provided by some local municipalities are second to none. Rochester is an excellent
example of the municipal base being centred in the town and promoting industrial
development and encouraging decentralized industries to come to Rochester.

The council has also expanded the sporting facilities within the township and has
encouraged the development of educational facilities, especially the high school, which is
an excellent school. However, the municipality is under threat because of the policy of the
Government to withdraw professional personnel from the town. Personnel of the Rural
Water Commission have already been recommended for transfer, and I am concerned
about the likely impact of the amalgamation of that municipality with another municipality
in the area.

Cohuna is a similar example of a town that has every facility required. It was one of the
first communities of which I was aware that appointed a joint community recreation
officer and welfare officer. Although the municipality is small, the community has provided
resources for the elderly in the form of a senior citizen's centre and elderly person's units
through the Ministry of Housing. The community has also provided a hostel or village for
its elderly citizens. More recently, it has provided a nursing home.

Cohuna has excellent hospital facilities and the high school is strongly supported by the
community. It is presently expanding its technical facilities. The town has excellent sporting
facilities strongly supported by the council. The town also has a whole range of other
facilities and one could not find a town in Victoria with better sporting facilities than
Cohuna. However, that would not have been possible without the support of the local
municipalities based in the local community. That will be lost if the Labor Government
gets away with its attempts to force the amalgamation of municipalities and to phase out
smaller municipalities.

The Labor Government appears to ignore the degree of voluntary involvement that
supports local councils in those communities. The Local Government Commission and
the Government have placed a lot of emphasis on the rate of revenue per head of population
in certain towns. However, that takes no account of the money provided by volunteers,
and that is the best way for projects to be funded. Joint community exercises in conjunction
with council and State and Federal Governments is a better system than a local council
providing all of the revenue for specific facilities.

Across Victoria there are many examples of community centres, public halls and sporting
facilities that have been provided as a joint exercise between local government and State
and Federal Governments, but, importantly, with the local community providing a large
voluntary contribution. The advantage is that the local community believes it owns a
certain facility.

I shall now refer to the Echuca bridge and the so-called new bridge that, hopefully, one
day will cross the River Murray between Moama and Echuca. When I came to Parliament
in 1973, the Echuca bridge was the big political issue of the day. It is still a big political
issue and I am beginning to wonder whether a new bridge will ever be built.

A few years ago the city council showed some initiative by buying an old punt and
floating it down to Echuca. It may be that when the present bridge collapses—as it
eventually will—the punt could be used.

The Treasurer has provided the Minister for Transport with the money to build a new
rail bridge, but the Minister for Transport cannot spend it because the New South Wales
Minister for Planning and Environment has slapped a heritage order on the proposed site
of the bridge. That is a frustrating aspect of the whole issue. We are now going through the
complicated process of arguing whether a new bridge should be built.

To my horror, the last edition of the National Trust newsletter carried a front page
photograph of Echuca. I am normally happy to see any promotion of Echuca, but the
photograph showed the present bridge with a white line across it with the words "No
bridge here". The photograph was presented in a devious manner as it comprised two
identical photographs, one on which the National Trust had placed a white line across the
top of the historical area. There is no way that a bridge could be built on that area, however, the trust was indicating that the Government and the people of Echuca want to build a bridge across the top of the wharf. That is simply not true!

I have invited the previous Minister for Planning and Environment, the Minister responsible for Tourism, the Minister for Transport and, more recently, the new Minister for Planning and Environment to visit Echuca. Between the first three Ministers, agreement was reached that the new bridge could be built immediately downstream of the existing bridge. Despite that, the National Trust has conducted a devious campaign suggesting that the new bridge will be built across the top of the wharf. That is nonsense!

In the article in the newsletter, the National Trust sought Government funds to mount a campaign to stop the Government proceeding with the development of the new bridge. I hope the Treasurer will never sign that cheque and will never provide funds to an organization that has obviously set out to deceive the public and make suggestions that are quite dishonest.

There has never been any suggestion that the new bridge would be built across the wharf area. That would be quite impractical and ridiculous. If an organization that is supposed to be reputable wants to mount that type of campaign, it should at least be honest about it. I seek an assurance from the Treasurer that he will not fund the National Trust in its campaign. The Government should totally reject the views of the National Trust on that issue.

I shall now refer to the grant provided to the Royal Agricultural Society to fund the Young Farmers organization. For the past three years that grant has remained static and, in fact, two years ago it decreased. The organization is perhaps one of the most effective programs into which the Government could enter because it provides a great deal of support for young people of this State, especially rural people. A lot of young people in that organization are no longer farmers; they are bank clerks, teachers and people from a wide range of professions.

It is a youth leadership organization; it is autonomous and extremely beneficial to the State. It would be of good value for the Government to promote and assist the organization. I hope the Treasurer will see his way clear to providing an additional increase in the grant for that organization. I have a pecuniary interest in that I spent ten years in the organization and I gained much of my own expertise from my involvement in it. It is a valuable youth organization well worthy of increased financial support from the Government.

Mr COOPER (Mornington)—I am pleased to join the debate. A number of areas within the State require assistance from the Government and some determined help if the problems are not to worsen. If the problems do get worse, it would be to the detriment of the total community. One does not have to examine the Bills too closely to address those areas.

The health area has a waiting list of 28 000 in public hospitals for patients wanting elective surgery and pain relieving surgery, and that figure is escalating rapidly.

The problems relating to the transport area have been addressed most competently by the honourable member for Gippsland West. Public housing waiting lists have escalated to 33 000. These are areas that obviously require some direction and input from the Government to a better extent than they have received during the past few years.

I direct the Government's attention to those areas because I would be failing in my duty as a member of Parliament not to direct the attention of the Government once again to its failure in those areas and its failure to come up with the right policies or, alternatively, its failure to follow through with the promises it made.

It is to the eternal shame of the Government that it has failed in so many of the promises that it made in those heady salad days of 1981-82 when it was aspiring to power and ultimately came to power.
I have examined the allocations to the Local Government Department set out in the Supply Bill and have extended the figures set out for the first five months of the 1986–87 financial year to the full twelve month period. That has provided some intriguing results. I indicate at the outset that this is not an exact science and I do not claim that the figures I shall quote are the exact figures, because in areas of capital works and works and services one is likely to be out by substantial amounts. However, in the allocations to the Local Government Department the bulk of the expenditure is recurrent expenditure; money is allocated to people in the department rather than works and services, and consequently the figures I shall quote will be more exact. I believe the figures will give a fair indication of the way expenditure is heading in the department.

I have recently been given access under the Freedom of Information Act to a diagnostic report made available to the Minister for Local Government from the Public Service Board regarding a re-organization of the Local Government Department. I note from the latest directory of the Government that the report may have been partly implemented, if not completely implemented, and so the figures supplied should be a fair guide of the expenditure in the Local Government Department for the next twelve months.

Program No. 502, corporate services, has an allocation for 1985–86 of $2,240,880. If the five month projection for 1986–87 is extended to the full twelve months of that financial year, the department will spend approximately $2.6 or $2.7 million. That is an increase of $445,000 to $450,000. If those figures are compared with the estimate for 1985–86 it is an increase of just under 20 per cent.

Program No. 504, financial assistance, has only a small increase. The 1985–86 allocation is $2.8 million and the 1986–87 projection, again taking the five month figure and extending it to the full twelve months of that financial year, is $2.856 million, an increase of $49,150, which is 1.75 per cent.

Program No. 505, advisory and regulatory services, is an important part of the working of the department, particularly in its relationship with individual councils throughout the State. The 1985–86 estimate was $543,300. The 1986–87 projection extended for the full twelve months is $600,000, an increase of $56,700 or 10.44 per cent.

The over-all increase in the allocation for the department for the full twelve months of 1986–87 is $552,970, an increase of 9.89 per cent. I do not have the benefit of the actual expenditure for the 1985–86 financial year, but based on the performance of the department in the previous year I would assume that it will be close to the estimated expenditure, which is an amazing result. That may be attributed to good management or to creative accounting practices.

One can assume that the increase that the department will be seeking for the 1986–87 financial year will be approximately 10 per cent. In examining these comparisons, I find it strange to relate the types of promises that the Government and the Treasurer have been making in statements in the House regarding the economic future of the State, particularly the fact that the coming Budget will be pared to the bone and, yet, the Local Government Department will receive an estimated increase in expenditure of 10 per cent.

Honourable members will recall that according to the Commonwealth Budget Papers the consumer price index increase will be 7.8 per cent. Both the shadow Treasurer and the Treasurer have agreed that for 1986–87 the increase in the consumer price index will be approximately 7 per cent, a slight drop on the figure for 1985–86. Honourable members should compare those consumer price index figures with the projected 10 per cent increase in expenditure for the Local Government Department. Why is this department allowed to increase its expenditure over and above the CPI, particularly having regard to the fact that the House has been warned constantly day after day by the Treasurer and the Premier that the coming Budget will be tough? One would expect that when the Premier and Treasurer make those statements they would back them up with action.
Mr SIMMONDS (Minister for Local Government)—On a point of order, Mr Speaker, can the honourable member inform the House from what notes he is quoting and whether those notes are available to the House?

The SPEAKER—Order! Is the honourable member quoting from notes and if so are they available to the House?

Mr COOPER (Mornington)—I am quoting from the Supply Bill and I would expect that the Minister would have that available to him. I have made some pen notes alongside the figures in the Bill and I am prepared to make the sheet to which I have referred available to the Minister.

The SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member does not have to make his notes available to the House, but I should be pleased if he would make his remarks on the Bill available to the House.

Mr COOPER—I am quite happy to assist the Minister in every way possible, Mr Speaker. I know he requires assistance. I was making a point about the question of a projected increase of some 10 per cent. The Minister has been in the Chamber when I have explained how I have arrived at those figures, which is by projecting the figures in the Supply Bill—which apply for the first five months of this financial year—and extending them over twelve months. I have explained that this is more exact in cases where it involves recurrent expenditure, such as salaries and so on, than when it involves capital works.

If my notes on the short mathematical calculations are of assistance to the Minister—and I now presume that they are—I shall certainly copy them after completing my remarks in this place and make them available to the Minister.

I now turn to a note in the Bill relating to the Local Government Department Supply allocation, which states that the estimated amount required during Supply for Program No. 502 reflects the expected activity of the Local Government Commission in consulting with local government and local communities as part of a review of municipal structures.

As I pointed out before, that increase, extended over twelve months, amounts to an increase slightly below 20 per cent. It rises from $2.2 million to $2.7 million in round figures, involving an increase of somewhere between $445 000 and $450 000.

Honourable members should direct their attention to ascertaining the reasons why that kind of note should appear in the Bill and why that kind of increase is necessary. Honourable members should consider the activities of the Local Government Commission that would require the expenditure of that sort of amount.

It is interesting to note that in Ballarat today, the Chairman of the Local Government Commission released an options paper. Part of the money being allocated to the Local Government Department in the Supply Bill will, presumably, be expended on that kind of activity. The document, entitled “Options Paper—Ballarat/Colac Segment”, is quite interesting. It is also interesting that the expenditure that the Minister and the Government are now seeking will be used for activities relating to the production of options papers and so on.

This options paper suggests a reduction in the number of councils from nineteen to either ten or eight. That reduction will occur if any of the options presented by the Local Government Commission are adopted. The chairman of the commission made it quite clear today that the discussion points contained in the options paper are those from which a decision is likely to be arrived at; that perhaps one of them may not be adopted or it could be an amalgamation of a number of them or it could be something entirely different.

It is necessary to examine what the commission is doing, because it is obviously an absorber of a large amount of public money through the Local Government Department and represents a significant percentage of the department’s budget. I find it remarkable that the commission is now indulging itself in what is called “meaningful consultation”
with councils and the people involved in the Ballarat-Colac region. The commission issued the options paper today and has allowed itself a maximum of two months in which to consult meaningfully with nineteen councils and about 135,000 people.

It is amazing that honourable members are now considering a Bill which will expand into the full Budget, which will be introduced in the next sessional period, and which allocates a high percentage of the Local Government Department budget to the Local Government Commission. The commission has had printed only 2000 copies of the options paper it released today. Some 135,000 people and nineteen municipalities are involved, yet only 2000 copies of the options paper are available.

When the Chairman of the Local Government Commission was questioned about how the people would be consulted and how they would be made aware of what was occurring he was, in the kindest terms I could possibly use to express it, very vague. He was not quite sure how the people would learn about the options that the commission presented. He suggested that they might obtain copies from their local municipalities, or perhaps they might be able to obtain copies from some other source. My colleague, the honourable member for Polwarth, suggested that perhaps the commission might make some copies available to local members of Parliament. The chairman of the commission felt that was a jolly good idea!

It seems remarkable, on a matter that is of great significance to many people in an important part of Victoria, the Ballarat-Colac region, that in the next two months people will have to start making up their minds about what to do. So far as the Government and the commission are concerned, the 135,000 people will not be granted the courtesy of being provided with copies of the options paper unless they go out and find copies somewhere. As of lunchtime today, nobody quite knew where to obtain copies of that paper.

I should have thought with this kind of extension to the budget of the Local Government Department, if it was not able to produce 135,000 copies, or a sufficient number for everybody in the region—and I take the point that it may have been beyond the financial capacity of the department—the department would have at least presented every resident with some sort of summary of the options that would have been delivered to them in their letter boxes, so that they would be aware of what was occurring and informed that they would be required to provide some input on the contents of the options paper.

I believe it is accepted by honourable members on all sides of the House and everyone else who is involved in this matter that local government amalgamation and restructuring is something of meaning and that it could affect people’s pockets and financial futures in one way or another. It will have some sort of impact, whether one takes the view that it will cost the taxpayers more money or that it will mean a saving to taxpayers. Either way, people should be informed of the options that have been provided.

However, the Government, through the Local Government Commission, is not prepared to make the options available to the people involved in a clear and precise form by delivering the options paper to them. It is a shame, and it shows the hypocrisy being exhibited by the Government and the commission on this matter.

I should have expected, when options are proposed to change municipal boundaries to such an extent, that there would be some evidence of benefits that might accrue to the people who will be involved.

Honourable members have heard all about the clear, overwhelming evidence of benefits that the Minister and the Chairman of the Local Government Commission say will exist as a result of a local government restructure, but when members on this side of the House and other people have asked what the benefits will be, all they have received in reply have been generalities.

The Local Government Commission has now extended itself to presenting some lines on a map showing the new boundaries, but it has not yet come forward with an idea of
some of the benefits that might accrue to people as a result of the four options it has presented. I should have expected that to be a minimum requirement for such an options paper, but that has not occurred.

What is contained in this red-covered document is a rehash of a couple of pages from the now discredited principles and program report, which set out a summary of nine benefits, which are generalities and mean nothing to individual ratepayers.

The department and the commission have again disappointed the ratepayers in the area concerned by not providing them with the hard, cold facts which they say exist and on which the people are expected to make a value judgment. At some stage or another it will be necessary for the Government to present some facts to the people. I should have expected that, by now, the Government would have got its act together and had those facts available. However, it is apparent that it does not have those facts, and that is hypocrisy in the extreme.

I also find it intriguing that the Chairman of the Local Government Commission at lunchtime today informed a press conference that some 60 councils in this State could disappear as a result of the recommendations of reports his commission will make to the Government and the community. That will create an enormous amount of debate and concern among communities throughout the State. I hope the report on the Bendigo region, which is due to be released next week, and the report on the bayside councils, which is due to be released the following week, will do better and will supply far more information and facts to the communities that will be affected than have been made available in this options paper.

The very clever approach of the Local Government Commission is to give people four options about which they can go ahead and fight among themselves. It is, in fact, pushing forward to councils the option of embarking on a smash-and-grab raid on their neighbours. That is rather sad. There is no intent by the Government or the commission to introduce a system of bringing people together to try to work out a situation that can be acceptable to all.

The commission and the Government are deliberately fermenting unrest and concern among communities. The matter has been explored in this House on many occasions and it will be explored on many more occasions over the next year or so, which will be to the detriment of this Government as it gears itself for an election in the next couple of years.

I express concern about the extent of the Local Government Department budget and the way in which it is being allowed to escalate, apparently with little control. If there is a determination by this Government to return some economic sanity to the financial control of this State—and it appears from the rhetoric that the Government is so determined—I suggest that it should put that rhetoric into action and now examine the individual budgets of its departments, which, based on the evidence before me, particularly in regard to the Local Government Department, appear to be escalating beyond a level that would be acceptable in the circumstances that this State will face in the next two or three years.

I ask the Government to review the matter in the interests of both present and future generations of Victorians.

Mr PERRIN (Bulleen)—The 1986-87 Supply Bill relates to the expenditure of a rather large sum of money. Unfortunately, members of the Opposition will not be allowed the opportunity of fully discussing the measure, because the debate is being guillotined. The Government does not want to hear what is going wrong in the Victorian economy.

I was in the lobby of Parliament House earlier today when I met a former member of this House and a former member of the Liberal Government. I told him that the House was to debate the Supply Bill and that it would be guillotined. That former member reminded me that, under the last Liberal Government in this State, the debate on the Supply Bill continued for some 24 hours, at a time when there were only 81 members of
this place. There are now 88 members in this place, yet the Bill is being debated in one day.

That is an indication to the people of Victoria of the sort of government that exists in this State. Not only is the House sitting on fewer occasions but also debates are constantly being guillotined.

This is an important Bill. It involves the allocation of moneys for expenditure over the next five months of $3792 million, yet the Government is guillotining the debate, which will last for only about 8 or 9 hours. The Government has created a shameful situation. That demonstrates a contempt for Parliament. It indicates to the people of Victoria the way in which the Government thinks.

When one considers the contributions to the debate that have been made by honourable members on this side of the House, one notes that a long list of well-documented cases has been put and, no doubt, there will be more such contributions from both the Opposition and the National Party.

The lead Opposition contribution to the debate by the honourable member for Brighton was excellent and I recommend honourable members who were not present in the Chamber that they read that speech because it contained a number of messages to which honourable members should give serious consideration.

The thrust of the Opposition's present approach is that problems exist in the Victorian economy and it is now time for restraint in expenditure. The Supply Bill contains no indication of expenditure restraint.

Admittedly, the Treasurer said he would not embark on any new programs, but the Bill involves the expenditure of $3792 million, and I remind the House that that sum will be divided into two amounts, $2944 million for recurrent expenditure and $848 million for works and services. Those sums have to come from somewhere; they do not just appear from thin air. The money is raised either through taxes or borrowings.

If one wishes to understand the situation under this Government and the sorts of policies that it puts into practice, one needs to only examine the expenditure proposed in the Bill. There is no doubt that this Government is the highest taxing Government in Australia. Both the honourable member for Brighton and the Leader of the National Party have clearly stated that to live in Victoria imposes a great burden on Victorian taxpayers, who pay the highest level of taxes in Australia.

This is also a high-borrowing Government. There are more debts in Victoria per head of population than in any other State of Australia.

Mr McNamara interjected.

Mr PERRIN—As the honourable member for Benalla says, by interjection, the debts have also escalated. There is no doubt that the way that the supposed economic recovery is being funded is either through taxing or borrowing. This is a big-spending Budget, and honourable members are expected to approve the expenditure of a large sum. This big-spending Government is prepared to throw money around to its friends and look after particular people in the community when there are other problems and concerns to which the Government should give priority.

There is no doubt that there has been incompetent financial management. The honourable member for Gippsland West has highlighted the incompetent management in the transport system. There is evidence of such incompetence in other areas, including the State Insurance Office.

There are other areas of the Government where economic managers are supposedly working well, but they are simply turning the losses of organizations that have previously been profitable into even greater losses for the future.
There has also been clear evidence, which was again documented by the honourable member for Gippsland West, about the selling off of transport assets of the State. A great preponderance of assets has been sold off, and there is no doubt that this is an exercise in asset-stripping. There is no doubt that the Government has been prepared to get into the hollow logs, as it said, and obtain and use all the working capital of the various statutory authorities.

I have evidence that there has been a massive drop in the working capital of both Government departments and statutory authorities because the Government has used the money for its own purposes, even though in many cases the money was usefully employed by being invested in the private sector.

The Liberal Party believes restraint is needed in the area of pet projects funded by the Government from time to time. I will not be able to expand on them all because the debate has been guillotined but I shall refer to examples of pet projects and the areas where cuts will be made when the Liberal Party gets back into government.

The first is district health councils, which are part of the political agenda of the Government. In the current financial year the estimated cost of district health councils is $500,000. According to the figures provided to Mr Birrell in another place under the Freedom of Information Act, next year an amount of $2,761,899 is to be spent. Over the next three years that sum will increase to $6,251,572 of which 90 per cent will be used to increase the number of bureaucrats in the State. The Government's priorities are wrong. The money should be spent in decreasing the waiting lists in public hospitals and in nursing homes. The priorities should not be to set up district health councils. The Opposition believes the expenditure of over $6 million in the next three years for district health councils is wrong.

Another area in which the Government's priorities are wrong is in the public sector where the number of employees has skyrocketted over the past few years of the Labor Government. I refer to the Australian Bureau of Statistics figures which show that, in May 1982, the number of public sector employees in Victoria alone was 268,300. That number had increased to 303,200 as at September 1985, six months ago. That is an increase of 34,900 in the number of public sector employees added to the pay-roll since the Labor Government came to power. Most of those public sector employees are at the bureaucratic, administrative level. They are not employed at the services level. We need fewer paper pushers and more police and nurses. The obvious problems in the community need to be solved.

Another example is that every public sector organization now has to employ an affirmative action officer. When one considers how many additional employees will be added to the bureaucracy, without any additional service being provided to the taxpaying public of Victoria, it is an example of the Government's priorities. The Opposition makes it clear that it will reduce the number of public sector employees.

When one examines the types of jobs that have been created in the Ministry of Education, the Ethnic Affairs Commission and other Government departments, it is obvious they have been jobs for the boys and girls. They are areas in which cuts should be made to create job opportunities and promotion opportunities for public servants who want to get ahead and who find their path to promotion blocked by the fact that jobs are being made for the boys and girls.

There are other pet projects the Government has considered in its priorities. I refer to grants made for the International Year of Peace. The Government has set aside $450,000 of the taxpayers' money to promote the International Year of Peace. No honourable member in this Chamber would oppose the promotion of peace in the community. However, one must question the types of grants made. To date, only $100,000 of the $450,000 has been allocated. The Minister for Education released information about where the grants will be made.
I wish to outline to the House why the Opposition believes some of the Government's priorities are wrong. Some organizations are doubtful about the benefit the taxpayers will receive from the expenditure of these funds.

The first grant was $5000 to the "No Grant Theatre" which will enable the performing group to stage the play, *A Flash of Light*. The second grant of $80 was to the St Kilda People for Nuclear Disarmament. The third grant was $1600 to the Geelong International Year of Peace Project Committee. That grant will assist the group in the staging of a public debate on the question of, "Peace Through Pacifism or Peace Through Strength". It appears that they do not care about us defending ourselves. The fourth grant of $7873 was to the Kew Peace Project Group, which is to conduct a Peace Festival, a youth art exhibition and a presentation to Kew Council.

The fifth grant of $5000 to the Community Education Publications Association will assist the group in producing a 20-minute video on the nuclear fuel cycle entitled, "Because We Had No Knowledge". I do not know on what we are going to have no knowledge or how many people will see the video. One can question the benefit of the video to the people of Victoria.

The sixth grant of $1400 to the Young People for Nuclear Disarmament will provide guest speakers, displays and distribute literature which will encourage youth involvement in peace issues. The seventh grant of $973 to the Selby Community House will allow the local community to conduct an eight week peace education course for women focusing on peace, development and justice.

The eighth grant of $7200 to the Peace Education Task Force will enable the task force to conduct a peace education conference for both primary and post-primary teachers.

The ninth grant of $1000 was to the Castlemaine People for Nuclear Disarmament. The tenth grant of $2500 is to the Maroondah Youth Theatre Company, for yet another play. The eleventh grant of $400 was to the Shire of Eltham Living and Learning Centre.

Mr Weideman—Did Mickey Mouse get any money?

Mr Perrin—Mickey Mouse did not get any, but I am sure there are plenty of Donald Ducks here.

The twelfth grant of $5000 was to the League of Women Voters of Victoria who will produce a resource kit featuring the contributions female politicians have made to peace and international understanding. The thirteenth grant of $850 was to the Movement Against Uranium Mining which will use the money for the purchase of a display board and the lamination of display materials which will subsequently be available for use in libraries and schools.

The fourteenth grant of $12 000 was to the Friends of the Earth to assist in the production and distribution of a resource directory detailing the availability and suitability of a range of peace education literature. The fifteenth grant was $2000 to the "Human Rights—First The Child" to assist in the organization of a walk from Bairnsdale to Frankston.

That is how the first $100 000 has been allocated. There are many more to come to make up the $450 000.

The Liberal Party strongly questions whether that type of expenditure is in the best interests of Victorians. Why should taxpayers have to fund those organizations? If those organizations consider that they have broad community support, they should raise their own funds and then put forward their propaganda. Why should the taxpayer have to pay? When the Liberal Party wins office, it will introduce cutbacks in those areas.

Further interesting grants have been made in the Community Employment Program. The Gay Publications Co-operative received $123 280 for the production of magazines about homosexuals. A grant of $35 631 was made for three people to write about the history of the Victorian branch of the Union of Australian Women which, as honourable
members know, is the women’s arm of the Communist Party of Australia. A grant of $15,446 was made to Actors Equity to enable it to try to eliminate exploitation of announcers by employers. The Victorian Teachers Union received a grant of $110,617 to fund the *Women’s Affirmative Action Handbook*.

The Australian Broadcasting Commission received a grant of $334,890 to employ 21 people to win community acceptance for “accented” voices to be heard on air.

That is the type of project on which money is spent by the Labor Government. There are legions of examples of organizations which do not receive broad community support, but which receive funds from the Government. There are examples of trade unions receiving grants. Trade unions receive millions of dollars in income every year, so why do they need taxpayers’ funds to supplement their activities? The Government should exercise restraint in these areas. A case which is well known to honourable members and about which the honourable member for Richmond is well aware involved a grant of $166,000 to an organization designed to promote the Labor Party in this State.

Many pet projects of the Government have been provided with funds which cost the taxpayers millions of dollars. I shall not canvass all the areas mentioned by the honourable member for Gippsland West, but there are many other examples of the waste of taxpayers’ funds in the transport area.

I refer to the Fairway system, which is supposed to make it easier for motorists and public transport on our roads. If one speaks to motorists, one discovers that they do not think it makes it any easier on the roads. Recently a question on notice was asked about the cost of the Fairway system and, in 1983–84, $3·1 million and in 1984–85, $5 million was spent in this area. No doubt, in the current Supply Bill, many more millions will be spent on that system. Those tens of millions of dollars have been wasted. That type of project should not receive priority when one considers the long waiting lists at hospitals, nursing homes and for Ministry of Housing accommodation.

In the transport area, the Government has been prepared to put our future generations into hock. The Government has undertaken large borrowings and $590 million of transport assets have been sold and leased back at repayment terms of $1000 million. The future generations will be mortgaged to pay for that. The Opposition questions the priorities of the Government and wonders whether it is spending money in the right areas. Borrowed funds, in some cases, have been used to pay for the operating costs of transport authorities. This practice is continuing day by day. Taxpayers’ borrowed funds should not be used for operations.

When one examines the areas in which the Government spends funds, one realizes there is a need for restraint. I support the honourable member for Brighton who made it clear that expenditure restraint should be the top priority of the Government. Expenditure restraint should be exercised without a cut in services. I do not believe the 1 per cent productivity cut this year and the 1·5 per cent productivity cut, which is supposed to be contained in the Supply Bill for next year, will lead to efficiencies. In many departments there should be increases instead of decreases in spending. The police and health areas, which are experiencing problems, should not be subjected to productivity cuts.

All the grants provided to various organizations by the Government total tens of millions of dollars and it seems that the Government’s priority is to provide funds to its pet projects. Expenditure restraint is necessary, but it is not enough. The Government must go one step further and reduce borrowings. The Government has embarked upon a borrowing binge and, when one examines the capital expenditure in the Bill, one realizes the Government is continuing to borrow large sums of money at a time of historically high interest rates. It is the funds of the taxpayer that will be used to pay the interest. If ever there were a need for restraint, there is a need for restraint in State borrowings. It does not matter whether one is discussing the Budget or the non-Budget sector, a need for restraint exists.
As the credible alternative, the Liberal Party received a nice swing at the last election. Although the swing against the Government was not enough to put the Liberal Party into government, the people of Victoria have seen through the policies of the Labor Government. The people of Victoria do not want to be the highest taxed State in Australia. Victoria’s young people do not want to have the highest level of debt per head of any State; they do not want to be mortgaged; they want Government restraint. The people of Victoria want the Government to be sensible and not run up huge debts which taxpayers have to pay off at a time of historically high interest rates.

The Liberal Party policy advocated the strong need for a tax freeze—a moratorium if honourable members like—for a year. The Victorian community wants a break from the record high taxes imposed by the Labor Government. The Liberal Party policy proposed an eighteen month freeze on Board of Works and other rates. Unlike the Labor Party, the Liberal Party has a policy of Government restraint. The honourable member for Dandenong might be interested in this because when one examines the expenditure, taxes, asset sales and borrowings of the Government, one realizes the need for such a policy.

I shall quote the Liberal Party policy summary on Government restraint so members of the Government might appreciate that the Liberal Party is the only party that has such a policy. The document states:

To bring about this change in balance, to achieve deregulation, to reduce the cost of government to the taxpayer, the next Liberal Government will adopt the following plans:

1. The provision of many government services will be contracted out to the private and non-profit sectors.
2. In appropriate cases government businesses will be shifted to the non-government sector.
3. No new government programmes will commence except by Cabinet decision after an assessment of priorities including whether any existing programme should be ended.
4. A reduction in public sector employment will be achieved through voluntary redeployment and natural attrition. There will be no retrenchments.

Mr SHEEHAN (Ballarat South)—On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, I direct your attention to the fact that the honourable member for Bulleen is referring to Liberal Party policy, which has little to do with the Supply Bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Dr Vaughan)—Order! There is no point of order. The House has been conducting itself in an exemplary manner this afternoon and I should like it to continue.

Mr PERRIN (Bulleen)—The document continues:

5. Regulations and paper work requirements will be vigorously pruned.

I can well understand the agitation of members on the Government benches because they would not want this reported in Hansard.

The Liberal Party questions the priorities of the Government. I ask members of the Government to think carefully about the waiting list for public hospitals, about which the honourable member for Ballarat South may not care.

Mr Norris interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Dandenong is out of his place and out of order. He has been repeatedly interjecting and I ask him to stop.

Mr PERRIN—Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. The waiting list for public housing accommodation has doubled in this State and that for nursing home accommodation has also increased. The community is being hurt badly by the policies of the Government.

It is the view of the Liberal Party that it is time for restraint in Government taxes and borrowings. If there is not, by the next State election, which the Liberal Party will win, there will no assets, huge debts and taxes and nothing left for the people of Victoria to continue with in the future. It is about time the House started to listen to the community
and put into practice some of the rhetoric of the Government. Let us have some restraint in Government spending.

Mr WEIDEMAN (Frankston South)—I support the proposition put forward so well by the honourable member for Brighton and the comments of other speakers who have spoken about particular requirements of Supply. It is my job to consider matters dealing with health. The media has adequately covered the problems faced in the area of transport but the health portfolio is in a complete shambles; transport and education matters would run a clear second to it.

Recently the Premier has made great play of requests made to the Government by members of the Opposition. I shall quote from a document that I received from the Secretary to Cabinet, which lists 150 projects requested by members of the Opposition. The document is headed:

SAMPLE—1985

150 REQUESTS FROM THE OPPOSITION FOR EXPENDITURE/TAX CHANGES PRELIMINARY COSTINGS

The Premier has referred extensively to this list and in answers to questions put to him has tried to instill fear in members of the Opposition and the community by foreshadowing increases in taxes and cuts to the Budget as a result of these requests.

In answer to a question without notice, the Premier referred to this list of 150 requests, of which he said:

The list points out the lack of understanding, incapacity and stupidity of the Opposition in the irresponsible way it has handled this issue. . . . . asking day after day, week after week, for a whole host of things that is wanted by the Opposition to satisfy and to curry favour with some local interest groups in the electorate.

He further stated:

It goes on willy-nilly issuing these claims or requests regardless of cost.

I suppose one can say that, in the past, veracity and integrity of those claims has been undermined because there have been obvious flaws in them so far as costing is concerned and they have been seen for what they are—irresponsibly made.

One would think the Premier would have more integrity. He said that the list of 150 requests would cost many millions of dollars.

On 8 April 1986 in answer to a question without notice from the honourable member for Essendon, who is good at asking these sorts of questions, the Premier said:

I said then that there was a degree of irresponsibility in the Opposition, which was continuing to make requests for changes to expenditure that amounted to hundreds of millions of dollars. At the same time it wanted fewer taxes!

The Premier included me, as a member of the Opposition, in that accusation and he suggested that I was irresponsible in making these requests, which would cost millions of dollars.

According to the document that I have, I am responsible for requesting three projects, one of which is in the area of health. The document states that I made a request for an expansion of the Frankston Hospital on 18 April 1985. It alleges that I made representations to the Minister for Health about funding for this project. Of course I did! The project has gone ahead and it will be of great benefit to the people of Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula.

The project costs amount to $31.65 million. The document suggests that I irresponsibly requested the expenditure of this money. I point out to the Premier that the former Minister of Health, the present Minister for Transport, authorized the expenditure of that money. All honourable members know why that honourable gentleman lost responsibility
for that portfolio and why that portfolio has been hidden in the Upper House. The reason is that it can no longer be subjected to scrutiny in this House.

I have a publication that is put out by the Frankston Hospital and is called the Peninsula Heart Beat. It reports with pride and appreciation that a $3-1 million contract was signed by the Treasurer. There we have it! The Premier claimed that I was irresponsible in requesting that project yet the same project brings accolades for the Government when it agrees to it.

That was the first request attributed to me in the list of 150 requests. One would expect to find one mistake in a document of this sort but I have three attributed to me!

The second allegation is even more hilarious; it is that I made a request for a new primary school to be built on the Lakewood estate at Frankston. The project would cost approximately $3-1 million. I well remember making representations to the Minister on the matter on 23 October 1985. I made the request because the school now located at Frankston Heights has approximately fifteen or sixteen portable class-rooms on a small block. It is overcrowded and caters for 800 or 900 school children. It is, therefore, important that the Lakewood estate, which is situated on high ground to the north of Frankston and has superb views of Melbourne, gets the go-ahead for this $3·1 million project.

The blocks have already been purchased for the new school. It is important that the planning committee gives the school the go-ahead as quickly as possible. I point out that I wrote letters to the appropriate Minister making this request yet, as is the way of Labor Ministers, the local Labor representative is asked to make the announcement of the new project.

In this case, the announcement of the project was made by the honourable member for Chelsea Province in the other place, the Honourable M. A. Lyster. That was the second project to which I had earlier referred the Government.

The third project was a request I made to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services for a breathalyzer unit to operate in an area notorious for both drink-driving and drug taking. A special unit was needed to police this area. The Minister replied that he would investigate the matter, but that he was concerned at the cost of providing units on request as they are valued at $3500 each. Recently in the House a Labor Party back-bencher referred the same matter to the Minister, and, this time, the Minister responded differently by saying that he would examine the situation and take steps to ensure that part of the Federal Government's $100 million campaign against drug abuse would be directed towards drug surveillance procedures in Victoria. He stated that he would take action on this request.

When I raised these three projects with the Government, I was told that I was being irresponsible and that the Opposition is always asking for money to be spent in various areas. I invite all honourable members to examine the document to which I have referred. It is notable for its hypocrisy. If the Premier is to use this document as a basis for his comments on 150 requests for expenditure received from the Opposition, he should at least get his facts right.

Whenever members of the Opposition have sought information from various Ministers on the provision of certain projects, requests have always been made in the context of budgetary restraints. The Premier and the Government cannot call members of the Opposition irresponsible and at the same time favour requests by back-benchers on those same issues.

In 1981, when the present Minister for Education was in opposition, he addressed a public meeting of the Peninsula Education Council—PENEC—and promised that when the Labor Party obtained office every State school—there are some 2100—would have its school buildings brought into line with public health requirements. The standards that apply to restaurants would be applied to the toilet facilities of all schools—tertiary colleges, secondary schools and 1700 primary schools. At the time, this expenditure would have
amounted to $1 million for each building. Today, the total cost of fulfilling this promise would amount to $2000 million. I question, under the Government's criteria on requests of expenditure by opposition party members, whether the Minister for Education showed any responsibility in making that request when he was in opposition.

Since the Labor Party obtained office I have not heard another word about this promise except that when a school is built the Public Works Department must consult with the Health Department Victoria on requirements for toilet block facilities. Of course, Government buildings are not subject to the same building regulation procedures as private enterprise development.

I suggest that the Government review its document on requests for expenditure to ensure its accuracy, as the Government, through its media unit, is trying to discredit the Opposition by means of an inaccurate and untruthful document.

The honourable member for Greensborough commented that honourable members are able to obtain more information on Supply Bills under the present Government than was possible previously, and that is to the credit of the Government. On the last occasion I spoke on a Supply Bill, I referred to the importance of members of Parliament being fully informed. The Supply Bill in its entirety is a complex document.

Under the health allocation the Government intends to proceed with the same programs as applied in the 1985-86 financial year, with one exception. As the honourable member for Greensborough stated, the program for services to the intellectually disabled under the health allocation in the 1985-86 financial year has been transferred to Community Services Victoria.

A famous statement was made by the then Minister of Health that he will probably regret having made. He said that he had inherited the best hospital system in Australia, and possibly the world. That was in 1982 when the Minister for Transport held the portfolio. That is not the case today. Victoria does not have the best hospital system in Australia or in the world—far from it.

The Labor Party Government has broken many of the promises it made when in opposition, and credit can be given to Labor Party policies over the past four years of government for the fact that the Labor Party has created a new stratum of poor in health services.

Mr Trezise—Who has the best health system in the world?

Mr WEIDEMAN—The Swedes.

Mr Trezise—Try Madagascar.

Mr WEIDEMAN—Perhaps the Minister for Sport and Recreation is offering me overseas travel. I have not travelled overseas on behalf of the Government—not yet, anyway! I recommend to the Government that more members of Parliament travel overseas to enable them to be better informed on facilities provided by other countries.

As a result of Labor Party policy, Victoria has a record waiting list for entry to public hospitals and nursing homes. From debate in the House previously it appears there is also an unprecedented inability to fill positions in the mental health area. An enormous number of public beds has been closed.

As the honourable member for Bulleen pointed out, millions of dollars have been wasted on the establishment of district health councils. Recently, problems of community health centres were highlighted including, in one case, claims of fraud and corruption which were contained in a report to Health Department Victoria. As the honourable member for Bulleen pointed out earlier, $3 million was provided this year to district health councils. It is estimated there are approximately 45 district health councils. Quite rightly, the Opposition has pointed out that this money would be better spent in providing services for public hospital patients and reducing the public hospital waiting list.
It is apparent that the Labor Party Government's policies have failed when the waiting list for public hospital beds totals 27,862 people. Even more important is the time those people must wait. With the public hospital waiting list statistics one could argue about urgency and about elective and non-elective surgery, and arguments would differ from hospital to hospital.

Those figures can vary from month to month because of the way in which they are collected. Some hospitals record only those patients registered to have surgery in that month and they do not take into account those people who have cancelled for some reason or could not obtain a bed, so the list could be much longer.

The time for a person requiring surgery or other medical treatment has increased from 77 days in January to 81 days in March. Some 2,176 Victorians have been on the waiting list for more than a year, which is unbelievable. That breaks down to 40 operations a week for every week of the year. The average waiting time at teaching hospitals, or Melbourne's larger hospitals, has increased from 86 days in January to 108 days in March.

The Labor Government promised in February 1985 to reduce the waiting list by half, to 10,000 people. However, it has increased by 170 per cent. The Liberal Party was criticized when it was in government and has been called everything from "sleazy" to "dishonest". I could call the Premier sleazy because of the way he has put together the "150 requests" document because I find that insulting.

Mr Steggall—And an insult to the public.

Mr WEIDEMAN—Never mind the public; the Government gives thought to the public only at the end of the line. When the Labor Party came into office the number on the waiting list was an honest figure and not one trumped up by the Government. The waiting list at that time was 8,000 people and that figure was genuine because all patients awaiting surgery had to be recorded.

It was not one of the Labor Party trumped-up cheat lists. That figure has now increased from 8,000 to 27,800—an increase of more than 300 per cent.

Mr Ernst—You said you didn't keep lists!

Mr WEIDEMAN—The Opposition kept honest lists. Honourable members who have been involved on hospital boards would know what I am talking about and other honourable members with no special expertise should keep quiet.

Mr Trezise—He is an expert.

Mr WEIDEMAN—The honourable member does not look like one.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Dr Vaughan)—Order! The honourable member should address the Chair and ignore interjections.

Mr WEIDEMAN—The Premier also stated that he would provide $10 million to eradicate this problem by reducing the waiting lists by half. I do not believe that $1 has been spent. How could it be if the waiting list has increased from 8,000 to 27,800? The list has gone through the roof.

There are now more than 1,000 beds unused in private hospitals. A recent publication put out by the Private Hospitals Association of Victoria Incorporated pointed out that the occupancy levels of public hospitals was 78 per cent in 1983-84. The Frankston Hospital has an occupancy level of between 95 per cent and 100 per cent because of the needs of residents on the Mornington Peninsula.

The occupancy level of private hospitals, which form a large part of Victoria's medical services, was 64 per cent. There is almost a 27 per cent difference between private and some public hospitals and because private hospitals are a little more than half full one would expect that they would have enormous additional costs. The reality is that the provision of services to the public demonstrates the difference between the Liberal and Labor parties.
Mr Fordham—We are in government.

Mr WEIDEMAN—The Labor Party is in government, but should not be. Honourable members should examine this document and note the cost of payments to public hospitals under the Motor Accidents Board and Accident Compensation Commission. Group 1 Hospitals charge $196 and $209 a day respectively but in the public hospitals involving specialized units and teaching aspects the average cost is $432 a day. I am aware that in a public teaching hospital special services such as heart surgery are provided, but in major and general hospitals the cost is $301. In country base or community hospitals it is $222. I am sure members of the National Party would be aware of that.

In comparing costs in the public and the private systems, the equivalent to the $432 with 100 per cent usage is $300 at 69 per cent usage. In the major and general hospitals it is $301 against $255 for 85 per cent usage and in the community hospitals it is $222 against $202 with 91 per cent usage. It is obvious that enormous savings can occur in the private area. Why has the Government not accepted the approach put by the Opposition to consider this issue? If that were done it would not have 1000 empty beds in the private hospital system. The Premier promised moneys for the improvement of the hospital system but nothing has occurred. The capacity is there for something to be done, but the promise so far has been illusory.

There is not only a problem of 1000 empty beds in the private system but also more than 760 beds closed in fifteen public hospitals. A survey of public hospitals was carried out by the Liberal Party in February 1986 which discovered that the nursing shortage, the shortfall in funding and the draconian cuts across the board created by the Minister to meet the Budget set by the Treasurer have caused the crisis. In other words, teaching hospitals such as the Royal Melbourne Hospital with a waiting list of 3236 people has closed 80 acute beds. The Alfred Hospital with a waiting list of 3281 has closed 138 beds. Prince Henry’s Hospital with a waiting list of 1231 has closed 90 beds.

Nursing homes are also a problem in Victoria and a staggering 2199 Victorians have been forced to wait for nursing home capacity which is not available. More than 700 elderly people are almost permanently enshrined in public hospital beds, which does not help the public hospital system. Those people should be transferred to nursing homes or other accommodation, but it cannot be done. More than 6000 Victorians who have gained access to nursing homes have another problem caused by the Government involving funding costs, and they are finding it difficult to cope with the funding freeze.

The Cain and Hawke Governments are responsible for this unjust situation in failing to provide a sufficient number of properly funded nursing homes in Victoria. There has been a cut back in the rate to $54.50 a day. Federal nursing home benefits are usually increased annually but Victoria was singled out on the ground that nursing costs were too high. What a joke! This situation has been created by the Minister for Health, the Government and Health Department Victoria because of the introduction of the 38 hour week. The former Minister of Health, Mr Roper, was involved in negotiations for the 38 hour week and that policy has created enormous problems for hospitals.

Honourable members should reflect on the Mental Health Bill which is now before the other House. Honourable members in that Chamber will have to debate 20 pages containing 206 amendments to that Bill. After six years of discussion and committee meetings one would have thought that the Government would have had the Bill drafted in a more acceptable form. However, the Bill has required the preparation of eleven drafts and will require further amendment before it is returned to the House.

The issue of mental health does not end with the passage of the Bill. The vast majority of mental health institutions are understaffed. In some cases there are no psychiatrists available. In the Mildura area the local institution has difficulty obtaining the services of a psychiatrist. There are fewer psychiatrists available than what is needed. Only 11 of the 26 senior psychiatry positions in country areas are filled. The shortfall is approximately 60 per cent.
As the Opposition spokesman on mental health matters, I shall attempt to suggest ways in which one can come to terms with the issue. Everybody is aware of the problems in hospitals and the general health area that have been created by the change from Medibank to Medicare, doctors working under an honorary voluntary system, nursing numbers being cut back, nurses put under pressure, the nursing profession wage structure not being commensurate with ability and jobs, administrative and medical teams being placed under pressure and militant unions taking part in these issues so that a small group of unionists now has considerable control. Mr Butler of the Hospital Employees Federation of Australia is using similar tactics to those used by the Builder's Labourers Federation, and more tactics of that kind may be in the pipeline to be used in the future.

What can the Opposition suggest to the Government to overcome those problems? The Minister for Health should make a statement to Parliament to help lift the morale of the loyal and dedicated health professionals in this State. There are ways of giving them support. The honourable gentleman should explain how the human and financial resources will be made available to overcome the shortage of 760 hospital beds. I emphasize the need for a nursing policy to involve nurses in an effort to shorten the waiting list for surgical procedures. The Government should also lobby the Hawke Government about Medicare arrangements so that private health insurance contributions can be made tax deductible. It should also arrange the use of 1000 private hospital beds for public patients and commit itself to slashing wasteful expenditure in Health Department Victoria starting with the abandonment of unnecessary expenditure on the district health councils and the making of a serious reassessment of the regionalization programs.

If the Minister for Health addressed himself to those matters I am sure the Government would not experience the problems that are now apparent in the Budget, about which he and the Premier are trying to indicate to the Opposition and the public of Victoria are under control. The Government is in for a serious shock in September. I have highlighted the problems in the Supply documents. The Government should not blame the Opposition. The Treasurer can only blame himself for his lack of endeavour.

Mr HAYWARD (Prahran)—The Supply Bill is essentially about the payment for services performed by the Government. When one considers the economy of Victoria it is easy to realize that the Victorian Government is the largest consumer and customer of goods and services. Therefore, supplying goods and services to the Government is important business, especially for small business.

Unfortunately, the Government has increasingly been operating as a closed shop in that it is obtaining its goods and services increasingly from within its own dinosaurian structures to the exclusion of small private businesses. Business worth millions of dollars is being syphoned from the private sector by newly established Government corporations, as well as the expansion of the business operations of existing Government departments and instrumentalities. The initial victims of this move by the Government are small companies and their employees. However, in the longer term the continued expansion of Government business operations will be detrimental to investment, employment and industrial development; so too is the willingness of some Government authorities to pay a cost premium for goods and services purchased from within the public sector.

Recently, the Australian Chamber of Manufactures through its publication File which was reproduced, in part, in the Age on Monday last, cited two examples. The first example relates to V/Line workshop work worth approximately $500 000 covering the supply of tarpaulins for railway use about twelve months ago. It was later discovered that this cost was $40 000 more than the lowest tender received from private enterprise. In other words, it was a decision by a Government instrumentality to purchase a large order of tarpaulins from within a Government instrumentality, even though it had to pay a premium of $40 000 more than the cost of purchasing the tarpaulins from a private organization.

What is more, the Government instrumentality supplying the tarpaulins had to purchase additional new capital equipment as it did not have an existing capacity to produce those
tarpaulins. It had to purchase additional capital equipment to manufacture the tarpaulins and that equipment was purchased out of taxpayers' funds. It is an extraordinary situation that taxpayers are paying for the purchase of capital equipment to produce goods within the public sector when those goods could have been provided by the private sector at a saving of $40,000. If the contract had gone to the private sector it would also have meant increased business in the private sector, increased employment opportunities and so forth.

The second example of the Australian Chamber of Manufactures, after considerable research, was that a Victorian company recently failed to win the renewal of a Government contract despite the fact that its tender was 65% below that of a competing tender from a public sector manufacturer. That meant the loss of approximately $1 million in trade and the company was forced to shelve plans for expansion of its export markets. In other words, the company was using the domestic market to provide the base for its export activities and an important component of that domestic market was the Government order. The loss of the Government order reduced the company's over-all volume and its economies of scale and it was unable to compete on the export market.

Dr Coghill—What was the order?

Mr Hayward—I am not sure of the details, but those can be obtained from the Australian Chamber of Manufactures. It is referred to in the chamber's file which was published in the Age on Monday last. The example quoted was on the basis of extensive research carried out by the chamber.

However, public commercialization continues to expand in various ways. A well-known example is the establishment of a print shop within the Victoria Police to print police insignia, signs and certificates. It is inconceivable why the police should be printing its own insignia, signs and certificates when that printing capacity is readily available within the private sector.

V/Line; the Road Traffic Authority; the State Electricity Commission; the Gas and Fuel Corporation and the Board of Works have been encouraged to compete on the open market with the private sector.

There has been an expansion of the sign manufacturing operations of the Road Construction Authority, yet road signs could be easily provided by the private sector.

The Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board and the Country Fire Authority have been encouraged to sell or hire safety equipment. One has the fascinating situation that the board has been able to prescribe certain safety equipment as being unsatisfactory and then act as the provider of alternative safety equipment.

The Victorian Tourism Commission has been authorized to act as a private travel agent, backed by a requirement compelling departments and authorities to use its services. All of this adds to the cost and expenses of the public sector, which adds to the need for increased taxation.

Apart from the unfair competition, it is easy to realize the advantage which is enjoyed by public sector commercial operations. For example, many of these public sector commercial operations do not pay taxes and charges, which are increasing rapidly under the Government. This gives them a major advantage over the private sector.

Even more serious and worrying is the considerable scope of Government departments and instrumentalities to contract work out to other Government instrumentalities without the need to call for tenders. Through regulations under Statutory Rule No. 433 of 1984, the limit above which public tenders are required to be called was increased from $10,000 to $50,000, which is considerably in excess of the increase in the rate of inflation. It means that many Government instrumentalities are able to contract out in the closed shop situation with other Government instrumentalities up to a limit of $50,000 without the need to call for competitive tenders.
It is likely that the extent of this closed shop atmosphere is much greater than appears on the surface because there is no need for many Government instrumentalities to call for tenders for many of their orders.

This is absolutely the wrong direction for the Government to be taking because it should not be doing business with itself. It should be encouraging the growth of new small enterprises and an increase in the number of self-employed people.

Evidence world wide has shown that an increase in work opportunities is best derived from an increase in new small businesses throughout the private sector. Small business is put at a considerable disadvantage because the Government is competing in an unfair way with the private sector in the production of goods and services and is paying a major cost penalty to purchase from itself.

Major changes are under way in the industrial world. Society is moving to what futurists call the third phase or the third wave. The first wave was the agrarian revolution. The second wave was undoubtedly the so-called industrial revolution or industrial society, which reached its peak in the middle of the last century when there was an intense development of manufacturing in Britain and intense social problems developed as a result of the industrial application of steam.

This opinion is based upon a great deal of research conducted by people looking into the future. Society is now moving into the third wave or so-called post-industrial society. This new wave or new society has the potential to be of enormous benefit to civilization and the community, so long as that society is based upon a compassionate and resourceful approach.

It will be typified by highly productive and co-operative small units. The relevance to the current situation is that the Government is increasing its own commercial operations at the expense of small business. The Government is competing unfairly with small business to reduce the opportunities for small business, and this is completely at odds with and completely reactionary to this new, progressive wave.

One has the interesting situation of a Government that promotes itself as being forward looking, even revolutionary. However, it is being reactionary because often the procurement of goods and services covered by the Bill will damage the development of new small organizations.

The new third wave—and this type of society—will not be based upon Government institutions. The new society will not be essentially capitalistic in the sense of the predominance of large-scale capitalistic enterprises that exist in many parts of the world today and, to a degree, in Australia. It will be based upon small-scale, capitalistic enterprises. It will be co-operative in nature and it will involve a high level of self-employment. It will also involve—and this is important—a high degree of worker participation in the conduct of organizations and in the distribution of the new rewards of organizations.

These new small types of businesses will be based very much upon the workers having either an equity participation in the business or being involved in some type of profit-sharing arrangement. They will have a lot of say in how the business is organized.

These small organizations will be more productive because they will provide a better environment in which people can give expression to their individuality. The productivity of these small units will therefore increase relative to the big units because the small units will better harvest the rich resources of enthusiasm and creativity that abound in our communities.

Therefore, the type of closed shop approach by this Government in stifling small business by doing business with itself is absolutely at odds with that trend.
These small, non-Government units will beat the large Government units and, for that matter, the large capitalist units, because they will provide a better vehicle to satisfy people's capabilities and desires in their work and in their lives and thus will increase the productivity and competitiveness of the small against the large.

The new era in industrial development—the third wave—will enhance the scope for individual or small group action and it will essentially empower people to have more say in their lives; to make better contributions in the work place and to increase productivity.

That is exactly the opposite of what the Government is putting forward. The Government is aiming at controlling the environment and attempting to control business, which will reduce business productivity.

The Government is not encouraging business productivity at all—just the opposite. It is attempting, through its closed shop approach of purchasing its supplies of goods and services from within its own organization, to put the private sector at a disadvantage, and that is absolutely contrary to the new trend. The Government is attempting to control the industries of the State and to control people's lives.

The Chinese have coined a wonderful phrase, that describes the effect on people when controllers are put in charge. That phrase is, "The masses lose enthusiasm". That is what happens in Government organizations and that is what happens when the Government has control of business. This sums up the problem in a nutshell.

We do not have to look further for a source of the malaise in Australia's productivity performance than to realize that when the controllers take charge the masses lose enthusiasm. That is exactly the wrong approach. We must realize that it is the people out there working with a hands-on approach who are the ones who matter.

The role of others such as the politicians and bureaucrats is to assist those people and not to control them or to take over their businesses. Governments, commissions, unions, managements, social engineers and so forth produce nothing themselves. The economic contribution of politicians and of administrators is to provide infrastructures and to encourage attitudes that will maximize the realization of the capabilities of people at the grassroots level. A proper role is not for them to go into business themselves; to attempt to take control of business or to attempt to produce the goods and services that Government requires.

Winston Churchill said, "We must beware of building a society in which nobody counts for anything except the politician or the bureaucrat." That is the type of society the Government is attempting to build. This is exactly the opposite of historical trends and it is exactly the opposite of what people in the community want. People want better opportunities to build their own lives in their organizations. They want better opportunities to work in small units in which they can say how that group will operate and to participate in the rewards of that group.

They do not want to be employees of large Government organizations; they do not want to have their lives controlled by the Government, which is expanding its commercial operations. By increasingly sourcing the supply or purchase of goods and services from within the Government, it is stifling the trend towards new small units and self-employment. It is forcing people into employment situations in large Government bureaucratic organizations. I believe the people will finally wake up to the Government and realize that it is a reactionary Government, that is going against the trend of history and the desires of the people and that the Government does not understand what productivity, competitiveness and quality are about. That is the message that will come through and that is what will finally bring down the Government.
In the future a completely new approach is needed. There is a need to reduce the involvement of Government in business and commercial opportunities and to ensure that, instead of a closed-shop approach, all government requirements are put up for public tender and government organizations do not give other government organizations an unfair advantage—as we have seen here today—when one government organization paid an extra $40,000 just to purchase from within the government structure.

It is absolutely essential and vital to future business development in Victoria that this does not occur and it is something to which the Government should pay attention or it will be out on its ear at the next election.

The sitting was suspended at 6.25 p.m. until 8.5 p.m.

Mr Jasper (Murray Valley)—I am pleased to join the debate on the Supply Bill and to support the comments already made by the Leader of the National Party, who took a responsible attitude to the Bill.

The Government is constantly telling the opposition parties that, if increased funding is required in certain areas, those parties need to stipulate where funding cuts can be made, where we can change funding and, in the case of the National Party, where funding could be more appropriate in areas specifically represented by the National Party.

The Leader of the National Party spoke about some areas where there could be changes in Government spending. He particularly mentioned the Ethnic Affairs Commission and how it could be made a more effective operation with better communications with the vast ethnic communities in Victoria. In the electorate of Murray Valley, there is a strong ethnic presence, particularly in areas such as Wangaratta and Cobram.

The Leader of the National Party also mentioned that there could be a revision and a reduction in the large range of Government publications, usually glossy publications, showing pictures of the various Ministers in their areas. Although there may be some rationalization for spending the money on these publications, they are purely promoting the Government and the programs it is implementing. It is a hard sell and it is using money that should rightfully be spent elsewhere.

The Government, better than anyone, should recognize that money should be spent in areas where it will be of most benefit to the community and the people in general. The Government does not seem to have learnt that fact. It is looking to get the biggest promotion possible to make sure that it stays in front.

Also mentioned were the problems with V/Line, which has recently captured enormous publicity with a great deal of questioning of the Minister and the Government taking place. There is no doubt that V/Line is overstaffed and that if it were sold off to private enterprise the service would change dramatically into a profitable operation providing the best service possible.

Mr Kennedy—So we should sell it to private enterprise, should we?

Mr Jasper—I am interested to hear the honourable member for Bendigo West jump in. I hope he has listened to what has been said because, realistically, he has no idea of how private enterprise operates in Victoria and he does not understand that it is the lifeblood of Australia.

It has created the wealth that has made Australia the great country that it is today. If one were to follow through with the ideas and attitudes expressed by many of the Labor Party back-benchers, particularly those like the honourable member for Bendigo West and some of the socialist left members, the State would go downhill; it would not progress.
The National Party is therefore suggesting a strong review of the total operation of V/Line. One needs only to speak to the people closest to the operation of V/Line, not only the people managing the operation but some of the responsible workers, to discover the many problems it has. One does not need to go to the top to ask questions about the inefficiency of V/Line, and the honourable member for Gippsland East would back me up strongly on this point.

National Party members talk to the people working at the railway stations in their electorates, the basic workers within the system. These people are saying that the system needs review and that the community is not getting the service that it needs.

I was interested to hear the honourable member for Gippsland West, as the Opposition spokesman on transport, strongly suggesting that there should be changes to V/Line. There is no doubt in my mind that major changes are needed. Otherwise, the whole network of rail services in Victoria will collapse. One needs only to visit country areas and speak to people working within V/Line to understand that they are worried for the future of the great railway network that has been in the forefront of providing a service for passengers and freight. The grain growers of Victoria regard the rail network as a most efficient way of shifting wheat from country areas to the seaboard, but they are paying too high a price for that service.

The Government needs to examine the operation and speak with the people involved. They will tell the Minister where the deficiencies are. Recently, in responding to questions, the Minister for Transport asked an honourable member whether he had travelled on the network. I ask whether the Minister has travelled on the network recently.

An Honourable Member—What has this to do with the Bill?

Mr JASPER—Plenty. The honourable member should read the Supply Bill and see the enormous subsidy that is being paid by Victorians to maintain the system. I ask: how much will it lose this year?

Mr Cunningham—Some $670 million.

Mr JASPER—I suggest to the honourable member for Derrimut that he should try to make the railways more efficient. The National Party wants efficiency in the service. The railways can provide a service, as I mentioned when I drew an interjection from the honourable member for Bendigo West. Perhaps the Government should talk to some of the best private enterprise operators in transport in Australia. They will tell the Minister how to run the system.

An Honourable Member—What about privatization?

Mr JASPER—Perhaps the Government should consider privatization of the network. I suggest that many country people would support a change to the whole system. Perhaps people should be brought in who have worked in and run private enterprise and understand it, to achieve an efficient operation.

The Minister could not run a pie shop and make a profit; there is no doubt about that! I have the greatest respect for the Minister as a person. I have known him well and served on Parliamentary committees with him, but he is totally an academic. He has not gone out into the private enterprise system and gained an understanding of what makes private enterprise tick. If the Minister really wants to make the system work, he should talk to the top people in private enterprise and ask what he can do to make the system efficient.

I invite him to use the train services. I suggest that he take the Wodonga–Albury service from Melbourne and then return to Melbourne on the Sunday night, and he should ask for a cup of tea or coffee. He will be told that the tea and coffee are available but that the train does not carry the cups to put it into. I can tell the Minister of a female passenger...
who said to the buffet attendant that she would like something hot. The attendant said, "We can not give you anything hot. We have pies, pasties, sandwiches and other things that we can heat up, but unfortunately we have not got the wrapping to put around those things before putting them in the microwave oven to heat them". The passenger then said, "Perhaps I will settle for a can of Coke and a piece of cake," which she was able to get. Then a thirsty male arrived at the counter and asked for a cold can of beer.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fogarty)—Order! The Supply debate goes a bit further than a can of Coke.

Mr JASPER—This is a vital point, Mr Deputy Speaker. The transport system is being run at an enormous loss; the Government is subsidizing an unprofitable system. I am pointing out the reasons why the system is not profitable.

When the passenger asked for the cold can of beer, the hostess said, "We do have beer, but unfortunately it is hot". The passenger remarked that a hot can is as good as any, so he would have a hot can of beer.

To cap it off, the lady passenger returned to the mini buffet after the train had passed through Benalla, thinking she would have something else, but she found that the buffet had run out of drinks and most other things and had closed after Euroa.

That highlights the manner in which the system is operating. V/Line is a typical operation on which the Government could save tens of millions of dollars by improving the service. In many areas of the system, huge reductions could be made in the numbers of employees.

Those are the sorts of things about which the Leader of the National Party was speaking. He went on to speak of the Department of Sport and Recreation. An excellent program for funding developments within municipalities throughout Victoria has operated through the department: funding has been provided on a $1 for $1 basis to provide sporting and associated facilities. The way to go about the matter is to ensure local interest; the Government then provides its share—not allocations that are made gratis under Commonwealth Employment Program projects and other such schemes. Of course, the honourable member for Richmond is well aware of how to obtain funding without providing any local funding whatsoever: he gets the lot from the Government.

Mr Sidiropoulos interjected.

Mr JASPER—I shall sit down in a few minutes, and I shall be interested to hear the honourable member for Richmond defend himself.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member should ignore the interjections of the honourable member for Richmond. He is out of order and disorderly.

Mr JASPER—The Department of Sport and Recreation has had enormous success in the provision of funding.

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! Honourable members are carrying matters a little beyond the extreme. This is a serious debate.

Mr JASPER—However, as highlighted by the Leader of the National Party, the administrative costs of the department have grown out of all proportion. Half the allocation to that department goes in administration. It is top heavy.

The Minister for Local Government highlights in this House the high cost of administration in local government. He should come closer to home and examine the administration costs of some of his own Government's departments, and he could start with the Department of Sport and Recreation. I have no criticism of the Minister at all; he
is a fine person and a fine representative of his area, a person to whom one can talk, a person who is responsive to his department and to Parliament. However, the National Party believes a major investigation is necessary so that more of the funds from that department are provided where they should be—for the development of sport and recreation facilities.

As I said before, the best way of providing funding, where funding is on a $1 for $1 basis, is to ensure local interest and local funding and then obtain the Government grant to add to the local funding, in that way these facilities can be achieved. An enormous range of facilities have been developed throughout the State with support from the department, but the level of that funding must be improved.

The National Party makes no apology for the fact that it represents country people. It has a special responsibility in the total representation of country people, those in the small towns and hamlets as well as those in the bustling urban areas of country Victoria. I take issue with the Leader of the Opposition who indicated that the National Party represents only farmers. He went on to say that the Liberal Party totally represents country people, urban people and metropolitan people.

I suggest that the Leader of the Opposition should examine the electoral results of my Leader, whose support approaches 60 per cent of the primary vote. I should hardly call that a country electorate. It is in country Victoria, but it is highly urbanized.

Mr Ross-Edwards—It is 82 per cent urban.

Mr JASPER—My Leader tells me that 82 per cent of the population of his electorate live in the urban cities of Shepparton and Mooroopna. That highlights the total representation that the National Party offers to country people.

Members of the National Party are totally aware of the problems facing country people and we make no bones about the fact that when we speak in Parliament they are the people we represent. Recently when I was speaking during a debate, an honourable member interjected stating that the National Party did not represent anyone at all. The National Party represents country people and is proud of the fact it is able to put forward their views in Parliament on the type of proposed legislation currently being debated.

Enormous problems exist in country areas. The Labor Government is redirecting funds away from country people in many ways. Housing funds are now being redirected to metropolitan areas. The former Housing Commission was established in the 1940s by a Country Party Government to build housing in country areas. It was supported by the Liberal Party when in government. This ensured that the majority of housing funds was spent in country areas. At that time approximately three-quarters of housing funds were spent in country areas because the then Liberal Government, pressured by the National Party, recognized that it must spend money in those areas because of the difficulties faced by country people in securing housing of any description.

Now that the Labor Party is in government, it is redirecting funds so that two-thirds of housing funds are spent in the metropolitan area. The former Minister of Housing once said to me during a private discussion, “Where is all the population? We support the place where the population is”. That was absolutely disgraceful and that is why the Labor Government is redirecting housing funds to the metropolitan area when it should be providing more funds for country areas.

That situation was recently highlighted in an article in the Wangaratta Chronicle of Wednesday, 16 April 1986. For honourable members who have not read that fine publication, I recommend that they go to the Parliamentary Library and regularly obtain copies of the paper to read. The former honourable member for Hawthorn, the Honourable Walter Jona, would regularly read through many country papers and, from time to time,
would indicate to me that he had seen a comment made by me reported in the Wangaratta Chronicle, the Cobram Courier, the Rutherglen Sun, the Numurkah Leader, or the Shepparton News. Those newspapers truly represent what country people are thinking.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! In the opinion of the honourable member for Murray Valley!

Mr JASPER—I am sorry that I cannot take up that interjection. I do not usually respond to interjections, as you are well aware, Mr Acting Speaker, but an interjection of yours, Sir, would be appropriate. In the opinion of many people throughout country Victoria, the newspapers I mentioned are fine publications.

As I stated previously, I shall refer to the Wangaratta Chronicle of Wednesday, 16 April. The article is headed, “Public Housing Cuts Dramatic”. The article highlights the enormous change in funding for housing in country areas. For the 1986–87 financial year, it is proposed that only twelve homes will be built by the Ministry of Housing in the City of Wangaratta. Last year, 21 homes were built with an additional number of pensioner units.

In the current financial year, 111 houses will be built in north-eastern Victoria. The allocation for 1986–87 will be for only 39 houses. The Ministry of Housing Regional Manager, Mr Russell Williams, is quoted in the article as stating:

The cuts represented an attempt by the state government to correct an ‘imbalance’ in housing allocations under the previous government

“In previous years the rural sector has done well out of the program,” he said.

The article continues:

Mr Williams, while admitting that advisory councils in country areas are unhappy with the cut backs, says there are no real alternatives with the problem being one of resource allocation.

It is an indictment of the Government which claims that it is increasing the spending on houses in Victoria that only 3000 homes will be built in this financial year.

Where are the results? The waiting list for houses is increasing. It is not unusual to visit areas such as the City of Wangaratta and the township of Yarrawonga and discover that people must wait more than two years before they can secure housing accommodation. That has been complicated by the policy of the Ministry of Housing allowing people to carry with them their full waiting time but relocate to another area of the State. If a person is unemployed and married with a young family, he or she would be fairly mobile. Some people believe they should move to the country because the different lifestyle would be an advantage. Some people shift from Melbourne to country areas and claim their full waiting time to get into a house in country Victoria. That complicates the housing problem in country Victoria.

The Government must review its policies regarding funding for houses and where they are built. It must ensure that a large number of houses will be built in country Victoria to meet the dramatic needs for housing in those areas. I hope the Minister for Housing will be responsible enough to be aware that the waiting list for housing in country areas is increasing and that an attack must be launched on it.

Another area of concern in the housing field is in the non-payment of rentals. The National Party has the facts and figures to back up my claim that over the five years from 1980 to 1985 an enormous increase has occurred in the rent owing to the Ministry of Housing. The Ministry is owed approximately $10 million in rental payments, and action must be taken. The Government cannot allow people to remain in houses if they are not prepared to pay any rent, even if it is on a subsidized basis. I implore the Minister for Housing to take action on this problem.

Miss Callister—Do we just put them out in the street?
Mr JASPER—The Government must make a decision. If 27,000 people are on the waiting list and people are living in houses and not paying any rent, surely the Government must act. Even a person receiving a social security benefit of some type can pay some rent. However, thousands of people throughout Victoria are not paying anything.

I suggest that the honourable member for Morwell has a discussion with the Minister for Housing because the Ministry of Housing has suddenly realized that it has too much money owing to it. If it wants to run an efficient operation, it must try to collect the arrears of rental. If people are not prepared to pay rent, they must be removed from the houses. If pressure is brought to bear, many of those people will pay their rents.

The reason those people are not paying rent is because the Ministry of Housing is not tough enough. The Ministry has to be more business like in its approach and say to people, "If you do not pay, you will be put out".

The honourable member for Morwell should talk to the Minister for Housing because the Minister has informed me that the Ministry is evicting people who are not paying their rent from Ministry of Housing houses at the rate of approximately ten people a week. If the Ministry followed the policy suggested by the honourable member for Morwell, it would not bother putting those people who did not pay rental out of Ministry houses, it would allow them to stay there and not pay anything at all. The message would soon go through that there was no need to pay any rent. Fortunately, the Minister for Housing is a responsible Minister and is acting to see that a change is made to overcome these problems.

Another area of concern to the people in north-eastern Victoria is the reduction in funds being provided for capital works in the Ministry of Education. A publication from the Assistant Regional Director, Dr Warren Garrett, for the Goulburn North-Eastern area demonstrates the reduction in funding that has occurred. In the financial year 1981–82, the total capital works and maintenance expenditure was $3.8 million. In 1982–83 that rose to $5.4 million; in 1983–84 it rose to $6.45 million and in 1984–85 it rose to $6.32 million. However, in 1985–86 the figure was $5.409 million, a dramatic downturn. That is a reduction of $1.2 million in capital works funding for that region. The assistant regional director indexed the funds that were provided in 1981–82 at $3.8 million. The index figure for 1985–86 showed an actual drop in the funds provided of $3.558 million.

I seek leave to have incorporated in Hansard a table of figures from Dr Warren Garrett, and two graphs that show the dramatic reduction in funds. I have spoken to Mr Speaker, to Hansard and to the Minister about incorporation of the table and they have given their approval.

Leave was granted, and the table and graphs were as follows:

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Session 1986—52
Mr JASPER—It is important that this type of information is presented to the House. I ask honourable members to examine the graphs which illustrate the reduction in funding of capital works for education in this area, despite the fact that the Minister for Education has stated that an increase in funding has occurred.

The decrease in funding for capital works in the past financial year is over 20 per cent. This reduction in funding cannot be tolerated. More money is needed for capital works to provide facilities so badly needed in the education area throughout the Goulburn/North-Eastern area.

Mr KENNEDY (Bendigo West)—I support the proposed legislation and, in doing so, I wish to emphasize a number of aspects that are vital to Victoria generally, and to my own electorate in particular. I again stress the importance of the proposed legislation and Government policy for economic development in Victoria and especially for economic development in country Victoria and in my own area of Bendigo.

I have spoken on a number of occasions in the House about the introduction of the Government's ten-year plan for the economic development of Victoria and have had the pleasure to highlight the significance of that ten-year plan, which gives new hope and scope of development to manufacturing industry in particular, which is of tremendous importance to country centres, such as Bendigo, Castlemaine and a town near my electorate, Maryborough.

I am pleased to record again, as I have recorded in the past, how well a number of firms in my area are going under the new program that provides tailor-made assistance to individual firms to meet their needs. Some sixteen firms in the Bendigo area have been approved for assistance by the Government under the ten-year plan, representing over 1500 employees in the manufacturing sector. That is a substantial commitment of funds to the Bendigo area and to industries operating in that area.

It represents over $6 million in assistance and I am pleased that this assistance has been provided. It is the kind of assistance that was never provided before the Cain Labor Government came to power in 1982.

 Honourable members interjecting.

Mr KENNEDY—I note the interjections of honourable members, but particularly the interjection of the former Minister for Economic Development in the previous Liberal Government. Only last week the former Minister for Economic Development, the honourable member for Balwyn, stated in the Legislative Assembly that he paid a personal tribute to the Government's ten-year economic plan. As the honourable member has taken the trouble to indicate to the House his own views on the subject, it is appropriate to quote from Hansard of 15 April in which the honourable member for Balwyn, the former Minister for Economic Development, strongly supported and praised the economic policies of the Government. The honourable member stated:

Victoria should be glad that the Government has a sound economic strategy...
I reiterate my strong support for the economic policies introduced by the Labor Government. It is pleasing to note that, over a period, those policies have been strongly endorsed by the National Party and the Liberal Party. It is particularly important that the Government's policy relating to country Victoria places considerable emphasis upon regional growth centres such as Bendigo, Castlemaine and, as I indicated, a town near my electorate, Maryborough.

This policy was rejected for years by the previous Liberal Government which refused to commit itself to specific development to these areas of rural Victoria. I remember that the honourable member for Balwyn, when a Minister, argued that the then Government should commit itself to growth centre policies, which this Government has implemented.

That was not the policy of the Opposition when it went into the 1985 election. In fact, it was because the Opposition had no specific policy about increased economic development in country regions that it was thrashed in the election. The Opposition had hoped to pick up seats in country Victoria but that did not happen. Ballarat and Bendigo held on!

The Bendigo and Castlemaine areas have growth development that has been a boost to the morale of local people. Maryborough has received assistance from the Government on a scale never conceived under the policies of the former Government. The relocation of the Melbourne-based firm of Allens Sweets (Vic) Pty Ltd to the Maryborough district has been appreciated in that area. It has involved the transfer of some 200 jobs and some $8.6 million worth of plant. That is a significant development for the Maryborough area and has been anathema to the opposition parties because they have always told country Victoria that the Labor Party does not care about country people.

The evidence is all to the contrary. If we consider the over-all assistance that has been provided to various areas, we can appreciate the care shown by the Labor Party. For the first time in history, Castlemaine has its own economic development committee. That was never possible in the past because the former Liberal Government ignored Castlemaine. The Cain Government has worked closely with the Castlemaine council and has brought about the transfer of industrial land at Wesley Hill. The Government has also assisted the Castlemaine development committee to finance a study of the need for industrial areas in Castlemaine. These are all practical, down-to-earth, no-nonsense, positive developments that have taken place in the Castlemaine area with the assistance of the Government. The same is happening all over country Victoria.

Liberal and National Party politicians do their best to hush up these achievements because the last thing those politicians want is for people in country areas to know about the positive and progressive policies of the Government. Those policies are designed to bring about economic development and to protect jobs and, where possible, to create new jobs. In areas like Bendigo, we tell the public what we are doing because we are proud of our achievements and we know how significant those achievements are for the maintenance of existing jobs and the development of new job opportunities.

I indicated earlier that some sixteen firms in the Bendigo area are being assisted by the Government. It is interesting to note that the assistance being provided in the Bendigo area is 25 per cent of all assistance provided under the new ten-year plan. That is an indication of the enterprise shown by firms in the Bendigo area and how active and progressive is the Department of Industry, Technology and Resources in that area.

One can hear a cacophony of sound from the other side of the House and the interminable whingeing, sneering and snivelling of Opposition members. It is in contrast to the attitude of Government members, who are getting together with the people in country Victoria, developing plans and assisting country areas.

Our policy is endorsed by the National Party but its members love to run their own story on radio and television and in country newspapers about how terrible it is that the Government can change policy. I shall quote from Hansard of last year to indicate the
policies of the National Party. The National Party at the time said that its policy was to bring back pay-roll tax rebates but, in the same breath, it said:

With regard to the decentralization incentives, the party will initiate discussion with the various decentralized secondary industries to consider alternative measures to provide incentives.

In other words, its members thought it was a dead-duck policy that they could temporarily adopt. They exhumed this decaying policy from the 1970s for use in the election. It sounded good and they intended to scrap it after the election. After all, the Liberal Party would be back in power and would scrap it.

The policy we have adopted for country Victoria has been extremely successful. The Government also strongly supports the development of tourism throughout the Bendigo region and I have previously highlighted various tourist attractions. The financial assistance for the development of Central Deborah Mine has created a key tourist attraction. The Government has also developed the tourist information centre at Kangaroo Flat in Bendigo. It has taken years and it took the election of the Cain Government for it to happen. It is typical of the progress being made in areas where people are not being inhibited by the propaganda of the opposition parties.

The Castlemaine-Maldon train is being restored by the Steamrail Castlemaine Maldon Railway Preservation Society. A steam train and some carriages have been restored and they run for a short distance in the area of Maldon. The Victorian Government, as part of its 150th birthday celebrations, injected $20,000 into that project, which is of significance for the history of Victoria and the history of steam transport. At Maldon, the Government has also made a commitment for the development of low-cost tourist accommodation. This will be an important tourist development for the Maldon area.

Mr Lea—On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I direct your attention to the state of the House.

The SPEAKER—Order! A quorum is present; there is no point of order.

Mr KENNEDY—I am pleased to lend my support to the heavy engineering assistance package that has been introduced by the Victorian Government in the Bendigo-Castlemaine area. It is of significance to many firms in Victoria and, in particular, the firm of Thompsons—Byron Jackson. As a result of many months of co-operative endeavours by unions and employees in the metal industry area and in the heavy engineering sector, this program was recently announced by the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources and the Government has promised substantial support for the development of heavy engineering in Victoria in the future.

This enables Victorian firms to get in on the ground floor and to make an input into planning so that, when plans are finalized, Victorian firms will have the chance of participating in projects. That assistance to private firms is important. Equally important is the Government's determination to study the capacity of the heavy engineering sector in Victoria, especially through the medium of business plans. The Government has said that it will fund 60 per cent of business plans to ten heavy engineering firms. That will assist with the over-all development of the industry in Victoria.

It is also important that the Government is considering the scope for manufacturing development in Victoria that comes with the continuing discovery of oil and natural gas. A good deal of work will be done in that area. These are positive policies that have been undertaken by the Government in its commitment to ensure the future of the manufacturing sector and to maintain and, where possible, increased employment opportunities in Victoria.

I have dealt so far with the private sector. I shall now deal with aspects of the Government's policy for the public sector. I was not surprised to hear the destructive comments made about V/Line by the honourable member for Murray Valley. What he is saying, on behalf of the National Party, is that the axe should be put through V/Line. He is saying that V/Line should be handed over to private enterprise. This is an astounding
comment being made by someone who claims to be a specialist representative of country Victoria.

The end result of such a policy would be the elimination of the railways system in country Victoria. It would mean the total elimination of the grain transport system, and would also result in the total elimination of the country passenger operation and the end of the jobs with V/Line in country Victoria. Such a policy would be a serious attack on job opportunities in the Bendigo area if there were no railway workshops in the area.

The same type of argument was put forward by the Fraser Federal Government concerning the ordnance factory. The proposal was to hand it over to private enterprise— to sell it off to the lowest bidder—but no one would buy it. There was an uproar in the community because people realized that it was an attempt to destroy the viability of this industry in the Bendigo area. The same mentality is being demonstrated by the honourable member for Murray Valley. I am not surprised that he has adopted that view because not long ago people listening to the radio would have heard an argument that the Government cuts did not go far enough. The Government has to demonstrate some sort of restraint and rationalization in the funding of the railways in Victoria to ensure that the railways system is viable. It is not the intention of the Government to destroy the railways and to hand the railways system over to private enterprise. This would result in the elimination of the railways.

I wonder how many National Party and Liberal Party politicians will go out into country areas and say that V/Line should be flogged off to private enterprise; they will say it here. Recently the Liberal Party passed a resolution at its State conference demanding the handing over of the grain freight transport to private enterprise. That would mean the destruction of the railways as a means of transporting grain and would result in the elimination of the passenger system, and that would be the end of the railways.

When members of the Liberal and National parties talk about privatization of the railways, they talk about destroying the railways. That policy was exposed in the past, and it may seem incredible until one realizes how conservative some honourable members opposite are.

The previous speaker from the National Party presented a negative policy. The Government has a positive policy regarding the railways, particularly the railway workshops.

I referred to the ordnance factory which is vitally important to the Bendigo region. As I said, the Liberal Party wanted to hand it over to private enterprise; to get rid of it. Under the Hawke Labor Government, with the support of the Cain Labor Government, the ordnance factory has received assistance in the provision of contracts for equipment for the State Electricity Commission of Victoria, for the Loy Yang power station and for the testing and assembly of a tunnel borer for use at the sewerage works at Hoppers Crossing.

Mr Perrin—Mr Speaker, I direct your attention to the state of the House. A quorum was formed.

Mr KENNEDY—Prior to the forming of a quorum I was commenting on the disastrous policy of privatization by the Liberal and National parties. I was commenting on how it is particularly interesting that the Liberal Party in this House does not stand alone on privatization. That would be about the hardest line espoused by the Liberal Party that I have ever heard.

The honourable member for Murray Valley is obviously reflecting the thinking of the National Party when he states that the railways should be handed over to private enterprise. The activities of the Victorian Government in the Bendigo area are an example of how constructive the Government has been. The railway workshops were being run down by the previous Government. Since the Labor Party came to office, it has maintained the railway workshops and obtained contracts.
This year, the Government is providing $625,000 to the railway workshops for the provision of new equipment and new machinery and for the infrastructure because the equipment in the railways is decades old.

I recall when I was a candidate for the seat of Bendigo, I telephoned the then Minister for Transport to obtain permission to visit the Bendigo railway workshop. He told me I was welcome to visit them but informed me that the place was tsarist—that is, it was the type of factory one would have found in Russia before 1917. That is the system of which the former Minister was proud. This year, the Government has injected $625,000 into the railway workshops in upgrading to provide it with a viable future because of its importance to the railways and the Bendigo area for employment opportunities. The Government has an equally strong commitment to the maintenance and development of the Golden Square workshop of the Rural Water Commission. This workshop would have been out of operation by now had the previous Government stayed in power. The Government has gone out of its way to ensure that contracts are available for the Golden Square workshop and has provided $250,000 for new plant and equipment. The equipment at the Golden Square workshop was of second world war vintage. The Government is providing those workshops with the first input of brand new equipment.

The Government has also taken a positive approach in pursuing the submarine project, which will be of tremendous significance to the ordnance factory and the high level of technological sophistication will be important to the manufacturing sector of Victoria. The Minister should be complimented for his role in pursuing that project.

I also mention the important role played by the Government purchasing unit in ensuring that, whenever it is necessary for Government authorities to purchase overseas, 30 per cent of the value of the work must be done in Victoria or must come in some form of benefit to the Victorian economy. That is a positive policy. That has happened in the Bendigo area with respect to the tunnel borer project undertaken by the ordnance factory.

Equally important is the development through the industrial supplies office, in co-operation with the Metal Trades Industry Association of Victoria, to ensure a far better opportunity for Victorian manufacturing firms to obtain contracts which would otherwise go overseas.

I referred recently to aspects of the Government's policy on agriculture, and in particular I observed that the ten-year plan places high emphasis upon agriculture as being one of Victoria's competitive strengths.

It is noteworthy that the Budget last year added no new taxes and, in fact, introduced some tax cuts. It is interesting to note the benefits put in place by the Government for the rural sector and for the economy of Victoria as a whole when compared with what was provided by its predecessor.

In 1981-82, State Electricity Commission charges rose by 16.9 per cent but in 1984-85 they rose by only 6.1 per cent and the rise this year is estimated to be 4.4 per cent. In fact, the projected rise for this year is approximately one quarter of what it was in the last year of Liberal Government.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr KENNEDY—The Opposition does not like to hear these facts because it believes in whingeing all around the country about how terrible are the costs imposed by the Victorian Government; it should consider the facts. Gas charges in 1981-82 rose by 18.9 per cent but last year under the Cain Government they rose by 5.5 per cent and it is estimated the rise this year is 5.3 per cent. This is a third of the rise for gas charges in the last year of Liberal Government.

The Grain Elevators Board charges in 1981-82 rose by 29.4 per cent but last year under the Cain Government they rose by 6.2 per cent, and the rise this year is 5.4 per cent. Under
Another positive step is being undertaken by Professor Alan Lloyd, who is considering aspects of the rural economy with a view to assisting the Government to develop policies to provide relevant relief. Also being undertaken is the development of the rural affairs unit, an initiative taken only by the Cain Labor Government, which was not thought of by the former Government. Already a new head of the unit has been appointed, Mr Frank McClelland.

A major policy is being undertaken in the area of salinity and even the National Party has had to accept that this is an achievement for Victoria. I do not expect that comment to be generally made by the opposition parties—and I certainly do not expect it from the National Party—but they have indicated that they recognize the virtue of what the Government is doing with regard to salinity. It is a comprehensive and integrated policy for tackling a severe problem for the future of agriculture, the land and the environment of Victoria.

A number of positive measures have been taken by the Government to assist the farmers and their families with their problems in the Mallee. It is distressing to read and hear of the problems that are being faced by so many farmers in the Mallee. It is difficult to understand just how well these people in that area have faced up to the hardships of life and how well they are coming through.

The Government is providing a range of services through family, personal and financial counselling, and through the Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association in publicizing the assistance that is available. Assistance is available through the Rural Finance Commission and special assistance was approved recently to provide relief to Mallee farmers who would otherwise not be able to obtain funds to plant their crops this year. This support was quickly followed by assistance in the form of water rate relief.

All those policies are desirable and necessary. Agriculture is extremely important to the Victorian economy; it is important to regional areas around central Victoria. When farmers and their families in the Mallee areas are facing difficulties it is good to see that they are not being overlooked and a sympathetic approach is being taken by the Government. I commend the Government on the proposed legislation. It is typical of the over-all development of policies being undertaken by the Government and I am pleased to support it as the member representing Bendigo West.
With regard to the Supply debate, I shall quote from two comments which relate to Government accountability—because that is what Parliament is about and that is what the Supply Bill is about and that is the accountability of Government in spending the taxpayers' funds in this State. The first quotation is:

**Government accountability**

"A Labor government when elected will be accountable to the Parliament, the electorate and the party. In implementing Labor's programme, the government will develop mechanisms which will maintain and enhance this accountability. . . . In addition, it is intended that participatory mechanisms will be developed in all areas of government responsibility to ensure that policies and programmes embody community aspirations and administrative practices that are sensitive to the public."

The second quotation is from the conclusion of the article:

Accountability is a central feature of the concept of parliamentary democracy, but the extent to which government and government services are truly accountable and responsive to their constituency varies enormously, depending on institutional, administrative, cultural and other factors.

The key to that is the "other factors" of the Government. The quotation is taken from *The Parliamentarian* of January this year from a contribution to that magazine by the honourable member for Werribee. The fact is that the Government has failed to meet the things it talked about then and will no doubt continue to talk about now. The words "other factors" are the key because when the Labor Party came to Government, honourable members heard the broken record of "the Opposition not having policies" and that the Labor Government had to clean up the mess that the Liberal Government had left behind, and so forth. It was not true. Since the Labor Party came to office taxes have risen in the State by the enormous percentage of 70 per cent.

With regard to the Supply Bill, it is more important to consider what beneficial practices the Government has brought about in the State in the past four years. Billions of dollars are owed, and the community must pay huge taxes, but the honourable member for Bendigo West informs the House about how well things are in the bush for our country cousins—I say that as a metropolitan member.

An Honourable Member—He does not travel by V/Line!

Mr LEIGH—I will come to that in a moment.

The first area to which I refer is labour, where training, the Youth Guarantee Scheme and youth affairs generally are important. What has been the Government's contribution in the past year and what does it foreshadow for next year? The employment initiatives program and the Community Employment Program, which were training programs set up by the Government, were the subject of the ravings of the honourable member for Geelong who said they embraced a wonderful concept. The CEP set up a cafe called the Ye Ye Cafe in Station Street, Malvern.

Mr Sidiropoulos—Did you support it?

Mr LEIGH—No, I did not. The cafe was opened with the idea that it would make money and provide a self-generating employment program to assist young people in the training of cafe management. A social welfare oriented committee ran it. From the day the cafe opened to the day it closed—a period of four and a half months—it lost the grand sum of $62 000. Not many young people obtained jobs as a result of that.

In the process it took four months to extract an amount of $1000 in the form of a bond which was owed to the builder. The committee mismanaged funds that belonged to the builder. What did the Government do? The answer is—not very much. The cafe has now closed and the building is to be taken over by the Community Youth Support Scheme, known as CYSS. Perhaps the cafe was commenced for the right reasons but, in the end, it was the taxpayers who lost their money. Even though the cafe is closed now, there does not appear to be any way that the Government can recoup the losses. The building has
been handed over to the CYSS and it will cost $200 a week to operate a cafeteria-style venue for that scheme. One wonders if that is the type of training program that this Government considers to be so marvellous.

When the former Minister for Employment and Training was involved in the training schemes, I referred to them as “Mickey Mouse productions”. The current Minister now has a busy time covering up the mess of the former Minister. In the past few days, honourable members have heard about large sums of money contributed by the Government to a member of Parliament to establish a newspaper. The waste of taxpayers’ money is incredible.

If one looks back over the past 27 years of Liberal Government and asks what it did, one can say that it established the Arts Centre, the underground rail loop and provided new trains. At least the former Liberal Government provided projects which benefited the community. After four years of Labor Government if one asks what has been achieved, the Minister for Transport will say, “I bought new trains, but I sold them and leased them back and, some time in the future, the leases will have to be paid out”. Obviously the community is not benefiting from this Government. Members of the Government back bench may think that is uninteresting but my constituents seem to be paying increased taxes even though the Government said it would not raise taxes and charges above the level of increase of the consumer price index.

The former Minister of Health, now the Minister for Transport, achieved the same objective—most successfully—in the health area. When he took over the health portfolio from the former Liberal Government it was the best health system in the country. Today it is in ruins.

When the Labor Government achieved office there were 8000 people on the hospital waiting lists for operations. I admit that that figure is too high, but now there are 27,500 people on the waiting lists. That is a disastrous record for a Government that says it acts in the interests of the poor and the community in general. There has been a 180 per cent increase in the number of people on the waiting lists.

There are now 2100 people on the waiting lists for nursing homes. When a patient dies the doctors say, “Hang on to the bed and I will sign the death certificate only if the person I want gets the bed”. I know for a fact that that has happened, and I am sure all honourable members are aware of the problem.

In 1982 when the Liberal Party was in government there were 16,000 people on the public housing waiting lists. Once again, that it too many, but today there are 33,000 people on the waiting lists under the policies of a Government that says it cares. What judgments can one make about a Government that says it is doing a better job? Day after day the Premier and the Ministers whine about the achievements the Labor Government has made. I was always taught that self-praise is no praise at all. However, that is all honourable members hear in this place. I am sure that no one else will praise the Government for its actions.

When he was the Opposition spokesman on police matters, the current Minister for Police and Emergency Services promised that, if the Labor Party achieved office, in the first year the Police Force would be increased by 1000 members. What happened? Over the four-year period that the Labor Party has been in office there has been an increase of 35,000 public servants. That means more people are behind desks making contributions by passing sheets of paper from one side to the other. Is that the type of community benefit this Government thinks is important? I note that the honourable member for Melbourne is giggling. He well may giggle because this will be his last period as a member of the Government party. He will not have to face up to the problems created by the Labor Government.

The Minister for Police and Emergency Services is disliked by his own constituents, and members of the Police Force cannot stand him either. The reason is that people cannot
stand politicians who say one thing and do another. I remember members on the Government side of the House criticizing Malcolm Fraser and Lindsay Thompson for saying one thing and supposedly doing another. Lindsay Thompson, who was the former member for Malvern, never made a commitment that he could not keep. If he could not meet a commitment, he did not make it.

In modern politics one sees the buying of votes. Although Lindsay Thompson may have lost the election, as the honourable member for Richmond interjects, the public now regrets that fact because it had an honest man in charge who told it as it was.

Where are the 35,000 public servants? The Minister for Transport says that his departmental staff has decreased by approximately 8 per cent. He is speaking about tram conductors, station attendants and the like. However, a real increase has occurred in the bureaucracy. Any honourable member who visits the Ministry of Transport to make complaints will see the bureaucratic mess of gigantic proportions in that office.

There used to be only one person from the Ministry who was in charge of the railways, now there are four people who have that responsibility over and above the one who has specific charge of the railways. There has been a gross increase in spending on the Public Service not only for wages but also for superannuation and other benefits that come with being a public servant.

The Government also snaps up prime real estate in metropolitan Melbourne. It could not wait to take up the options presented by the Grollo group at the Rialto Hotel. The Government took up that prime office space once the Grollo group had agreed to get rid of the Builders Labourers Federation. One must ask: where does this lead us and what does it produce for the community? The answer is: absolutely nothing! The same applies to the Community Employment Program and other programs implemented by both State and Federal Governments. At the end of the day they create no more opportunities for real jobs. It is a giant paper shuffle.

One of my favourite topics is transport. The Minister for Transport, who was the former Minister of Health, has now sought to do to the transport portfolio what he did to health. It is the equivalent of an earthquake in San Francisco; not only is the transport portfolio totally derailed, there is nothing left of it! Victoria has new trains and trams but it does not own them. Who owns them?

If one puts in a freedom of information request, after many days one would discover that various foreign finance companies and a whole range of people other than the Victorian Government own them. The Minister for Transport is not sure when the leasing options will run out. He does not seem to realize that at some stage he must buy back the trains and the trams. When one takes into consideration the effect of devaluation of the Australian dollar in the past two years under the Hawke Government, one realizes that Victoria is faced with a disaster of mammoth proportion.

Another favourite topic of mine in the transport field is the Fairway system, of which the former Minister of Transport was as proud as the present Minister seems to be. During the past two years the Government spent $8 million implementing that system and no doubt it will spend significantly more this year, but to what end?

A survey was carried out on one line on which the Fairway system was introduced. It cost more than $13 million over the period from 1984 to 1986 yet the system improved the performance of one tram by approximately 1 minute. That is a lot of money to spend to improve the tramway service when a substantial number of people no longer use public transport.

When one considers the Met and public transport in general, one realizes that it is nothing short of a disaster. How can the Minister talk about "this great system"? One can only assume that he has used only his Ministerial car for some time. Perhaps if he did use public transport, he would become aware of its shortfalls. For example, the Australian Railways Union is at present giving its members free tickets; trains do not run on time;
and one is lucky if the train system gets one into work and takes one home again, because the unions will not give that guarantee.

The community has rights. The commuter is entitled to a reasonably priced fare, a clean service, a guarantee that he or she will be returned by train, tram or bus at the end of the day, and a trip safe from thugs and other ratbags who travel on public transport. The community is not getting those benefits. Several weeks ago the honourable member for Gippsland West pointed out that the railway inspectors needed to be investigated.

The Minister for Transport has little to his credit. Members of the Opposition cannot wait to have the honourable member for Monbulk as the Minister for Transport. Perhaps he will be a better Minister than the one we have at present, who is incapable of handling this portfolio. The Government should say to the unions that, if they do not follow the agreements made, the system will be closed. Day by day the union movement is strangling the transport system.

The Minister can use the Supply Bill in various ways to hide the escalating costs being caused by the unions. He can quote figures for bus, train and tram services to show the Government has increased the efficiency of this system but if one asks any member of the public about that system, no one will say it is working. The system is in a mess. Clearly the Minister for Transport must go.

There are two issues that are especially important to me as a local member; one is land tax and the other is Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works rates. The Premier has quoted from a document that lists 150 requests made by the Opposition of the Government. I am shown on the document as requesting two things. I asked for the abolition of land tax on residential properties, which, according to the Government, is worth $148 million a year in revenue. I gladly make a commitment to fight for the abolition of that tax.

Some elderly people who live in the Malvern electorate can no longer afford to stay in their homes because of this tax. They have had to face land tax bills that have increased over the past three years by more than 3000 per cent. These people are not wealthy and their homes do not have the added luxuries of swimming pools and so on. They are normal houses but, because the value of the land has increased, the Government has changed its land tax policy.

The final point I wish to raise is Board of Works rates. Brochures produced by the Minister for Water Resources indicated that Board of Works rates would increase by only 7 per cent in line with the increase in the consumer price index. In my electorate the rates have increased by an average of 25 per cent. That tax is also driving people out of their homes. It is a tragedy that the Government is so morally bankrupt that it decides to tax people who live in Liberal electorates.

The Government has, in effect, imposed a capital tax. It wants to tax people it claims are wealthy and forgets the fact that they have worked all their lives to buy their homes. The honourable member for Murray Valley mentioned that the honourable member for Springvale owned a house in East Melbourne valued at approximately $180 000. There is nothing wrong with him owning a property. The next Liberal Government should abolish land tax.

Small businesses that rent buildings are now faced with the added burden of land tax and increased Board of Works rates being passed on to them by their landlords. It is about time the Government made decisions that were for the good of all the people in the State.

In a short time the Government has forgotten, as did the former Liberal Government in 1982, that it must govern for all the people and not only for some of the people. I have been elected to Parliament by 58 per cent of voters, yet I also represent the other 42 per cent who, unfortunately, vote for my political opponents.

I hope that at the next election 42 per cent of my constituents will see the light. The greatest tragedy of the Government and of many Government party members is that back-
benchers have sat through debates on Supply without making any contribution. They forget that they represent people and that if the Government taxes people out of their homes—which it is doing to my community and to the communities of the honourable members for Brighton and Kew and other colleagues—obviously the Government has forgotten the real lesson of life, which is to provide the essential requisites for community infrastructure. As a result, I hope that at the next election the Labor Party loses government and Labor Party members lose their seats, because that is the only way in which they will learn this important lesson.

Mr B. J. EVANS (Gippsland East)—I was rather saddened to hear the address of the honourable member for Bendigo West, because if what he said were true the once proud city of Bendigo, which has contributed so much to the welfare of the State—it was one of the forces that sparked the great growth of the State in the 1850s and in the second half of the nineteenth century—will have degenerated to a handout mentality. The honourable member for Bendigo West emphasized the need of many industries in Bendigo for assistance and detailed how those industries were getting assistance. He said those industries would be nonviable if they were not supported by the Government.

I do not believe Bendigo is in that situation and that the honourable member’s remarks reflected that great city’s true attitude. Like every other electorate, such as the electorate that I represent, Bendigo asks for no more than its fair share of State revenue. It is high time the Government understood that every citizen, no matter where he or she may live, is entitled to participate in the benefits the State Government has to offer.

I deplore the attitude of the honourable member for Bendigo West. It appears his seat is being bought by the Government through a series of handouts to businesses and associations of various types in the electorate that he represents. He made great play about the development of some association.

More than twenty years ago I sponsored the creation of the Victorian Eastern Development Association in east Gippsland, which has been regarded as a pioneer organization in regional districts. It is an entirely voluntary organization. It has not had the need for any Government handouts or Government support. It is an association of business organizations and private individuals and is supported by municipal government. It has done tremendous work over the years to try to bring about the type of development that those in east Gippsland seek.

The formation of the association was triggered by the discovery of oil and gas resources in Bass Strait. Many people came to me because they were very concerned about the possibility of great development occurring in the wake of those very important discoveries, which were extremely important for the State of Victoria and for the Commonwealth of Australia. People were concerned at the time because they did not wish to be overwhelmed by any development that might destroy the lifestyle that they enjoyed in east Gippsland. That was the basis of the organization.

In its initial stages it was intended to be a restraining hand on too rapid growth and development in the area which would change the lifestyle of east Gippslanders. As events turned out, the envisaged too rapid development did not occur because the benefits from oil and gas resources in Bass Strait bypassed east Gippsland, although those resources are immediately offshore partly of the electorate of Gippsland East and partly of the electorate of Gippsland South.

Unfortunately, the electorate of Gippsland East was not in direct line with the City of Melbourne, to which all the wealth was directed through pipelines from the Gippsland area. The absurd situation exists where residents of towns like Lakes Entrance who live within sight of these offshore activities—the offshore resources are almost at their back doors—do not benefit from a reticulated gas line. They are paying the same fuel costs as people in Mildura and other remote country areas pay for bottled gas. There are spin-off benefits through employment of local people, which is very much appreciated, but I
believe Gippslanders are entitled to expect a return from the resources of their region which are of such tremendous benefit to both the State and the Commonwealth.

I have always believed, and any reasonable Government should accept the proposition, that some small proportion of the royalties received from the oil and gas resources of the State obtained from the Gippsland area should be set aside specifically for the development and provision of facilities in east Gippsland. It is eminently reasonable to suggest to the Government that although a gas pipeline to service Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance and Orbost may not be a viable proposition, a percentage of the revenue from resources obtained from that area should be returned to the area by the Government so that local people can enjoy the direct benefits of their own resources.

A matter of immense concern to people throughout east Gippsland, particularly in the furthermost reaches of the electorate that I represent, is the imminent release of recommendations by the Land Conservation Council, which apparently will result in a 40 per cent reduction in the availability of timber resources for the sawmilling industry. Sawmilling is a major industry in the eastern part of the State and, again, it provides an extremely important resource for the benefit of the City of Melbourne in building materials and is a significant source of revenue for the State.

I sometimes wonder what other electorate can claim credit for providing such substantial revenue through royalties and other sources. If Gippsland could have the benefit of royalties from timber production in its area returned to it for the purposes of reforestation and silviculture, certainly east Gippsland would have much better forests and much better protection of those forests.

Unfortunately, successive Governments have never acknowledged the need to consider that point of view and, again, there is exploitation of resources in a particular area that provides additional revenue to the Government without the region receiving the necessary compensation for the utilization of those facilities.

At present it is feared that a cutback of the dimension anticipated in the Land Conservation Council's recommendations will cause severe economic deprivation in east Gippsland, and east Gippslanders are perturbed at the implications of those recommendations.

The timber industry has the prospects of increasing employment, increasing the amount of revenue to the Government and improving the general amenity of east Gippsland. It is strange that at a time when the Premier is constantly condemning members of the Opposition and of the National Party for seeking more funds from the Government, he refuses to accept that he is being offered more revenue for his Government.

The Premier has a wonderful opportunity of providing more jobs by authorizing a program of integrated logging in east Gippsland. Material wasted from sawmill operations would be chipped and exported, which would provide additional revenue to help meet Australia's serious balance of payments problems. I do not know why the Government and a large proportion of the population do not understand the simple logic of that proposition.

I have been arguing it for at least ten years so it is not directed particularly at the current Government but at Victorians who fail to understand the logic of the argument. They are persuaded by spurious arguments put forward by so-called conservationists. Many conservation groups are heavily funded from the public purse and supported by the Cain Government, and that has been increasing over the past four years. I am not directing my remarks specifically at the Labor Government, although it has been responsible for increasing funding to conservation organizations in recent years.

It is only fair and reasonable that some assistance should now be provided to people who want to put the other side of the story because they represent a small percentage of Victoria's population. The Government has funded one minority group to put its argument but has ignored or neglected another minority group with a contrary view by not providing
support and financial assistance. It is clear why a biased and emotional argument appears to have won the day.

Much of the argument concerning banning wood chipping has been highly emotive, irrational and is unable to be proven. For many years wood chipping has been carried out in Victoria and can be traced back to 1935. I have repeatedly challenged opponents of wood chipping to point out any area of Victoria where permanent damage has been brought about by wood chipping. They have been unable to do so because no permanent damage exists. They point to Eden in New South Wales or to parts of Tasmania but those areas were not logged under the jurisdiction of the former Forests Commission, which has now been absorbed by the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands. Victorian authorities cannot be held responsible for what has occurred in other States of Australia, not that I necessarily agree that significant damage has been done. I do not know enough about those areas so I shall not comment. However, I am aware of what has occurred in Victoria.

Australian Paper Manufacturers Ltd has been wood chipping in Gippsland for many years. Many people now visit the Gippsland area where wood chipping occurred 30 or 40 years ago and admire the magnificent forests that have resulted from that operation. Future generations of Victorians will be able to visit the forests of east Gippsland in 30, 40 or 50 years and remark on the beautiful forests if the Government allows integrated logging to proceed.

In the best of forests the ratio of saw log recovery to total wood material that can be recovered is only on a one to three basis and in some areas it is one to fifteen.

If a sawmilling company were able to take out 500 000 cubic metres of saw logs from east Gippsland—it is not at that level now but it was a few years ago—1.5 million cubic metres of material would be available for wood chipping. At present it is lying on the forest floor and is going to waste. Forestry officers now have to burn the material and in most cases the larger logs do not burn and remain there for decades as a further obstacle to any proper management of the regenerated areas.

People who are genuinely interested in these matters should visit the area and examine the situation. I give credit to a number of honourable members from the Opposition who have taken the trouble to examine the forests. I invite members of the Government to see for themselves whether what I am saying can be proven and demonstrated on the ground.

It would take honourable members only a day to visit east Gippsland and I am sure the sawmilling industry and forestry officers would be proud to show them how they are successfully managing the forests. It is nonsense to suggest that forests should be tied up and that nature should be allowed to take its course. Nature does not take its course the way it ought to because man has interfered with it in an irretrievable way.

Species of animals and plants that were brought into Australia over many generations have been introduced into the forest environment. Animals do not know where the boundaries of national parks are and there is a strong need to manage and control them. From my reading and understanding of the situation, I can inform the House that our forests are very much the creature of man’s intervention over thousands of years. Aborigines lived in and managed the forests. Man cannot be excluded from Australian forests so that nature can take its course the way it has done for 30 000 years because animals and plants that are not native to Australia have been introduced into forests. The activity of man in these areas, particularly national parks, has changed the nature of the forests’ regenerative processes.

Another area of concern involves claims made from time to time by the Government about its taxing policies and that rates will not increase by more than the consumer price index. The Government should carefully consider what is occurring with charges being made and levied on landowners who unfortunately have leases on unused roads and river frontages.
In recent years the lands section of what is now the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands has almost come to a standstill while many of its officers have combed the countryside, parish maps and every other source of information they could obtain to try to find every last vestige of a reservation that may have been made in the past over which the adjoining landowner may have some sort of control because it has never been fenced off.

In about the early 1860s a survey of the State was carried out. One must express great admiration for the surveyors of those days who were able in such a short time to traverse the vast area of this State and carry out a ground survey of the various allotments, the road reservations and reservations of other kinds. They demonstrated an immense foresight for what may develop in the future but there have been cases where reservations and the like have been inadequate or where they have not been made at all.

In many cases those surveyors, in the interests of working through the whole of the State in the quickest possible time, may have taken short cuts. For example, in the more rugged country of the Gippsland East electorate they made allowance for road alignments through terrain on which it was simply not possible to build a road. However, in the interests of completing the job, that was the idea they had. They probably reasoned that if the road alignment was unsuitable a new reservation could be created using the Government's powers of acquisition, and that where they created an alignment that proved to be unnecessary the Government would have the good sense to release it to adjoining landowners. Unfortunately, those surveyors did not allow for the sort of Government Victoria has today. The present Government is now increasing the charges for leases on those unused roads—and there are thousands of them in country Victoria—to a point where many owners of adjoining land are saying that they no longer wish to keep leasing the land because it is just not worth it.

In the main, those road reservations were leased only on the basis that it would save having to fence them off. The local landowner, in exchange for not fencing off those reservations, took on the responsibility of looking after the land and protecting it from vermin and noxious weeds. Quite frankly, in many cases it was a liability rather than an asset.

Mr McNamara interjected.

Mr B. J. EVANS—That is true. The Government is hitting those adjoining landowners so hard with increased charges that the landowners no longer wish to lease the land because it is costing too much and is not worth it. The Government has said that if the landowners no longer wish to lease the land, they must erect 7-strand wire fences on their property boundaries and fence out the reservations.

There have been many cases where unused roads extended right through someone's property. In such cases the usual practice was for a person to be required to have an unlocked gate at the end of the road so that anybody who chose to go through the property could do so without problems. However, when the adjoining landowners informed the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands that they no longer wished to lease the road reservations, they were told that they must erect 7-strand wire fences on either side of the road reservations and must remove the fences and gates from the ends of the roads.

I do not know what the purpose of it all is, because it seems to me that the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands is saying, "If your stock does happen to get out of your property and on to an unused road, we want to make it easier for your stock to get out on to the used road and create accidents". That is what the Minister seems to be saying through all the requirements being imposed on adjoining landowners. It seems a ridiculous proposition.

Nobody seems to know why some of the reservations were made in the first place. For example, no one knows why half an acre of land was set aside in the middle of someone's property. This has occurred on the property of one of my neighbours. However, before my
neighbour can acquire that land—and in this case I believe the Government is prepared to let that land go because the Government does not have access to it without travelling through private property—a survey must be carried out at a minimum cost of $700 and, quite simply, the land is not worth $700. I do not know why the Government does not forget about the whole thing and let the situation return to what it was for generations and ignore the fact that the reservation exists.

The most ridiculous example of this situation is the case of a pensioner couple who own a home that has, for reasons I have yet to understand, a leased frontage between it and the Gippsland Lakes. The property is in a residential area on the Gippsland Lakes. The couple no longer wish to lease that frontage. They have never really had any use for it; apparently it came with the house when they bought it, and they have now decided that they do not wish to pay $21 for a new lease to be drawn up or $50 or more a year to lease it because they do not own any stock. In fact, when I asked the gentleman concerned whether he had any stock, he said that he and his wife did not even own a cat or dog.

Nevertheless, the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands has said that if the couple relinquish that lease they must erect a wire fence to fence out the reservation. If that is the case, I believe the department should make every person who resides in the metropolitan area and whose property abuts a park, build a fence on his or her boundaries. There is no difference. The reservation is the same as a public park, as it is available to the public to walk through if they so wish. It is not land that could be leased to anyone else for grazing purposes, yet the Government is blackmailing those people by saying that they either pay up the $50 a year rental on the lease or erect an expensive fence that will not keep anything in or keep anything out.

The next question with which I shall deal also does not ask the Government to provide more money. Many people retire in the Gippsland Lakes area to enjoy their favourite pastimes, such as fishing and boating. Recently a person who retired in the past couple of years asked me to investigate a problem he is experiencing in obtaining a mooring facility for his boat at Paynesville. I recently received a letter from the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands stating that that gentleman had 92 people ahead of him requesting mooring facilities at Paynesville. The person to whom I refer applied for those facilities in 1984. I wonder how many more are now on the list.

The people involved are getting old and they do not wish to wait 5, 10 or 15 years; they do not have that many years to wait to obtain such facilities. They want to be able to enjoy their retirement and their favourite pastimes, and Gippsland Lakes is an attractive area in which to retire. In the letter to which I refer the Minister suggested alternative sites, which were not really available anyway, such as Lakes Entrance, Metung and Loch Sport. I point out that Loch Sport is some 200 miles by road from Paynesville, which makes it hardly likely that a pensioner who lives in Paynesville would store his boat at Loch Sport and pop out for a few hours fishing. He would have to drive 200 miles there and another 200 miles to return home.

The solution to this problem should, in part, be put in the hands of private enterprise. Honourable members must overcome the unfortunate attitude that prevails that water frontage land cannot be made available to private enterprise for the provision of those facilities. If security of tenure could be given to private enterprise for water frontage land it would take up those areas and develop facilities so that people who enjoy boating and fishing in the Gippsland Lakes could have moorings for their craft. The ridiculous situation currently prevails where elderly people have to place their boats on trailers and tow them out of the water simply to go home and have a meal because there is nowhere to tie up boats for even 1 or 2 hours.

Mr NORRIS (Dandenong)—I am happy to speak on the Supply Bill. Firstly, I must comment on some of the contributions of previous honourable members. I have been in the House for most of the day and have heard most of the debate. It was rather sad to hear the contribution from the honourable member for Malvern. It was sad that a young, energetic man could make such a sour and bitter speech. He concluded his contribution
by saying that he hopes the Government loses the next election and—I thought he was looking in my direction—said he hoped I will lose my deposit.

He indicated that he won his seat at the last election with a margin of 8 per cent, but in his absence I inform him that I won my seat with a margin of 12·5 per cent. If I lose my deposit it will certainly be in an unmitigated disaster of an election! The attitude of the honourable member is possibly understandable as he is an ambitious man who is frustrated as a member of the Opposition; unfortunately for him, he will remain in opposition.

The honourable member for Gippsland East, who has just resumed his seat, began his contribution by attacking the honourable member for Bendigo West. I wrote down what he said: he said that people in country areas do not need handouts. That statement sounded rather strange coming from a member of the National Party, the party that invented the pork barrel. With all due respect to my Parliamentary colleague, National Party members are second to none at getting their snouts into the trough before anybody else. That is the dilemma that the Opposition faces at this stage. The National Party, like the Liberal Party, faces the difficulty of being in opposition.

Day after day Opposition members are asking what is the Government doing for their electorates. They raise matters on the motion for the adjournment of the sitting by asking what is the Government doing in various electorates, but at the same time they preach economies and Government restraint in spending. They cannot have it both ways.

The honourable member for Bulleen read out the Liberal Party economic platform. That platform called for economic restraint, expenditure cuts, lower taxes, incentives and privatization on a grand scale. I should have thought the Opposition would have learned the lesson from the last election because that platform is virtually a complete rerun of what the Opposition put to the electors of Victoria last year when it was defeated.

With all due respect to my Opposition colleagues, I thought the privatization arguments were dead and buried. I know there was much argument within the Liberal Party on that issue. Obviously, it is not dead and buried. There will be a rerun of what the Leader of the Opposition suggested at the last election: the privatization of the State Bank, prisons, high-rise flats and the State Insurance Office. Other members of the Opposition are now indicating that they want to privatize the Victorian railways system. It is “Maggie Thatcher Mark II”. Maggie Thatcher is at present in more trouble than the early settlers.

Victorians are fortunate to have the Supply document, which is a tribute to the Treasurer. Without any fear of embarrassment I suggest that the Treasurer is the finest Treasurer in the Commonwealth. He has taken this State from boiled lollies to chocolates. Honourable members should cast their minds back to 1982 when the Labor Party took office. This State was the sick man of the Commonwealth. Even my Liberal colleagues would agree with that statement! Victoria was in a disastrous state.

There was a mass exodus from Victoria of people going north. All roads out of the State were the busiest roads in Victoria. The economy was clapped out. The economy was depressed and there were extremely high levels of unemployment. Over the past four years there has been much economic progress and a turnaround. I know it is a bitter pill for the Opposition to swallow, but it must accept that there has been a massive turnaround.

Victoria is now back on top and has unequalled economic growth and the lowest unemployment rate in Australia. I shall pick up some of the points that the Leader of the National Party made in his address to the House. He compared this State with the State of Queensland. I thought the message would have got through to the Leader of the National Party—that the Queensland bubble has burst. He tried assiduously to “talk up” the Queensland economy, real estate business and Queensland markets, but the penny has at last dropped for many people in this State who thought that the northern climes would be much more favourable than Victoria for rheumatism and their bank balances. However, it has all turned sour.
In my electorate office on Monday I was talking to a Victorian resident who travelled north with his family in 1981, like many Victorians. He was back in Victoria and in my office asking me to endeavour to assist him to set up a business in Dandenong. He had returned with little capital. He had been taken for a ride—and it is a long ride to Townsville! He was back licking his wounds and asking for some form of assistance to re-establish himself in Victoria.

The exodus has been turned around. Victoria now has a population growth. The people who left the State during the latter years of the Liberal's 27 years' reign are now returning. Much of that is due to Victoria's Treasurer and his forward looking economic policies.

The issue of police has been a topic of considerable interest to honourable members. I am the only honourable member who is a graduate of the Hector Crawford police academy, so I speak with some knowledge on this matter. Members of the opposition parties, particularly the honourable member for Benalla, have been harping and carping about police numbers, police facilities and police buildings. The Government made promises in 1982 because the Police Force was run down and depressed. The Government said it would increase police numbers and assist with the provision of vehicles, facilities and so forth. The Government has taken longer than it had hoped to take to fulfil those promises, but it has fulfilled them. Despite what members of the opposition parties say, the Government has acted in this area.

I know the honourable member for Caulfield is concerned about the crime rate in his electorate. Victoria now has the highest proportion of police to population of the States in the Commonwealth. Whether Opposition members like it or not, Victoria has more police for each person in the State than any other State. I agree it is not enough; we all agree it is not enough. However, like anything else, one gets what one is prepared to pay for. It is a difficult argument. Opposition members request cuts in Government expenditure but also request more police in certain areas.

Hopefully, after the next Budget, the number of police in Dandenong and Caulfield will increase. I realize I am not telling the House anything it does not already know but crime and law and order are of enormous importance to the community. No matter where one travels, people are worried about break-ins and heaven knows what. There has been a dreadful escalation in crime but, there again, this is a ghastly Western World phenomenon.

Those of us who have had the privilege of travelling overseas would realize that the problem is not merely Australia-wide. We can all hark back to those marvellous days that I fondly remember when one could go out and leave the back door open and know that no one would be rifling one's place; but these days, even if one puts locks and double locks on doors and windows, the dreadful crime rate is still increasing.

I reiterate that Victoria has the best proportion of police to population of any State in Australia, including Bananaland.

Mr Ross-Edwards—And we should give them some powers!

Mr NORRIS—Yes, that is a point for debate. I know that the Leader of the National Party is very concerned about police powers, as we all are. I have the highest regard for our Police Force and I say, without contradiction, that Victoria has the best Police Force in Australia and the best Police Commissioner in Australia. One has only to look around to some of our neighbours to see how lucky we are. We also have the best police Minister.

By the same token, I realize that we have a very antagonistic Secretary of the Victoria Police Association, Inspector Rippon. Oh, for the days of Inspector Crowley! Some honourable members may remember him. Then again, Inspector Rippon is an assiduous trade union leader. He is out for the best deal he can get for his members; but if I may give Inspector Rippon one word of advice: he overplays his hand. One never hears a word of praise for the facilities and the benefits for his members. Victoria has the best paid Police Force in Australia, as well as the best equipped and the best housed. I am sure Inspector Rippon would have to agree that what has been done on capital works alone in the Police
Force is beyond his wildest expectations; but apart from all of these things, never one word of praise do we hear from Inspector Rippon, and after a while this does get a little grating.

If I may give him a word of advice on public relations: do not be so whinging and knocking; occasionally say something good about the Minister for Police and Emergency Services who has the difficult task of going into Cabinet and putting his case with all those other Cabinet colleagues. He has done extremely well and has been most successful. My advice to Inspector Rippon is: give praise occasionally where praise is due.

However, I am sure everyone agrees, including the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, that we want an even better proportion of police in operation and an even better equipped Police Force. That is on the way, but as things stand at present we still have the greatest Police Force in the country.

The arts situation in our State is one of which we can be justifiably proud. Victoria was always the leader in the arts in this country. The number of world ranking artists, both visual and performing, produced in Victoria is astounding and we can be justifiably proud of these world-class artists.

Those of us who have seen the best that overseas has to offer would agree that Australia has nothing to be ashamed of; in fact, a decent exercise for honourable members would be merely to pick up Saturday's *Age* and turn to the entertainment pages. We would have more world ranking concerts, theatre performances, recitals and art exhibitions in this State than in any other State in Australia and any other city of its size in the world.

Ms Sibree—Who built the Victorian Arts Centre?

Mr Norris—I am sorry, I did not catch that interjection. The honourable member is on my deaf side. I give all praise to one of our former Premiers, Sir Henry Bolte, who did not do a lot for the arts but he did begin construction on the Arts Centre. I believe in giving praise where praise is due but when the present Government came to power, the Arts Centre, like the economy, was on its knees in this State. Sadly, there again, the general malaise in confidence and so on had seeped right through to the arts and there had been an artistic exodus as well as an economic exodus.

I know that the honourable member for Kew, like myself, is very keen on the arts. We could call ourselves the Florence of the south here in Victoria.

Mr Cooper—And you are singing like a nightingale!

Mr Norris—The renaissance is back in full swing; but with the great Victorian Arts Centre have come problems and they are problems that the House should understand. Some of the problems concern the plethora of theatres around the great city of Melbourne. We are extremely well off for theatres and if one looks at European cities, particularly British cities of our size, such as Birmingham, Manchester or Liverpool—and I am talking about Britain because it was certainly the centre for performing arts—there is now only one live theatre in those cities; I am sure there would be no more. Here in Melbourne the great Victorian Arts Centre houses three performing areas.

The difficulty arises with an issue that all honourable members must face up to and this is not a party political issue; it is something that concerns members on all sides of the House—we have a surplus of theatres. One such theatre is the great Princess Theatre in the precincts of this building. The problem is: what do we do with the great Princess Theatre? Negotiations are taking place at present with the Carroll family and it is hoped that that theatre will be purchased because, apart from anything else, it has an "A" classification from the National Trust.

I do not know what will become of the Princess Theatre but it could possibly be used for star debates from this Chamber and an admission fee could be charged!
Her Majesty's Theatre is also threatened with demolition and if I am sounding cruel here, I do not mean to be, but it is not a theatre of great architectural significance.

The area in which Her Majesty's is situated would have to be a prime piece of real estate. Over the road there is the delightful and well-known playhouse, the Comedy Theatre, and then we have the Regent Theatre, on which, I believe, our dear friend Norm Gallagher put some sort of black ban years ago. I can see no architectural significance in the Regent Theatre and I believe it should be demolished, but I am not sure what could be put in its place.

My memories of the Regent Theatre go back a long way. The original Regent Theatre was that magnificent rococo-Louis B. Mayer 1935 structure that I remember as a child. You would have been in Scotland at the time, Mr Acting Speaker, and would not be able to remember this, but it had, underneath it, the Plaza Theatre.

The Regent Theatre of those days was of architectural significance, but it was burnt down in about 1946. The great chandelier fell and went right through the floor to the Plaza Theatre below. The Regent Theatre was rebuilt and we now have the rebuilt theatre, not the original Regent Theatre. All sorts of plans have been proposed to convert it to some sort of arts centre and to divide it up. My opinion may differ from that of the Minister, but I think the Regent Theatre should go. Heaven knows what it has cost to keep it there.

Across the road from the Regent Theatre, Melbourne has another delightful playhouse, the Athenaeum, a lovely Victorian balcony playhouse which must stay, because it is certainly of historical significance, apart from anything else.

We have the Russell Street Theatre, which again is of no architectural significance. It is a small 400-seat theatre and would possibly make a nice little experimental theatre.

In the suburbs we have the Church Theatre in the Hawthorn electorate. It is an interesting experimental theatre. We also have the Anthill Theatre in South Melbourne. Melbourne is extremely well off for theatres.

Mr Leigh—What about the Caulfield Arts Centre?

Mr NORRIS—Although it is a splendid venue, I believe no professional company has yet played there. As I said, Melbourne has a surfeit of marvellous performing spaces in this State.

We come back to the other difficulty with the Victorian Arts Centre and that is that, since the Melbourne Theatre Company moved from the Athenaeum Theatre as its major playhouse, although attendances have been approximately 85 per cent of capacity, the costs are massive.

Mr Stockdale—Because actors ask too much?

Mr NORRIS—Unfortunately, one does not get paid much at all unless one happens to be Joan Sutherland.

An Honourable Member—You are putting on a good act now.

Mr NORRIS—It is great to continue one's life of fiction, fantasy and make-believe by coming here. The costs at the Victorian Arts Centre are crippling. It is a delightful centre; audiences are great, but costs are massive. The Melbourne Theatre Company puts on exactly the same productions of the same standard as it put on at the Athenaeum, but now at the Arts Centre it has to charge more for admission because of the massive overheads. Although its allocation has increased significantly, it is battling for funds. This is something on which John Sumner and the Minister will eventually have to come to agreement.

I wish to return now to a matter that I mentioned earlier in the absence of the honourable member for Malvern from the Chamber. I should add that I thought his contribution tonight was soured and bitter, and that is unlike him.
The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! I wish the honourable member for Kew would cease her harassment of the honourable member for Dandenong and return to her place.

Mr NORRIS—Thank you for your protection, Mr Acting Speaker.

Ms Sibree—I assure the honourable member for Dandenong that he does not need to be protected from me.

Mr NORRIS—I shall deal now with the Victoria State Opera. Most honourable members are interested in the opera and Victoria has the best opera company in Australia—and I include the Australian Opera in my assessment. There again, giving praise where praise is due, Sir Rupert Hamer had a lot to do with the resurgence of the Victoria State Opera; I believe he is still the chairman of the board of that company. After a lot of arm twisting last year, Victoria and New South Wales assisted the Federal Government—very reluctantly, I hasten to add—to bail out the Australian Opera to the tune of approximately $2.5 million. If ever a company has been mismanaged under Mr Veitch, it is that company.

Mr Leigh—Privatize it.

Mr NORRIS—The honourable member for Malvern comes back to the question of corporate sponsorship, and I am with him on that matter. There should be much more corporate sponsorship of the arts in this country. In America arts funding is 80 per cent private funding whereas in this country approximately 15 per cent of the funding for the Victoria State Opera comes from private sources and 85 per cent from Government sources. I am not against corporate sponsorship of the arts; I am all for it. I say to our captains of industry that they should get behind the arts; they have something to be proud of; our arts would be a magnificent vehicle for them to use in the exhibition of their goods. Sport has no problems in attracting sponsors. I am sure the public are sick of seeing sporting people running around grounds with advertising logos on their clothing, but it is so difficult to attract sponsorship for the arts.

Coming back to the Australian Opera, $2.5 million was necessary to bail out the Australian Opera, and that must be viewed against the background of the waste that has gone on in that company and its elitist type campaigns in pursuit of members. The report submitted to the Parliamentary inquiry into the arts last month reveals that in 1976 Joan Sutherland and Richard Bonynge—and no one quibbles for a moment about their talent—were paid $1 million to perform for the Australian Opera. As I said, I am not quibbling about the talent of Dame Joan Sutherland, but that was an absolute rip-off of the Australian public because opera is subsidized to the hilt, so it is mostly taxpayers' money. When we come down the scale to the Australian performers, the top Australian soprano that season was Marilyn Richardson, a splendid artist, and she was paid $800 a performance. She would be lucky to perform twice a week, so she might have got $1600 in a particular week and would then perhaps have been off for the next two weeks, while at the same time Dame Joan and Richard Bonynge were paid $1 million; and I remind honourable members that that was ten years ago in 1976.

Be that as it may, Victoria has the finest opera company in Australia. It is about to begin its 1986 season and I thoroughly recommend to anyone who has yet to see that company perform that they become subscribers and support that company. Their money will be put to good use from an entertainment point of view and will be used to support our own company.

The ACTING SPEAKER—I inform the honourable member that he has 2 minutes in which to complete his contribution.

Mr NORRIS—I mention in passing the urban arts units. I am sure the honourable member for Malvern will be interested in that matter because Malvern is an artistic area.
Honourable members may have seen reports in the press recently that the units will spotlight some of the great statues and landmarks such as the Skipping Girl vinegar sign and other features that evoke memories from childhood.

One of the worst and most unwelcoming areas in the city—it is full of shacks, sheds and displays—is our City Square. I hope the new urban arts unit will do something about that area.

That is an eyesore! I am sick of seeing the pie stalls, broken down saveloy vans and heaven knows what stuck in that square. If one were a weary traveller, it would be the last place in which one would want to sit. One is deafened by the cascade of water and sickened by the smell of saveloys and hot pies.

Victoria can be proud of the Minister for the Arts; he is doing a magnificent job and has put Victoria back on the map as the cultural centre of Australia and, as I stated before, as the “Florence of the south”. I am pleased to support the Bills.

Mr LEA (Sandringham)—After the cacophony—

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! The Chair has not yet given the honourable member for Sandringham the call. I hope the House will save the comedy for another time.

Mr LEA—In my breathless haste to book a ticket to see the Victoria State Opera, I ignored your call, Mr Acting Speaker.

I preface my remarks by making two observations about education in this State. I shall comment about the breathless rate of change that has taken place during the four years of Labor Government. I quote from the Age of Tuesday, 4 February that complains lamentably about the fear and uncertainty facing Victoria’s 2100 Government schools. The article states:

The state system of primary and secondary education is undergoing a series of unprecedented changes that are imposing considerable strains on teachers, parents and school councils alike.

In this hurly-burly of change, the Government makes claims about consultation and decision making, and the Age reflected on the capacity of the Minister for Education to cope with that change. The articles states:

Mr Cathie seemed uncomfortable with Labor policy of consultation and participation.

During speeches I have made in the first twelve months that I have been in this place, I have referred to that fact. It is a sad indictment of the Minister.

The second factor to which I shall refer is the sinking school population and the tremendous rate of change mentioned in the Age of 11 February. Therefore, the two factors to which I shall refer are the incredible rate of change and a decline in school population.

I have a chart that shows the horrendous decline in school population, and I ask leave of the House to have the chart incorporated in Hansard.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! I understand that the Speaker has given his approval for the incorporation of the chart.

Leave was granted, and the chart was as follows:
Mr LEA—In a cavalier fashion, the honourable member for Dandenong indicated that the Government has the best Treasurer in the Commonwealth. I shall debunk that proposition by referring to the education budget. In the light of the fact that the school population has declined by some 40,000 in the past four years, it would be unreasonable to expect increases in the education budget. Despite that, the education budget has been increasing, and the Bills increase it further. How should the savings due to the decreasing of school population be translated into the education budget? I suggest that the Treasurer and the Minister for Education examine the staffing situation in schools.

Many schools have an oversupply of teachers. Earlier this year, technical schools had an oversupply of 500 teachers while some schools were short of staff in specific areas. The record of the Government in transferring teachers from oversupplied schools to understaffed schools is lamentable. If the Government implemented a proper transfer system it could make considerable savings.

I shall reflect on some of the shortages caused by the Government over the past four years and examine ways in which priorities could be altered. I am not asking for more money but merely use of the savings that should have been made by the Treasurer in the face of falling enrolments in secondary and primary schools.

The situation regarding emergency teachers is scandalous. In February this year, 90 per cent of the $40 million allocated by the Minister for Education had been spent. Since that time, the budget has been exceeded and schools, in a low key manner and without publicity, have received extra allowances for emergency teachers.

The winter term is the worst for schools, with excessive sickness and teachers being absent for long periods. There are significant problems not only with the provision of emergency teachers but also with the provision of teachers in specific subject areas. The Minister should address the problem.

In practical areas, it is virtually impossible to find emergency teachers to take classes as they are either employed as teachers elsewhere or working in their specific trade areas. The Minister must address that matter.

The allowance for one day per teacher per year is totally inadequate to cover school contact days, in-service training, school camps and excursions. Use must be made of the excess savings that should have been made by the Treasurer through declining school enrolments to supplement the allowance. A school with 40 staff members has 40 days to
pursue excursions, school camps and in-service training to keep teachers up to date with curriculum and school organization. Constant review needs to be done in that area.

Another area that has suffered under the administration of Government is the provision of furniture for schools. At the end of the term of office of the Liberal Party, it was customary for a post-primary school of 600 to 700 pupils, at which I taught, to receive $4500 for school furniture. With four years of inflation, most secondary schools receive approximately only $2000 to $2500 as a furniture grant. Furniture in many schools is battered and shattered and is another sign of the incorrect priorities of the Minister for Education and the Treasurer.

In Budget Paper No. 4 for 1985-86, the Government boasted about how it would ensure that Victorian schools were the best resourced in the nation. Practical workshops in most of Victoria's schools were built in the 1950s and the 1960s. Not only are the trade workshops out of date and outmoded but they are also functionally dangerous. In some cases teachers have walked off the job because of the danger in operating lathes and other equipment. It is about time the Minister and the Treasurer faced up to the responsibility of bringing Victoria's schools into the 21st century and created conditions that are safe not only for teachers but also for the students who work in them. It is another area that is in need of constant attention.

Recently I raised a matter that appeared in the *Age* related to maintenance grants in schools. It is a sad indictment on the Government that in five years it has not raised maintenance grants for secondary school students. The allowance of $208 a year and $104 a half year has not been reviewed during the Labor Government's term of office and that is disgusting. I have a constant stream of parents coming to my office who are suffering hardships because of the lack of support for people who under a means test fall into the disadvantaged category, for example, a single parent family or those who are retired, on pensions or superannuated.

The Minister for Education has promised to set up a Ministerial review of maintenance grants. As yet no reporting of that has occurred. In addition, a Government which is supposed to care for disadvantaged students has created no maintenance grants for primary schools. I wonder how the disadvantaged feel about the Government which, in effect, is saying that poverty begins at twelve years of age when those students enter Year 7. The Minister should examine his priorities and use some of the savings that should be made from declining school enrolments.

During the past two years many teachers have been superannuated and retired because of ill health. In 1983-84 $12 million was paid to superannuated teachers, but, in the last twelve months, $35 million was paid out. It is a sad indictment on the Government that teachers are so stressed and the rate of retirement through ill-health is so high. The fault can be laid clearly and squarely before the feet of the Labor Government and, in particular, the previous Minister for Education who initiated disciplinary changes in the school system in February 1983. A major emphasis of the Government in the Supply Bill should be to provide teachers, with extra support structures and to build up teacher morale because teachers are bewildered by the rate of change in the education system.

Another area that the Government can give priority to, from savings it can make through declining school enrolments, is the cyclic maintenance of schools. If one visits schools as much as I do, and I know the Minister does visit a number of schools, one sees the state of disrepair in many of those institutions. For instance, the amount received by the Sunshine North Technical School for its last cyclic maintenance, the first since the school was opened, was for over $200 000. The cyclic maintenance at the Aspendale Technical School was $300 000. The Government needs an ongoing program of maintenance so that schools can do their maintenance each year and not wait for a massive clean-up at the end of a ten or fifteen-year period. In other words, it should be a factor that the schools can control themselves.
Many schools have had problems in changing over from oil-burning heaters to gas-burning heaters. A program was commenced by the Liberal Government, but the Labor Government has not completed that project. That creates tremendous strain on school finance for those schools unfortunate enough to have heaters operating on oil burners.

There are two other matters I wish to raise before examining local issues. I am concerned about the career structure for principal class appointees. Since the development of the school-based selection of principals and vice-principals, there have been few successful transfers by people appointed under the system. I know of many principals and vice-principals who would like to change their school to seek further progress or have a change of view and the present system does not allow for that. I ask the Minister to give consideration to structural change for principals who are locked into a system from which they cannot get out.

From my discussions with teachers during the past three or four months I am aware that teacher morale, particularly in the post-primary area, is not high. Teachers are bewildered by the rate of change and they need solid support and a boost from the Government. I hope that is forthcoming.

I raise the matter of gifted children. An article that appeared in Sun Living on 18 February said that our gifted children were deprived. It is to the credit of the Minister that he has supported Melbourne High School and MacRobertson Girls High School, and the continued existence of girls' schools then received community support. I congratulate the Minister on that, but there is much more to be done to look after the interests of gifted youngsters in our schools. Not enough money has been allocated in the Budget in that regard. The State and the community will receive tremendous benefits if they look after the talented children in our schools.

I have referred recently to the sad state of competitiveness of Victorian and Australian industries, and the way they fare against overseas countries, particularly against the fierce competition from countries such as Japan, West Germany, South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore. Developing talent in schools will improve our long-term industrial competitiveness.

In turning to local issues, I inform the House that the Sandringham area is no better off with its train services. When trains are not late, they do not run at all. Only one or two trains go through the loop for city travellers and often one or both of those trains are cut out. Reference has been made to the colossal debt of the $1 billion account outstanding for new trains. If the Ministry of Transport could spend some Budget money to have the trains run on time, then the people of Sandringham would be extremely pleased.

There is a desperate need for public housing in the Sandringham area in spot purchases. Commission villages such as the Graham Road estate, which should not be developed as this has created severe problems for the Ministry of Housing. However, the Minister for Housing has helped in this regard.

The Sandringham and District Municipal Hospital provides a fine service to the community but needs more nursing beds for elderly patients. Over 25 per cent of the electorate of Sandringham are over 60 years of age. The area has an ageing population and to date the needs of the community have been overlooked by the Labor Government.

The area also needs a day care centre to assist people who are hospitalized. This would take the strain off the hospital in its requirement for acute beds. The Minister for Health is at present considering the matter. The City of Sandringham and the Sandringham hospital are hopeful that this amenity will be built in that area.

Finally, the Red Bluff cliffs are in decay and are facing massive soil erosion, and the beach has disappeared. If urgent work is not undertaken, Beach Road could be undermined.

The honourable member for Evelyn is also aware of this problem and another at Hampton, where some beach renourishment is needed. In fact, the whole coastline is in
urgent need of repair and the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands in another
place is considering the matter. I hope some solutions are achieved.

In conclusion, significant savings should be made in the education area because of the
shrinking population in schools. Better priorities are needed so that the Minister for
Education and the Treasurer can attend to the problems that so grievously beset schools
at present.

Mr LIEBERMAN (Benambra)—I feel it is my duty as a representative of part of
country Victoria to spell out that the State Government, in complicity with the Federal
Government, has caused more problems to the rural sector of Victoria than has any
previous Government. I shall summarize the policies and the repercussions of those
policies on rural Victoria by saying that the Government has sold out the rural sector. I
back that up with facts so that it cannot be said that I speak rhetorically. I am prepared to
be judged on those facts because the Australian people are becoming increasingly aware of
what is happening.

High interest rates are probably the most fundamental problem facing the rural sector.
That has occurred because of the various budgetary policies of the State and Federal
Governments in the past four years. Interest rates are the highest they have been in the
past 50 years.

The Labor Party has pursued a deliberate policy of borrowing and pump-priming
expenditure and growth in the public sector. It has announced that policy as its strategy to
help build this State. That policy has caused a blow-out in interest rates, about which the
Government was warned some years ago but it scoffed at the idea. Pressure was brought
to bear on the dollar, which has reached its lowest level ever. I was pleased to see that the
value of the dollar increased by 3 cents yesterday but that may well be due to some
artificial manifestation.

The Government's pump-priming of the Budget has caused enormous damage to us all,
but especially to people who are entirely helpless and who have no way of avoiding the
repercussions to themselves and their families. Small businessmen and farmers are
especially prone to these economic pressures.

I have been informed—from an authentic source—that the interest rate bill of farmers
rose in one year, 1985, by $350 million. I wonder what will happen to this State and this
nation because of the enormous impost that has been placed upon people who are unable
to find means of increasing their income or are unable to cut back on expenditure to cope
with that additional increase.

That situation is directly attributable to the Government's policy and is a consequence
of its reckless spending and borrowing. We all know of the infamous selling off and buying
back of assets. The Government is not buying new assets in every case but is buying back
the assets that it sold, and the community is bearing the consequences of that action.

The electorate I represent is perhaps not as hard hit as is the Mallee and other areas but
my constituents are feeling the pinch and will continue to do so. Accompanying the
increase in the farmers' interest bill of $350 million in 1985, is the explosion of interest
rates for home purchasers. I, like other honourable members, see the plight of many
families in our electorates. In the past few months I have spoken to people who have
purchased homes in good faith and have been struggling to maintain mortgage payments.
They are finding it increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to meet repayments.

One family managed to obtain a low income mortgage loan to purchase a Ministry of
Housing home that the family had rented for three to four years. That home had been
purchased by the Ministry on a spot purchase basis three or four years before for
approximately $40 000. The family took up an offer by the Ministry to purchase the home,
which the Government insisted on revaluing and which is now valued at $53 000. The
family was lent $51 000 as a low interest loan through the co-operative system of the
Ministry. The family is in the red for $51 000 for a home that cost the Ministry $40 000
and the family's equity of $2000 was obtained through a Commonwealth State first home buyer grant.

The rate of interest for this so-called low interest loan is calculated each month on a computer print-out that has reference to the movement in the consumer price index and in the ordinary bank overdraft rates for Australia. That interest rate is now in excess of 14.5 per cent.

Mr J. F. McGrath—So much for assistance!

Mr Lieberman—The story has not ended. One of the conditions of the mortgage was that repayments must not exceed more than 25 per cent of the household income. If the husband and wife both work, it is 25 per cent of their joint income. If one of them works, it is 25 per cent of that person's income. This family is in the position where, because of the blow-out in interest rates, 25 per cent of the family's earnings is now less than the monthly interest bill on the mortgage. The family started off with a notional $2000 equity but every month that the economy is in its present situation because of the Government's fiscal policy the family is going further into debt. One does not need to be a Rhodes scholar to realize that if this continues the small equity the family has will be exhausted and the family will possibly face insolvency. They will have to get out or the house will have to be sold because default has occurred.

That is not an isolated example; it will occur with increasing frequency while the economy of this State is in such a terrible situation.

How much worse is the situation when one learns that the Federal Government has deregulated interest rates on housing loans and has made a deal with the Australian savings banks, providing a $120 million subsidy to the banks so that they will not increase interest rates on existing loans above 13.5 per cent. Victorians and Australians who have obtained home loans from co-operative building societies, insurance companies and other sources can have their interest rates increased as the market goes up and, because the economy has gone mad under the policies of the Government; those people receive no subsidy. Just to put salt in the wound, most people who pay tax as they earn each week face increasing interest rates and have to pay a subsidy to their neighbour because he happens to have a savings bank home loan. I find that impossible to justify when I talk to constituents. No Australian can justify it. It indicates that the Labor Government has panicked and the position is out of control.

The Government is now making crazy decisions that discriminate against home buyers because one home buyer happens to borrow from a bank and another borrows from a building society. That type of budgetary outcome is the consequence of Labor Governments over the past four years. Labor Governments have decided, at Premiers' conferences and otherwise, that a new tax system is needed in Australia so that the States with Labor Premiers can distribute the spoils. A capital gains tax has been introduced and it has to be paid by farmers and small business people.

If ever people in Australia needed encouragement to "give it a go" and take risks, it is now. Instead, Governments are building walls by introducing new revenue mechanisms to depress people's personal feeling of, "I will have a go". It is destroying incentive. Fringe benefit taxes have been introduced—goodness knows what that means because we still have not seen the legislation from Canberra. All Victorians are expected to know about fringe benefits taxes by 1 July, if not earlier. In addition, we have the overlay of this Government's policies regarding the unions on wages, superannuation claims and other deals. All of those things are part of a budgetary strategy that the Supply Bill purports to provide for Victoria as a new deal—as part of its ten-year plan.

Another example of the consequences of the first four years of the Government's policies, and its brothers in Canberra, is that in Victoria in 1983–84 the average employer has had to pay costs, in addition to the wage dollar, averaging 43 cents in the dollar to cover long service leave, public holidays, sick leave, maternity leave, and the like. In the space of a
little over twelve months, the oncosts in Victoria for people employing others have risen to about 53 cents to 54 cents in the dollar.

Mr Acting Speaker, you know what that means because you are a man of the world. You are experienced and know that, in the space of a year, despite the fact that inflation has been officially pegged or identified as being around 8 per cent, additional oncosts of employment above wages have risen ahead of the rate of inflation and are now about 10 per cent or 11 per cent.

This year, secret deals are being made by the Government with the big unions to give them a position of advantage. The Government is either not game to stop the unions from having that advantage or it wants them to have it as part of its accord. Small businesses, large businesses and farmers are expected to pay the consequences. If that type of repercussion of oncost explosion is attached to the interest rate explosion, to which I have referred, the House can understand my concern.

When I hear Ministers smugly talk about the magnificent performance of the Government over the past four years, it makes me very angry that they have the temerity to make such claims. They are not telling people the truth.

It disappoints me that the Australian media is not playing its part by at least printing the Opposition's view of what is going on, even if the media does not accept that view. The media is not printing the Opposition's view. It should give an account to the Australian people of what it is on about. What has happened to fair and balanced reporting? Both sides of the political spectrum used to be reported in a balanced way. Nowadays, in order to get a story on politics into the media in Australia one has to talk about a scandal or the media takes no interest.

I am telling the House about the real problems in the economy in Australia, about the problems being faced by families who have to pay off their homes, who are faced with increasing interest rates which, in some cases, make their monthly repayments less than the interest bill. Where is the press report about that?

Why is the press not asking what is going on? Where is the press report on the oncost situation to which I have referred? Where is the report that says "Lieberman is wrong" or "Lieberman is right" and asking why oncosts exist? Where is the press report of the Opposition's call a few weeks ago for an inquiry into oncosts in Victoria? Not one word was printed. I ask, "Why?" An explanation ought to be provided urgently.

I have seen the consequence of the Government's policy in education in the electorate I represent. It is true that the Government spent record sums on education in its first few years of government but, in the past twelve months, particularly the past six months, there has been a panic because the Government has suddenly arrested its capital works programs. Schools in my electorate are subject to public announcements on documents which have been printed and which identify them for major capital works expansion programs. Last year, the Minister for Education claimed credit for all those programs and yet in the space of a few months those programs have been cancelled.

The Wodonga West High School, which is one of the most rapidly growing high schools in terms of enrolment in country Victoria, if not in the whole State, is now denied any prospect of getting permanent class-rooms. Wodonga is the fastest growing provincial city in Victoria. This is a sign that something is seriously wrong.

People ask me what is happening. They say "Mr Lieberman, the Government is claiming record expenditure on education, health and other areas and we are paying more taxes than we have ever paid before. The Government has borrowed more money than the State borrowed in its whole history. Why is it that the works that are urgently needed in schools, hospitals and other areas—for example, police stations—have been threatened?" Those questions are increasing daily. Thank God they are because they are starting to expose some of the serious problems in the Government's strategy.
One of the serious problems is that there has been more expenditure on the education system but that expenditure has been sucked up to pay additional, record wages.

There has been an explosion in the cost of administration in education. There are more highly paid people at the top of education than ever before. Some of them are very fine, competent people, but, for the life of me, I cannot understand the justification for all of these people.

In the education regions a number of highly qualified people have been employed. Some of the best educated educationalists in the world are stationed in education regions at high salaries but they cannot do their jobs because in the head office of the Ministry for Education there are men senior to them who get paid more than them and who apparently are doing the same sort of work, that is, checking, double checking and so on.

The situation is outrageous, especially when one considers the good teacher—and there are many of them—who wants to do better in the class-room and the desk that is broken down and needs replacing. Those needs are going further down the list of priorities because the money does not exist. Yet the taxpayer wants to know why, because the taxpayer is paying more taxes.

Victoria is the only State that has ever gone through the convoluted exercise of arranging early retirement for people who have no jobs in a so-called “reorganization” of V/Line. However, those people were re-employed after getting golden handshakes. Approximately $60-70 million was borrowed to pay out those employees on early retirement but many of them have been re-employed by V/Line. It is a matter that almost requires a Royal Commission on the reasons for that situation and the consequences.

In the health field in country Victoria some hospitals are under threat of closure. There have been reports, spawned by the former disastrous Minister for Health—now the disastrous Minister for Transport—that in the interests of rationalization the future of some country hospitals is in doubt because some may have to be closed or their beds transferred to other areas.

Although a record amount of $2300 million is provided in the Bill for health, city hospitals are facing serious problems because more than 27 000 people are on the waiting lists for elective surgery but they cannot obtain that surgery.

More people appear to be employed in the health system than ever before. The Premier has proudly proclaimed that the Government is spending more on health and that more people are employed in the area of health, yet there is less service.

There has been a blow-out of 150 per cent in the number of people on the waiting list for elective pain relieving surgery in Victoria in the past three years. One of the reasons is that in many cases in the health system, because of the Government’s deal with the health unions and its inability to control the demands of those unions, it has employed two people to do the job that one person used to perform. The Government has also reduced the working hours from 40 a week to 38.

Dr Coghill—That was your deal.

Mr LIEBERMAN—It was not my deal. The 38-hour week was not implemented in 1982. When the Minister for Transport was the Minister for Health, I publicly called on him to defer the implementation of that working week because the health system could not handle it, especially with the introduction of Medicare. That advice was ignored because the then Minister scoffed at it, as he usually does when given advice; he thinks he knows everything. When I went out to Tullamarine airport to try to talk the then Minister out of going overseas because of the health crisis, he would not listen to that advice and in the next seven weeks the health system nearly fell apart. The story goes on and on.

In my electorate, as in others, the present Minister for Health, who is a competent, able Minister, is now implementing another aspect of the Government’s health policy by introducing district health councils. That will cost $2 million a year but, if the Liberal
Party were in government, it would employ another 150 district health nurses to travel around the State in four-cylinder cars and treat people and keep them out of hospital so that the hospital bed, which costs so much money, would not be used so much.

The Government will not take any advice on this matter; it is adamant that the district health councils should be established. This ultimately will create another layer of decision making and delay in the process.

Volunteers in the health system will become more frustrated because such persons need to have their autonomy recognized so that they can be accountable but they will now have this layer of well-meaning people who will be placed in a vulnerable position bouncing the ball backwards and forwards before a decision is made.

Approximately $2 million is provided in the Bill for district health councils when that money should be spent on people who can provide basic hands-on health care.

It may be fine to have a health council down the track but where does the Government's ability to discern priorities lie? It does not have the ability to discern priorities. The district health councils should go to the bottom of the list and the money should be spent on employing additional district health nurses to travel around the State in four-cylinder cars, visiting patients every day and keeping them out of hospital. The Government has chosen to ignore that suggestion, so another problem has been built into the health system.

I, like other honourable members, have a particular interest in apprenticeship schemes. I am especially keen on the development of group apprenticeship schemes, that is, schemes where a number of employers can take on apprentices. One employer may be frightened to take on an apprentice because he is not game for three or four years to bind himself because he may not have enough work. A few employers get together under a group scheme and provide apprenticeship opportunities.

In my electorate there is the Albury-Wodonga Group Apprentice Scheme Ltd, which is sponsored by the State Government with a Commonwealth subsidy. This year that scheme has 140 apprentices in training. Those apprentices probably would not have a chance of obtaining apprenticeships without this scheme. It is an excellent scheme and the Government has done a good job in continuing it.

However, the scheme is in jeopardy because the Bill does not provide an adequate insurance indemnity for either the group apprenticeship scheme directors or the employers.

The apprentices are indentured in Victoria, where they are covered by WorkCare, thanks to the Treasurer, but they are not covered in New South Wales, where workers compensation claims can be high, nor are they covered for common law.

The converse applies: the New South Wales group apprentice has to be registered in New South Wales and works in Victoria but is not covered by the WorkCare scheme. I hope the Treasurer will provide enough money to overcome these serious anomalies so that the group apprentice scheme is not jeopardized.

Volunteers run these schemes and give up their time in industry and commerce to do so. They should not be exposed to potential liability because inadequate insurance is provided. I hope the Bills will enable the Treasurer to remedy the situation in the next 48 hours because the matter has been dragging on for too long.

Mr SHEEHAN (Ballarat South)—I am pleased to join the debate on the Bills which continue the programs initiated by the Labor Government over the past four or so years. I pay tribute to the Treasurer for the way in which he has been able to handle the economy. Economically speaking, the State has now reached a stability that was missing prior to the Labor Government coming into power and the Government and the Treasurer have been able to direct the State towards greater prosperity.
The Labor Government came into power at a time of extremely high unemployment. No one would find the current unemployment rate acceptable and I am sure I will find agreement about that from members on the other side of the House.

However, it must be noted that during the time of this Government the decrease in the unemployment rate is very much due to the policies and progress made by the Labor Government. The Labor Government came into power at a time when a large deficit was looming and it was possible, due to the policies of the Government, to turn around that situation.

That is the background of the situation four years ago and we can now look at a State which is developing extensively in the economic field. It was necessary at that time to make attempts towards developing policies with long-term effects. However, in the situation in which the incoming Labor Government found itself, it was necessary also to establish short-term policies to support the long-term strategy.

It was in that context that the first of the community employment programs—I suppose one could call them—were introduced. In the early years of the Labor Government $30 million was provided for employment opportunities, especially for young people. That was an example of the short-term policy which had an important effect and has now been introduced in a wider field by the Federal Government.

The economic policies, of which the Bills form part, have enabled a reduction in the unemployment rate and have directed funds specifically towards the development of industry in both metropolitan and country areas.

It is worth reiterating that the industry policies adopted by the Government resulted from the work of a committee, which admittedly was established prior to the Labor Government coming to power. However, the incoming Labor Government adopted the recommendations of the committee and brought them to fruition.

Surveys conducted by industry at that time—and substantiated even by Ministers of the previous Government—showed that the decentralization policies were not having the results that were initially envisaged. They were inefficient and were not targeted to the regions or industries. Tailoring to the needs of firms was virtually impossible.

One of the achievements of the Labor Government is that that situation has been turned around to the point where one finds that assistance can be directed more specifically not only to regions but also to "firm specific", a term which has been adopted to describe the assistance to firms by the provision of State funds.

I am pleased to note that the Department of Industry, Technology and Resources is again leading the way in the assistance provided to industry and commerce. An allocation in the vicinity of $35 000 is made in the Supply Bill for services to industry and commerce, including the programs to which I have just referred.

The Supply Bill also provides for the allocation of funds to tourism, which is extremely important to me as the honourable member for Ballarat South. Sovereign Hill in Ballarat is regarded as one of the most outstanding tourist attractions in the world and it is one of the few tourist attractions in the world that is working in the black. This Government has provided significant assistance to Sovereign Hill, not only in terms of funding but also in other support provided by responsible Ministers in that area of Government activity.

The strategy adopted in the Ballarat area is assisted in a number of ways by providing "firm specific" assistance. Honourable members opposite may not be familiar with that term. Ballarat companies including McCain Australia Pty Ltd, a potato processing plant and Mars Confectionery of Australia have received assistance. Pacific Maltings is a firm which is developing an export market targeted towards Japan. The assistance provided by the Government has been an enormous advantage to that company. A number of other firms in the area have been assisted by various programs in the Department of Industry, Technology and Resources.
The honourable member for Benambra referred to programs within the Ministry of Housing. The urban homesteading program is particularly interesting and provides an opportunity, especially for couples, to obtain houses with what is termed "sweat equity". It means that the recipients must spend two years bringing a house, which has been bought by the Ministry, up to a particular standard. The recipients must renovate the house and, after a two-year period, the house is handed to them through the normal financial arrangements. This program is one of the continuing energetic policies of the Government.

The point raised by the honourable member for Benambra about group apprenticeships is an important aspect of the Supply Bill. I was pleased to launch the sixteenth such apprenticeship scheme in the State. It is an important part of the over-all assistance provided by the Government. It is a worth-while program because it offers young people the opportunities of obtaining wider ranges of skills which they would not otherwise receive and provides assistance to small firms that would not be able to hire apprentices on a full-time basis. It is an honourable scheme which is worthy of support.

The SPEAKER—Order! The time allotted for the remaining stages of the Bills having expired, I shall deal with the Supply (1986–87, No. 1) Bill first. The question is:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The motion was agreed to, and the Bill was read a second time.

The SPEAKER—Is leave of the House granted to proceed forthwith to the third reading? As there is no dissenting voice, I shall put the question:

That this Bill be now read a third time.

The motion was agreed to, and the Bill was read a third time.

The SPEAKER—I shall now deal with the Works and Services (Ancillary Provisions) Bill. The question is:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The motion was agreed to, and the Bill was read a second time.

The SPEAKER—Is leave of the House granted to proceed forthwith to the third reading? As there is no dissenting voice, I shall put the question:

That this Bill be now read a third time.

The motion was agreed to, and the Bill was read a third time.

SENATE VACANCY

The SPEAKER—I have received a message from the Legislative Council that the Legislative Council has agreed to the following resolution of the Legislative Assembly:

That this House meets the Legislative Council for the purpose of sitting and voting together to choose a person to hold the place in the Senate rendered vacant by the death of Senator Alan Joseph Missen and proposes that the place and time of such a meeting be the Legislative Assembly Chamber, on Wednesday, 7 May next at six o'clock.

LAND (MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS) BILL (No. 2)

This Bill was received from the Council and, on the motion of Mr CATHIE (Minister for Education), was read a first time.

PATHOLOGY SERVICES ACCREDITATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

This Bill was received from the Council and, on the motion of Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport), was read a first time.
Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—I move:

That the House do now adjourn.

Mr KENNEDY (Bendigo West)—I direct a question to the Minister for Water Resources. I wish to discuss, in particular, the question of water safety on Lake Eppalock near Bendigo. I ask the Minister what measures he has taken to improve water safety on the lake and I suggest that he work closely with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to ensure that there is a co-ordinated approach by both Ministers and both areas of Government activity in dealing with the question of water safety on the lake.

Lake Eppalock is an important place for sport and recreation for many people not only from the Bendigo region but from many areas of Victoria and Australia as a whole. It is well known as a delightful and attractive spot for recreational sport and those sports include sailing, swimming, motor boating, water skiing and activities for families. It is a good place to take children, especially during the warm weather.

It is, of course, very important in the total water supply system of the Bendigo area. A good deal of concern has been aroused lately about the question of water safety on the lake in relation to motor boats. Some injuries have occurred on the lake and concern has been expressed that the situation needs to be brought under control.

This concern has been expressed by a number of groups including the Strathfieldsaye Council, the Bendigo subdivision of the Australian Medical Association, the Axedale Water Police, by quite a number of boat owners, by the Coast Guard, caravan park owners, management committees at Lake Eppalock and also the State Emergency Services and the Ambulance Service Melbourne.

The Australian Medical Association in the Bendigo area is reported in the press as intending to conduct a survey at the Bendigo Base Hospital to see how many people have been treated following accidents at the lake so that they can get some precise indication of the degree of the problem.

A number of suggestions have emerged in recent times in dealing with the problem, including an increased police surveillance of the lake to ensure that regulations are properly observed. The suggestion is for more education of the users of boats. Another suggestion was for the licensing of motor-boat drivers, and I understand that the police have been making this request for licensing since the early 1970s.

A suggestion has also been made that more information is needed to ensure that accident victims are moved as quickly as possible for medical or hospital attention and, in general, there is a suggestion that better measures are required to rezone the areas of the lake where boats are active.

Speaking briefly in a report in the local newspaper the *Bendigo West Advertiser*—which has taken a fairly strong editorial view on the need for improved water safety—police Sergeant Rex Brown says:

The worst offender was a man who was charged with doing 95 KMH in an 8 KMH zone.

Sergeant Brown said that 40 boats had been checked and twenty boat owners had been charged with offences, the bulk of these relating to carrying equipment.

He was appalled at people’s ignorance of the rules governing boating, particularly the one which stated that boats passing within 30 metres of each other must slow to 8 km per hour.
The police have put forward a number of criticisms that reflect a good deal of concern felt by many people in the Bendigo region and so I reiterate to the Minister for Water Resources that I would be happy to hear from him as to what measures he and his department and the Rural Water Commission have taken in this area and what measures he intends taking in the future.

I also ask for an assurance that he will hold discussions with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to ensure a co-ordinated approach in dealing with the problem.

Mr I. W. SMITH (Polwarth)—I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education on behalf of the Minister for Housing, who is temporarily absent. It relates to the building of a number of homes by the Ministry of Housing in the City of Colac under contract to a builder now in receivership whose firm name is Frontier Homes Pty Ltd.

Not only is this builder likely to leave bad debts for the supply of goods and services in the City of Colac, but worse than that, the Ministry of Housing has seen fit to bring in builders from outside Geelong to complete these buildings when it would have been far more appropriate, bearing in mind that many of the homes being built are nearly completed, to complete this work with local tradesmen in Colac.

I would like an assurance from the Minister on behalf of the Housing Ministry that debts to local traders incurred by Frontier Homes will be honoured and that the Minister will review the completion of the homes with the object of having local tradesmen involved in completing the process rather than the expensive importation of tradesmen from Geelong and other areas.

The matter is urgent and I ask the Minister for Education to direct the matter to the attention of the Minister for Housing right away.

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley)—I refer the Minister for Education to the concern that has been expressed to me by a number of people in my electorate about the lack of funds for capital works in the Goulburn/North-Eastern region. I shall highlight to the Minister some figures that have been provided to me by the Assistant Regional Director (Resources) of Education, Dr Warren Garrett. The document has been made public and is available to people throughout the region. It was sent to principals of all schools and to the chairpersons of school councils to make them aware of the present funding for capital works in the region.

I shall make the figures available to the Minister for Education. The document sets out a table showing that in 1981-82 the funds provided for capital works in the Goulburn/North-Eastern region were $3.8 million. This amount was increased to $5.402 million in 1982-83; to $6.457 million in 1983-84; and $6.632 million in 1984-85; but for 1985-86 it was decreased to $5.409 million.

Initially there was an increase but, if one indexes the inflation figures during that five-year period, the initial allocation of $3.8 million converted to the 1985-86 allocation of $5.409 million shows an indexed value of $3.558 million, which represents a reduction in the actual funds that were provided in 1981-82. The Minister constantly refers to increases in funds that have been provided for capital works programs since the Labor Government came into office. In the first three years of the Government the funds allocated through the Ministry of Education were increased but in real terms the funds have been decreased. This is making it extremely hard for the Goulburn/North-Eastern region to maintain an adequate building and maintenance program for schools.

Dr Garrett highlighted the difficulties in the region:

The problem is that, as costs increase, the region can complete fewer and fewer jobs given a constant amount of money. This means that the projects on the end of this year's program are pushed into next year and the next year's into the following year and so on. The only other alternative is to move money from one category of building fund into another.
The Government had increased the allocation of funds to the building capital works program in the first few years, it has decreased the funds provided in 1985–86 and, in real terms, there has been an over-all decrease in the funds allocated.

I ask the Minister to explain the reduction in funds for the capital works program and ask him to assure the House that corrective action will be taken in the next financial year with representations being made to the Treasurer for an increased allocation to that area.

The Speaker—Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mrs Toner (Greensborough)—The matter I raise with the Minister for Transport has exercised the minds of a number of my constituents over the years. It concerns the use of credit cards at Road Traffic Authority offices when people wish to pay their motor car registrations or drivers' licence fees. The Watsonia area has an excellent regional office that provides a splendid localized service but it would be more convenient for patrons if they could use credit cards to pay their bills.

I think this situation prevails in a number of Government departments, even though I raised the matter with the former Minister in 1983 soon after the Labor Party came into office. I was given a negative response to the use of credit cards for the payment of bills but their use has proliferated since that time. Credit cards are now a normal means of paying bills and the Government should seriously consider their use in its departments.

Telecom Australia offers this service to its clients; people can ring Telecom offices and give their credit card numbers, and their bills are paid immediately. That service is convenient. When I first raised the matter in 1983, the then Minister indicated that the use of Bankcard to pay bills could be costly because it carries a significant commission on all transactions and that commission would be considerably in excess of the bank charges being made on the present method of payment. The Minister also suggested that the Bankcard charges could revert to the user in the form of a small penalty and, regrettably, the increased administration costs involved in recouping the charges would go beyond what is reasonable. He said that payment of the commission by the user would not be feasible.

The situation has changed significantly since 1983. The current Minister for Transport has always been progressive, innovative and concerned about the convenience of services provided to clients of his department, so perhaps he could consider the suggestion put forward by my constituent that, if in our modern society people can use credit cards to pay most of their bills, that service should also apply to the payment of motor registration fees and drivers' licence fees. If that argument was in any way valid in 1983, it is certainly valid in 1986.

Many motorists would be appreciative of the implementation of this facility, particularly those who are facing difficult economic circumstances and, therefore, leave payment of their bills until the last minute. In the long term this service would be of benefit to both the clients and the department. I should like the Minister seriously to consider this matter. If it is possible to implement it in his department, perhaps it could also be extended to other State Government departments.

Mr Weideman (Frankston South)—The Minister for Education will recall that in 1979–1980 a group comprising mainly Morington Peninsula teachers established the Peninsula Education Council—PENEC—which held public meetings on the issue of school buildings being subjected to health and safety regulations and standards of the then Department of Health and that at one of those meetings, as the honourable member for Carrum, the Minister gave a very specific assurance that the Labor Party in government would make all schools subject to health and safety regulations of the Health Act. The Minister's statement was featured on the front page of the local newspaper at the time.

Now that the honourable member for Carrum is the Minister for Education, I ask him whether he has carried out investigations into the possibility of upgrading school buildings to comply with those regulations now that he has the power to carry out this policy. He
will agree with me that 1700 primary schools and 300 secondary schools and tertiary education establishments, totalling 2100 schools, require this upgrading of facilities. Inquiries I have made about the toilet facilities of those buildings being brought up to the standard of health and safety regulations reveal that the cost will be approximately $1 million per school, which amounts to $2 billion.

Recently, the Premier made great capital of a document that was compiled on the 150 proposals the Opposition has made to the Government, which the Premier described as irresponsible. Included in that list was a proposal that it was suggested I made to the Minister for Education which was incorrect. In fact, it was a Labor Party member's proposal. I understand the Minister for Education attempted to remove this error from the document, and I urge him to continue his efforts to remove it. The proposal concerns the Lakewood Primary School.

At the same time, I request the Minister for Education to invite the Premier to include the specific assurance of the Minister for Education made in 1981 that when in government the Labor Party would make all school buildings subject to health and safety regulations.

Further, I ask the Minister whether he has done any work in this regard, whether he has obtained any estimates of the cost of his proposal and whether this project will be part of the December Budget. I ask whether he has had discussions with the Treasurer on this matter and whether he would describe this proposal for Government expenditure as the Premier has described proposals of the Opposition as irresponsible. I should like him to determine whether the Premier would regard his proposal as irresponsible.

Miss CALLISTER (Morwell)—I refer the Minister for Consumer Affairs to a deceptive promotion by a New South Wales-based company, Halberts, S.A. This company writes to people claiming they are amongst the very few people sharing that particular surname. The promotional material states:

Dear Friend,

As you may already know, we have been doing some work relating to people who have the same last name as you do. Finally, after months of work, my new book, “The Amazing Book of the Eades in Australia” is ready for printing and you are listed in it.

The Eade name is uncommon and our research has shown that only a small percentage of the people in Australia share the Eade name. We have spent a great deal of effort and thousands of dollars in researching through 15 million Australian names and have just completed work on the Eade family name directory. We have searched through public records to identify almost every Eade family in Australia. My new book features this valuable and extensive family of Eades living in Australia and it is as complete as possible.

This correspondence bears the signature of Dennis Haslinger. The advertising blurb does not end there. It indicates that the work is of a unique and special nature peculiar to the particular surname being addressed in the correspondence.

I point out that so far in Victoria this company has worked its way only through the “As” and “Bs” and that it has started with the “Cs”. The company writes to people sharing the same surname and states that the proposed book covers topics such as: how the family got its name; what it means; “never before published” information about the family population in Australia; how the company discovered an unusual coat of arms granted to an earlier member of the family and its original heraldic description; and an expert interpretation and drawing of the coat of arms which the company states ancient archives reveal to be many hundreds of years old. The company is not referring to a few years consistent with Australia's history, and it has lots of advice on how people with this surname can research their ancestry and obtain information applicable to the family name.

Consumers who have ordered copies of the book have discovered that the first 80 pages deal with information common to all names with a few insertions of the personalized name taken from a computer listing that is nowhere near being comprehensive or unique. The book costs $35 and all it amounts to is a do-it-yourself kit on how to trace one's family history. I advise honourable members that the Australian Genealogical Society charges $4.95 for this information. I urge the Minister for Consumer Affairs to take action to
Mr REYNOLDS (Gisborne)—I raise a delicate matter with the Minister for Sport and Recreation concerning the performance of the Harness Racing Board at two levels. Firstly, I refer to the board level. I am sure the Minister has some misgivings and heartaches about this matter. I am reliably informed that at present the board has a budgetary shortfall of more than $330,000. This results from many causes. From the information that I have been given I know this matter must be causing both the board and the Minister a great deal of concern.

The Inter-dominion event was a success in many ways, but not financially. I understand the board obtained from the Racecourses Licences Board an advance of $200,000 which the Harness Racing Board receives each year from that body to subsidize the rent at Moonee Valley Racecourse. As the Harness Racing Board has now used the money one year in advance, it has a need for further moneys to catch up on that shortfall.

The second area concerns problems of staffing. The Harness Racing Board has a long-serving, loyal and devoted staff, many of whom at this stage are feeling insecure.

There is talk of a strike amongst staff and there is definite dissatisfaction and low morale. I have seen advertisements for three or four senior managerial positions in recent weeks. These positions have been capably filled by people still with the Harness Racing Board and it appears that they will now be moved sideways.

As a regular attender of harness race meetings all over Victoria and as recently as last Monday, I have heard a plethora of comments from people from all facets of the industry who are concerned and disappointed about what is happening in the office and staffing area of the board. Many stories are being told but rather than make them public in this forum I ask the Minister to undertake a high level, full-scale investigation into the administration of the Harness Racing Board to identify the problems and have them rectified as soon as possible.

The board is involved in a multi-million dollar industry that benefits many Victorians, creates the livelihood of many families and provides significant revenue for the Government. I should hate to see the industry damaged in any way by inefficiency and problems that could be overcome. These problems seem to have occurred following the resignation of the chief executive, Mr Ray Quinn and the appointment of Dr Philip Swan. I hope that is coincidental. I ask the Minister to undertake a high level inquiry into the problems facing the Harness Racing Board.

Dr WELLS (Dromana)—I raise a matter for the attention of the Premier, but as he is not present I direct my comments to the Minister for Education. I am concerned about the Government’s inadequate provision of infant welfare sisters in the Dromana electorate.

Dr WELLS—I have written to the Minister for Community Services and she agreed that, on the figures available for the electorate, more infant welfare sisters were required. However, she was unable to meet the need because of inadequate funding available to her department. She pointed out that insufficient funding had been made available in the current Budget and that the matter would be examined before the next Budget.

My concern is about the protection of newborn babies and it seems to me that the Government is either inefficient in its calculations or does not rate newborn babies highly. The Premier has funds available for emergency services and I believe this is a serious matter. I ask the Premier to examine the matter that I have raised and make those funds available.

The SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member’s time has expired.
Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Water Resources)—The honourable member for Bendigo West raised the matter of boat safety, particularly on Lake Eppalock, which is in the electorate he represents. He referred to the careless attitudes of people enjoying recreation with boats who were making dangerous manoeuvres with children poised on the bows of boats while they were speeding past each other.

Several accidents on Lake Eppalock occurred last summer in which people were injured and eventually died after being struck by motor boats. The Bendigo community held a meeting on 21 March at which a number of interested parties gathered to discuss how they could improve the safety of boats using Lake Eppalock. I pay tribute to the Rural Water Commission of Victoria, the Lake Eppalock committees of management, the Victorian Water Police, the Australian Medical Association, the Eppalock Traders Association, Axedale police, the State Emergency Service and the ambulance service. The meeting identified three major issues, held discussions and decided to report back at a further meeting to be held on 2 May.

The first area the meeting considered was water zoning on Lake Eppalock. A report was to be made on 2 May that would identify ways of zoning the lake for different water users, including swimmers, power boats and sailing boats. That is an important exercise and it is hoped that signs will be put up around the lake to limit the activities of different forms of boating to different parts of the lake.

The meeting also decided to encourage further education on water safety, motor boat regulation and general boating conduct. It is obvious from the history over the past summer that that is necessary. A significant amount of material is available and, after the honourable member from Bendigo West raised this matter, another honourable member handed me water safety codes and brochures encouraging people to take an interest. The problem is not an absence of material but an absence of encouraging people to read and understand it.

It is also necessary to produce a Lake Eppalock safety brochure and to have safety signs erected around the lake. The group also intends to ask the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to consider compulsory licensing of motor boat drivers.

The final area of consideration is to examine putting identification numbers on launching ramps around the lake so that people can identify their positions from the shore and the position of any accident can be easily identified. There is also a need to improve radio communications and introduce other safety measures.

The matter is receiving strong attention from the Rural Water Commission and other interested Government and voluntary agencies, and I am sure positive action will come out of the bad experience over the summer period.

Mr CATHIE (Minister for Education)—The honourable member for Polwarth raised a matter concerning the building of Ministry of Housing homes in the City of Colac, where a builder has gone into receivership leaving some bad debts. The honourable member is concerned that if the Ministry is to employ additional contractors to complete those homes local tradesmen should be involved in that work and the bad debts of the builder should be honoured. I shall direct that matter to the attention of the Minister for Housing.

The honourable member for Murray Valley complained about the lack of capital works funding for education in the Goulburn/North-Eastern region. The honourable member should compare the increase in capital funding for education in the first three years of the Cain Government with the allocations in the last three years of the former Liberal Government, because in that time there was a massive increase of 45 per cent.

A further increase of 9 per cent in the capital works allocation for schools has been made in this year's Budget. Part of the difficulty this year has been that costs in the building industry have increased by 20 per cent. To a certain extent, despite the increase in funding, the Government is not getting full value because of the overheating in that industry. Previous Liberal Governments neglected the maintenance of schools for many years.
Schools that were built in the late 1950s and 1960s are now having considerable sums of money spent on maintenance. The Government will have to continue to maintain its effort for a long time so it will meet not only the need for facilities for new pupils but also the need for essential maintenance and upgrading of existing facilities.

I shall review the report concerning funding that has been issued by the assistant regional director in that region to ensure the funding received a fair distribution. I point out to the honourable member for Murray Valley that approximately 70 per cent of the capital works budget is now being allocated by the region as they are best placed in determining the priorities for both major and minor works programs.

The honourable member for Frankston South directed my attention to remarks he claimed I made to a body called the Peninsula Education Council in 1980 or 1981. I remind the honourable member that the Government has legislated effectively in that area of concern and that my colleague, the Treasurer, in introducing WorkCare and in legislating for occupational health and safety, has ensured that all areas in the workplace, including schools, will come under the legislation to enable the Ministry to establish clear priorities within that health and safety program. I shall be initiating a working party, comprising representatives from the Ministry and teacher unions to establish what the priorities should be for the health and safety programs to be developed within schools.

The honourable member for Dromana raised an issue for the attention of the Premier, requesting special funds for the provision of additional infant welfare sisters in the Dromana electorate. I shall direct the matter to the Premier's attention and determine whether any assistance can be provided.

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—The honourable member for Greensborough raised the important question of how people can be assisted to pay licence and registration fees with the Road Transport Authority. As the honourable member pointed out, two significant improvements have been made: firstly, the establishment of regional offices has enabled easier access to Road Transport Authority services; and, secondly, arrangements to enable people to pay amounts directly into a bank account has assisted consumers.

The honourable member has suggested the consideration of whether the methods of payment could be extended to include the use of various forms of credit cards, such as Bankcard and American Express. There may certainly be a case for doing so, given the way in which the community is moving towards an electronic transfer of funds system for paying accounts. The Government will have to consider the economic consequences for the authority, such as administration costs or any fees that would be payable to the banks and agencies that operate those cards. I am sympathetic to ways of making it easier for people to pay what are, in some cases, substantial accounts. I shall examine the matter and report back to the honourable member for Greensborough.

Mr TREZISE (Minister for Sport and Recreation)—The honourable member for Gisborne made allegations about the Harness Racing Board. From what he said it appears the allegations were based on stories that he had heard at a racecourse. One can hear stories every day of the week at racecourses, football clubs, sporting clubs and political parties. The allegations he made were, firstly, that the Harness Racing Board was experiencing financial difficulties and, secondly, that staff were being appointed to the wrong jobs and were being moved sideways when they should have been moved upwards and so forth. The substance of those allegations would depend on which staff member one was talking to.

The honourable member made an attack on Dr Swan, the chief executive officer of the board. He also mentioned Mr Quinn, the former chief executive officer. I point out that Mr Quinn was in exactly the same position with the former board and was subject to exactly the same rumours and stories on racecourses, apparently from different people. To make general comments and criticisms publicly, particularly about individuals on a board, is irresponsible.
I hear stories on racecourses from bookmakers, jockeys, trainers, stewards and so forth. Most of those stories depend on who makes the allegations against whom. I take those allegations into my mind, but do not repeat them until I analyse the full facts. I ask the honourable member for Gisborne to give me the full allegations, any justifications for the complaints and the names of the people who made the complaints, and I shall check on the matters.

Mr SPYKER (Minister for Consumer Affairs)—I am pleased the honourable member for Morwell has raised the issue she raised tonight because I wanted to direct public attention to this matter. It concerns “The Amazing Book” a publication that I consider is misleading and is based on the operations of Halberts, S.A., a New South Wales-based company which promotes and markets a publication claiming to be a unique history of particular surnames in Australia.

The interesting point about the publication is that one does not have the opportunity of previewing it as it is posted by mail order. People are asked to send a cheque for $35 and they will be sent the publication. The publication relates to particular surnames and alleges to have people all of a particular surname listed in the publication, such as all the “Bennets” in one volume. I am sure the producers of the publication obtain the names from the electoral rolls. My Ministry has been advised that in some cases not even half the names of a particular surname are included.

It is interesting to note that the first 80 pages of each publication are the same. Whether one’s name is “Callister”, “Bennett” or whatever, one is told to go to a public library to find the same information. The publication suggests that if a person wants to know the history of a family name one should ask a brother or sister, father or mother, grandfather and so on. I thought that approach would be the logical step for anyone. One does not need to spend $35 to be told to adopt that approach. The publication suggests that if one’s relatives do not have sufficient information, one should visit the State Library.

I have also been advised that the Genealogical Society of Victoria has kits available for people who wish to trace their ancestry. My concern is that consumers are not aware of what they will receive when they order the publication. The letter promoting the publication informs people that they have been selected and that the marvellous publication will allow them to trace their ancestry and any other relatives they may have in Australia.

This matter first came to the attention of my Ministry in 1984. The Ministry asked the company to cease its operations, which it did. It also gave an assurance at the time that if it started to produce the publication again it would contact my Ministry to discuss the matter. It has come to my notice again that the publication is out. The concern of my Ministry is also shared by the consumer affairs authority in New South Wales.

I have instructed my Ministry to request Halberts to suspend its promotion of the publication in Victoria until the concerns have been resolved. I have also instructed it that if the proprietors of the company fail to comply with the request that has been made, I shall not hesitate to initiate proper action to protect consumers, particularly under the Fair Trading Act and in the Market Court.

The company also operates overseas and we have been advised that on 6 December 1985 the company was convicted in Canada and was fined a total of $9000 on three charges of misleading advertising arising out of a similar promotion.

I urge consumers who may be interested in tracing their family history to consider less costly and more credible alternatives, such as libraries, genealogical societies or the Public Record Office. If consumers are still attracted by the “name-dropping” possibilities of researching their past, they might best be served by dropping the name of Halberts, S.A., from their list.

I will take action if the company does not cease this type of promotion because it is totally misleading. People are asked to send $35. Recently there has been a tremendous interest in tracing one’s ancestors and family tree in Australia and other parts of the world.
One can understand that people who receive a letter like that would be interested. I warn people and inform them that there are many other ways of researching a family tree than spending $35 on a virtually useless publication.

The motion was agreed to.

*The House adjourned at 12.22 a.m. (Thursday).*
Thursday, 24 April 1986

The SPEAKER (the Hon. C. T. Edmunds) took the chair at 10.34 a.m. and read the prayer.

ABSENCE OF MINISTER

The SPEAKER—Order! I am advised that the Minister for the Arts will be absent from the sittings of the House today.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES BILL

Mr KENNNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—I address my question without notice to you, Sir. I ask: has it now been ascertained that the Residential Tenancies Bill, declared to be urgent in this House on 13 November 1985—163 days ago—contains provisions which under the Constitution Act require an absolute majority for its passage and that, as the Bill was not in this House declared to be passed by an absolute majority, and did not obtain an absolute majority for its passage, it thus failed to pass lawfully in the Legislative Assembly more than five months ago?

The SPEAKER—Order! It is unusual for a question without notice to be directed to me, but the Leader of the Opposition did advise me that he may do so. I am aware of a legal opinion that is circulating supporting the statement of the Leader of the Opposition. Of course, that opinion is one opinion and does not necessarily have to be accepted. However, it was accepted by the other place.

I am also aware that the other place rejected the Bill at its second reading. If that had not been the case, I would have accepted a consideration from the Leader of the House and anyone else concerned for ways and means to be adopted in this place to have the matter reconsidered to ensure the Bill was legally passed in view of that legal opinion.

GOVERNMENT TENDERS

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS (Leader of the National Party)—I ask the Minister for Public Works: does the Government intend to persist with its present policy of not accepting the lowest tender in some cases and giving the work to a Government department, despite the fact that a reliable firm has lodged a better tender than a Government instrumentality?

Mr WALSH (Minister for Public Works)—It is the intention of the Government always to consider the lowest tender. It is not definitely the absolute policy and decision one has to make, but it is always considered. If the Leader of the National Party will inform me of the firm about which he is concerned, I shall examine the matter.

SPORT AID

Mr SIDIROPOULOS (Richmond)—Will the Premier provide the House with details of action being taken by the Government on the Sport Aid campaign to assist African people?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—Today, in an hour or so, I shall be launching the Sport Aid campaign with prominent sporting personalities, Leon Wiegard and Max Walker, together with visiting American singer, John Denver.

Honourable members interjecting.
Mr CAIN—I am launching the campaign in Victoria today and I hope the opposition parties will support it. Members of the opposition parties had better not make smart comments but listen to my explanation of what is going to be done, because this campaign is designed to assist in a matter in which I should have thought everyone would want to assist.

The Bob Geldof band organization responsible for the rock concert almost twelve months ago has also joined forces with the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund to launch a continuing campaign to draw attention to the needs of people in Africa. Sport Aid is being launched today in seven Australian capital cities.

The highlight will be Sport Aid week from 17 May to 25 May, during which a series of events throughout the world will be conducted to raise money for African relief. In Australia, during the Sport Aid week, organizations representing a whole range of sports, including basketball, netball, swimming, athletics, motor racing, VFL football, tennis, and others will be pledging their support for Africa.

Hundreds of clubs have already taken part in organizing fundraising events and the climax of the week in Australia will be the Wang “Race Against Time.” That is a 10-kilometre run at 2 a.m. on 26 May in Sydney which will coincide with races being held simultaneously throughout the world. That race will be linked by satellite for a two and a half hour television hook-up.

As a curtain-raiser to the worldwide race, Australia will conduct seven 10-kilometre runs simultaneously in Australian capital cities at 9 a.m. on Sunday 25 May. It is intended that those runs will be televised live by the Australian Broadcasting Commission.

The race will be called the “rat race” and will attract the attention, endeavour and support of a wide range of sportsmen and sportswomen.

The money raised will be split between thirteen major Australian aid agencies for both short and long-term projects in Africa to enable people to return to their homes and rehabilitate their lives.

Honourable members interjecting

Mr CAIN—I hope that last sentence will remove some of the spirit of levity from the other side of the Chamber. The Leader of the Opposition and other honourable members of the Opposition can scoff as much as they like. I would have hoped this program would attract their support and not their apparent derision. The Government wants to see those people return to their normal lifestyles so that they are able to sustain themselves in their countries. It is a program that I hope will be supported by everybody.

I would like to thank Wang Computer Pty Ltd for its support. The Government has doubled the funds available to Community Aid Abroad this year, as I indicated some weeks ago, from $5000 to $10 000 and this money will be used to assist people in East Africa.

I hope this week is able to attract very wide support from right across the community.

QUANTITATIVE TARGETS FOR MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West)—I direct another question to the Minister for Transport and I refer the Minister to section 58 of the Transport Act 1983, which requires him to set quantitative targets for all transport authorities in each financial year and to lay copies of these quantitative targets and any amendments to them before the House as soon as possible after they have been served on the relevant authorities.

Have the statutory requirements been properly and completely fulfilled since the Minister became the Minister for Transport and, if so, on what dates did he lay before the House the determinations and amendments to them for the financial year 1985–86?
The SPEAKER—Order! I should advise the honourable member for Gippsland West that the information he has sought is readily available in the usual course of events. If the honourable member chooses to raise the matter by way of a question without notice, that is his choice, but the information is available.

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—I am well aware of the requirements that are placed on me by the Transport Act and will ensure that those various requirements are met.

MUNICIPAL RATES OF GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES

Mr HANN (Rodney)—Can the Premier inform the House why a number of Government departments such as the Government Employee Housing Authority, the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands and the Rural Water Commission are consistently late in making payments of municipal rates and refuse to pay interest on outstanding amounts when those rates are finally paid?

Will the Premier ensure that any outstanding amounts are paid immediately and that interest is paid on those amounts?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I should have thought the proper course for the honourable member to adopt concerning these assertions would be to speak directly to the Minister.

Mr Hann—There are three of them.

Mr CAIN—If three Ministers are involved, he should see the three of them. If a complaint is made about an agency or department that is not paying a specific bill, I should expect honourable members to see the responsible Minister about it.

I have put in train a process that will ensure that greater accountability occurs in respect of the payment of accounts generally across the board. Discussions have occurred with department heads and heads of Government agencies, and assistance is available if any accounting methods or business practices require revision or review to assist in making payments on or before the due date.

If rate bills are involved, the Government has a direct interest and would want to have them paid on time. If the honourable member has specific examples about departments or Government agencies in respect of rate payments, I suggest that he speak directly to the Minister or Ministers concerned.

MOTOR ACCIDENTS BOARD

Mr POPE (Monbulk)—Can the Treasurer inform the House of action being taken by the Government to combat motor accident fraud, particularly in the Motor Accidents Board?

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—As honourable members would be aware, the Government is taking action—

Mr STOCKDALE (Brighton)—On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I direct your attention to your ruling on an earlier question that, if information is available, it should be sought in that form. This information was available in a press release issued by the Treasurer several weeks ago.

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

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—The honourable member for Brighton obviously had a bad night and is off to a poor start today. The Government has been taking action to stamp out fraud and that is one of the driving forces behind the need to reform third-party insurance. In February of this year the Government appointed a computer systems analyst who formerly worked for the National Crime Authority, and he has been undertaking detailed investigations since that time.
As a result of those investigations, the Motor Accidents Board is examining some 1500 claims involving aliases which require further detailed work. I also point out to honourable members, and to the honourable member for Brighton, because this has nothing to do with a previous press release, that the computer systems analyst has discovered a case of internal fraud where a payment of $9000 had been made to a board employee.

The Fraud Squad was immediately called in to investigate that situation and, as a result, further work has revealed that some $110,000 has been paid to that person at the same address. It is obvious that fraud continues to be a serious element of the Motor Accidents Board system and third-party insurance generally.

The newspaper reports on fraud activities in the third-party area have basically been correct. That is why the Government is now taking a tough stand on any fraud discovered in the Motor Accidents Board or the State Insurance Office and it will continue to do so.

As I stated in my opening remarks, fraud is one of the driving forces behind the reform of the third-party system. In this session the Government will announce a package involving third-party reform and I hope it will receive widespread support from honourable members on both sides of the House.

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT OPERATING EXPENDITURE

Mr STOCKDALE (Brighton)—I raise a question with the Minister for Transport. In light of the Minister's ignorance yesterday about the level of capital expenditure in his portfolio, today I refer him to operating—and I stress the word “operating”—expenditure and I ask whether total operating expenditure for public transport this year will increase by 5.2 per cent, as the Ministry claims, or whether it will be above the level of inflation at 8.9 per cent, as the Treasurer claims.

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—That question is almost as good as the point of order that the honourable member for Brighton raised earlier. One of the basic and important steps in examining Budgets, Budget Papers and related matters is to match like with like.

Yesterday the honourable member for Brighton obviously forgot that that was what he was required to do. For instance, he and his colleagues commented about road funding. They seemed to have decided to take into account just the works and services allocations rather than taking into account all the funds that are available through other aspects of the Budget. They referred to documents in which they claimed there was some difference of opinion between the Ministry of Transport and the Treasurer.

The honourable member for Brighton demonstrated fairly well during the debate yesterday that he does not know one fact or figure from another. It takes him a long time to come up with the figures, and even when he does, he does not come up with very much that is useful.

I repeat: one has to match like with like. It is clear that that did not occur yesterday.

I should like to put the facts to the honourable member, although, again, he probably will not understand them. However, I am sure that either my officers or the Treasurer's officers would be happy to brief him. When my officers briefed the honourable member for Brighton, they thought some of the questions he asked were peculiarly stupid, but I said that they should be tolerant of that honourable member and help him as much as they could. I am sure the Treasurer would have done the same.

Mr Kennett interjected.

Mr ROPER—It is fairly clear that the Leader of the Opposition does not want to hear anything factual about the Budget arrangements or anything that reflects on the honourable member for Brighton and his ability accurately to examine Budget Papers. The projections of the transport budget put forward in 1982-83 showed that there would be a significant
and continuing increase in the deficit incurred by the transport authorities. The reality is that there has been a 2 per cent reduction in real terms, an amount of some $10 million, compared with those projections.

Mr Kennett interjected.

Mr ROPER—It has not been easy to achieve that and it has taken much hard work by management.

Mr McNamara interjected.

The SPEAKER—Order!

Mr ROPER—Honourable members opposite obviously do not want to hear my answer. Yesterday the honourable member for Hawthorn talked about staff increases. However, because he had not made any inquiries, he was not aware that there had been a significant reduction in the staffing levels of both the Metropolitan Transit Authority and the State Transport Authority. One would expect that his information would be out of date.

The level of funds to be spent by both authorities this year will be in line with the transport budget, as adjusted, as I mentioned earlier, for such matters as revenue shortfall as a result of reduced wheat cartage.

SAFETY OF CYCLISTS

Mr ERNST (Bellarine)—Can the Minister for Transport advise the House of the steps the Government is taking to improve the safety of cyclists on the roads, especially child cyclists?

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—I am aware, as are many honourable members on both sides of the House, of the importance of increasing protection for child cyclists. I read recently that the honourable member for Sandringham had suggested that a Bill should be introduced into this House during the present Parliamentary session to make the wearing of bicycle helmets mandatory for children.

I am interested in the honourable member's views. He should be aware that that matter is currently before the Social Development Committee, of which the honourable member for Doncaster is a member. The Government is concerned to ensure that there is improvement in this area. The question of whether the wearing of helmets will be mandatory will be addressed by the Government and, if necessary, by Parliament following receipt of the report of that committee.

I inform the House that there has been a significant increase in helmet wearing, especially by young children, from 4 per cent four years ago to 58 per cent this year. That increase has resulted in significant reductions in the numbers of children being admitted to hospital with serious head injuries as a result of accidents.

Victoria has the best helmet-wearing rate for both children and adults in Australia and the world. Most honourable members would strongly support the increased wearing of helmets. During the past two Christmas periods, more than 70,000 helmets were sold to the public, each receiving a subsidy from the Government of $10 towards the cost of the helmet. That resulted in people who may not have thought of buying helmets for their children or for themselves, doing so.

We await the report of the Social Development Committee on this and other matters but, in the meantime, we are taking action both through the provision of assistance for the purchase of helmets and through advertising in an endeavour to keep our young children out of hospital.
EARLY RETIREMENT OF TRANSPORT WORKERS

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West)—I refer the Minister for Transport to the fact that three years ago the Government put 2500 transport workers into early retirement at a cost to the Victorian taxpayer in excess of $90 million, and then replaced those workers with 3200 more workers. With that precedent, how valid is the Minister’s statement made yesterday that 10 per cent of the managerial structures of the Metropolitan Transit Authority and the State Transport Authority will be retired and what confidence can the public have that they will not all be replaced, plus more?

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—The honourable member for Gippsland West has a close understanding of these matters, as was pointed out in the *Australian Financial Review* of 29 January when the reporter from that newspaper, having examined the capacity of the honourable member for Gippsland West to speak about a loan that had been taken out by the Victorian Transport Borrowing Agency, simply headlined the article, “Victorian Liberals in Bungle” and pointed out that anyone who had any understanding of this matter would not have made the comments he did.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ROPER—The honourable member for Gippsland West does not like having this pointed out to him.

Mr Brown—I do not mind at all.

Mr ROPER—I am sure when he read the *Australian Financial Review* that he was less than impressed with the advice that he had no doubt received from the honourable member for Brighton, which had caused him to say what he did to the media in the first place.

The early retirement scheme, as was mentioned by the Minister at the time, was a major exercise to ensure that the work force in the railway industry became more modern and effective. Those statements by the former Minister were borne out by events.

The honourable member suggests that the current change projects will not bring any result. Prior to 1982 the railways were allowed to deteriorate; no effort was taken to introduce major change. The honourable member for Berwick might have tried to introduce change when he was Minister, but his colleagues were not interested.

My predecessor set up a program of change in a number of areas; for example, two persons crewing, the training of cooking staff and in the numbers of conductors. More than twenty change projects are involved, none of which had been put into effect or even considered by the previous Government. Nothing had been done to address the basic staffing requirements in the railways.

I repeat, my predecessor commenced that process. As a result of that process, we are now in a situation where 100 fewer employees will be employed in the Metropolitan Transit Authority and State Transport Authority than were employed last year.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ROPER—Obviously, honourable members opposite do not want to hear what is happening. They want to draw out figures and put some strange interpretation on them. Those change projects are being put into effect and are reducing staff numbers. They will continue to do so, as I said yesterday, at all levels—not simply at the operating level but at all levels of the authorities. That is the commitment that was put into effect by my predecessor and that is now being carried out.

ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley)—I ask the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources: is it a fact that a document entitled “National Policy on Alcohol in Australia” was endorsed by the Minister for Health at a meeting in New Zealand recently and that it
concluded that alcohol consumption would increase with deregulation? In view of the significance of the current debate, particularly with the release of the Nieuwenhuyzen report, will the Minister make the document available to Parliament?

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—It is not clear from the honourable member's question whether he is asking me to make available a document from the Health Department Victoria. I should have thought that the obvious Minister to ask would have been the Minister for Health. If, however, the honourable member can give the details of the document to which he is referring today, I, of course, will be happy to raise the issue with the Minister for Health to ascertain if there are any difficulties so far as he is concerned.

I repeat, it is not a document, so far as I am aware, within my Ministry as such, particularly if it relates to the conference of Ministers of Health in New Zealand.

RECYCLED WATER

Mrs HILL (Frankston North)—I ask the Minister for Water Resources: as the use of recycled water is a key element to the Government's management strategy, what action has the Minister taken to ensure the maximum use of recycled water?

Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Water Resources)—The House should be aware of the importance of recycling water and waste water coming from sewage treatment processes. The importance of that in reducing the pressure of harvesting new water for urban use is particularly significant in reducing the cost of water to the people of Victoria.

Something like 11 per cent of all the volume running through sewage treatment in Australia is recycled as waste water and 7 per cent of that is actually processed and reused at the Board of Works Werribee farm, the treatment centre for a considerable part of waste water in the metropolitan area. The other MMBW treatment plant in the south east at Carrum is also recycling water and making it available through the trunk sewer which flows out at Cape Schank. There are currently ten users of waste water, including golf courses and recreational areas.

The Health Department Victoria recently completed a long study into the use of treated sewage. It has approved the use of waste water for vegetable growing. Two pilot projects will be conducted and one of these will be located at Cranbourne.

PETITIONS

The Clerk—I have received the following petitions for presentation to Parliament:

Birth, death and marriage records

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled:

The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the State of Victoria sheweth that, seventy-four (74) days after the release of the indexes to pre-1896 birth, death and marriage records for Victoria held by the Office of the Government Statist, the cost of obtaining certificates was increased by 90 per cent for those records most commonly used for historical research. The cost has been increased from $5 to $9.50 for pre-1896 certificates, provided the reference number from the indexes is supplied with the request; from $10 to $19.00 for the certificates for the period 1896 to 1911 and from $18 to $19 for the period 1896 to 1986.

Your petitioners hereby present their protest at this action and therefore humbly pray that the Government of the State of Victoria revoke this price increase; that the indexes for the period 1896 to 1911 be made available for public use; and that copies of microfilms of the pre-1896 registers be made available to family history societies, public libraries and other relevant organizations accordingly, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Mrs Toner (28 signatures)
Springvale Road railway crossing

TO THE HONOURABLE THE SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED:

From the undersigned Citizens of the State of Victoria praying that the Ministry for Transport initiate works as a matter of urgency to provide grade separation at the Springvale Road railway crossing to overcome excessive delays to motorists in Springvale Road.

By Mr Micallef (5224 signatures)

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

NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Use of uPVC pressure pipe for water supply purposes

Mrs HILL (Frankston North) presented a report from the Natural Resources and Environment Committee upon the use of uPVC pressure pipe for water supply purposes in Victoria, together with appendices and minutes of evidence.

It was ordered that they be laid on the table, and that the report and appendices be printed.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—I move:

That the House, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday, May 6.

The motion was agreed to.

PRIVATIZATION

Dr COGHILL (Werribee)—I move:

That this House condemns the Opposition's privatization policy as supported by the Leader of the Opposition and some other members of his party.

The Liberal Opposition is badly split over privatization and a number of other issues: firstly, about what the policy ought to be; and, secondly, the political tactics that ought to be used in promoting privatization as a policy.

Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—On a point of order, the honourable member referred to policies of the Liberal Party on privatization. I ask the honourable member to present one document of the State Liberal Party that even mentions the word “privatization”.

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—On the point of order, I think honourable members have just witnessed the beginning of the great retreat! I suggest that the point of order is totally out of order. The Leader of the Opposition will have the opportunity of replying to the motion. Indeed, the Government looks forward to hearing his reply and that of a number of other members of the Opposition. I suggest that that will be the appropriate time for the Leader of the Opposition to reply rather than interrupting the honourable member for Werribee.

The SPEAKER—Order! I do not uphold the point of order. I would be of the opinion that that was a mini debate on the side.

Dr COGHILL (Werribee)—As I said, the Opposition is badly split on the issue of privatization, and that has already been demonstrated by the point of order taken by the Leader of the Opposition. Not only has he confused his own policy; but he and his own party are clearly confused, divided and split over the political tactics that ought to be adopted on privatization.
Indeed, in the past two sitting weeks honourable members have seen two attempts by the Opposition to prevent debate on this important political question in Victoria: the extent of division within the Liberal Party on privatization. The motion is important, not so much because of the differences between the Government and the Opposition on this question and like issues—those things are well documented—but because of what privatization symbolizes for the Liberal Party. Clearly, it symbolizes divisions within the Liberal Party, confusion in the views put by the Leader of the Opposition, and the failure of the Leader of the Opposition to produce a coherent and effective policy that is supported by his colleagues.

Indeed, the splits within the Liberal Party reflect the general failure of the leadership of the present Leader. The split honourable members are seeing is basically a split between traditional Liberal philosophy, the conservative approach of the traditional conservative party, versus a radical and strongly ideological view that is being put by some members of the Opposition who are led by the Leader of the Opposition. It is the same sort of split as honourable members saw recently on the Opposition's industrial relations policy when conflicting views were put by different speakers from the Opposition. The same sort of split is affecting the Liberal Party as it considers what coalition or amalgamation arrangement it may enter into with the National Party and how many and which portfolios it may give to the National Party in a coalition arrangement. The Liberal Party is clearly bitterly divided on which portfolios should be assigned to the National Party in a coalition arrangement, whether in opposition or in government, and honourable members are seeing the same sort of split on the question of privatization.

It is probably true that there is not a single Liberal Party policy on privatization, but the Leader of the Opposition has put a view that outlines a privatization policy, and some other members of the Opposition have advanced a privatization policy which generally supports the views of their Leader which is in contradiction to the policy put by other members of the Opposition and which indeed has not had the endorsement of the whole of the Opposition.

These divisions in the Opposition have been clearly illustrated by the events surrounding the honourable member for Forest Hill. I am disappointed that he is not in the Chamber this morning. It would be important for him to have his say on this issue and to make clear whether he stands by the views he put last year. The honourable member then put a strong view on privatization and it happened to be at variance with that of his Leader. As a consequence he was dumped not only by his Leader but also by the administrative committee of the State branch of the Liberal Party.

I shall quote from the Age of 10 January 1986, which indicated the views of the honourable member for Forest Hill. The article states:

Mr Richardson described the privatization policy as a "political dead-end for the Liberals" and said the party's ratings would improve when it was abandoned. "It is symptomatic of the party's growing reliance on buzz-words and slogans which seem a good idea at the time but are soon shown to be electorally disastrous."

"The simple reality is that the community is comfortable with traditional government enterprises," Mr Richardson said.

"To be diverted by buzz-words like privatization is political and economic lunacy and if Liberal leaders persist with the concept regardless of what new buzz-word they invent, the Liberal extinction will be complete as that of the dinosaurs," Mr Richardson said.

Those statements were made by a former senior member of the Liberal Party Opposition, and his views are clearly at variance with the views of the Leader of the Opposition. They highlight the extent of the division within the Liberal Party.

What was the reward from the Liberal Party for the statement of conscience made by the honourable member for Forest Hill? He was banished! The Australian of 10 January 1986 stated that:
The administrative wing of the Liberal Party has castigated a rebellious MP for publicly claiming the party would die if it did not abandon its controversial privatization policy.

The powerful Victorian president, Mrs Eda Ritchie, said the attack on privatization by the former State frontbencher Mr John Richardson was viewed with "grave concern" by the party's administrative committee.

She warned Mr Richardson that he would not get preselection at the next election if he continued to show a lack of discipline by criticising party policy.

The Opposition, which claims to be the inheritor of the liberal tradition of free speech and freedom of the individual, decided that a member who spoke his conscience should be threatened with losing his preselection.

It is a disgrace that an honourable member with the record of the honourable member for Forest Hill should be threatened by the Liberal Party and dumped by his own Leader for having spoken his mind.

The issue is not just about privatization. When considering privatization, it is important to remember that we are not considering it as an end in itself but as a means to an end. I am certain that is what the honourable member for Forest Hill was getting at when he suggested that his party should not be concerned about buzz words but should be examining concepts.

As the honourable member for Forest Hill stated, the concept is wrong. I suspect that the views put forward by the honourable member for Forest Hill are shared also by former Liberal Party Ministers who have been relegated to the back bench by the Leader of the Opposition: I refer specifically to the honourable members for Benambra, Frankston South, Berwick and Polwarth. It is interesting that none of these honourable members has remained in the Chamber to support their Leader while this motion attacking him is under debate. None of them has stayed here to defend him. They have all deserted the Chamber because they cannot support the privatization policy and are not prepared to support their Leader.

The issue is not just relevant in this State as the same type of thing has occurred elsewhere. During the recent Tasmanian State election, the Premier stated that privatization was not for Tasmania. He did not quite say that it was un-Tasmanian, but he said that the Tasmanian Liberal Party would not support the policy of privatization put forward by the Federal Liberal Party. Senior members of the Federal Liberal Party have distanced themselves from the views on privatization put forward by Liberal Party spokesmen.

Honourable members should consider what the honourable member for Forest Hill strongly and rightly objected to. I shall now refer to the evidence that is readily available.

I refer, for example, to the very short-lived plan by the Leader of the Opposition for selling off the Victorian State Bank. One should have thought if he had been sincere and consistent on the issue of privatization, the Leader of the Opposition would not have distinguished between the State Bank and the State Insurance Office but would have wanted to privatize both. He was divided and inconsistent even on his own views of what privatization ought to involve. An article in the Herald of 26 March 1984 refers to what the Leader of the Opposition had said on the previous Saturday at the Liberal Party State Conference. It states that the Leader of the Opposition said:

... a future Liberal Government would hand over to the private sector activities of Government it felt could be better performed by private enterprise.

He said the State Insurance Office was one Government activity which could be handed over as a first step . . .

Those were the words of the Leader of the Opposition reported in the press and never repudiated, but confirmed, that it was clear he had in mind that the State Insurance Office should be sold off. Honourable members will recall it was about that time in an interview on the ABC Schildberger program when the Leader of the Opposition and the Treasurer were interviewed that the Leader of the Opposition was asked his position on the State Bank and, according to a report in the Herald of 28 March 1984, the Treasurer asked the Leader of the Opposition his opinion on any possible sale of the State Bank and the Leader
of the Opposition replied: "I recognize the State Bank is a major institution. We would be progressively moving to sell off those areas that compete and I have got to admit it would be very hard to sell off the State Bank, although it would not be possible."

Mr Kennett—I said "impossible"—get your facts right!

Dr COGHILL—Clearly, if the report is correct—

Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—On a point of order, as the honourable member for Werribee is not accurate in his quotes I ask him to table the document from which he is quoting so that I may check his accuracy to assist me in my reply to his remarks.

The SPEAKER—Order! I ask the honourable member for Werribee whether he is prepared to make the document available to the House.

Dr COGHILL (Werribee)—I shall be delighted, Mr Speaker. I am quoting from a report that appeared in the Melbourne Herald on 28 March 1984. I shall repeat the quotation:

Mr Jolly asked Mr Kennett for his opinion of any possible sale of the State Bank.

Mr Kennett replied: "I recognize the State Bank is a major institution. We would be progressively moving to sell of those areas that compete and I have got to admit it would be very hard to sell off the State Bank, although it would not be impossible."

It is clear that the Leader of the Opposition was more than prepared to consider the sale of the State Bank but when it suddenly became politically embarrassing to him in the heat of debate he subsequently retreated from that position. However, the Leader of the Opposition did not retreat from his view that the State Insurance Office ought to be sold off.

Further statements were made later. A report appeared in the Age of 8 November 1984. It stated:

The State Opposition next month will release a radical plan aimed at saving $500 million a year in public sector wages and administrative costs by cutting the size of the public sector by up to 15 per cent.

The plan will involve the sale of some Government agencies to the private sector and the transfer of up to 40 000 public sector employees to private companies.

But the Opposition Leader, Mr Kennett, described the plan as a cornerstone of Liberal policy.

There it is again: the Leader of the Opposition making a clear unequivocal commitment to what he sees as the principle of privatization.

Other Opposition spokesmen have put forward the same view. I refer to a report that appeared in the Sun newspaper of 6 February 1985 which quoted the then Opposition spokesman on minerals and energy, Mr Crozier, now the honourable member for Portland. He is recorded as having said:

SEC functions would be sold if it could be shown they could be run more efficiently and effectively by private enterprise.

He said companies could also build power stations, possibly even the proposed giant Loy Yang B project.

Again an individual member of the Opposition has committed the Liberal Party to privatization. That is absolute nonsense. Can honourable members imagine power companies competing with multiple sets of reticulation through residential streets of Melbourne so that customers can decide whether to purchase their power from company A or company B? That is the sort of nonsense the Liberal Party wants to introduce.

If the Liberal Party were to introduce power stations that could tie in with the grid rather than use multiple reticulation, how would it operate? Is the Leader of the Opposition and his spokesman on minerals and energy proposing that a customer could purchase
electricity from one grid supplier rather than a separate supplier, so that two different suppliers would operate? Again, that is nonsense.

The honourable member for Syndal interjects, "What about the municipal system we have at present?" I am not aware of any municipal system in which different power sources are available to a customer.

Another incredible example of the privatization policy involves comments made by the then Opposition spokesman on housing which appeared in the *Age* newspaper of 16 February 1985.

Mr Kennett—Mr Speaker, this is obviously a riveting speech supported by the Government, so it is strange that Government members are not present. I direct your attention to the state of the House.

A quorum was formed.

Dr Coghill—Again the Opposition is not prepared to seriously debate this central issue, particularly as it affects the Victorian Liberal Party. The Opposition is so severely split on this issue that it cannot even command more than five members in the House at one time. At present only four members of the Liberal Party are supporting the Leader of the Opposition. It is clear that members of the Opposition do not see this as an issue on which they should and can support their Leader. They are not prepared to come into the Chamber and back up statements that he and his shadow Ministers have made.

I again refer the House to a statement reported in the *Age* newspaper of 16 February 1985 attributed to the then spokesman on housing, which states:

Melbourne's controversial high-rise Housing Ministry flats would be progressively sold under a Liberal Government, the Opposition spokesman on housing, Mr Brown, said yesterday.

Selected Housing Ministry towers would be sold to private developers and others would be converted to office accommodation for public service and private sector use.

Towards the end of the report, he said:

... one housing commission tower would be made into a Victorian sports centre and another would be converted into a retirement village.

Anyone who has seen those towers would have to regard that as an incredible statement. The Leader of the Opposition, a former Minister of Housing, must know how incredible that statement is, not only because of the design and structure of the building but also because of another issue. The report continues:

The Minister for Housing, Mr Cathie, said yesterday that the Liberal's plans were illegal under the terms of the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement.

The proposal by the Opposition spokesman also suggested that some of the units could be made available for sale and a 1 per cent discount would be allowed for each year of occupancy. The then Minister of Housing went on to point out that the plan to sell public rental stock to tenants at discounted rates was nothing but asset stripping and is outlawed under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement.

Not only was the proposal for privatization put forward by the Opposition ludicrous but it was also illegal and could not have succeeded under the terms of the funding arrangements.

Mr Brown interjected.

Dr Coghill—We should not be surprised that the honourable member for Gippsland West is ignoring such basic matters as legality. After all, when he was a councillor, he built a block of flats in breach of a building permit—he built five flats when only four were permitted. That sort of issue does not seem to concern the honourable member for Gippsland West. To that extent, he is being consistent. He does not care whether some action of his own or of a prospective Liberal Government is legal or illegal.
The honourable member for Forest Hill said that the concept of privatization was wrong. I am sure he is correct in saying that. What he said was that the community is comfortable with traditional Government enterprises. I hope the honourable member for Forest Hill comes into the House today and clarifies his views on this matter.

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West)—On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the honourable member for Werribee said that a company with which I was formerly connected built a block of five flats when a permit was issued for only four. That comment is untruthful.

The SPEAKER—Order! I advise the honourable member for Gippsland West that that is not a point of order. The honourable member is attempting to make a personal explanation. That should be done in another manner and by a different form.

Dr COGHILL (Werribee)—Once again we see the sensitivity of the Opposition on this issue. The Opposition is not prepared to debate the issue seriously, it merely wants the debate diverted to issues that are peripheral to this important matter. As you pointed out, Mr Speaker, if the honourable member for Gippsland West is so embarrassed about his actions as a councillor in building blocks of flats, he can use the proper forms of the House to set the record straight according to his understanding of the facts of the matter.

It would be helpful if the honourable member for Forest Hill were to come into the House and put his view because that view is clearly indicative of an important area of opinion within the Liberal Party and confirms that a major split exists within the party. As you pointed out, Mr Speaker, if the honourable member for Gippsland West is so embarrassed about his actions as a councillor in building blocks of flats, he can use the proper forms of the House to set the record straight according to his understanding of the facts of the matter.

The stupidity of pursuing a privatization policy has been confirmed during recent State elections. The Liberal Premier of Tasmania clearly said that privatization is not a policy that his Government would endorse and he openly and publicly rejected it. His opinion was confirmed by the electorate at the Tasmanian State election.

Conversely, a short time earlier, during the State election in South Australia, the South Australian Leader of the Opposition sought to promote privatization as a major policy of a prospective South Australian Liberal Government. That policy was overwhelmingly rejected by the electorate—and properly so.

Similarly in Western Australia, in the State election earlier this year, the Western Australian Leader of the Opposition strongly pushed his party's privatization line, which was again overwhelmingly rejected by the electorate in that State.

The matter should not simply be regarded as an electoral popularity issue or as involving people being comfortable with existing institutions, as was said by the honourable member for Forest Hill. He rested his case not only on principle but also on the comment that the community is comfortable with traditional Government enterprises. The matter should not be considered on that basis nor on the basis of electoral popularity or blind ideological commitment, which is the basis on which the Leader of the Opposition based his case, as did other members of the Opposition.

I shall refer to the editorial in today's Age, the timing of which is fortuitous. It refers to matters that were raised in the House yesterday, to which I shall not refer. On this issue, the editorial states:

There is a growing consensus as the privatisation debate continues that whether a producer has a public or private payroll is a less important criterion than whether it is operating efficiently.

An Honourable Member—Who wrote the editorial?

Dr COGHILL—I am in no position to say who wrote it but I am sure that the editor of the Age takes responsibility for it. The view expressed in the Age neatly sums up the issue.
We should not be concerned with a blind ideological commitment to a buzz word, as honourable members opposite are. We should be considering our political objectives, as a Parliament and as a State. As such, we should distinguish means from ends. Privatization is simply one means towards certain ends. The ends it seeks are not those that have been publicly put forward by the Leader of the Opposition and others in his party.

The ultimate end is not simply a matter of efficiency or effectiveness in the delivery of services to the public, it is the distribution of wealth, income and control over decision making in the community. It comes down to the basic divisions that exist between the Government and the Opposition. It is a matter of social justice and the Labor Party states that it is the regressive redistribution of wealth, income and political and economic power that lies behind the Opposition's views.

Honourable members interjecting.

Dr COGHILL—The only way in which the Opposition can respond is to refer to Eastern Europe. The honourable member for Mornington may have a preoccupation with Eastern Europe, which I do not have, and I have no intention of referring to Eastern Europe. However, I shall refer to a range of evidence from Western economies because I regard that as important to the issue.

Honourable members may be aware that British Columbia in Canada has in recent years had a social credit party Government, a party which is of the right and which has been heavily committed to privatization and like policies and has applied them in government with disastrous results.

It has caused high unemployment, wide disruption and massive protests in the community. Those protests arise from the savage cuts in health, education and welfare expenditure. That effect is a good illustration of what could or would happen.

Mr Kennett—Mr Speaker, I direct your attention to the state of House.

A quorum was formed.

Dr COGHILL—Opposition members are not prepared to support their Leader during debate on the motion, which is directed at him. The fact that members of the Opposition are not remaining in the Chamber to support him is indicative of the failure in leadership of the Leader of the Opposition.

There are further examples of the effects of the privatization policies advocated by the Opposition. I refer to a statement by the then honourable member for Westernport, now the honourable member for Gippsland West, on 19 February 1985, in his capacity as Opposition spokesman on correctional services. He is reported to have said that a Liberal Government would sell one of Victoria's low-security prisons to private enterprise. The suggestion of selling a prison is taking the policy to an absurd level. He said, "Private enterprise can do it cheaper". His main consideration about prisons was whether they are cheap or expensive to maintain. Presumably, he would be happy to put a few prisoners in the rotting hull of the Cerberus. I suggest that is a logical extension of the views of the honourable member for Gippsland West.

The honourable member has also said that a gaol would be purchased and operated by private enterprise. I shall draw upon international experience to determine the implications of that proposal. Prisons have been privatized in the United States of America. For example, in Florida, a company was sued for cruel and abusive conditions of confinement in a prison. Corrections Corporations of America—or CCA as it is known—was one company concerned. A report which appeared in the Age of 27 December 1985 stated:

A youth facility run by the Jack Eckard company in Florida was sued recently by the American Civil Liberties Union for "cruel and abusive conditions of confinement".

The ACLU suit claims the privately-run jail is overcrowded and its young inmates live in an atmosphere of fear and violence. Among other things, the ACLU suit cites "unsanitary conditions, inadequate feeding, poor security, grossly inadequate medical care and frequent sexual assaults".
One ex-employee of the facility even claimed inmates were fed stew made with rat meat.

The Florida case has brought to the attention of the public what many criminologists say is the main problem with private prisons: the profit motive. Guaranteed a flat cost—say $US24 an inmate—a private company running a jail then has a built-in incentive to cut costs to enhance profits. The easiest areas for cuts—security personnel, educational and medical services and food—are also the most important if a prison is to be run in a humane manner.

It is clear that what one gets, one keeps. It is a captive market, because once private prison operators are established they request subsidies so that they can operate the prison at the level desired by people concerned about humane conditions for prisoners. The report also states:

Indeed, the worry that the state could become dependent on the private contractor that replaced it, was borne out recently in Tennessee when Hamilton County Detention Centre turned over its jail to CCA in the hope it would save money.

The firm is demanding more money to cover costs. It is clear that privatization has failed in yet another instance, this time in prisons.

I shall now refer to the much quoted British Telecom case, an organization that was privatized with much fanfare. A high proportion of shareholdings in British Telecom was sold off and $16 billion worth of assets, which were owned 100 per cent by the British people, were virtually given away for about half their value to a small number of people who represent only about 3.5 per cent of the population in the United Kingdom. In addition, advertising associated with the privatization of British Telecom cost approximately $600 million. What has been the consequence of that move? It certainly has not been a better service for the men and women in Great Britain; far from it!

Businesses are receiving huge tariff concessions but the cost of telephone calls to the average man and woman in Britain has escalated enormously to the point where the United Kingdom now offers the cheapest international telephone calls but some of the dearest domestic telephone calls anywhere in the world.

A slightly different example is the deregulation of the ATT monopoly in the United States of America, where exactly the same situation has occurred. The break-up of the regulated monopoly has resulted in a withdrawal of services in less profitable areas and the provision of concessions to the business sector. In no sense can it be properly claimed that either the privatization of British Telecom or the deregulation of ATT has benefited the general community. Those who have benefited were those with the greatest wealth and greatest power.

I shall cite an example closer to home. One appreciates the ideological basis of privatization. In debates in this House last year on the WorkCare package it was indicated that the Government was committed to efficiency and effective service in the protection of workers. However, the Leader of the Opposition and the Opposition spokesperson opposed that approach. The Opposition was committed to privatization, regardless of the costs to the community, regardless of the effects on benefits for workers and regardless of the costs of premiums to employers. It was simply ideology gone mad. With the Government enterprise of WorkCare, employers' premiums for accident compensation have been reduced by about half, despite improvements in benefits for workers. The Leader of the Opposition was not prepared to concede that improvement. He was concerned only that workers compensation be privatized.

He was not prepared to have a bar of the WorkCare proposal with a Government monopoly, especially in the way it is now run. The Leader of the Opposition and some members of the Opposition have ideological obsessions. Their first obsession in that there is some relationship between small government and economic growth. They claim that
reducing government will inevitably increase economic growth. The second obsession is that there is some relationship between the ownership of equity in an enterprise and its efficiency. Those honourable members suggest there is a relationship between public ownership and efficiency or private ownership and efficiency. If that were so, one would expect to find international evidence in that regard. In an article by Tim Colebatch that appeared in the Age of 20 May 1985 it was stated, inter alia:

Sweden has been the ultimate welfare state; in 1982, two-thirds of its GDP went through the public sector (compared to one-third of Australia’s). Yet Sweden is the West’s fourth richest country.

If big government was the road to ruin, then Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and West Germany would all be burning now in an economic hellfire.

That is the view put forward by Tim Colebatch on the basis of a very careful examination of the facts. I have had prepared a couple of tables which relate to that issue, and I seek leave to have them incorporated in Hansard.

Leave was granted, and the tables were as follows:

**GENERAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE**

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Source: OECD publication tax Role of the Public Sector 1985.
Privatization 24 April 1986 ASSEMBLY 1579

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(1) 1981
(2) 1982 or nearest year


source: OECD Statistics.

**Dr COGHILL**—Those tables clearly show that the trend asserted by the Opposition in its privatization arguments simply does not exist. There is no negative relationship between economic growth and public expenditure.

If one examines the figures in those tables and other figures which are available, one realizes that in 1962, in terms of living standard, Australia ranked seventeenth out of 23 Organization for Economic Development countries. At that time Government expenditure was approximately 22 per cent of gross domestic product, which was about five-sixths of the OECD average.

Twenty years later, in 1982, Australia had slipped one point relative to the OECD countries, and at that time Government expenditure had risen to 36 per cent of gross domestic product, but was still only three-quarters of the OECD average.

It is clear from those figures that the public sector in other countries had grown more quickly than the public sector in Australia, but, despite that, Australia’s position had slipped behind those countries.
The argument advanced by the Opposition on privatization simply lacks credibility. Some other figures which have been published more recently again refute the view put forward by the Opposition that there is a negative correlation between public sector growth and economic growth. The Opposition simply cannot sustain its argument. I have a copy of a chart which appeared in the spring 1985 publication of OECD Economic Studies entitled, "The Role of the Public Sector", which I seek leave to have incorporated in Hansard.

Leave was granted, and the table was as follows:

![Chart 3: Elasticity of General Government Total Expenditure](chart.png)

Dr COGHILL—This is an interesting chart which clearly illustrates the falsity of the Opposition's argument because it shows there is no negative correlation between the trend of growth in Government expenditure and economic growth. If anything, there is a trend towards a positive correlation, in that it would appear to suggest that, if there is a high rate of growth in Government expenditure, there is more likely to be a high rate of over-all economic growth.

The Opposition's argument is about concentrating wealth, power and income in the hands of a few. It is about reducing the right of the community to have some influence over the services that are provided for it; concentrating wealth and power more strongly amongst the few who already have a concentration of wealth and power and eroding the democratic rights of the community to influence economic and social decisions.

I should have thought that honourable members opposite would appreciate that responsible government involves some sort of acceptance of responsibility and that, accordingly, that policy of responsibility to the community should not be measured in narrow commercial terms of profit maximization.

Market forces cannot guarantee efficiency, and there is even less historical evidence that market forces can ensure that efficiency.

Market forces are not concerned about any equitable distribution of resources within the community. Privatization does not address those basic issues of equity or social justice. It does not address how best Government can assist the private sector and it certainly does not address how Government can best assist and serve the entire community; nor does it address the issue of how the public sector itself can be improved—that issue is simply swept aside; nor does it address how the public sector can best respond to the needs of the community.

The Opposition even ignores the other benefits which may accrue from public ownership. I refer honourable members to the Budget figures on Government revenue from public enterprises. In 1985–86 the State Electricity Commission is estimated to have contributed $80 million; the Gas and Fuel Corporation, $210 million; the Board of Works, $60 million; the Port of Melbourne Authority, $5 million; the State Bank, $51·4 million; and the Grain Elevators Board, $4·5 million. Those figures add up to about 10 per cent of Government revenue derived from public sector sources, leaving aside Commonwealth sources.

If those enterprises were to be sold off and their profits accrue simply to the private sector, either there would have to be a massive reduction in services or, alternatively, there would have to be a 10 per cent increase in taxes.

Mr Heffernan—Rubbish.

Dr COGHILL—I hope the honourable member for Ivanhoe is given an opportunity to speak, but I rather doubt he will be. What is important for efficiency and effectiveness is not the question of ownership but the question of administrative management in the public sector and indeed the private sector. These issues have been addressed by the Government and there has been a massive shake-up in the way in which government, the public sector, public utilities and authorities operate in Victoria. There has been a massive effort to address the machinery of government which determines how best services can be delivered to the community. This has been combined with a commendable restraint on Government expenditure so that it has been possible for the Government to both aim for and achieve better value for the dollar for the taxpayer by improving the way in which various public sector activities are conducted and by improving their efficiency.

In addition, there has been partnership and co-operation between the Government and the private sector in the provision of guidelines for the private sector which have facilitated the economic growth of the private sector and the Victorian economy generally.

The social justice strategy, which is now being evolved, will similarly create a fairer and more equitable society.
The Leader of the Opposition, and the few honourable members who choose to support him, ignore those matters of substance and instead dwell on the ideological commitment of the buzz-word “privatization”. The Opposition has not offered any substantial argument to support that commitment. The Opposition has rejected overseas evidence, which clearly points to greater unemployment, higher costs to consumers and a reduction in services through privatization.

The policy of privatization advocated by some members of the Opposition deserves to be rejected because of its irrelevancy and irresponsibility.

The Leader of the Opposition has yet to present a comprehensive case showing some or all of the services of public instrumentalities which he would seek to have privatized, much less to justify the assumption on which he would propose privatization. All one has is an assumption of some sort of benefit, a rejection of the evidence showing that that benefit would not accrue and the endless parroting of this ideologically based commitment to privatization.

One has yet to see any evidence from the Leader of the Opposition that privatization would produce a more equitable, just or fair society. One has yet to see from the opposition parties generally a coherent or logical view on what privatization ought to be; how it ought to be structured and how it ought to be put forward both in terms of political tactics and in terms of what it would actually do in practice.

This is yet another example of blind ideological commitment to the concept of privatization without any substantiation whatsoever.

That in itself is, no doubt, the reason why the Liberals are so badly split over this point and one can only hope that the honourable member for Forest Hill will be given the opportunity to speak on the debate because, until he does so, unless he shows that he has a change of heart or, alternatively, he has been able to convince his colleagues, the evidence will be overwhelming that there is a major split in the Opposition over this issue and on that basis the motion ought to be carried and the Opposition should be condemned.

Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—Every few months the honourable member for Werribee emerges from the kennel of the Labor caucus and tries to use his title of Doctor as a cloak for a pseudo-academic attack on the Liberal Party.

Of course, the honourable member’s title comes about because he is a vet and, invariably, his attempts at a political vivisection fail, and fail dramatically. He is, without doubt, the mouse that roared and today he has been at it again.

I would not normally bother myself by responding to the comments made by such an insignificant character as the honourable member for Werribee but on this occasion I welcome the opportunity of addressing the issue and being able to prove by the conclusion of my comments just what an absolutely hypocritical approach he takes to this subject.

I intend to examine the intellectual processes of the “Werribee mouse” because what has emerged today from the honourable member for Werribee are the products of a confused analysis and of a deliberate attempt to mislead Parliament and the people of Victoria about the economic policies not only of the Opposition but also of the Government.

Right at the beginning of the speech by the honourable member for Werribee, honourable members may recall that I took a point of order in which I asked him to table a full copy of any official published document of the State Liberal Party of Victoria that contained the so-called policy of privatization to which he was referring.

Honourable members will recall the embarrassment of the honourable member for Werribee because he could not produce a copy of such a Liberal policy and so right from the start he was forced to admit, as he did during his contribution——
Dr VAUGHAN (Clayton)—On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, I direct the attention of the Chair to the fact that the Leader of the Opposition appears to be spending most of his time reading his speech.

Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—On the point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, I am referring to copious quantities of notes that I have prepared because I would have thought the honourable member for Werribee, who also referred to copious quantities of notes, would have wanted a serious debate on this issue, and I make no apology for it.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! There is no point of order.

Mr KENNETT—I was referring to the fact that during his speech the honourable member for Werribee indicated quite clearly and of his own volition that there was no published document on privatization held by the Opposition. I can only confirm what he said—that there is no so-called policy of privatization in the State Liberal Party.

The State Liberal Party has two policy documents. One is entitled the “Structure and Management of Government” and the other is entitled “Restraint in Government”. These documents were published in December 1984, nearly eighteen months ago. They were widely distributed and yet the honourable member for Werribee, who would like to be seen as an expert on these matters, has obviously still not obtained a copy of either of the policies.

If the honourable member for Werribee wishes to embark on an intellectual debate on good management in this State, I would be happy to give him a copy of both of these policies; in the meantime, I shall summarize the contents of the policies: in the first place, they provide for the restructuring of the Public Service into an efficient effective and cost-benefit organization. In particular, they aim to bring about again a return to an apolitical Public Service, which is not the case today and which certainly should be the case.

They provide mechanisms to ensure that programs are not undertaken by whim or by duplication and that outdated and unnecessary programs are reviewed. These two policies provide for a reduction in the bank of regulations and the huge paperwork load that the Cain Government, of which the honourable member for Werribee is a member, has instituted.

Mr MICALLEF (Springvale)—On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, it is quite obvious to members of the House that the Leader of the Opposition is reading his speech.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! There is no point of order.

Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—Understanding that the honourable member for Springvale is, in the very real sense, a slow learner, I will provide my notes to him afterwards so that he can take away the content of what I am saying and become better educated.

The policies in these two documents provide job security for public servants and guarantee that a reduction in the Public Service work force will not be by sacking. A reduction in the Public Service would occur only through resignation and limited replacement of those who leave.

They provide for a thorough review of all Government activities to ascertain those functions that could be carried out most effectively or with great expertise by the private sector. Such functions would then be examined to determine whether it would be economically and socially desirable—and that is an important point—that those functions be contracted out or transferred to the private sector. In such circumstances, there would be no sacking of public servants.

The result of these policies will be more efficient and effective government at less cost to the taxpayer. Effective government at less cost to the taxpayer is something that 4 million Victorians are desperately crying out for.
One of the reasons why the honourable member for Werribee has perpetrated his little charade today is to try to divert attention away from the failures of his Government's economic policies. The statistics of failures in aspects of this Government's management were updated yet again in recent days. To refresh the memory of the House, I shall quote some of the updated statistics on the economic policies of the Cain Government.

Taxes have risen 72·9 per cent in four years, Government spending has risen 66 per cent in four years and the number of unemployed youth has risen 22·6 per cent in four years. Government revenue has risen 43 per cent in four years, the size of the public debt has risen to 56 per cent in four years, the Government's interest bill on that debt alone has risen 35 per cent in four years, the number of bureaucrats has risen 13 per cent in four years, waiting lists in our hospitals have grown 300 per cent in four years, waiting lists in nursing homes have grown 100 per cent in four years and the waiting list at the Ministry of Housing has grown from approximately 14 000 in 1982 to 33 000 in 1986; this is an increase of almost 150 per cent.

With that background of horrifying economic failure it is no wonder that the honourable member for Werribee has tried to create a diversion. As well as trying to hide the facts about failure, the honourable member for Werribee is also acting as the lickspittle of the socialist left. If the honourable member cannot handle it, I will say it again: he is the lickspittle of the socialist left.

The Minister for Consumer Affairs asks by way of interjection how "lickspittle" is spelt. One would expect that from the Minister. In case the Minister is in doubt about what that means, I shall give him the dictionary definition: "lickspittle" means a servile flatterer. The honourable member for Werribee is a servile flatterer of the socialist left.

The honourable member for Werribee is trying to throw a smokescreen over two vital factors: the first is the truth about the creeping nationalization the Cain Government has been inflicting on Victorian taxpayers; and the second is the incontrovertible fact that the biggest privatization program being undertaken in Australia is being undertaken by the Cain Government. That program involves the sale to the private sector of half a billion dollars worth of trams, trains, buses, dredges and cranes. The Cain Government tried to privatize Victoria's dams by selling them to the private sector. That is the sort of privatization the honourable member should have dealt with.

If it were not for the fact that the Chair would be tempted to rule me out of order, I would suggest that the honourable member for Werribee is a 100 per cent hypocrite. He is certainly a 100 per cent political lightweight.

I shall now turn to the first point of creeping nationalization that the honourable member for Werribee is trying to hide in a babble about so-called privatization. Earlier I said taxes under this Government had increased by more than 72 per cent in only four years. A large proportion of that money has gone into funding Government intervention in the private sector. The Government is trying to get a piece of the action at the taxpayers' expense. It is trying to force private firms out of business only for reasons of ideology.

The honourable member for Werribee obviously wants to continue along that track or else he would be speaking out against such a performance. He is happy with the prospect of a further minimum increase of 70 per cent in taxes in the current life of the Government to fund the continuing nationalization and socialism being witnessed in the State.

Government business operations are fuelling tax pressures and posing a threat to private sector companies for investment and jobs. I shall summarize some of the Cain Government interventions that the honourable member for Werribee obviously supports. The Government has empowered the Victorian Economic Development Corporation to buy into and run private businesses.

The corporation was specifically given the green light to take up a 20 per cent interest in the Hong Kong Bank of Australia Ltd. It has legislated to enable State corporations, including V/Line and the Road Traffic Authority, to move into the open market for the
production of goods and services. It has imposed a State monopoly to control workers compensation insurance and has become a major shareholder in the aluminium smelter being built at Portland.

The Government has extended the franchise of the State Insurance Office to provide all forms of insurance. It has broadened the State Bank franchise to embrace general commercial areas. It has enabled the Victorian Tourism Commission to act as a private travel agent and compelled its departments and authorities to use that service.

Mr Remington—You wanted to sell the gaol and the State Bank.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! The honourable member for Melbourne is repeating the same interjection and I ask him to cease.

Mr KENNETT—The Government has established the Victorian Prisons Industry Commission to manufacture and sell products including concrete blocks and nails for both the export and domestic markets. Honourable members should note that the commission is losing a great deal of money.

The Government has encouraged the State Electricity Commission, the Gas and Fuel Corporation and the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works to seek new markets selling private enterprise commodities to meet new taxes that have been demanded by the Government. The Government has authorized the Board of Works to conduct businesses on Crown land. It has allowed the Police Department to establish its own print shop to produce insignias, signs and certificates.

It may be of particular interest to members of the Government to understand fully the way in which the Government is interfering in the process of competition in the private sector. The Government has committed the Road Construction Authority and the Rural Water Commission of Victoria to manufacture prestressed concrete components for bridges, including culverts, pipes and so on. It has expanded the authority sign manufacturing operation and has forbidden most public hospitals from obtaining laundry services from the private sector.

Dr COGHILL (Werribee)—On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, I am delighted the Leader of the Opposition is reinforcing my comments with his preoccupation with the activities in which the Government happens to be involved, but I find it impossible to relate his remarks to the motion, which refers to the policy put forward by him and other members of the Liberal Party.

I should have thought the motion would require the Leader of the Opposition to defend his policies, which in fairness he commenced to do, but he has now completely diverted from that course and is seeking to debate the policies of the Government. I would have no hesitation in debating those policies, if the motion were appropriate to that purpose.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! The honourable member for Werribee cannot debate his point of order.

Dr COGHILL—The motion deals with the privatization policies that are supported by the Leader of the Opposition and other members of the Liberal Party. I suggest the Chair should direct the Leader of the Opposition to direct his comments to the motion and not to deal with extraneous matters.

The ACTING SPEAKER—Order! The motion before the Chair is broad and the Leader of the Opposition has the same opportunity as the lead speaker for the Government in answering the points made by the Government in the motion moved by the honourable member for Werribee. As I understand the position put by the Leader of the Opposition, he was answering, in part, those matters that he is allowed to debate. Therefore, I rule against the point of order.

Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—Obviously I am developing a case that will totally refute the points put by the honourable member for Werribee. If the honourable
member cannot stand a little fire directed at his belly through the recognition of the failure of his Government, so be it. If the House is to have an intellectual and serious debate on the matters he raised, it is necessary that all sides put forward their cases.

I was trying to explain how the Government has interfered in the private sector by allowing its agencies and departments to compete directly with the private sector. The decisions by the Government have been spread out over time and have been carefully contrived to deceive. Put together, that collective group of decisions reveals a rapid switch under Labor to provide a high taxing corporate State that is moving to displace the private sector at the expense of Victorian taxpayers.

Government duplication of the production of goods and services already available through Victorian business is detrimental to investment, employment and industrial development.

I turn now to the smokescreen that the honourable member for Werribee is endeavouring to throw up over the attitude of Labor Governments—including his own—to privatization. The honourable member claims—he spends much of his time claiming—that privatization is some sort of mindless selling off of people’s assets for no public benefit.

He should reflect on the fact that the largest privatization in Australia’s history was the Cain Government sell-off of $490 million of transport assets, which it leased back at the cost of $1 billion! If that is not privatization I will go “he” for tiggy. This was not an action taken by the Government on our side; it was taken by the Government on the honourable member’s side.

Of course, as always, the Cain Government made a mess of it because the people will now have to pay back twice as much in leaseback payments as the so-called modern money managers in Mr Cain’s stable received for the assets in the first place. This shows what can happen when one puts a socialist Labor Government in charge of money.

If the honourable member for Werribee and the Government believe privatization in the sense of contracting out services is bad, why did the Premier make his election promise to try to reduce the public hospital waiting lists by contracting private hospitals to treat public hospital patients? The honourable member remains silent.

I remind the House that it was the Labor Party that increased the hospital waiting lists to 28,000 because of its mismanagement. I shall quote from a glossy propaganda sheet that the Government issued at the time and this is not a bad quote. It states:

To reduce delays in major surgery the Government has made an unprecedented move—public hospitals will enter into contracts with private hospitals to allow public hospital patients to be treated at private hospitals and remain covered by Medicare.

The Government described the proposal as unprecedented! It was unprecedented in that it was a sensible adoption of the existing Liberal policy. It was the Premier who was suggesting privatization.

There was nothing unprecedented about the fact that having promised that the Government would use the private sector to relieve the pain and suffering that it had inflicted, once the election was over the Government reneged on its promise. In other words, it saw a way of clearing the backlog by using the private hospitals as part of its policy but as soon as the election was over, it tossed this away.

Dr Coghill—It had to be done!

Mr KENNETT—If it had to be done, why is the honourable member moving a motion such as this? Talk about a “mouse that roared”! One moment the honourable member is moving a motion in this House criticizing the utilization of the private sector——

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! I draw to the attention of the honourable member for Bendigo West that he is out of his seat and that he is disorderly.
Mr KENNETT—Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. The interjection made by the honourable member for Werribee must prove to be hypocrisy. If the honourable member is genuinely concerned about the motion, why is he now saying that the Government has used private hospitals to relieve the public waiting lists? The Government has used the same policy of privatization that the honourable member is ridiculing. Those examples have not been the only flirtation between the honourable member's Government and privatization.

I turn to the history of the 1982 State election, a book entitled Labor to Office. Has the honourable member read this book?

Dr Coghill—Yes.

Mr KENNETT—I draw his attention to page 232 on which there is a "little gem", as Barry Humphries would say, which simply states:

"Labor was considering plans to sell shares in public corporations like the State Electricity Commission to the public".

Can honourable members believe it? Well I never! Then there was the sell-off—if that is not enough to make a mockery of the motion by the honourable member for Werribee—of Government land and a greater use of private buses and the opening-up of the transport of grain to an efficient private sector when the Government railway system failed; but still the honourable member has the audacity to move this motion.

Dr Coghill—Back to the motion.

Mr KENNETT—Talk about the mouse that roared! Governments of all persuasions around the world are making their administrations more efficient by contracting out or selling to private enterprise a whole range of functions which they have proven to their satisfaction will be better handled by the private enterprise sector at less cost to taxpayers and consumers.

The honourable member mentioned one or two. I shall mention a few more which are doing this "disastrous" thing, endeavouring to provide services that are more effective. They are: Britain, Communist Hungary, Japan, France, South Korea, the United States of America, Bangladesh, Sweden, Spain, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Denmark, Malaysia, Singapore, Brazil, Turkey, Canada, Mexico and China.

What a great spread of political philosophies are represented in that list. Surely they cannot all be wrong except perhaps in the twisted logic of the honourable member for Werribee who is not concerned about the efficient and effective delivery of services to the people of this State.

If the honourable member is not prepared to accept world trends, let us look at Labor Government attitudes about privatization in Australia.

The Hawke Government recently sold off the Belconnen Shopping Mall in Canberra for $87 million. The Federal Minister for Finance, Senator Walsh, recently stated that he would not oppose the privatization of the Tasmanian railway system. Why did he say that? It was because of its great cost to the Commonwealth.

In Western Australia, only last month, the Rural and Industries Bank became the first State-owned bank in Australia to be partially privatized when it issued $60 million of capital in private placement to institutional investors. I invite honourable members to consider some statements by Labor Ministers of the Commonwealth Government. Recently the Federal Treasurer, Mr Paul Keating, said:

The Government has chosen a course of moderating public sector involvement in the economy .... properly functioning, the market mechanism is a powerful engine for economic growth.

Mr Bill Hayden, Minister for Foreign Affairs, in the 1985 Chifley Memorial lecture said:

It would be foolish to defend public enterprise uncritically. It must convey economic benefits to the community as well as social advantages. The resources it uses belong to the people. The money it uses comes from the
taxpayer. There is no practical or moral validity in maintaining public enterprise which wastes or risks these resources in doing less well what the private sector is doing.

The shadow Leader of the Federal Government, Mr Hayden, does not support the views expressed by the honourable member for Werribee. If that were not enough, I refer honourable members to a statement by Senator Walsh, the Minister for Finance, at the Australian Financial Review privatization seminar in Sydney on 26 February this year. Senator Walsh stated:

I have no ideological preference for public or private ownership. In my view, what is important is not whether a business is public or private, but whether it delivers the goods and services required by the public efficiently, that is at lowest cost.

Do honourable members opposite want another example?

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr KENNETT—Do they want to hear the truth? The Minister for Trade, Mr Dawkins, who may not be in that position much longer, at the RAIPA autumn seminar on privatization and deregulation on 6 March this year stated:

We agree with our opponents that the present Australian boundary between the public and private sectors is neither natural, immutable nor in every aspect satisfactory.

Another senior Federal Labor Minister has recognized that it is time the Government looked at other forms.

In the face of all this practical experience and opinion, what has the honourable member for Werribee trotted out? In the honourable member’s media release of 17 January this year he claimed that $530 million of estimated public authority profits for 1985-86 would be lost by Victorian taxpayers if the Liberal Party were to privatize public authorities. It is evident from the figures used by the honourable member for Werribee that most of that money referred to is the estimated revenue from the public authority dividend. What an outrageous series of unsubstantiated assumptions in the honourable member’s media statement!

The honourable member has argued that a Liberal Government would sell off all public authorities which pay a dividend. He offered no evidence for this assertion and it is not in the policy statements that the Liberal Party has made.

Mr Remington—You support the selling off of the State Bank.

Mr KENNETT—The honourable member for Melbourne earned a reputation through deeds outside the House as a bruiser.

Mr Remington—You support the selling off of the State Bank.

Mr KENNETT—The honourable member earned that reputation for activities that he would rather not have referred to in this Chamber. The honourable member’s knowledge on this issue is equally well known.

Mr Remington interjected.

Mr KENNETT—The essential issue is your character.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! The Chair cannot hear the speech of the Leader of the Opposition because of constant interjecting from both sides of the House. I call on honourable members to listen to what is being said in order to allow the Chair to understand the honourable member’s speech.

Mr KENNETT—I will come back to the “bruiser” later. The Liberal Opposition has said that, when in government, it will examine all Government businesses to determine whether in both economic and social benefit terms it would be more appropriate if the function were carried out by the private enterprise sector.
The Opposition, when in government, will certainly give early consideration to the position of the State Insurance Office, because of the incredible loss it has generated under the Labor Administration, and the Government Printing Office, both of which are in direct competition with the non-Government sector. The Liberal Party has also said that the State Bank must remain a State authority because of its special place in Victoria.

The honourable member for Werribee and the bruising member for Melbourne made reference to the Opposition's claim on the State Bank. The honourable member for Werribee may have finally got the quote correct, but what happened was that on 29 March 1984 I did an interview with Mr Schildberger and the Treasurer, Mr Jolly. The Treasurer asked me the following question:

I am also interested, Jeff, to know what your attitude is towards the State Bank, because if you—the logical conclusion of your position is that you should sell the State Bank as well. And yet of course that would have a very damaging effect on the Victorian economy.

Mr KENNETT—Yes, I recognize that the State Bank is a major institution. We would be progressively moving to sell off those areas that compete and I have got to admit that it would be very hard to sell off the State Bank. It would not be impossible.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! Could the honourable member inform the House if this is a transcript?

Mr KENNETT—Yes, Mr Acting Speaker, and I will make it available to the House. What happened then was that the Premier jumped to his own conclusions for his own political reasons and said that the Opposition would sell off the State Bank. Not once did I say or even infer, as the honourable members for Werribee and Melbourne well know, that the Opposition would sell the State Bank.

If honourable members will not accept my word, and I accept that they will not, then I ask them to accept the word of Mr Schildberger. After the debate was carried into the public arena, Mr Schildberger, the interviewer, having seen the remarks of the Premier on this issue played his part of the tape again and stated:

Well, that's what the Premier said immediately after it. It makes sense except for one important fact. Jeff Kennett did not say he would sell off the State Bank.

At some stage the Government may start using the truth to advance the merits of its debate.

The honourable member for Werribee's argument falls down because it is not based on fact. The honourable member is wrong in stating a hypothesis that, if authorities are sold off, the net effect will be a loss to the State of $530 million. The sale of any public authorities nominated by the honourable member would result in receipts by the State of a substantial capital sum. Application of that sum to reduce the massive debt which the Labor Government has built up would reduce debt servicing costs to more than offset any loss of anticipated revenue from the existing public authority dividend. Of course, consumers would be relieved of the burden of contributing to the public authority dividend which is in reality a tax.

The honourable member's premise is also false because he simply cannot add up. Firstly, if the Government was honest it would acknowledge that the public authority dividend that it has introduced is in reality a tax collected from consumers by the authority and then paid into the Government coffers. The clearest proof that this is not a dividend is that when the State Electricity Commission of Victoria could not afford the budgeted figure of $126 million, the Government simply reduced the tax to $70 million that it thought the State Electricity Commission of Victoria could afford.

Secondly, if the honourable member for Werribee genuinely believes that a public authority dividend really is a dividend, that dividend should be given not to the Government but to the true owners of the authorities, the people of Victoria.

There is good precedent for that in the American State of Alaska. In that State, all Government surpluses, including public authority profits, are simply handed back to the
citizens of Alaska. I am advised that in 1985 every person in Alaska received a cheque for $400 and that in 1986 each citizen is likely to receive as much as $500.

In addition to his myopic view of public authority dividends, the honourable member for Werribee has also made a range of fevered ideological assertions about British Telecom, the efficiency of the private sector, the competitive market system and so on. However, in the light of all the evidence I have presented today, which destroys the honourable member's basic argument, I shall not take the House on detailed journeys through all of the spectres he has tried to raise.

Let me content the House and, obviously, the honourable member for Werribee, by commenting on the efficiency of the private sector and the competitive market system using the words of just one individual, the embattled Victorian State Government Minister for Transport, the Honourable Tom Roper. I direct that comment through you, Mr Deputy Speaker, to the honourable member for Werribee, and I suggest he should listen.

The Minister for Transport is a deregulator and is proud to say so. I suspect he may have been behind the moves I referred to earlier when the Victorian Labor Party was considering plans to sell shares in public corporations, such as the State Electricity Commission, to the people.

Honourable members will remember that last year the Minister for Transport deregulated his personal overseas travel arrangements so that he could be upgraded on the international aircraft and so that he could get a bigger room, at a much greater cost to the Victorian taxpayer, in Hong Kong.

What most honourable members would not know is that the Minister for Transport has made a trenchant statement demanding deregulation and greater competition in the Australian airline industry. I ask the honourable member for Werribee whether he is aware of that statement.

Dr Coghill—What does that have to do with privatization?

Mr KENNETT—It has to do with greater competition, efficiency and effectiveness. I happen to have a copy of the statement of the Minister for Transport. So that honourable members opposite may savour the facts about deregulation and greater competition as set down by the Minister for Transport, I shall read some excerpts of it into the record.

In arguing that deregulation would benefit both the airline industry and travellers and bring about lower fares, the Minister for Transport said:

There is a strong case for allowing more competition on Australian domestic routes.

The Victorian Government believes airlines should be free to charge fares which reflect the cost of providing the services and to offer a wider range of services such as low-cost no-frills packages.

The Minister for Transport then said that airlines "should not be protected against competition". As if that were not enough for the honourable member for Werribee, the Minister then said:

Indeed, deregulation will enable them to abandon unprofitable routes, providing more scope for new entrants to exploit niches left by them.

Finally, he said:

The industry must be free to react to consumer demands and face real competition.

If ever there were a statement supporting greater competition and deregulation of a Government airline, that must be it. And this honourable whim from Werribee—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fogarty)—Order! To use the word "whimp" is unparliamentary, and I suggest the Leader of the Opposition withdraws it.
Mr KENNETT—Yes, Mr Speaker, I withdraw the expression. I shall return to referring to the mouse that roared. The honourable member for Werribee has been put on the operating table today and has been chopped up not only by the Opposition but also by his own side, Labor Party Ministers in this State and his Federal colleagues. His tirade against privatization and deregulation and against individuals has been tossed into the wastepaper bin, not only by this side of the House but also by his own Federal and State colleagues.

It would have been more worth while had the honourable member, with all the resources of Government and privy to what presumably are the grave deliberations of Cabinet at his disposal, taken up the question that the Age asked in its editorial of 9 April about V/Line:

Is V/Line really necessary? Or are Government run railways outside the metropolitan commuter-network an obsolete extravagance that ought to be replaced by more efficient, privately operated and profit-motivated forms of transport? The time has come for these questions to be seriously asked and answered.

Honourable members should note that two companies in the private sector put forward tenders to the Government for Government works, but they were unsuccessful in securing contracts to supply goods to the public sector because the contracts were awarded to Government-owned agencies. To further back up my point, today's Age editorial states:

In each case the contract went to a public instrumentality.

. . . It appears that the tendering process, surely a very suitable measure for ensuring that public money is spent wisely and equitably, has been short circuited; if so, public employees may have been protected at the expense of the public interest.

The Government is not interested in efficiency and effectiveness; it is interested in featherbedding, and that has been proved time and again. Instead of a reasoned argument from the honourable member for Werribee, honourable members heard empty slogans and variations of the socialist left refrain about privatization: "selling the people's property to our rich mates".

Dr Coghill interjected.

Mr KENNETT—I am told that no one invites the honourable member for Werribee to the meetings, perhaps that is why he will stay where he is at present.

The cynicism of this approach and its intention to confuse and frighten Victorians is clear, regardless of the merits of an argument, regardless of the public interest and regardless of the fact that people are now seriously discussing the pros and cons of this issue.

Let me make quite clear the Liberal Party's position both in opposition and after the next election. This party is committed to more effective and efficient government. It is determined to reduce the burden of regulation and waste that the Australian Labor Party has allowed to flourish in this State. The Liberal Party is determined that the instrumentalities of government shall be made effective and economical and service the purposes for which they were established.

The role of Government is surely to provide these services and to support private initiative as a basis for rewarding and permanent employment. Government should work for a sound and prosperous economy. This cannot be done through an expansion of Government bureaucracy. By leaning on the taxpayer, Government stifles initiative and mortgages the future. A Government should, rather, promote individual initiatives and flexibility. If this Government is so efficient and effective, why has it today been revealed that the inflation rate has increased to a massive 9·2 per cent?

If the honourable member for Werribee is right, why has the Victorian inflation rate risen to 9·8 per cent? Let me quote from the front page of today's Herald:

CANBERRA—Australia's inflation rate has shot up to the highest level since the Hawke Government came to power in March 1983.

Figures released today show the Consumer Price Index annual rate was at 9·2 per cent after the March quarter. It increased by 2·3 per cent over the previous quarter.
The Australian Bureau of Statistics figures reveal Melbourne had both the highest quarterly and yearly increases of any state.

Melbourne's annual inflation rate is now running at 9.8 per cent. The quarterly increase was 2.7 per cent.

Earlier in my speech I referred to some of the imposts imposed by the Government that have contributed to today's rise. The Liberal Party is concerned—and is committed when in government—to ensure that Victoria becomes a vibrant and growing State.

Governments must reduce their demands on the economy. Governments must recognize that there are alternatives to Government assistance. Businesses must realize that Governments cannot protect them from fair competition. Employers and employees must be flexible and adaptive to changing conditions.

The Liberal Party objective is to arrest the growth of Government and to restore the basis for long-term private sector expansion and genuine job creation.

Nothing less than a change of philosophy throughout the whole of Government will achieve this result. It must pervade every area of Government activity. Although growth in Government spending must stop, ongoing community services must be maintained. We, in the Liberal Party, are not about cutting services but about determining how the services should be provided and at what cost. That is the approach being adopted by some of the Government's Federal colleagues, which approach it rejects here in Melbourne.

The Liberal Party is also about ensuring that Government action is designed to promote competition and improve efficiency. These are the major thrusts of our economic policy, and, of course, our philosophy. They are in keeping with the sentiments of the Victorian people. It is the Government and the honourable member for Werribee who are out of step and who are blinded by ideology to the reality of contemporary economic life.

Dr VAUGHAN (Clayton)—On a point of order, the Leader of the Opposition is giving a classic example of reading a speech in the House. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to make available a copy of his speech to the House.

Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—On the point of order, I am happy to provide a copy of my speech to the honourable member for Clayton.

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

Mr KENNETT—The Liberal Party, today, has been able to demonstrate not only that the honourable member for Werribee has jumped out of his hole to launch what was supposedly a tirade, an attack on the Opposition for having policies based on privatization, but also that it has policies which are concerned about restraint and the structure of Government; about deficiencies and effectiveness; about people and the delivery of services.

It is obvious that those are the policies which the Victorian community will be looking forward to between now and the next election, and after the next election when the Liberal Government takes office the people of Victoria will look forward to honest Liberal thrift. Just as the Federal Government ...d its Ministers are prepared to responsibly consider any measure to ensure services are delivered efficiently and effectively, so, too, are we. We, unlike the honourable member for Werribee, do not close our minds to options; we do not close our minds to ensuring that the people of this State are given good government; we do not close our minds to the activities that have been undertaken in many countries around the world but which the honourable member for Werribee says have no place in this economy.

One cannot allow a situation to develop where, through Government interference and inefficiency, that Government sells off rolling-stock and enters into an agreement of privatization, which is a misuse of privatization, and then leases back equipment at a cost that is double the initial cost and value of the property.

It is not an efficient use of privatization to try to sell off the banks, as the Government did. It is not an efficient use of socialism to move towards, what we would call,
nationalization of an insurance company at a cost of $1 billion a year. It is not efficient for a Government to call tenders from the public and the private sector and then, to please the unions, to award those tenders to Government agencies, which in many cases are ineffective and inefficient, at a greater cost than the same tendering process raised in the private sector. It is not an effective use of our resources for the Government to give a grant of $166 000 to a Greek media co-operative to promote the line and policies of the Government.

An Honourable Member—That is privatization.

Mr KENNETT—Listen to him!

The SPEAKER—Order! I suggest that the Leader of the Opposition should ignore interjections.

Mr KENNETT—This is a serious debate and the Opposition has treated it in that way because the time has arrived for Government members and members of the media and public to understand the benefits of having in place a Government that is prepared to ensure that community funds are spent responsibly and that services are delivered efficiently.

Mr Spyker—The Cain Government does that.

Mr KENNETT—The Minister for Ethnic Affairs interjects inanely, as always. The Cain Government must accept the responsibility for lifting the inflation rate to its highest level in the past three years. The inflation rate is 9·2 per cent nationally, 9·8 per cent in Victoria. At some stage, the Government will have to accept the responsibility.

I do not know whether those documents tabled by the honourable member for Werribee referred to the inflation rate in other countries, but Victoria is becoming less and less competitive because, this year, the Government has borrowed $1·5 billion. The Government has the audacity to employ another 10 800 public servants that will add to the inflation rate and make Victoria less competitive.

I conclude by referring to the inflation rate in other countries. For example, in Japan the inflation rate is 1·8 per cent; in Germany it is 1·8 per cent; in the United States of America it is 3·8 per cent; in Canada it is 4·4 per cent and in France it is 4·7 per cent. In each of those cases our inflation rate is at least twice that of our major trading countries.

The Government will not accept any responsibility for what it is doing in destroying Victoria and putting at risk the security of the people and their future opportunities. One of the greatest opportunities in this State will come from a Government that cares, that has a management record and, importantly, is prepared to consider all options responsibly and realistically. The next Liberal Government will do that.

In accordance with Sessional Orders, the debate was interrupted.

The SPEAKER—Order! I shall resume the chair at 2 p.m. when Government Business will take precedence. When the motion is next before the House I shall call on the Leader of the National Party to commence his speech.

The sitting was suspended at 1 p.m. until 2.5 p.m.

EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES (LYSTERFIELD) BILL

The debate (adjourned from April 15) on the motion of Mr Fordham (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

Mr RAMSAY (Balwyn)—I wish to make two preliminary points. Firstly, as the proposed legislation concerns specifically one organization, namely, Boral Ltd, it is possible that members of my immediate family may be small shareholders in the company. It could possibly be suggested that a conflict of interest exists and that I have some interest in the company. I make that declaration to clear the point.
The second preliminary point is that the Bill concerns an agreement with a private company. It runs very close to being a private Bill. I refer to page 891 of May which states: Private Bills are Bills for the particular interest or benefit of any person or persons.

An examination of the Bill reveals that it is of particular value to Boral Resources (Vic.) Pty Ltd.

The SPEAKER—Order! I advise the honourable member that I shall regard the second part of his remarks as a point of order.

Mr RAMSAY—Before proceeding, I raise, as a point of order, whether the Bill should be treated as a private Bill. I quoted the definition of a private Bill that is contained in May and I suggest that the Bill fits that definition with respect to the interest or benefit of any person or persons. The contract in the agreement involves Boral Resources (Vic.) Pty Ltd, Bayview Ltd and Dandenong Quarries Pty Ltd. These three companies form part of the organization known generally as Boral Ltd.

The benefits in the agreement are clear. The company will be able to gain access to land to which it previously did not have access for the purposes of quarrying. The company will receive significant advantages in gaining this access rather than having to find other areas for quarrying in the future.

To assist the company with the responsibility for the rehabilitation of the land that has already been quarried, the Government proposes to enter into an agreement to actually purchase the existing areas of freehold land that were in the hands of the company and its predecessors. The land will be bought back at favourable terms, at which you and I, Mr Speaker, might marvel. The sum total is $3.96 million. This involves an initial cost to the Government of $296,000 and 50 annual instalments of $60,000. No adjustments are set out and I leave it to you, Mr Speaker, to determine what that might be worth in 50 years' time. I do not expect that you or I will be here to consider the case.

It is an extraordinarily long term, and it is a tremendous benefit to the company to have this type of financial arrangement and security for its future quarrying activities and the arrangement concerning the payment of a levy to establish a restoration fund, which will transfer from the company to the Government the responsibility for future restoration work. That arrangement is not available to quarrying companies in general. In fact, I believe this to be the only company to which that arrangement is being applied.

For all of those reasons I suggest that the Bill is clearly one providing a specific interest and benefit to the company involved and, as such, should be treated as a private Bill.

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—On the point of order, Mr Speaker, the Government obviously does not believe the measure should be treated as a private Bill. It regards the prime effects as accruing to the people of Victoria. No doubt some benefits will accrue to the company involved, but many Bills that are passed by this Parliament benefit organizations, and that is not necessarily a bad thing. I repeat that the prime benefit will be to the public at large. I am sure your advisers would have drawn your attention to the matter if they had believed the essential benefit of the Bill was simply to the company.

Mr B. J. EVANS (Gippsland East)—On the point of order, Mr Speaker, I submit that the point raised by the Minister is irrelevant. It is a question of whether the Bill benefits a definable group of people, who obviously would be the shareholders of the principal company and its subsidiaries. Serious consideration must be given to whether the Bill is a private Bill and whether the procedures that flow from that should be adopted by the House in dealing with it. I do not see the issue of whether the Bill will have subsidiary benefits for the people of Victoria as being entirely relevant.

Mr MACLELLAN (Berwick)—On the point of order, Mr Speaker, the Bill is not necessary to enable the sale of land by the company to the Government; nor is it necessary to allow an extractive industry permit to be issued in respect of the Crown land which is
proposed to be excavated by the company over the next 50 years. Those matters could be handled administratively under existing legislation. The Bill is not necessary in relation to any conditions that may apply to any extractive industry licence or permit, in town planning terms or in extractive industry terms.

The only significant part of the Bill that requires legislation is the establishment of the trust fund to enable the company to take a tax advantage of the deduction of moneys in advance of reclamation expenditure. An examination of the extractive industries legislation reveals that it is possible to require restoration work under that Act.

Those elements that are contained in the Bill are merely decorations to it. Its essential element is that it will provide a private company—a public company in the sense of it being listed on the stock exchange but, nevertheless, a company that is owned by individual shareholders—to render tax deductible the payments that it makes to a trust for ultimate restoration work. Those payments will be tax deductible contemporaneously with their being paid into the trust rather than the company having to show them as expenditure on restoration work, as all other Victorian quarries have to do.

The essential element of the Bill is not the sale and purchase of land or the issuing of the new licence. Although those matters are dealt with in the measure, it is not essential for those purposes. The only novel and essential element that requires legislation is the ability of the company to take taxation advantages that are not available to other companies.

The SPEAKER—Order! I am asked to rule whether the Bill is a public Bill or a private Bill. I sought advice in respect of this matter, and I am not prepared to uphold the point of order. I declare the Bill a public Bill for the reasons that I am about to express.

I use as a precedent the agreement with Jack Chia. It was not exactly the same, but at least it gave me some material from the past year or so as a precedent. In that instance the Bill was declared a public Bill. Perhaps there is little similarity; at least there is some.

The Bill proposes to formalize an agreement between the Government and the company regarding land and the use of that land for the future. I am also conscious of the Government’s policy in respect of agreements made with companies concerning the support of industry and environmental improvements.

I believe the Bill falls within that category. I therefore do not accept that it should be declared a private Bill and I declare it to be a public Bill.

Mr RAMSAY (Balwyn)—Thank you for clarifying your ruling in that way, Sir.

The Bill, although small, will change the face of Victoria permanently. I say that in a literal sense. Not many honourable members are unfamiliar with the landscape to the south east of Victoria as one approaches in the general direction of Gippsland. The Lysterfield hills form a prominent landmark in a general southerly direction from the Dandenong Ranges.

Perhaps a major feature of the landscape of the Lysterfield hills today is the present quarrying operations because, instead of looking at what would previously have been some fairly unspectacular and low lying hills covered with a light sprinkling of trees, one now sees a stark quarry face. Basically this major quarrying operation that has been going on for many years has led to the House considering this Bill today.

That quarry is currently owned by Boral Resources (Vic.) Pty Ltd, which is a conglomerate of companies, the detailed history of which need not concern honourable members today. The company and its predecessors have been quarrying in the Lysterfield hills area for many years. Undoubtedly many buildings and roads in the metropolitan area owe their foundations to stone that was quarried from that area.

The quarry is in a unique situation, and that is why it is such a marked feature of the landscape. Its south-eastern boundary stops, it would seem, at the high point of the ridge running generally through the Lysterfield hills.
The boundary of the quarry area, which coincides with the boundary of the freehold property owned by the company concerned, also coincides with a municipal boundary. For further quarrying in a general south-easterly direction from the existing operations to proceed, several problems had to be overcome. Some understanding had to be reached with the local government and with the owners of the land because it was beyond the freehold of the original site. In fact, it was moving into the old catchment area of the Lysterfield reservoir.

With some foresight, approximately ten years ago the area of land that was considered to have possible value for future quarrying use was excluded from the Lysterfield catchment and the Churchill National Park, which are adjacent to the area, with the view of treating the remaining deposits of stone as a future resource.

The predecessors of Boral Resources (Vic.) Pty Ltd owned other land not immediately adjacent to this area, but in the same vicinity, in Glenfern Road. In the early 1970s, discussions took place with the Government of the day and they were based on the possibility that at some time in the future the land immediately adjacent to the quarry, which was not owned by the company, might be made available to the company for quarrying purposes. Part of such an agreement involved the transfer back to the Crown of the Glenfern Road land owned by the company. That is one of the features of the Bill.

One problem any quarrying operator has is what should be done with a quarry after the stone has been removed. If anything is left, it is a hole in the ground. In the case of the Lysterfield quarry, not only is there a hole in the ground but also a high cliff face of bare quarry wall.

Around the world different communities have treated old quarries in various ways. Recently I had the good fortune of visiting a former limestone quarry on Vancouver Island in Canada. The quarry ceased to operate much earlier this century. In years since, the site has been transformed by the original owners, the Butchart family, into a most glorious garden including hanging gardens on the walls of the old quarry face. The Butchart Gardens on Vancouver Island in British Columbia are one of the gardening wonders of the world. It is a fine example of what can be done with a quarry when its useful life has been completed.

It was with that in mind that I examined some of the proposals in the Bill. It certainly is a long-term plan, as the proposal is to transform the old quarry land at Lysterfield into a series of lakes. The Bill will remove the Lysterfield hills and replace them with lakes.

Over the next five years the quarry operation will continue to take stone from Lysterfield, moving generally in a south-easterly direction. This will virtually remove the face of the quarry with which so many citizens of Melbourne would be familiar. The area will be restored, lakes will be put into position and, one would imagine, in due course the area will be incorporated into the existing Lysterfield catchment or Churchill National Park. However, that is a matter for consideration by the community at a later time.

The arrangements are based on an agreement contained in the schedule to the Bill. The agreement is fairly complicated. In fact, the whole proposal is complicated, as the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources indicated during his second-reading speech when he referred honourable members to the Parliamentary Library to inspect the plan and photographs that are on display. I would not attempt to try to spell out the details of that agreement or the landscape arrangement involved in the project. Honourable members must view the diagrams and illustrations if the arrangement is to be fully appreciated.

The Government is taking on certain costs, and it is important for the House to recognize that. In purchasing the existing quarry site, the Government will pay $296 000. The Government will also pay an annual fee of $60 000. The Government will surrender approximately 40 hectares of Crown land, which a previous Government had wisely excluded, in the existing Lysterfield catchment. That land will be made available to Boral over the next five years for its quarrying activities.
The Government will take on the responsibility of paying for the reclamation of the quarry area as the work is completed. Boral will pay an annual rental of $60,000, which is offset by the $60,000 that the Government has agreed to pay for the land. The company will surrender to the Government its 43-hectare site in Glenfern Road. Boral, like other quarrying companies, will pay the going rate on royalties for stone removed from Crown land, but an additional cost of 22 cents a tonne will be placed on Boral to be paid into the rehabilitation trust fund for progressive use in the reclamation of the area.

The Bill requires that the minimum payment into the trust fund will be at the rate of $100,000 a year for the first five years, $200,000 a year for the second five years and $300,000 a year every year after that.

As I indicated, it is a complicated and detailed arrangement set out in the schedule and, in the short time the Government has been prepared to make the arrangements available for examination, it has been difficult to comprehend all its details. However, a number of questions come to mind in examining the Bill, and the Minister should be prepared to answer them or at least give the House certain undertakings concerning them.

I shall refer to the time frame for rehabilitation. The schedule contains general indications about when rehabilitation could commence. Clause 19 (1) of the schedule states:

Progressive reclamation is to be undertaken by the Licensee in accordance with Approved Working Plan and Proposal and the conditions of this licence.

Clause 19 (2) states:

Reclamation is to proceed within twelve months and be completed within two years of the establishment of terminal faces unless otherwise authorised or directed by the Chief Inspector in consultation with the City Engineer.

There is a certain indication of intent, but the Opposition is not convinced that it is sufficiently tied up and that reclamation will proceed at the earliest opportunity. The chance of this money being held in trust funds and used for other purposes while awaiting rehabilitation at some future time concerns the Opposition. The Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources interjects that one cannot do that, and I am reassured by the interjection. I hope he places the interjection on record that one cannot do that. The House will want to ensure that the money is secure in the trust fund and that the reclamation program will proceed on an orderly basis at the earliest opportunity.

Earlier it was ruled that this Bill was not a private Bill but a public Bill. Nevertheless, a precedent is being created because the Government has shown that it is prepared to buy into a situation and to set up a trust fund under an arrangement in which one quarry owner only is obliged and has the opportunity to contribute, and where the contribution will be a tax deduction for the company’s operations in the year of the contribution, whereas any other company responsible for reclamation and rehabilitation of an old quarry area would not be able to claim a tax benefit until such time in the future as the actual work is undertaken.

This precedent is being set. Other quarry owners may well ask whether the Government is prepared to buy their old quarries, and in turn, for an agreed contribution to a Government trust fund, to undertake responsibility for the reclamation of those quarries. The Government has created something unique in its agreement with Boral Resources (Vic.) Pty Ltd as distinct from other quarry companies in the community. The Minister should indicate his willingness to discuss similar agreements with other companies.

A third and very important question that should be addressed concerns roads, road traffic and the general impact on the surrounding community that will result from this proposal. It is not good enough to say that has been offset by the fact that the Glenfern Road land will not now be used as a quarry and that therefore there is a real benefit to the community of the Sherbrooke shire to offset the inconvenience that may be created through ongoing activities of quarries in the Lysterfield area.
The community of Lysterfield could well have assumed that the quarrying days in Lysterfield were numbered and that some action would be taken to rehabilitate the old quarry site, perhaps similar to Butchart Gardens to which I referred earlier, but that will not be the case.

There will be a complete removal of the Lysterfield hills and replacement by a brand new, designed landscape over 50 years, during which time there will be an enormous amount of continuing quarry traffic on the approach road to the Lysterfield area. Wellington Road is obviously a key road in this project, but there is no mention of it in the Bill.

Will the company have any responsibility for maintenance or duplication or improvement of Wellington Road? Is the Government prepared to accept any responsibility? Does the Government perceive the maintenance of good roads in the surrounding area as an obligation that it and the company should undertake on behalf of the local community, or will the Government and the company simply unload that responsibility on to local government and say that the roads are the problem of local government?

In attempting to resolve the problem of an old quarry and a satisfactory arrangement for future quarrying of stone in the area, the Government has initiated a positive and in many ways creative proposal, but several issues are left untapped and unexplained. The question of access roads is the most significant. The other question of the continuing quarry activities does become a function of time to some extent and, generally, the long-term solution proposed will receive support by the community.

In this interim there is a great deal of concern from residents in the locality, and the Opposition seeks some reassurance that neither the Government nor the company will be allowed to ignore those concerns but that constructive action will be taken.

Those are the questions I pose for the Minister and I am sure the House will be interested in the Minister's response. The Opposition generally supports the measure.

Mr B. J. EVANS (Gippsland East)—I express my appreciation to the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources for providing members of the National Party with the services of officers of his department to explain the legislative measure because without that assistance it would have been a time-consuming process to try to follow through the various agreements and land exchanges and all the intricacies of the procedures leading to the introduction of the Bill. Certain of the arrangements which are formalized in the measure have been in the process of determination for many years and, in some respects, the House is confirming arrangements made in the past and entering into further arrangements for the development of the Lysterfield quarry site.

It is true with this quarry to say that within their proximity cities need production of stone and other materials essential for building purposes. However, the Lysterfield quarry site is particularly intrusive on the skyline east of the city of Melbourne. It is remarkable just how far across the city this quarry scar on the hill is visible. It is important to note that in the course of time—few honourable members will have survived to see the end result—this scar will disappear. It will be replaced by a much more attractive vista and will become a much more useful area for the people of Lysterfield.

The end result of the Bill is commendable. The only reservations I have are, firstly, whether the arrangements that have been entered into between the Government and the company concerned are entirely fair and, secondly, whether the House can guarantee that in 50 years the results will be those envisaged now.

A difficulty with the arrangements between the Government and the company is the value of the land which the company, Boral Resources (Vic.) Pty Ltd, is surrendering in Glenfern Road and whether the proposed exchange is a fair exchange for the rights to quarry material in the area that is being added to the existing quarry site at Lysterfield.
I understand there is some dispute about whether Boral Resources (Vic.) Pty Ltd has quarrying rights for the area in Glenfern Road, which would have a significant impact on the value of that land. It would be a pointless exercise to test whether that right does exist but it leaves some doubt in my mind whether the land is as valuable as indicated in the terms of the agreement.

Another aspect which disturbs me and has been referred to by the honourable member for Balwyn is the trust fund and how its operation will benefit the company over a number of years because of the taxation advantage given to it. It also appears that the Government is going back on a decision it made recently to do away with trust accounts.

As the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources is aware, up to three or four years ago many trust accounts were kept by the Department of Management and Budget, or the Treasury, as it was then known, for various reasons. Each year in the Budget Papers Parliament was reminded of the various trust accounts and individual members of Parliament could raise issues about their use or non-use.

I take it that this trust account will be treated in the same way as those accounts and that a constant reminder of their existence will not be made. I recall one trust account kept in the name of the Rural Finance and Settlement Commission into which payments were made by the farming community in better years for loans made in disaster situations, which built up a large reserve. That money just sat in the Treasury and was used by the Treasurer only as an offset against expenditure in other accounts. Some time ago the fund was directed to the attention of the Treasurer of the day and pressure was applied to again make use of those moneys for difficult situations experienced by rural communities.

Now that honourable members do not receive detailed references to trust accounts in the Budget Papers, the funds are being absorbed into the consolidated revenue. I am concerned that when the time comes for moneys from this trust account to be called upon to pay for reclamation of land, the Government of the day might somehow have conveniently forgotten that the funds are there. Perhaps the funds had been used for other purposes! If trust funds are no longer available, in 25 to 50 years' time future generations will be unable to insist that a Government replace the moneys taken out of the trust account so that they can be utilized for the purposes for which they were first raised. I have grave doubts whether Parliament or the Government can guarantee that those trust funds will be kept for the purpose for which they were raised in the Bill. Honourable members will not have the power of control over future Governments which the measure implies.

In the absence of any guarantee, the National Party hopes that that will be the case and that the intent expressed in the Bill will be put into effect. However, I am afraid members of Parliament in 25 years' time might not recall the details of the proposed legislation. A significant amount of legislation has been passed in previous years and I am sure most honourable members are totally unfamiliar with many provisions. I ask the Government to keep that in mind for the future.

The basic intent of the Bill is sound, although I have reservations about the detail. However, the National Party does not have any reason to oppose the measure.

The arrangements and agreements entered into between the Government and various companies should result in a marked improvement in the skyline to the east of Melbourne and eventually, over a number of years, an attractive recreational area in place of a stark quarry face and uninteresting solid rock hillside. The National Party does not oppose the legislation but hopes the Minister can reassure the House about some of the doubts I have expressed.

Mr COLEMAN (Syndal)—The introduction of the Bill and the fact that it is being debated today is significant because it is the same day on which the National Parks (Alpine National Park) Bill is being debated in another place. Once again the Government has indicated that it is prepared to consider and legislate for "park grabs."
The impact on the Lysterfield Lake Park will be considerable and the creation of this park resulted from a previous decision to stop using the lake as a storage for water supply for Dandenong. Residents living in the surrounding hinterland and close to the catchment area believed it would become an area for their exclusive use. However, the way the proposed legislation is drafted that will not be the case. I acknowledge that previous decisions have contributed to the introduction of the Bill.

The agreement, which is the integral part of the Bill, was made in 1971 by the Minister of Mines, Mr Balfour, the Minister of Water Supply, Mr Dunstan, who obviously had the water supply from Lysterfield Lake in mind, the Minister of Local Government, the Honourable Alan Hunt, and the Minister for Lands, Mr Borthwick, who was interested because Crown land was involved.

It is important that honourable members be aware that the Ministry of Conservation was not created until 1972 so any decisions made with respect to the agreement in this Bill were made prior to the considerable amount of information that would have been available when the Ministry was established.

The situation in the immediate area fifteen years ago is completely different from the present situation. I acknowledge that much development has continued despite the existence of the quarry. People have been able to live with the quarry but they have not previously had to face the fact that it will be in their immediate area for the next 50 years. It can reasonably be expected that in 50 years' time the whole of that area will be built up. No buffer zone has been provided because the licence for the quarry existed prior to any requirement for a buffer zone. Subsequent quarry licences issued for the northern and western suburbs of Melbourne have included substantial buffer zones.

Subdivision of residential land is now occurring right up to the fence of the quarry. The operation of that quarry will involve substantial heavy traffic moving backwards and forwards in the area. At one stage I had an office in Clayton and, for whatever reason, it was necessary at one time to conduct a traffic count on Clayton Road. One in three vehicles in the traffic using that road between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. was carting sand out of the extractive zone in the Clayton area.

The quarry will serve the southern sector of the metropolitan area and it is reasonable to suppose that a similar traffic pattern to that on Clayton Road will develop along Wellington Road, which is the principal access to the quarry site. People living in the area deserve some consideration.

It is interesting that the Government is buying the freehold of the quarry because doing so brings the site within the ambit of the environment effects legislation that is directed at public works. The Government, by having an arrangement with a quarry operator to mine, will bring that legislation into play. The quarry could cease operation today and, with successful reclamation, such as has been done at Kerr's quarry at the back of the Swagman Restaurant, the scar on the hill could be covered with vegetation and would be offensive to no one.

However, the Bill proposes that the tail end of the Dandenong Ranges will completely disappear. Apart from the visual effect of that extensive quarry operation, residents will be faced with the traffic, noise and dust associated with quarrying. Although those matters are addressed in the agreement, with the best will in the world some problems will be created for local residents.

The basis of the agreement, when it was first negotiated, was that the quarrying of stone would be confined to one or two major sites rather than a proliferation of smaller sites along the length of the Dandenong Ranges.

Two companies operate quarrying activities in the immediate area, Boral Resources (Vic.) Pty Ltd and Pioneer Concrete (Vic.) Pty Ltd. The Pioneer quarry has not been mentioned in the agreement and it is not clear whether the company has agreed to the restoration measures contained in the Bill. One would hope that, as an adjoining operator,
it would have been granted the same terms as are available to the Boral quarry. As I understand it, Pioneer would accept the prescriptions that apply in the agreement and, when it has finished quarrying activities, its area would revert to the Churchill National Park, just as the Boral operation will revert to the Lysterfield Lake Park.

The residents of that area will welcome a return of those quarry sites to parkland and they will no doubt make good use of them. In 50 years’ time, those areas will be significant recreational areas for the residents who will live in what will then be a built-up area. On the south side, residential subdivision comes up to the police paddocks adjacent to the Churchill National Park. On the west side, the subdivision comes to the fence of the quarry. On the north side, the subdivision is creeping up the hill and is less than half a mile from the front gate of the quarry. Many reasons exist for the agreement to incorporate additional benefits for the people who live in that area.

When one considers the figures attached to the agreement, one can only marvel at the way it has been constructed. Notwithstanding that a mistake was made in the second-reading notes as to the total contract cost of the project, $296 000 is changing hands as the deposit on the transfer of the contract and thereafter 50 annual payments of $60 000 each will be made. The people of Victoria will not be entranced by those annual payments of $60 000, which are not indexed. I ask the Minister what $50 000 will be worth in 50 years’ time if it is not indexed.

The existing quarry site will be let back to Boral for $60 000 a year. No suggestion has been made that that figure will be indexed, either. Boral will no doubt be delighted in 50 years’ time when it is paying only $60 000 a year for that resource. That matter should be addressed by the Minister.

The restitution clause of the agreement contains a five-year review clause. The proposal is that 70 million to 80 million tonnes of stone will be removed from the quarry. It will take a considerable time to shift that quantity of stone. At the present loading of 22 cents a tonne for restoration, it will yield approximately $1.4 million a year, a total of $15.4 million. However, the agreement calls for a minimum of $100 000 for the first five years and $300 000 thereafter. The yield on an average basis over 50 years is $308 000 a year. The set-up cost and operating cost in the initial stages of the quarry being restored to the Lysterfield Lake Park will be significant and the effects will concern the people in the area.

Little publicity has been given to the Bill and an adjournment period of only one week was allowed for discussion. I have contacted the surrounding municipalities in the past few days and found that they have little knowledge of the proposal.

Mr Fordham interjected.

Mr COLEMAN—The City of Dandenong extends to one corner of the quarry.

Mr Fordham—What about the Shire of Sherbrooke?

Mr COLEMAN—The Shire of Sherbrooke is on the north side and the City of Dandenong is on the south side of the quarry.

The response was that they could do nothing about it as the matter had not been before the council. There are many reasons why this matter should have been canvassed further. In my view, using the provisions of the Environment Effects Act should have been considered, given that the Government had become the owner of the land. The Opposition also expresses concern about the creation of yet another fund in which money may be held in trust. The question to be answered is why is the agreement being made when section 25 of the Extractive Industries Act states:

(1) There shall be established and kept in the Treasury a fund to be called the "Extractive Industries Land Reclamation Fund".

(2) There shall be paid into the fund—

(a) the reclamation charges paid by the holders of licences in respect of private leasehold land; and
such proportion as the Minister determines of—

(i) the royalties paid by the holders of leases; and

(ii) the royalties paid by the holders of leases under the Mines Act 1958 which continue in force by virtue of section 37.

There shall be paid out of the fund all sums payable pursuant to sub-section (2) of section 24 and, upon the lessee of any private leasehold land in respect of which reclamation charges have been paid under this Act becoming entitled to a Crown grant thereof in fee simple, there shall be paid out of the fund to the lessee a sum equal to the total amount of the reclamation charges paid in respect of the land.

The question of whether this is a private deal is addressed in that section of the Act. There is provision for the reclamation process to proceed. The land in the Lysterfield catchment area is already in an extractive zone. There is provision there for quarrying operations to be expanded without reference to anyone, yet the proposed legislation provides provision for what I consider to be a unique situation of funding. I am sure anyone who understands the situation will reach the same conclusion. To set up the facility on the basis of what is said to be a new way of addressing quarry reclamation, and to provide legislative provision to enable the facility to proceed, does not seem to jell with me. It causes me to ask who are the beneficiaries. That question hangs over the Bill.

I am sure that if the measure were given more time for airing, many people would take objection to it. The Minister has said that most of the development is in the immediate area of the Shire of Sherbrooke; it is on the boundary of the Shire of Sherbrooke and the City of Knox. The City of Knox has been using a now exhausted clay pit in Cathies Lane for disposal of its rubbish. It is the first municipality to set up a recycling project simply because it is running out of space. One wonders why the Boral site is not being filled progressively.

The proposed reclamation includes a lake creation. Obviously, every last rock must be removed before filling the quarry with water. If hard fill is used over the rubbish it would mean the rubbish of the City of Knox would be compacted in that municipality and future generations would be able to use the reclaimed area. It would also mean that the City of Berwick, which is already accepting rubbish from the City of Knox, would be relieved of the road traffic involved in carting rubbish from Knox to Berwick to be buried.

A number of issues are involved. Obviously, the City of Knox supports the measure because the area is right on the boundary of that municipality and, at the time the agreement was first mooted, it was the dominant partner in negotiations for the severance between the Shire of Sherbrooke and the City of Knox. The City of Knox was prepared to agree to the proposal, given that the site was right on its boundary and adjacent to a national park, but the significance of the agreement fifteen years ago is completely different from what it is today.

I hope that while the Bill is between here and the other House the Minister will consider the contents of the agreement and the impact it will have on the people within the immediate area. I hope he will contemplate some of the additional benefits that should flow to those communities. Wellington Road, which is the principal access road in the area, has a road reservation and a double-lane carriageway for traffic travelling east as far as the Dandenong Creek. Consideration ought to be given to the company, given that it will operate on a fairly extensive scale for the next 50 years and contributing towards road costs.

Additional road widening ought to take place from Dandenong Creek further to the east right to the quarry entrance and beyond, if required. That would at least ensure that the consequent traffic that will flow along Wellington Road will be accommodated on a road that is sufficiently wide so as not to cause any danger to people using it and, more importantly, to ensure a steady flow of traffic in the area. Consideration should be given to immediate work to try to ameliorate some of the problems that currently exist.

It is possible that with the movement and relocation of some of the overburden and the significant planting of some major tree species, much of the visual impact will also be
overcome. The Minister ought to bear in mind that the current visible work is being undertaken on two of the three original freeholds. The little work that has been done is visible from the roadside. Some excavation has occurred, but as the development expands the face will open up further, and one can already see one end of it. Considerable effort ought to be made to ensure that the visual impact is recognized, and that people who have to suffer the visual impact are eased into the situation so that it does not cause them concern.

I recognize that there is a work force which fluctuates according to the whims of the building industry. It is an industry that will continue to be of importance in that area. Recognizing the fact that development is still continuing in the City of Knox and the Shire of Sherbrooke, one would expect the quarry, in the initial fifteen years of the agreement, to be well used. Those developments, together with stone deposits in Berwick and Pakenham, will obviously be a source of most of the crushed rock in the area for some time to come. Because of that fact there ought to be a review of the resource and work done to identify a further resource that can be utilized in twenty years' time rather than 50 years, as is proposed. The proposal should be reviewed at the end of twenty years but, more importantly, any newly identified sources of stone could be treated with the environmental precautions now available. That is a crucial factor. If the proposal were starting a project afresh, the environmental requirements would make it almost impossible to operate. I sense that is the reason why this land swap is occurring.

The Glenfern Road site is an exposed site. Any stone removed would be readily visible to significant areas of Ferntree Gully and Bayswater. It would require significant amounts of money to proceed through a planning process today. To ensure this State has a continuing flow of stone it should be adopting a forward view for identifying areas where suitable stone is available and then making the right environmental decisions to ensure that the impact on people who live in the immediate areas will not cause problems for future generations when further stone is removed.

For those reasons, I hope the Minister will review the Bill and provide an explanation to the people who live in the immediate area on what may happen in the future.

Mr MACLELLAN (Berwick)—I wish to say at the outset that my late mother and my mother's estate might at some stage have owned a couple of hundred shares in Boral Resources (Vic.) Pty Ltd. I can only say to honourable members that I do not believe I have any conflict of interest. However, any honourable member who is of a mind to buy some shares in that company may wish to do so because the Bill will be of great benefit to that company.

The Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources should not be criticized for having brought the Bill to the House nor for the way in which it has been explained by officers from his department. I should like to express my gratitude to the Minister and to the officers of his department who provided an excellent explanation of the details of the proposal. I found the explanation informative and useful.

Dr Clyne, who is one of the more notorious or well-known, depending on whether one reads his books, tax evasion experts, would eat his heart out if he could see the Bill. He would say that here one has the prime example of tax avoidance illustrated for all to see. A company is to sell its land to the Crown for a sum of money and to be paid for that land by a succession of payments which will be tax deductible. If one thinks of that for a moment, it makes leverage leasing look like a dream. One not only gets the capital sum tax free but one also gets the deduction for paying the money to oneself through the Crown. That is an extraordinary concept. It is as if one sold one's house to the Ministry of Housing and then obtained a tax deduction for all the payments one made to the State Government so that the State Government could pay one to buy one's house.

However, that is what is embodied in the Bill. The Bill is said to be an expression of an agreement made fifteen years ago by the former Government in an attempt to concentrate extractive industry in what was then a virtually unsettled part of Melbourne.
Honourable members would remember that the Catholic training college, now the Police Training Academy, was the effective edge of metropolitan Melbourne. Beyond that the area was a gleam in the eye of some of the more modern housing estates, which have since been developed and which have carried development right out. When VFL Park was constructed, it was regarded as being an absurd distance out of Melbourne. Now, of course, it is regarded as being close to the City of Melbourne.

What are the trade-offs in the Bill? The people who live in the area—and they are not my electors because my electors have the buffer zone of the Lysterfield Park between them and the working face of this quarry—on the north-western and northern parts of the quarry, will face 50 years of extractive industry on their front doorstep. That is the offering that the Bill makes to them—for 50 years they will see a diminishing quarry face and they will have to live with quarry traffic on their roads.

The most unsatisfactory feature of the Bill is its utter failure to deal with the duplication of Wellington Road. It is duplicated and and connected to a freeway as far as VFL Park. If the Government expects the local residents to put up with another 50 years of extractive industry, with trucks going down Wellington Road to deliver their product to the metropolitan area and other active sites, that road—it is not a long distance—from the quarry entrance to VFL Park ought to be duplicated and it ought to be duplicated now.

Once the Bill is passed, that road will carry 50 years of quarry traffic on it, let alone the traffic that flows along it on a commuter basis from Clematis, Emerald and Macklesfield as an alternative access to the trips through the Dandenongs, Ferntree Gully and the Burwood Highway. The duplication of that road would be the most important consideration.

The Glenfern Road site will be returned to public ownership after years of freehold lease. The honourable member for Gippsland East raised a telling point, which the Minister must answer, and that is the basis on which the value of the Glenfern land was established. Was it valued on the basis of having the rights for extractive industry or was it valued on the basis of a large area of land in a conservation zone in the Shire of Sherbrooke which could not be used for extractive industry without the most impossible and onerous conditions so as to make it impractical and which could not be subdivided or used for residential purposes because of policy considerations in relation to the Dandenongs and the environment in that area?

The Glenfern Road site is but a small offering being waved in front of us as a sort of bait for the Bill. It really is almost irrelevant to the Bill because I do not believe it could even have been used for extractive industry for the next fifteen months let alone the next 50 years.

The implications of the special payment into the trust fund are that they will become tax deductible when paid, not tax deductible when spent. Therefore, the Boral company will have the supreme advantage of being able to claim a tax deduction for the restoration payments which are paid into a fund, which will later undoubtedly be used to pay Boral to do some of the restoration work.

The honourable member for Syndal made a distinction on the escalation clauses, that the total amount will be for restoration work, which will be something in the order of $16 million in today's terms or whatever that turns out to be with the various increases in the royalty payments over the next 50 years.

There is no attempt to say whether it is wise or sensible to spend the next 50 years demolishing the landscape so that we can then spend $16 million attempting to restore it. Honourable members who have visited the Parliamentary Library and have seen the rather pretty photograph of the three lakes would be wise to remember a couple of things about it. The photograph is an aerial view; it is what a balloonist or an air pilot might see in the 50th year if the lakes were filled. It is not what anybody who lives on the ground would see; so it is a perspective which is quite unreal.
The other aspect is that the Bill does not relate to three lakes; it relates to two lakes. The other lake that is shown is a sort of fantasy lake in relation to a project which may be undertaken by the Pioneer company as a result of restoration activities on its site but which is not required to be covered in any way by the Bill.

Therefore, one could find that for 50 years we will be extracting material on the edge of Lysterfield Park, sanctimoniously reducing one of the Lysterfield hills to a Lysterfield mound so we can turn around and spend $16 million worth of tax deductible money to try to "green" the environment by covering it up with dirt and planting trees on it in the hope that everyone will appreciate the better environment.

If one visits the Adelaide hills and examines how a cliff face was treated after quarrying, one will realize that a different technique of restoration was used.

It may well be that this site ought to be considered for restoration work along the lines of the Adelaide hills approach, in which case quarrying would not go on for the next 50 years and the Government would say to the Boral company, "You have come to the edge of your boundary. You stop there because that is the end of the boundary". That is where the Glenfern land comes in, if it is covered as a sort of reasonable excuse for the extension of the area over the crest of the hill into the watershed of the Lysterfield Park so that extraction can go on for 50 years in the watershed of the Lysterfield Park. The traffic can then travel for the next 50 years down Wellington Road, whether or not it is duplicated.

The Bill represents one of the greatest tax wanks that I have ever seen demonstrated in my experience in Parliament. The company will receive tax deductions for everything it pays and it will receive advantages over the situation that would have existed had the Bill not been passed.

We do not need a Bill for Boral Resources (Vic.) Pty Ltd to sell the Glenfern land to the State. We do not need a Bill for the State to buy the freehold of the exhausted quarry that the company itself or its previous companies had already worked. We do not need a Bill to give an extractive industry a licence to a new area over the crest of the pit face in the watershed of the Lysterfield Park because it is already zoned under the Melbourne Metropolitan Planning Scheme.

We do not need a Bill to require Boral Resources (Vic.) Pty Ltd to make a contribution towards restoration where it gets a new extractive industry licence for a new area and for new zoning; and we do not need a Bill to fix or determine what royalty Boral should pay for land owned, leased or licensed from the State Government.

Therefore, the honourable member for Springvale—and he should remember this when it is next on his conscience that pay-as-you-earn taxpayers are paying too much—will be voting for a Bill that ensures that they pay more so that Boral Resources (Vic.) Pty Ltd may pay less and its shareholders may have more in terms of dividends.

Just in case he thinks his conscience is salved by that, because the shareholders would pay tax, he would know that under Mr Keating's tax arrangements, shareholdings of public companies that pay tax do not pay tax when they get the dividends. Therefore, the honourable member would realize, when going through the steps one after the other, that the ordinary workers and taxpayers will pay a little bit more so that the shareholders or Boral may receive a higher dividend on which they will not have to pay tax. That is the reality behind the Bill.

The realities of the Bill are that we are legislating to permit 50 years of quarrying in this area and we are saying to the local residents, "For the next 50 years something like 80 million tonnes of material will be taken out of the hole near you and driven down your roads." No provision has been made in the Bill for the roads to be upgraded to meet the traffic demands and that is the most devastating criticism that can be made of it. We have produced artistically false pictures of the restoration work as completed in 50 years-plus—if some Government in the meantime has not spent the money on something else—from a balloonist's view, not from a living-on-the-ground point of view.
Therefore, the Bill, which represents a social objective that was valid and compelling fifteen years ago when quarries were being opened all over the Dandenong Ranges, when the environment was not suffering and when public policy had not developed sufficiently and with sufficient sophistication to deal with the problems of quarrying, is now opening up the time capsule of an agreement made all that time ago.

An additional contribution is not being made by the benefiting company by way of additional road works, which are road safety works, or environmental works that might abate the poor environment already created and the poor environment that is likely to exist for another 50 years.

The Bill does not promise that it will create a better environment on the housing side of the quarry, which exists today by tree planting now and not in 50 years' time. It does not say that the roads may be improved now and not in 50 years' time, and it does not say that the environment will be better during the next 50 years; but it says we are legislating to make it a lot worse on the off-chance that in 50 years' time it might be made a bit better.

That, to me, is a criticism that ought to be made of the Bill and of a Government which is prepared to bring the Bill so uncritically into the House. There were opportunities for the Government to honour the full terms of the agreements made and acted upon over the fifteen-year period, although it is staggering to think that it takes fifteen years for the agreement finally to come to the House because, in effect, the companies that entered into the agreement some fifteen years ago had it in their pocket, so to speak, all along the line and it is merely Boral Resources (Vic.) Pty Ltd who is the successor, in a sense, to the agreement.

It is interesting to note that it takes so long for the Bill to come to the House and that, in that fifteen-year period, the situation has not advanced one step further. It could have been achieved under existing legislation in respect of a new quarry area; and it is a new quarry area having regard to the fact that the new extension of area will be absolutely cheek by jowl next to the existing quarry.

The existing assets that Boral has in the area will have a new and revised capital value without any overhead costs or any additional costs and for 50 years the people who now live in the area, who foolishly believed that the quarry was coming to the end of its working life, will find that Parliament has resurrected it for another 50 years to haunt them and their children who might live in the area over the next 50 years.

On balance, the Opposition has decided not to oppose the Bill. As a member in the area with a significant buffer between my electors and the voters at the site, I can say that I will be quite safe; but those honourable members representing the people of Knox and Sherbrooke who do live near the quarry will have to answer to these people as to why they have voted to give a tax advantage and a 50-year extension to a quarry that is boring out tracks onto Wellington Road and making that road more dangerous and life more difficult for the people who live in those areas immediately abutting the north and north west of this quarry site.

Mr WILLIAMS (Doncaster)—Honourable members have listened to a man of conscience, the honourable member for Berwick. What on earth has the Labor caucus committee, that should have been investigating the background of this Bill, been doing? The history of quarry masters in this State should shame us all.

I do not know how much the members of the caucus Bill committee know about the ownership background of bitumen and oil refineries started in Trinidad, but it is about time they found out about them. The Bill is a betrayal of everything for which the Labor Party stands and history will condemn it for passing the Bill.

Having said that, the Bill was approved by my party and, therefore, I shall vote with it.
Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—I thank honourable members for their contributions and I am delighted that all parties in the House are supporting the Bill.

The shadow Minister, the honourable member for Balwyn, raised a number of matters on which I shall now comment. He outlined the background to the legislation, the history of quarrying within the Lysterfield Hills area, and the significant scar on the quarry face that is now so much a feature of that local community.

The honourable member for Balwyn outlined the details of the arrangement proposed in the measure involving both the Glenfern Road site and Crown land and the future of the quarry in that general vicinity and how, in turn, that related to the future of the cliff face of the quarry.

The honourable member asked a number of questions, the first of which dealt with the time for reclamation of the land. I assure the honourable member that the plans referred to in the Bill specify how the quarry will be worked and reclaimed. Those plans are incorporated in the agreement.

The first lake will be completed within twenty years but reclamation of the land will commence on the western terminal face within two years. I am sure local members of Parliament will ensure that that reclamation program proceeds.

The honourable member referred to the trust fund. I assure him that the moneys will be earmarked for this purpose alone. I understand honourable members have referred to that aspect because of the peculiar nature of the measure. The honourable member for Balwyn also referred to the project's impact on road traffic in the area and the general local amenity.

I confirm the point that he made about significant benefits as well as detriments to the community through the continuation of that operation. The Glenfern Road site will become Crown land, which will be of significant benefit to the people of Melbourne and, more particularly, to the local community. As an indication of over-all community support for the proposal, I assure honourable members that I held discussions with representatives of the Knox and Sherbrooke municipalities, who strongly supported the Government in this proposal and commended its predecessors for bringing the matter almost to fruition prior to the change of government in 1982.

Immediately on taking office I received representations from the company and the local municipalities who sought from the Government an assurance to bring the long developing program to fruition. The two local municipalities are in a position to speak on behalf of their areas about the impact the quarrying will have on the local amenity.

The honourable member for Gippsland East emphasized the long processes that have been put in train, as did all honourable members. The Government is simply bringing to completion, through proposed legislation, the arrangements involving local government, the company and a significant number of State Government authorities and departments. The honourable member asked whether the deal is fair. I can understand his concern. It has been scrutinized by the department and by me. The deal is fair for the people of Victoria and for the company.

The honourable member also referred to the trust fund and I refer him to the statement I made earlier on the same subject. He further referred to the fact that the program is for 50 years. That is one of the reasons why the proposed legislation is necessary. The honourable member for Berwick also referred to that point and I agree with him that many aspects of the Bill do not need to be dealt with by legislation but it is necessary to put some important aspects of the agreement into legislative form. That is why we have a Bill of this sort.

The advice I have received from the department is that stone will be available from the quarry for an estimated 50 years. It would be a brave Government that saw fit to discontinue
the quarrying of that stone no matter whether it was the subject of a 10, 15 or 20-year agreement. The present agreement is for twenty years. The Government could not simply cast this resource aside.

The honourable member for Syndal, as the local member, emphasized the issue of the local amenity. Prior to that he referred to the agreement and mentioned the former Ministers of the Liberal Administration who were involved in this arrangement. They were, the Honourables Alan Hunt, Bill Borthwick, Roberts Dunstan and Bill Balfour. Those former Ministers were involved in the development, along with a former Premier of this State, the Honourable Rupert Hamer. The project has not stood still since 1971. Right up to the change of government in 1982, Ministers and officers of the department have worked with local government in trying to assess the inadequacies and details of the arrangement, which has been under scrutiny since 1971. The honourable member for Syndal was accurate in that comment.

On the question of local amenity, I repeat, strong representations and support for the project have been received from both the Knox and Sherbrooke municipalities. They recognize the benefits the project will have for ratepayers and the community at large. They also recognize the need for the stone to be quarried.

The honourable member went on to emphasize the impact the project will have on local roads. I reassure him that the reclamation works will proceed along the lines I have outlined. It may be worth pursuing the possibility of local involvement in the reclamation work by assisting and dealing with priorities that should be dealt with; perhaps they could help with plantings and other preparations. I am prepared to discuss that issue with officers of the department and initiate involvement with local government in the reclamation works. I agree that the matter is important to both present and future residents of the general area.

The honourable member for Berwick referred particularly to taxation and the overwhelming benefits he saw the company accruing. I do not recoil from the fact that the company will receive benefits but, on balance, the prime benefit will be to the people of Victoria. This valuable resource will continue to be worked and that will be done in such a way that the community will receive the over-all benefits.

The land exchange was essentially based around the 43-hectare site in Glenfern Road and the extension of 40 hectares, which was the basis of the arrangement made between the parties.

Mr Maclellan—Which one would you take?

Mr FORDHAM—I would take the area that was inherited from my predecessors.

In summary, the Government believes the resource is valuable and will be husbanded in the interests of the community at large. It hopes that in 50 years many honourable members will be in a sufficiently good state of health and fitness to be able to sail on the lakes and receive the benefits of this project.

Mr Maclellan—This could be my centenary park!

Mr FORDHAM—Those benefits will accrue to future generations who will applaud the decision being made today.

The motion was agreed to.

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

CHILDREN’S COURT (AMENDMENT) BILL

This Bill was received from the Council and, on the motion of Mr MATHEWS (Minister for the Arts), was read a first time.
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PATHOLOGY SERVICES ACCREDITATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—I move:
That this Bill be now read a second time.

The reasons why pathology services conducted in Victoria should be required to seek accreditation with a Pathology Services Accreditation Board were canvassed when the principal legislation was before the House in 1984. It is not my intention to again discuss the issues debated on that occasion.

However, recent claims, such as allegations published in the press that some Melbourne laboratories were being run from garages and backrooms by unqualified people, underline the importance of ensuring that pathology services are conducted ethically, and in accordance with acceptable standards of practice.

The Pathology Services Accreditation Board, under the chairmanship of Mr G. L. Jones, has been meeting regularly since April 1985.

The Bill will give effect to various machinery changes sought by the board before the substantive provisions of the principal Act are brought into operation. The proposed legislation is straightforward, and explanatory notes have been printed with the Bill for the assistance of honourable members.

The Bill makes two main amendments to the Pathology Services Accreditation Act. The first will enable pathology services to be accredited on a provisional basis. It is expected that a large number of pathology services will apply for accreditation under the Act.

The ability to extend interim accreditation to pathology services will avoid potential confusion as to the status of such services until these applications can be dealt with, and in particular, will put beyond doubt the ability of services to continue to operate while their applications are being considered by the board.

I mention to the House in passing that the Pathology Laboratories Accreditation Act of New South Wales provides for the provisional accreditation of laboratories in that State.

The second amendment will give the Governor in Council power to incorporate non-legislative material in regulations made under the Act.

It is the expressed intention of the board to aim for uniformity with the Commonwealth and the other States whenever practicable in standards and other matters to be prescribed by regulation.

The purpose of the amendment is to enable national or international standards and codes to be recognized and incorporated either in whole or in part, in regulation made in Victoria on the advice of the board. 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 Thursday, May 1.

LAND (MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS) BILL (No. 2)

Mr CATHIE (Minister for Education)—I move:
That this Bill be now read a second time.

Its purpose is to revoke certain permanent reservations in respect of Crown land which is required for other purposes and to make minor amendments to the Land Act 1958 and the Local Government Act 1958.
The main provisions in the Bill deal with parcels of permanently reserved Crown land which are either no longer required for the purpose for which they are reserved or are more urgently required for other purposes. Revocation of those reservations wholly or as to part is necessary to enable use other than for the purposes of the reservation and the Bill contains provisions which achieve those revocations. The particular parcels of land are described in the schedules to the Act. I am sure honourable members will be familiar with this type of Bill which has a similar purpose and format to previous Land (Miscellaneous) Bills.

**RAILWAY PURPOSES RESERVE, BACCHUS MARSH**

Item one of Schedule One to the Bill refers to about 4 hectares of Crown land which was permanently reserved in 1885 for railway purposes to facilitate the construction of the Bacchus Marsh railway station.

Development of the site has resulted in portions of Government roads being fenced in as part of the station grounds. On the portion of the Government road known as Parwan Street which has been so fenced in, nine old residences, housing railway employees, have been erected. These residential sites extend onto the reserve itself. All the land which is fenced in as part of the railway station grounds, including the portions of roads, is vested in the State Transport Authority. A strip of reserved land in the north of the reserve forms part of a public thoroughfare known as Station Street and, after revocation of the reserve and divesting of the land from the State Transport Authority, this land is proposed to be proclaimed as a road.

In accordance with its general policy of disposing of old residences on railway land the State Transport Authority desires to obtain title to the land upon which the nine residences stand. The authority's policy is to first give opportunity to the occupiers of the houses to purchase the sites. Virtually all employees who do not take up offers to purchase either remain as tenants whilst still employed as railway workers or are found other rental accommodation nearby.

Power to grant the land to the State Transport Authority exists in section 46 of the Transport Act 1983, but that power is subject to the provisions of section 8 of the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978, which provides that reserved Crown land shall not be sold unless the reservation thereof has been revoked.

The permanent reservation of the land is not necessary in view of the fact that the land within the fenced station grounds is vested in the State Transport Authority. Revocation of the reservation and the granting of the nine residential sites to the State Transport Authority will enable it to dispose of those sites.

**GLASTONBURY CHILDRENS HOME, BELMONT**

The second item in Schedule One of the Bill deals with the Glastonbury Children's Home site of 13 hectares which is 32 acres of Crown land adjacent to the Princes Highway, Belmont, at the present southern limit of Geelong's suburban development. The site contains a main two-storey building, plus a sports field, swimming pool, library, two residences and sundry outbuildings.

The home is run by Glastonbury Child and Family Services, which is a voluntary welfare organization, registered with the Hospitals and Charities Commission and subsidized through the Department of Community Welfare Services.

The history of the site is that prior to 1928 the Geelong and Western District Protestant Orphanage occupied another site on Crown land of approximately 12 acres with old obsolescent buildings. In 1928 the Minister of Lands agreed that the proceeds of the sale of this site could be applied towards the purchase of a new site if the orphanage agreed that the new land be transferred to the Crown. The orphanage purchased the new site now occupied by the children's home at Belmont for $7480 and received $4996, which is 67 per cent, for the old site. The Fyansford Land Act 1933 was enacted to facilitate these
arrangements and to permanently reserve the new site as a site for a Protestant orphanage. Consequently it can be said that the Crown gained a site of 32 acres in exchange for a site of approximately 12 acres at no cost to the Crown. Glastonbury contributed 33 per cent of the price of the new land, plus the full cost of all buildings and other improvements.

An objective of the Community Services Victoria residential child care services program is to ensure the provision of good quality residential care facilities which are accessible and integrated into local communities. These facilities are used for children and young people who are temporarily unable to live with their families and to facilitate wherever possible their return to their own families. In sympathy with this objective, Glastonbury has almost completed the transition from the orphanage to twelve residential family group homes. This program has been supported on a dollar-for-dollar basis by Community Services Victoria as a normal part of its ongoing support for voluntary sector organizations. Because of the change to family group homes, the site is no longer required by Glastonbury.

The buildings on the site have no significant conservation value. In 1984 a number of other public bodies were asked if they needed the site for other public uses. The responses were equivocal, and to date there have been no definite offers, apart from an expression of interest by the City of South Barwon in 0.8 hectare for recreational facilities.

PUBLIC RECREATION RESERVE, COCKATOO

Item one in Part 1 of Schedule Two to the Bill relates to 704 square metres of land at the intersection of the Healesville-Koo-Wee-Rup Road and McBride Street, Cockatoo, permanently reserved for public recreation, most of which has been developed as a garden and occupied in conjunction with the adjoining Mountain District Community Health Centre.

This beautification area, most of which is enclosed with the centre by fencing, is a grassed area of gently sloping land containing a row of oak trees. It is a narrow strip of land which has been occupied by the centre since 1970, until 1981 under a six-monthly tenure from the former Victorian Railways Board. Most of the land has not been readily accessible to the general public since 1970 and provides a treed buffer to the centre along the alignment of the Healesville-Koo-Wee-Rup Road.

The medical centre building stands on adjoining unreserved Crown land east of the reserved land and the trustees of the centre desire to consolidate and formalize the centre's occupation of the sites. It is also proposed that an adjoining portion of Government road, a small cul-de-sac, be closed and consolidated with that Crown land in a reservation for a community health centre under the provisions of the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978.

The centre proposes to erect offices to service its operations at the site but the structure will not be sited on the garden area which is to be retained for that use. Very small strips of the reserved land, will, after revocation of the reservation, be proclaimed as part of the Healesville-Koo-Wee-Rup Road. This reserved land was formerly freehold land owned by the former Victorian Railways Board. It was reserved by provisions contained in the Emerald Tourist Railway Act 1977, as was other land which was likely to be required for the extension of the Puffing Billy line. However, the Emerald Tourist Railway Board has agreed that this land may be excised from the reserve. The Shire of Pakenham and the Road Construction Authority are agreeable to the proposal.

PUBLIC PURPOSES RESERVE, KEYSBOROUGH

The land referred to in the second item in Part 1 of Schedule Two to the Bill is portion of a public purposes reserve created in 1881 as part of the system of drains needed for the reclamation of the Carrum swamp.

The subject portion of the reserve branches from the Mordialloc main drain reserve in Keysborough and runs for about 680 metres parallel to an unused road known as Bowmans Lane. The portion of the reserve has not been used for drainage purposes and is fenced in with the adjoining freehold land.
The owners of the land immediately to the west desire to purchase the portion of reserve which is fenced in with their property. As the land in question is permanently reserved it cannot be sold or used for other purposes without an enabling Act of Parliament. Easements protecting an oil pipeline, gas pipeline and a proposed State Electricity Commission power line will be provided in any Crown grant to issue over the subject land.

The reserve is not being used for drainage and the Dandenong Valley Authority, City of Springvale and Melbourne and Metropolitan Boards of Works have no requirement for its retention. Continued reservation of the land for drainage purposes is inappropriate. Future drainage requirements can be met by utilizing the adjoining unused road which is required for future road purposes.

PROTECTION OF THE COASTLINE RESERVE, TORQUAY

The Torquay Community Health Centre is situated on freehold land at Bell Street, Torquay. The site adjoins Crown land formerly permanently reserved for public recreation but now permanently reserved, together with large sections of foreshore land, for the protection of the coastline.

The centre has experienced difficulties in meeting the increasing demand for services as the building at the site is no longer sufficient to cope with the numbers requiring services. Constant and extensive use of the adjoining Crown land for camping for a season of about six months each year and the general increase in Torquay's population during holiday periods and week-ends means that the demand for services during those periods is very high. In the Christmas/January holiday period, Torquay's population increases from about 4500 to around 35 000. The centre offers a wide range of services including medical, dental, optometry, audiology, day centre for elderly and infant welfare centre.

To alleviate the space problems the centre desires to erect building extensions on the adjoining reserve which is controlled by the Torquay Public Reserve Committee of Management appointed under the provisions of the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978. A strip of land nearly 8 metres wide by about 50 metres long is required to accommodate their proposed extensions. The strip of land contains six caravan sites and services such as underground electricity cables and water mains. The centre has agreed to pay the costs of relocation of the sites and services. The Torquay Public Reserves Committee of Management and the City of South Barwon are agreeable to the excision from the reserve.

The Bill also contains some minor machinery amendments to the Land Act 1958 and the Local Government Act 1958. Section 349 of the Land Act 1958 which empowers the Governor in Council to partially close unused Government roads, contains the proviso that the reduced width of road remaining after any such closure must be a minimum of 20 metres. The provision is consistent with the power contained in section 532 of the Local Government Act 1958 which enables roads to be reduced in width to a minimum width of 20 metres. The restriction has historically been regarded as a protection in the interest of health, safety and planning.

A similar restriction in section 452 of the Health Act 1958 was repealed when certain provisions of the Building Control Act 1981 were brought into operation on 1 February 1985. That repeal and investigations of certain recent cases in which road closures would enable desirable land dealings, led to the proposal to amend the two Acts.

As section 349 of the Land Act 1958 provides that the relevant municipality must concur in writing to closure of the whole or any portion of the length or width of a Government road, the municipality is in a position to implement control if it desired to adopt a policy on minimum widths of roads.

Repeal of the restriction would enable municipalities to consider and decide on matters such as whether a building encroachment on a 20-metre wide road warrants a closure of the occupied portion of road with the view to the issue of a tenure or perhaps sale of that land under the provisions of the Land Act 1958. Also, a municipality would not be
constrained by the restriction if it desired to reduce the width of a road to less than 20 metres in the interests of better planning.

If the existing legislation remains, then where it is desirable or appropriate for sound reasons to close a road leaving a road width of less than 20 metres, the enactment of special legislation would be necessary to achieve the closure. It seems appropriate for any such proposed closure to be decided upon by the relevant municipality or planning authority rather than have Parliament spend its valuable time on any proposal.

It does not seem appropriate for the restrictive proviso to be contained in the Land Act and, this Bill, in clauses 3 and 4, provides for the repeal of that proviso and for an amendment to section 532 of the Local Government Act to remove a similar restriction.

The Bill contains a further amendment to the Land Act which relates to the surrender to the Crown of freehold lands vested in trustees for public purposes. Section 22c of the Land Act provides the machinery whereby those lands may be surrendered to the Crown where the relevant local communities consider that such action is in their best interest.

Schedule Two B to the Land Act lists those cases where the trustees are all deceased or there is no person capable of legally executing a surrender and the relevant municipality may make application for authority to surrender the land to the Crown.

A further parcel of land is to be added to Schedule Two B, that being the site of Glenorchy public hall. In this instance, the registered proprietor of the land is deceased and the person who could administer his estate is unwilling to act. The Glenorchy Progress Association presently manages the hall. The addition of the land to Schedule Two B will enable the municipality to initiate the necessary action for surrender of the land to the Crown. Following completion of the surrender, it is proposed that the site be reserved under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 for the appropriate purpose and suitable arrangements made for future control and management. I commend the Bill to the House.

On the motion of Mr PLOWMAN (Evelyn), the debate was adjourned.

It was ordered that the debate be adjourned until Tuesday, May 6.

**ROAD CONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY (LANDS) BILL**

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—I move:

That this Bill now be read a second time.

Its purpose is to authorize the Road Construction Authority compulsorily to acquire recreational land, most of which is owned by the City of Malvern, a small parcel of which is owned by the City of Camberwell and the remainder of which is jointly owned by the cities of Camberwell, Hawthorn and Malvern. The City of Malvern has been acting as agent for the other municipalities in respect of the jointly owned land for the purpose of negotiating compensation. The land is required by the Road Construction Authority for the construction of the South-Eastern—Mulgrave freeways arterial road link.

The land is subject to the Cultural and Recreational Lands Act 1963. This Act does not permit compulsory acquisition by the authority under the Transport Act 1983. The procedure required by the 1963 Act is that negotiations take place with the councils regarding the basis on which the land can be made available. If agreement cannot be reached, a specific enabling Act is required to allow compulsory acquisition.

As honourable members are aware, on 25 May 1983, the former Minister of Transport, now the Minister for Labour, announced that the Government had decided to link the South-Eastern Freeway and the Mulgrave Freeway by means of a four-lane arterial road. The decision to build the road link is the only sensible way to resolve the traffic shambles in the region. The lack of an adequate road connection between the two freeways has resulted in immense environmental degradation of the local roads in the municipalities of Malvern, Camberwell and Hawthorn with complaints from residents about traffic, including
large trucks in residential streets during all hours of the day. Also, for years motorists have been experiencing frustrating delays in travelling through the area between the two freeways and traffic conditions are unsafe. As well as being critical to enable free traffic flow between the South-Eastern and Mulgrave freeways, construction of the link will provide a traffic artery to service the needs of traffic between Melbourne and the Latrobe Valley and adjoining areas.

Soon after the announcement was made, negotiations between the councils and the authority began for the use of the land by the authority. Although agreement has been reached on a number of aspects, there are difficulties regarding the provision of replacement open space. The authority, at my request, is continuing to negotiate with the councils and every attempt will be made to resolve these difficulties, if at all possible.

If agreement cannot be reached, an enabling Act will be necessary to permit compulsory acquisition under the Transport Act 1983. That Act provides for the consequent determination of compensation and associated issues by incorporating the procedures set out in the Lands Compensation Act 1958. This will ensure that the councils have the benefit of the statutory procedures applicable to all other landowners whose lands have been compulsorily acquired.

Although it is my intention that the authority and the councils should continue to pursue means of resolving the issues by agreement, enabling legislation to permit compulsory acquisition needs to be enacted during the current sessional period. This enabling legislation will be used only if required, but will ensure that compulsory acquisition can proceed, if necessary, to enable road construction deadlines to be met. If the councils and the authority fail to reach agreement and it is necessary to wait until the spring sessional period before enabling legislation can be enacted to resolve the situation, there is a danger that the construction program will be severely impaired. This would add significantly to construction costs as well as delay the opening of that arterial road, which is expected to take place in 1988-89.

I commend the Bill to the House.

On the motion of Mr LEIGH (Malvern), the debate was adjourned.

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—I move:
That the debate be adjourned until Tuesday week.

Mr LEIGH (Malvern)—As the local member, I have been unable to consult with the Malvern City Council. I spoke to the council this morning and found it was unaware of the Bill.

I therefore seek an assurance from the Minister that if the council, the Opposition and I require additional time to consider this Bill, it will be granted.

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport) (By leave)—The Government has written to all the councils, but it was considered appropriate that the Bill be introduced in Parliament before the councils were contacted about it.

If the honourable member and the Opposition require additional time to consider the Bill, it will certainly be provided. I have told both parties that I will arrange appropriate briefings by my officers so that they can understand the purposes of the Bill.

The motion was agreed to, and the debate was adjourned until Tuesday, May 6.

PETROLEUM (SUBMERGED LANDS) (AMENDMENT) BILL

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—I move:
That this Bill be now read a second time.

It results from agreement of all the States with the Commonwealth to amend their respective off-shore petroleum legislation to bring it into line with the amended Commonwealth
Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Act 1967 and incorporated Acts. The amendments to the Commonwealth legislation followed extensive consultation with the State and Northern Territory Governments and, as appropriate, with the petroleum exploration industry.

The proposed amendments provide for:

- the establishment of an "area to be avoided" in addition to the existing safety zones for the increased protection of the off-shore petroleum installations by limiting the entry of certain vessels and prohibiting entry in emergency circumstances;
- the granting of retention leases over currently non-commercial discoveries and the setting of fees for such leases;
- revision of the registration provisions of the Act concerning approval and registration of transfers and dealings with off-shore titles, including increased power for the designated authority to require information;
- expansion and clarification of the powers to give directions and make regulations that control off-shore exploration and development operations;
- increase in the scope of access authorities and special prospecting authorities;
- the early release of basic data and interpretive information submitted by title holders to government subject to right of consultation and limited right of appeal; and
- expansion of the provisions relating to permits, licences and individual blocks and miscellaneous editorial amendments.

I now refer to the proposed amendments in more detail. Concern for the safety of the Bass Strait petroleum installations because of their intrusion into the shipping lanes between Cape Howe and Wilson's Promontory is the principal reason for the provision of the area to be avoided—ATBA—in the Commonwealth legislation now to be complemented by the Bill for the 3-nautical mile wide territorial sea portion of it. Except for Government and authorized vessels, entry into the ATBA is prohibited to Australian vessels over 200 tonnes and, in times of heightened terrorist threat, to all Australian vessels. The Bill extends these provisions to foreign flag vessels, which a coastal State has power to do under international law for its territorial sea.

The Bill provides that, where an unauthorized vessel enters or remains in the area, the owner and the master may be liable to a fine of up to $50,000, or five years' imprisonment or both. Provision is made for possible defences against prosecution on the grounds of an unforeseen emergency or because of circumstances beyond the control of the person in charge.

The ratification of the area to be avoided is necessary to ensure the protection of one of Australia's most important resource development projects. It is also essential in order that the risk to the lives of those working on the production platforms and on ships passing through the area is minimized.

With the introduction of a new division 2A into Part III of the principal Act, the amendment Bill enables permittees discovering petroleum, which is currently non-commercial, but which is expected to become commercial within fifteen years, to apply to the Minister for the award of a retention lease. Applicants are required to provide details of proposed work and expenditure in a large area, as well as details of the commercial viability or possible future commercial viability of the recovery of petroleum from the area.

If the Minister is satisfied that recovery of petroleum is not currently commercially viable but is likely to become viable within fifteen years, a lease will be granted for a period of five years over all of the blocks applied for by the permittee. Given the uncertainties concerning petroleum prices, marketing opportunities and technological change, a fifteen-
year assessment period should ensure that discoveries with genuine development potential are awarded leases. Provision for the new title is commended to the House.

The Petroleum (Submerged Lands) (Amendment) Bill also revises the registration provisions of the Act. The new provisions take into account recommendations of the Royal Commission into the Activities of the Federated Ship Painters and Dockers Union and suggestions by industry and other States and the Northern Territory to clarify the process of registration of transfers and dealings affecting petroleum titles.

The status of transfers and dealings that have not been lodged for registration is also clarified. Provision is also made to ensure that the register is kept as up to date as possible, to protect the interests of investors and potential investors. The amendments also ensure that a transfer of title is of no force in law until it has been approved by the Minister and registered.

The amendments to the registration provision of the Act are complex and could not have been completed without the considerable support of all States and Northern Territory Governments and industry.

Originally suggested by the Victorian Government to the Commonwealth, amendments to improve the administrative processes for the making of regulations and the service of directions are included in this Bill. The new provisions will facilitate the service of documents, enable codes of practice and standards to be adopted as they exist from time to time, and enable the directions and regulations to control certain activities by making them subject to the consent or approval of specified persons.

In view of the international nature of the petroleum industry, the Bill will enable regulations to apply Australian or international codes of practice or technical standards, as in operation from time to time, to off-shore petroleum activities. Of course, overseas standards would be adopted only where appropriate Australian standards do not exist. These provisions are fully supported by industry and the other States and the Northern Territory.

The Bill also extends the scope of access and special prospecting authorities and facilitates their grant to exploration companies. At present, an access authority applies only to title holders and exploration areas under the jurisdiction of the State off-shore legislation. The scope has been broadened to allow a person who holds a Commonwealth off-shore petroleum title or an adjoining on-shore State petroleum title or an adjoining petroleum title of a neighbouring State to apply for an access authority to enter the State area adjacent to that title.

The scope of special prospecting authorities has been extended to allow them to be granted over any vacant area, and more than one person may be granted a special prospecting authority over the same area. However, the Minister must inform each holder of a special prospecting authority of the proposed activities by other holders in that same area.

The Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Amendment Bill also provides for the early release of basic data and interpretive information supplied by titleholders to Government, subject to consultations with titleholders on the release of interpretive information. The new provisions will increase the public availability of data and information and will encourage exploration activity.

The proposed amendments will ensure that legislative arrangements to the 3-mile limit will be consistent with Commonwealth legislation applying in the off-shore area beyond that. It is crucial for the petroleum industry that State and Commonwealth legislation applying off-shore should be administered consistently, thereby assisting to create an environment which will facilitate exploration and development of petroleum resources.

I commend the Bill to the House.

On the motion of Mr LEIGH (Malvern), the debate was adjourned.
It was ordered that the debate be adjourned until Tuesday, July 1.

PUBLIC RECORDS (AMENDMENT) BILL

The debate (adjourned from April 15) on the motion of Mr McCutcheon (Minister for Property and Services) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

Mr DELZOPPO (Narracan)—There is an old adage that says, "Those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it". The public records of Victoria—the official documents made and received by Government departments and public bodies—are among the most important sources of remembrance of the past. Effective arrangements for their proper preservation, management and control are essential if we are not to forget.

There is no need for me to remind the House of the great upsurge in interest in the Public Record Office and the fact that interest in the past was heightened by the 150th celebrations in Victoria so a great number of people have been seeking information on their forebears, working out their family trees and generally inquiring into the history of their own local districts and their own family background.

In 1973, the former Government enacted the Public Records Act which was widely hailed at the time as a major step forward in accomplishing that task. It established the Public Record Office which is the office this Bill addresses. The Act gave the Public Record Office a statutory position and it gave the Keeper of Public Records statutory recognition and the necessary powers and responsibilities to give effect to those provisions. All over the world the office of Keeper of Public Records or its equivalent is a person of importance in administration and a person who has a tremendous responsibility to take care of and preserve public records.

The former Government also took steps to improve and upgrade resources available to the Public Record Office to enhance the management of public records generally and the services that are made available to public users.

It is interesting to note the significant interest by members of the public in the Public Record Office over the past five or six years. One of the logistic difficulties with which the department has to deal involves inquiries, making available material in such a way that it is secure and providing a room in which people can carry out research on the documents they seek to research.

A major records repository was established at Laverton to house many thousands of running feet of records which had formerly been kept in poorer conditions and at greater cost in the basements and attics of Government offices all over the State. A systematic approach was developed for the transfer of public records and their release to scholars and other users.

The former Government established the first of what was seen as a network of regional offices at Ballarat to house the public records for the Central Highlands region. This initiative of the former Government launched the public records program in Victoria and gave promise of a healthy future. The volume of preserved records and the task of making them available to the public is great, as the annual reports of such successive keepers have testified. Those reports are tabled in this House.

The annual provision of money to install sufficient shelving at the Laverton repository to enable it to continue its operations is an essential part of managing that program. Yet, I direct to the attention of the House, that for the past four years—since its very first Budget—the Cain Government has withheld the funds for that purpose which had previously been provided regularly. This has created a backlog and is creating some difficulties in the storing and preservation of our heritage.

According to the 1984–85 annual report of the Keeper of Public Records, this has resulted in the cessation of transfers for the first time since the Laverton repository opened in 1978. The provision of a mere $68 000 in the current financial year for shelving in no
way restores the program to the position it has lost as a result of the failure of the present Government to support it.

The Laverton repository is an important element in the effective management of the State's public records. It provides the most cost-effective storage of adequate quality and is available for less frequently used records while awaiting a decision on whether they are worthy of preservation.

One of the biggest problems faced by archivists is deciding which records should be preserved and which records should be destroyed. It is estimated that storage costs for the documents within the control of the Keeper of Public Records amount to something like $2 million, and yet, if those documents were sorted through, a great many could be destroyed. The agony is that if, in going through some of these records a valuable piece of information were lost to the State, this would be a tragedy.

The former Government also recognized the need to develop adequate storage facilities close to the City of Melbourne for records deemed worthy of preservation, for use by the public. Negotiations were commenced with the Commonwealth Government to join with Victoria in establishing first-class archives storage and public facilities at South Melbourne. These negotiations languished under the present Government and the proposed site was lost.

The State of Victoria is all the poorer for the fact that it does not have a large repository close to the city. The Bill has much to commend it. The broadening of the composition of the Public Records Advisory Council, which advises the keeper and the Minister, the extension of the keeper's powers of inspection, and the provision for financial support of approved places of deposit for public records kept outside the Public Record Office subject to the keeper's inspection, are worth-while improvements.

One of the difficulties with, for example, local government records—old rate books and so on—which are in the custody of various municipalities, is that they could, in some cases, be demanded to be kept within the Public Record Office. There is a certain resistance by local government to this idea because researchers in the local area use the old rate books as a first reference in their research.

A disturbing provision in the Bill is the change to the role and function of Keeper of Public Records. The public records program, if it is to be successful, must be sustained and directed towards the long-term goals. It is appropriate that in determining the standards that apply to the management and treatment of the records, the keeper should have the power to implement and sustain them and the Government of the day should not be able to interfere in the decisions made about what records are to be destroyed. Such a power, the power to tamper with the evidence of Government activity, is a hallmark of dictatorships the world over.

An unusual situation has arisen under the administration of this Minister. Under the present Act the Minister is required to demand from the Keeper of Public Records a report which has to be in the Minister's hands by the September following 30 June, the day on which the report terminates.

I direct to the attention of the House the failure of the Minister in this regard because the report of the Keeper of Public Records for the year ended June 1985 was not tabled in this House until Maundy Thursday, that is the Thursday before Good Friday this year.

If I had a sinister mind I would suggest to the House that this was a deliberate ploy to bury the keeper's report over the Easter period when it would not be subject to scrutiny and examination by those people who have an interest in it. The Minister has failed in his duty to bring forward the report and, furthermore, the Bill reveals the requirement in the current Act that the Keeper of Public Records has to report to the Minister and that the Minister is required to report to Parliament.
The Bill effectively interposes the Director-General of Property and Services between the keeper and Parliament. It is ironic that a Government that prides itself on making available information, that introduced the Freedom of Information Act and advocated more open Government so that there could be closer public scrutiny, should introduce a Bill that takes away from the Keeper of Public Records the ability to report to Parliament and thus to the people of Victoria.

There is a great deal of interest in the reports of the Keeper of Public Records from time to time. Over a long period keepers have been critical of any shortcomings of the Government of the day and this has happened both to the current Government and to Governments of other political persuasions.

In other words, the Keeper of Public Records occupies a unique position, akin to the Ombudsman and the Auditor-General. It is my view—and the view of the Opposition—that the Keeper of Public Records should not be, so far as practicable, influenced by the Minister and the Government of the day.

The people of Victoria should be given the facts of the storage of public records and reports should not be sanitized by the Minister or the department before they see the light of day. In point of fact the effect of the Bill is to sweep away the balance of powers and functions which has worked well over the past thirteen years.

By clause 5, which repeals section 6 (2) of the principal Act, the control and management of the Public Record Office itself is removed from the keeper and the exercise by the keeper of his statutory functions under section 7 of the Act, including the control and management of the public records themselves, is made subject, without qualifications, to the Public Service Act.

The effect of the amendment is to vest the authority and responsibility for conducting the public records program not in the hands of the officer appointed by Parliament to carry it out, but in the hands of the permanent head of the Department of Property and Services who is himself, nowhere in the Act, charged with the discharge of those responsibilities.

From the outset I point out that I am not being personally critical of the permanent head of the Department of Property and Services; far from it. I understand the gentleman concerned is well versed in archival activity. However, when one is dealing with legislation, one is dealing with perpetuity and it may not necessarily be the case that, at some future date, a permanent head may have the sensitivity or knowledge of public records of the current encumbent.

The importance of protecting the public record program by enshrining it in legislation is widely recognized. It is important that these functions should be founded on specific legislative authority and not in the Public Service Act. The public records program involves agencies of Government which are themselves in a different relationship to the Executive arm of the Government than are the municipalities, departments, courts and statutory bodies, to cite some examples.

Moreover it is vital that Parliament, and not a Minister or a permanent head of the department, should retain a direct oversight, through the statutory office of the keeper, over the public records program. Other Governments have recognized this and I direct the attention of the House to the fact that in New South Wales an independent archives authority is established by statute to manage the archives program.

Such authority is insulated from Government interference and it can report to the community without fear of being overridden or swayed in any way. In the Commonwealth the Minister's powers of direction over the Director-General of the Australian Archives are to be exercised in a way not inconsistent with the archives Act itself.

Similar arrangements apply in Tasmania where the Parliament thought it so important that the archives Act specifically states in sub-sections 8 (7) and (8) that the State archivist
is free from direction and control by the political arm in relation to any responsibility, duty or power relating to the important functions of destruction or disposal of records.

That is the argument I am mounting today; that the Keeper of Public Records should be free from political interference and not subject to the whims of Ministerial control and the control of the Government of the day. The public of Victoria is entitled to have a complete unbiased account of the state of the archives, the way they are protected and looked after, and the schedule of disposal of unwanted records should be open to the scrutiny of any person in Victoria.

The 1973 Act established the keeper in a similar position, which was an appropriate and workable balance of responsibilities between the keeper, the responsible Minister and Parliament. The proposed amendments are at best ill-informed and at worst sinister. They represent a far-reaching, fundamental change to the existing arrangement for the management of public records in this State which goes far beyond the Minister's claim that the Bill will "streamline" administration of the Public Records Act.

I am rather wary of some words in the language: "streamline" is one and "rationalization" is another. More sins have been committed under the name of "rationalization" than under any other name in the English language.

Such profound changes, if they are to be considered at all, should be dealt with only in the context of implementing the review announced by the Minister. I direct the attention of the House to the fact that the Minister has called for a review of his department by a team of consultants, and it is inconceivable to me that he should proceed with the Bill when, in point of fact, that review is still taking place. Logic should dictate that Parliament would not proceed with a Bill dealing with public records when the Minister's own department is still being subjected—from his own volition, I might add—to review. It is elementary that no moves should be made to introduce a Bill into Parliament when the Minister's own review has been handed down and accepted by the Minister. The Minister is putting the cart before the horse.

The powers of inspection conferred by proposed section 13A are an important extension of the powers of the keeper and will apply to a wide range of public offices, not merely to departments; and the keeper will be able to inspect the archival exhibits of municipalities throughout the State. This is an important improvement. The ultimate authority for that should lie directly with Parliament and not the Minister. If the power of entry into municipalities, courts and statutory bodies is conferred, it should not be exercised by an officer who is subject, without qualification, to Ministerial and departmental control.

Finally, as I have indicated, the provision for the keeper to present to Parliament an annual report is an essential safeguard, ensuring that the keeper is accountable to Parliament for the exercise of the powers conferred on him. Over the years, the reports that have been submitted have provided a valuable and informative record of the development of this important function.

Commenting in another place on the 1983–84 report of the Keeper of Public Records, Mr Guest said that it was an example of the kind of informative document which Parliament should be receiving but which is not being provided by this Government's annual reporting arrangements.

Based on what I have indicated to the House, I move:

That all the words after "That" be omitted with the view of inserting in place thereof the words "this House refuses to read this Bill a second time until the Report on the Review of the Public Records Management Policy referred to in the Minister's second-reading speech, is received by the Minister, and made available to the public for consideration and comment."

The reasoned amendment is based on the fact that the consultants are in the final stages of preparing their report. The report is entitled, "A Review of the Public Record Management Policy", and the review is being carried out by Nicholas Clark and Associates. The terms of reference include:
What amendments are needed to the Public Records Act to implement any changes arising from recommendations on any matters?

Further, the consultants may also consider other matters which are relevant to the review, including the role and responsibilities of the Public Record Office. It is foolish in the extreme to proceed with the Bill until the report is handed down. I am not alone in that view.

The President of the Victorian Branch Council of the Records Management Association of Australia on 8 April wrote to the Premier along these lines:

The Records Management Association of Australia (RMAA) is concerned that it has not been consulted about proposed amendments to the Public Records Act 1973.

The Association is an incorporated non-profit organization and is registered as a company in the ACT for the express purpose of promoting the betterment of Records Management throughout the community. It has members in Federal, State and Municipal government as well as in private industry throughout Australia.

I stress the following paragraph:

As you know, your Government is awaiting a consultant's report on the role of the Public Record Office and the RMAA believes no amendments to the Public Records Act should be considered or made until the report is released and all interested parties consulted.

I repeat that:

... no amendments to the Public Records Act should be considered or made until the report is released and all interested parties consulted.

That is the very reason for which I moved the reasoned amendment.

The letter goes on:

The omission of the RMAA from the Steering Committee (reference group appointed by the Minister) overseeing the consultancy can be interpreted as a deliberate act on behalf of the Department of Property and Services to keep the RMAA and therefore professional Records Managers from the consultative process.

That is a very serious allegation made to the Premier about the activities of the Department of Property and Services. The letter continues:

As the Archives Society is represented on the committee, it makes it more difficult to understand why Records Managers have been ignored.

This is particularly regrettable in view of the wide knowledge and experience of the Association’s members, some of whom hold, or have held, senior positions in the Victorian Public Service. We also believe we should have been represented because of the close and vital relationship between Archival and Records Management professionals and the Association’s role in the practical and daily activities of the Public Record Office.

If representation is at all possible, the Association would like an opportunity, even at this late stage, to be part of the Steering Committee/Reference Group.

The Association hopes that as a result of the consultant's review the Public Record Office will be given adequate staffing, finance and accommodation to fulfil the aims and objectives of the Public Record Act, which is the basis of an excellent Archival and Records Management programme.

The Association respectfully requests a firm statement from the Government that no amendments to the Public Records Act 1973 will be introduced into Parliament before our Victorian Executive has had the opportunity to comment on them.

That is exactly what is happening this afternoon: the Public Records Act is being amended before adequate consultation and before the results of the consultant’s review have been handed down.

As I said before, I am not alone in this opinion, nor am I alone in support for the reasoned amendment to the second-reading motion. The Australian Society of Archivists Incorporated wrote to the Minister for Property and Services on 24 April in the following terms:

The Australian Society of Archivists is concerned with the impact of this Bill on the Public Record Office of Victoria.
In particular, the effect of the Bill removes the statutory powers of the Keeper with repeal of S6 (2) and the addition to S7, making it possible for Government to place the functions of the Public Record Office under any administrative department or authority. It would have the effect of allowing directions to be given to the Keeper on the conduct of highly specialized and essential functions.

The Public Records Act 1973 applies to all records of all departments and agencies including the Courts and Municipalities and control is given to the Keeper who under S21 reports directly to Parliament.

Section 21 is the section the Bill seeks to repeal.

The letter continues:

With the loss of the statutory authority of the Keeper the unique power would devolve to a department or agency that would not have the necessary statutory independence from the Executive arm of Government which the fair and impartial exercise of these functions requires.

It is the Society’s view that the proposed amendments are contrary to all trends and defy the Victorian Government’s commitments to access to information and Public Service accountability.

I mentioned that earlier in my speech. How, on one hand, can the Government claim that there should be open scrutiny and greater public access to information and, on the other hand, attempt to muzzle the Keeper of Public Records who is one of the prime officers in ensuring that information is available to the public?

The letter goes on:

The amendments are also contrary to national and international standards in allowing for a public archives institution to function as a section of a branch or division of a department.

In other words, this is a downgrading of the role of the keeper and a downgrading of the care and security of archival material in this State.

The letter continues:

It is essential for the Government to provide safeguards for the needs of administration for information and other services as well as the rights of the community for information and for fully accountable control of Public Records. These should be provided by an archival institution solidly based on legislation.

Honourable members have already seen that the present Act is more than adequate and protects the integrity of the Keeper of Public Records and the integrity necessary to preserve the archival material that Victoria has collected over many years.

The letter goes on:

The current amendments remove the Keeper's accountability and power to control the major functions of the Office.

We see the Bill as pre-empting the consultative process which you instituted in 1985 . . .

There it is again—the Government is pre-empting the consultative process which was started but has not been concluded.

The letter further states:

. . . particularly since the legislation runs counter to the improved and commonly accepted patterns for archival institutions.

The amendments can only exacerbate the problems highlighted over the past several months.

A copy of this letter is being sent to the Premier and to the Shadow Minister for Property and Services.

The letter is signed by Mr Clive Smith, President of the Australian Society of Archivists Incorporated.

In further support of my reasoned amendment, I draw to the attention of the House the fact that the employees at the Laverton repository are most unhappy that, in their view, the consultation process has been incomplete.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fogarty)—Order! Now that the honourable member for Narracan has begun to speak to his reasoned amendment, honourable members who will speak during the debate will be speaking to both the motion and the reasoned amendment.
Mr DELZOPPO—It is not in the community's interest to muzzle the Keeper of Public Records, downgrade his position and prevent people working in the Public Record Office from having a say. The Bill is most untimely. It should be held over until the review instigated by the Minister for Property and Services is complete. I am not alone in that opinion.

The office of the Keeper of Public Records should be preserved as it is in the current Act. The keeper should be an independent person able to report to the Minister, and his report should be tabled to Parliament on time and not months and months late, as was the report for the year ended June 1985.

I shall deal with some of the other objections to the Bill when it is considered in the Committee stage; I shall propose an amendment and oppose several clauses of the Bill.

Mr STEGGALL (Swan Hill)—It is interesting to note that so many Bills that are introduced to Parliament have many good points in them but, invariably, have a sting in the tail or contain a specific provision that goes too far. During the past two weeks Bills have been introduced into Parliament in an incorrect order. I refer to the Mental Health Bill (No. 2) and the Guardianship and Administration Board Bill (No. 2). The presentation of those Bills was turned around the wrong way.

The Annual Reporting (Amendment) Bill is currently listed on the Notice Paper and is to be debated the week after next. However, the House is now expected to debate this Bill which relates to the amendments contained in the Annual Reporting (Amendment) Bill. It is unfortunate that the presentation of the Bills was not the other way around. No doubt the Government or the Leader of the House have good reasons for arranging things in such a manner, but it is unfortunate for debate and the operation of Parliament.

The Bill covers a few areas. I commend the honourable member for Narracan on the extremely good case he put forward and also on the reasoned amendment that he backed up very well. If honourable members listen to the argument and examine the current situation, they will realize that everything the honourable member for Narracan said was logical.

It is surprising that the Bill is before the House at this stage when the Public Record Office is under scrutiny. I know that the Government intends to introduce another Bill later in the year to act on the results of the review of the office. It may be that some provisions of the Bill, even the reasonably good ones, could be improved if the reports were studied.

Honourable members are becoming used to the fact that every Government department is being turned upside down, restructured and rearranged. I do not know of one department that is not upside down and suffering from low morale. Government departments do not know where they are going and how the Government will achieve its various policies through the departments.

The Department of Property and Services is heading down the same track. I should have thought it better for the review to be completed before action was taken. The Government claims it is good at consultation; if it were good, the Government would have discussed the proposed legislation and examined the report to be issued before going ahead with the changes.

The Minister for Property and Services is also the Minister for Water Resources. The Department of Water Resources is a classic example of the confusion in Government departments. That confusion runs right throughout the department, and it is especially prevalent in the Rural Water Commission. I should have hoped the Minister would not go even partly down that track to bring about confusion in the public records section of the Department of Property and Services.

The Bill amends the membership of the advisory council. I agree that many of these changes are good and will widen the advisory role and function of the council. Probably
other areas should be considered. I note that the Minister for Property and Services has in sub-paragraph (vii) of proposed sub-section (1A) provided for the appointment in:

Any area considered by the Minister to be a relevant area for the purposes of this sub-section.

I dare say that is where the Minister will include the appointment of a Trades Hall Council representative, as this designation has been conspicuous by its absence in the categories of appointments.

I have studied the list of areas from which it is proposed the Minister shall appoint members of the council and I have concluded that this is probably the only way one can achieve what is being sought.

Mr MACLELLAN (Berwick)—On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, I know that the honourable member for Geelong is a rubber stamp but I wonder whether it is in order for him to rubber stamp in the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fogarty)—Order! There is no point of order as I do not understand the honourable member's reference.

Mr MACLELLAN—Mr Deputy Speaker, if you observe the honourable member for Geelong, you will understand the reference.

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

Mr STEGGALL (Swan Hill)—The Keeper of Public Records is being given access to public records outside the Public Record Office. The Bill allows the Minister to provide financial assistance to areas where public records are held outside the Public Record Office and also gives the Minister the power to compulsorily acquire a public record and, at his discretion, to pay compensation.

I consider those amendments to the Act reasonable. This is probably where the Bill should have stopped but, unfortunately, as with other legislative measures, the Minister went one step further to delve into the reporting facilities of the Keeper of Public Records to Parliament.

The Keeper of Public Records will be responsible for the management and control of all public records in the Public Record Office but he will not be responsible for reporting to Parliament, a responsibility he has at present. The honourable member for Narracan has referred to some problems that exist at present. It has been explained that it is the intention of the Government through the Annual Reporting (Amendment) Bill to have the directors-general of departments ensure that annual reports go to Ministers and that every division covered in their operations is included in those reports.

The Public Record Office is a rather special and unique area. Honourable members are aware of the pressure placed on the office by genealogical societies and people seeking access to historical information and that the office is dealing daily with requests, costs thereof, and so on. It has the history, and it has the job of ensuring that the records of the history of the State are kept properly.

Under the Bill, the keeper is placed in an interesting situation. He will not have access to Parliament through reporting to Parliament. If a Minister or the Government decides not to supply adequate funds to enable him to carry out his duties he is not able to present a report to Parliament.

Over the years, the responsibility of Governments to fund departments has received much criticism and I appreciate that some steps are being taken to rectify the matter, as they have been in the past, and to upgrade facilities to the standards required. Probably there is still a long way to go. However, it is incorrect to remove the right of the Keeper of Public Records to report to Parliament.

The right approach to adopt at present is contained in the reasoned amendment moved by the honourable member for Narracan. Parliament should wait until it has the report on
the Review of the Public Records Management Policy and until the Annual Reporting (Amendment) Bill has been debated, so that honourable members will be aware of whatever tricks are contained in that legislative measure, until the public of Victoria has been informed of what the Government intends, and until it is determined whether this Bill is in fact a closing of the door and a slowing down of the whole process of annual reporting.

It is true that the concept of directors-general reporting to Ministers will cover this area of responsibility of departments, but even if Parliament demands that a report of the Keeper of Public Records must go to Parliament, the Director-General of the Department of Property and Services can still make his report and do everything he likes in the report he wants to present. The one thing he will not be able to do will be to bury the report of the Keeper of Public Records.

I suggest that this amendment to the Act is not necessary for the good running of a department. I do not believe it will make any difference to the reporting of the Director-General of the Department of Property and Services to the Minister and, hence, to Parliament, and if the requirement for the Keeper of Public Records to report to Parliament is retained in the Act, then everything that is desired to be done by the department and by the Minister can still be done. It will be interesting to learn from the Minister anything to the contrary.

The whole of this legislative measure is hurried. No doubt the Minister for Property and Services will agree to the recommendations of the Review of the Public Records Management Policy. I do not know whether the review covers these areas.

Mr Maclellan—It does.

Mr STEGGALL—The Minister may have good reason for wanting to make the change, which he has not mentioned in his second-reading speech, but I do not believe the change is justified. He is taking away from Parliament a right it has to the report of the Keeper of Public Records, and the amendment to the Act has the potential of gagging an officer who has been given the specific task of reporting to Parliament on the public records of the State.

The National Party will support the reasoned amendment. The Minister should examine the direction in which he is going and the extent to which he is going. If he desperately wishes some of the changes proposed in the Bill to be made to the Act, perhaps while the Bill is between here and another place these matters can be discussed.

The National Party will vote against the Bill, as it stands, and will support the reasoned amendment of the honourable member for Narracan.

Mr MACLELLAN (Berwick)—I support the reasoned amendment moved by the honourable member for Narracan that the Bill should not proceed until the report of the consultants, which the Minister for Property and Services has said is almost ready, is made public and is available for comment from interested parties.

The Opposition, therefore, is supporting the view of archivists and people who keep records and of the highly qualified technicians who look after the written heritage and records of Australia and its early colonial years which are now at risk. If honourable members were to take a shot in the dark and pass the proposed legislation without knowing what the consultants have said and what their recommended procedures might lead to, they would be doing Parliament and Victoria a disservice.

There is strong reason to support the reasoned amendment, but principles are also embodied in the Bill which, at first glance, appear to be wrong. Unless the report contains some cogent reasons to the contrary, there appears to be no justification for preventing the Keeper of Public Records, who has responsibility for the care, storage and availability of irreplaceable State records, from reporting direct to Parliament.

I understand that during the life of the Government, Keepers of Public Records have had some difficulty in reporting to Parliament. Their early drafts or final drafts of reports
have on occasion been returned to them with the suggestion, delicately delivered by a Ministerial adviser, that the report should be altered so that any embarrassment to, or criticism of, the Government is removed. They have been asked to alter or edit their reports so that any inadequacy in resources, methods or responsibilities of the Public Record Office is not reported to Parliament.

The Ombudsman, the Auditor-General and the Keeper of Public Records should be in their own category. They should not be made subject to departmental heads. They should not have to report through a departmental head who acts as the Minister’s filter to ensure that nothing embarrassing is reported and that anything that would produce embarrassment to the Government does not reach Parliament or the ears of the public. The records would be put at risk as a result of the suppression of those criticisms.

The Minister has introduced a Bill into the House in advance of a consultants’ report in a most blatant attempt to prevent the Keeper of Public Records from being on the advisory committee so that he is not a part of it, and to cut off access. A previous Liberal Government legislated to provide that the Keeper of Public Records had the right and responsibility to go to Parliament to make information available.

The Minister decided he did not like that system and is attempting to prevent criticisms being made about lack of resources and the inability to adequately care for public information. The professionals who have a regard for the need for careful storage of our records and our history are now at odds with the Minister and the Government because of the introduction of the Bill. They have written to the Minister, literally sending up distress signals, saying that the Bill should not proceed because it is following the wrong line.

I am sure some honourable members have campaigned for many years to obtain proper conservation of State records, which had not been properly managed, and attempted to heighten public awareness and consciousness so that the Public Records Office was created. Legislation was passed under the former Liberal Government so that records would no longer be left flooded, mouldering, eaten by vermin and lying around unwanted in many corners of Government offices. Those records must be collected, professionally managed and looked after as part of our heritage. It is unfortunate that that heritage is now at risk because of the Bill.

It is at risk because the Minister will not wait until the consultants’ report is available. The Opposition does not know what is in the report other than what it hears about it. I am sure honourable members can look forward with some interest if what they hear about it is true.

Another problem with the Bill is that the Minister is attempting to prevent the Keeper of Public Records from having the opportunity and freedom to report to Parliament which at present he is statutorily bound to do. I support the reasoned amendment because the Bill should not be allowed to proceed until the report has been delivered and made public.

The second arm of objection is that this is a debate on both the reasoned amendment and the principles of the Bill. I point out that many principles are, at first glance, wrong because they muzzle or cut off information rather than expand upon it. Some aspects of the Bill appear attractive and the honourable member for Narracan has mentioned the clauses that have some merit. Why should the House be discussing the merits and demerits of clauses when a major investigation into aspects covered by the Bill is on the brink of being handed to the Minister and should be on the brink of being made public and available for comment?

The Opposition believes the Bill is unsatisfactory and unworthy of support. The honourable member for Narracan has moved a reasoned amendment and given the Government the opportunity of thinking again about the matter. The Minister should also reconsider the various matters raised and should hold over the Bill until the next sessional period so that he can receive the report from the consultants and make their
recommendations public. If he does not do that, the Bill faces the prospect of being defeated or dismembered in another place so that objectionable features of the Bill are amended. The Keeper of Public Records should have the right to report to Parliament and not to his departmental head because that is the very person with whom he may be arguing for the resources to carry out his responsibilities.

I am sure honourable members do not agree that an officer should have to report to a departmental head who then reports to the Minister who then forwards the report to Parliament. The Opposition has no doubts that with that system very little information, involving even less embarrassment to the Government, will be made available. Consequently, less factual material will get through to Parliament.

No permanent head would allow a report to proceed to the Minister or Parliament if it were critical of any areas of responsibility under his control. Honourable members would be aware that almost every permanent head has been removed, retired or pushed sideways since the Government has been in office and new appointments have been made. The Minister for Property and Services probably has a director-general in whom he has full confidence and he would be sure that the director-general would not forward anything to Parliament that would be embarrassing to the Government because of his department’s failure properly and adequately to maintain the records of the State.

Honourable members are not dealing with the records of the Government but of all Victorians. The Opposition is aware of the day-to-day embarrassments experienced by the Government because of its inefficiency and incompetency. The Bill deals with the colonial and post-colonial records of Victoria, which are of vital interest to many people who wish to make a fair, reasonable, factual and well-based assessment of historical matters. Those records ought to be, and increasingly are becoming, important in academic studies and in our understanding of what the Victorian community is about.

Records are too precious to be put at risk by a badly directed system. They are too precious to be put at risk of the whim of a Director-General of the Department of Property and Services who is perhaps not keenly interested in that section of his department. He may well find that the political pressure of the Government or its policy expectations dictate that he put more resources into other areas of administration and less into the keeping of public records.

The Government may be embarrassed by the need to pay for the computer processing of titles in the Titles Office and so direct that funds should be shifted from the area of public records into the area of revenue-producing activities such as the processing of titles.

When the director-general is faced with policies such as that, one suspects that the keeping of public records might end up as the lowest of the priorities rather than the highest. We know from statements made by the Government that it intends to cut funding of Government departments. The Government is saying that it is a productivity matter. What it is in fact doing is softening up the Parliament and the people of Victoria for a Budget that will have real funding cuts.

In an atmosphere of real funding cuts, one would want the Keeper of Public Records to have access to Parliament and, through Parliament, to the electors and taxpayers of Victoria, to say that he needs more resources to stop irreplaceable records being lost for all time. If one reads some of the reports presented to Parliament by the Keeper of Public Records, one must say that that is still the situation with many of the records that should be preserved.

At first glance, the Bill may have a couple of attractive proposals in it, ones which would not upset the Opposition, but for the Government to say that that should lead us to support those proposals without seeing the consultants’ report is an insult to our intelligence and to the intelligence of professional people who take responsibility in archives and in public recordkeeping. It is equally an insult to the Opposition to suggest that a suitable
alternative is that the Keeper of Public Records will not report to Parliament, he will report to the Minister's chosen permanent head of an agency.

Members of Parliament regard the office of the Keeper of Public Records as being of the same character as that of the Auditor-General or the Ombudsman. We do not believe the Auditor-General should report to the head of an agency of the Department of Management and Budget and we do not say that the Ombudsman should report to the Secretary of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. We have always acknowledged the high office of the Auditor-General and the Ombudsman.

This Government has a different stream of consciousness guiding it. Anyone who shows a spark of integrity or independence in the Public Service is to be crushed. Any officer who has the temerity to speak to the Parliament through his report dealing with what he considers to be real needs, priorities, challenges or problems is pushed aside and turned into a tame cat who reports through a pyramidal structure of officers so that Ministers will be able to audit, edit and disembowel any report before it sees the public light.

I challenge the Minister to answer a fair question. It is not a highly technical question; it would be unfair to throw a highly technical question at the Minister. The question is whether during the period of the Labor Government the Keeper of Public Records was required to submit a draft report on two different occasions and to alter his report before it was presented to Parliament? The honest answer is that the Keeper of Public Records was so required by a Minister of the Labor Government. The Keeper of Public Records was required to change his report because the Government did not like what was in it. As a consequence of that, a Bill has been introduced that has as its primary purpose chopping off the opportunity of the Keeper of Public Records to report to Parliament, to muzzle him, to silence him and to stop the embarrassment of having professional officers of high integrity, professional responsibility and qualifications reporting directly to Parliament on such a critical issue.

I am sure a Bill will shortly be presented to the House proposing that the Auditor-General report through the Department of Management and Budget and that the Ombudsman report through some officer chosen by the Government for his ability to be sensitive to the need for abating any criticism of the operation of government. That is the proof of loyalty and dedication for this Government. Independence, integrity and professional responsibility have the lowest values. The Bill illustrates that as clearly as any Bill could.

The Minister should be ashamed to bring a Bill such as this into Parliament. He should be ashamed to do it in advance of the report being presented to him or his having the courage to make the report publicly available. If the House does not carry the reasoned amendment moved by the honourable member for Narracan, it should be done in another place or the Bill should be suitably filleted in another place so that the Minister understands that Parliament will not tolerate this effort to muzzle the Keeper of Public Records and to prevent him from having the responsibility and opportunity of reporting directly to Parliament. That is precious and should be supported by all honourable members.

Mr RICHARDSON (Forest Hill)—The House has had presented to it the bizarre proposition that the Keeper of Public Records, the person responsible for the conservation and management of one of the great masses of information within the State, should not be permitted to provide information to the Parliament to which he is ultimately responsible through the administrative processes of Government.

It is a bizarre proposition because of the contradictions that are contained within it. It is bizarre also because the proposition has been presented by a Government that has presented itself for so long as a Government determined to maintain the principles of open government and committed to accountability and consultation. These are beautiful words that are used by the Government, especially in the run-up to an election, and the Government has embraced all of those concepts. However, when government has finally
been achieved by the Labor Party, it then proceeds to restrict the provision of information, to muzzle public servants and attempts to pervert the course of departmental reporting to Parliament.

Honourable members have already heard of the disgraceful conduct of the Government in the insistence by the Minister for Property and Services that the report to be presented to Parliament by the Keeper of Public Records should be withdrawn and redrafted because what was contained in the original draft of the report was embarrassing to the Government; not because it was untrue, but because it was true, and it was that truth which embarrassed the Government. Honourable members know that this has happened in that department; that it has happened in relation to the Keeper of Public Records; and that it has happened in other departments.

Honourable members know what the Government does when it finds a departmental head who has any degree of independence and who has a responsibility not only to Government but also to Parliament. It proceeds to reduce that independence and, if possible, eliminate it altogether. It moves to restrict the accountability of the departmental head or the head of a statutory body in the requirement that he should report directly to Parliament.

Many examples of this action have been laid on my desk during the time I have been a member of Parliament, particularly in recent years when I took a particular interest in a number of portfolios. It is now happening again in the case of the Keeper of Public Records. If it were happening in the year 1984, it would be particularly ironic. It would be similar to the operation of the "Ministry of Truth". The next stage is for some public records, which are themselves embarrassing to the Government, to be sanitized in some way.

That is the logical step that will flow from the measure before the House. How dare the Government attempt to muzzle a senior administrative head in this way! How dare the Government be so impertinent as to suggest that Parliament should be denied the direct report of the head of this department or any other department! How dare the Government flout the laws of this State as they relate to reporting! The record of the Government is disgraceful in its failure to table reports that are required to be tabled in Parliament by a due date each year. There is a sorry record of performance by the Government in department after department. The Government treats Parliament and the responsibilities of Government with utter contempt.

The other issue that is of particular significance is the report of the expert consultants to which my colleagues, the honourable member for Narracan and the honourable member for Berwick, referred a moment ago. The Government has gone to the expense and effort of commissioning an inquiry to make an examination of the conservation and management of public records. Honourable members are advised by the Minister that the report will shortly be presented. Why rush the Bill through Parliament now? Why not wait, as has been suggested by the honourable member for Narracan, until the report is available, has been discussed, and legislation, if necessary, has been drafted based upon the propositions contained in that report?

Why this unholy rush to put restrictive legislation through Parliament at this time before the report arrives? Could it be that the Minister knows what is in the report and finds it embarrassing? Could it possibly be that there is some connection between the embarrassment contained within the report of the expert consultants and the embarrassing observations that have been made by the Keeper of Public Records in the past, which reflects accurately upon the performance of the Government and, in particular, upon the performance of the Minister?

One is drawn inescapably to the conclusion that there must be something which is unsettling or embarrassing within the report which the Minister does not want the House to see before he proceeds further with the Bill. Let the Minister answer the points that I have made about his motives! Let him answer the questions raised by my colleague, the
honourable member for Berwick! Let the Minister explain to the people why it is that the Bill must be rushed through Parliament and, if he will not accept the reasoned amendment moved by the honourable member for Narracan, let him say so!

Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Property and Services)—The Government is clearly concerned about the preservation and management of the State's heritage and public records. I completely throw out the balderdash that has been put forward by Opposition members who are trying to conjure up some sinister plot, some absurd conspiracy in their sonorous tones ringing around the Chamber. I totally reject that type of theatre. Last night the honourable member for Dandenong in his contribution to the Supply debate gave honourable members a rundown of all the theatres around town. Honourable members have heard a theatrical contribution from the Opposition today.

The issues are fairly straightforward. A number of matters have been raised with which I shall deal briefly. One issue was that the role of the Keeper of Public Records will be diminished by the proposed legislation. That is clearly not the case. The Bill provides increased powers for the Keeper of Public Records in carrying out his professional responsibilities to manage, store and preserve the records of this State. No honourable member has produced evidence on any part of the Bill where that is not the case.

The keeper will be given more defined powers so that he will be able to enter more places of record storage than he was able to do before in order to carry out those responsibilities. The role of the keeper has been raised. The Opposition likened it to the role of the Auditor-General and other statutory officers. His position in the department, of which he is a part, and the relationship of the keeper to the director-general of that department has also been questioned.

This is a serious and important aspect of the debate. The sonorous pontifications of the Opposition, making out that the keeper is the only public servant who has responsibility and sufficient nous to know how to act on behalf of the public interest, which was the tone of the remarks being made in defence of the Keeper of Public Records, are quite absurd. It was an insult to many other public servants. It downgraded the responsibility of many other officers employed both in my department and in other departments to state that the Keeper of Public Records is the only person with any sense of responsibility for public records. One person only cannot do the job and the preservation of public records depends on the sense of responsibility of all public officers in the private and public sector.

The Public Service Act clearly talks about the role of the director-general in any department. With regard to that Act, section 23A (5) states:

Subject to this Act and to any Order made under section 23B the chief administrator of an administrative unit shall be responsible for the general working and the transaction of the business of the administrative unit and shall advise the Minister administering the administrative unit in all matters relating to the administrative unit.

This Government and previous Governments have been clear in identifying the responsibilities of the chief administrator in any department. That does not detract from the powers given to the Keeper of Public Records to carry out his professional responsibility. However, it does clarify the process of responsibility to the Minister, the Government and the Parliament, and the Bill clearly reflects that line of responsibility.

A number of Opposition members commented on annual reporting by the keeper. Under the Westminster system, public servants are restricted in the comments they can make. An instruction from a Premier imposes a similar restriction in Victoria.

The report prepared by the keeper was the subject of some dispute because it went beyond the grounds on which the report should be based. He was asked by the director-general to resubmit his report following advice from the Solicitor-General. An officer such as the keeper should keep within the proper grounds of responsibility in making a report.

With regard to the consultative process, which was referred to by a number of Opposition members, last year I set in motion a review by consultants. Those consultants will report
to me at the end of the month. That review has involved wide consultation. Advertisements have been placed in newspapers announcing the opportunity for any interested group to make submissions.

However, the issues at stake in the review are policy issues. The Bill is machinery in nature, whereby policy recommendations can be implemented without any undue restriction being imposed. The Bill contains important machinery measures, which have been acknowledged during the course of debate.

The honourable member for Swan Hill, who has now left the Chamber, referred to the importance of widening membership of the advisory council. The reference group, which has been taking part in the review, represents a wider group of people interested in public reports and public report management.

The Bill recognizes the requests of various interested groups to have representations on the council. There should be no opposition to that; in fact there should be widespread acknowledgement of its importance.

The requirements to bring reporting under the Annual Reporting Act are quite in order. Indeed, section 7 (2) of the Act states:

Every permanent head shall cause to be kept true and proper accounts and records of the transactions and affairs of the department of which he is the permanent head.

Section 8 (2) states:

As soon as practicable after the end of each financial year, every permanent head shall cause to be prepared in accordance with section 11 financial statements for the financial year for the department of which he is the permanent head.

The management of resources by the director-general is an important part of his responsibility that flows through to the management of the Public Record Office and the provision of resources so that that office can properly carry out its responsibility.

The annual report of the Public Record Office will come within the annual report of the Department of Property and Services. The Opposition cast aspersions on the integrity of the director-general by suggesting that the report would not be a fair and accurate report of the actions and operations of the Public Record Office during the preceding year. The benefit of publishing that report in the annual report of the Department of Property and Services means that it will be much more widely circulated, and this will be of benefit to persons interested in the management of public records in Victoria.

The proposals contained in the Bill will contribute to the benefit of the keeping of public records and their management and are in order with other administrative measures that the Government has put in place over the past four years.

I totally reject the amendment and commend the Bill to the House.

The House divided on the question that the words proposed by Mr Delzoppo to be omitted stand part of the motion (the Hon. C. T. Edmunds in the chair).

| AYES | 44 |
| NOES | 27 |

Majority against the amendment 17

AYES
Mr Andrianopoulos
Mr Cain
Miss Callister
Mr Cathie
Dr Coghills
Mr Crabb
Mr Culpin
Mr Ernst

NOES
Mr Brown
Mr Coleman
Mr Cooper
Mr Crozier
Mr Delzoppo
Mr Gude
Mr Hann
Mr Heffernan
The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time and committed.

Clauses 1 to 3 were agreed to.

Clause 4

Mr DELZOPPO (Narracan)—Clause 4 (2) states:

In section 4 (2) and (3) of the Principal Act, for “Governor in Council” substitute “Minister”.

This allows the Minister to appoint persons to the council and also for the Minister to dismiss people from the Council. I ask that between here and another place the Minister for Property and Services give consideration to the Governor in Council removing members from the council in order that at least the public would know of such a removal by publication in the Government Gazette.

The clause was agreed to.
Clause 5

Mr DELZOPPO (Narracan)—I invite honourable members to vote against clause 5. Members of the Liberal Party and I oppose the clause because it means the Keeper of Public Records will be subjected to more control, as was outlined during the second-reading debate. The keeper would be made subject to rules and regulations more than he should.

I direct the attention of the Minister for Property and Services to the lax way in which the Bill was drafted. The Bill refers to the Public Service in connection with two sections of the principal Act. That Act already mentions the Public Service Act in its existing section 6 (1), but the Minister proposes to put the provisions of the Public Service Act 1974 above the provisions in section 7 of the principal Act.

The Opposition will oppose the passage of the clause because it provides for too much control over the keeper, which will stop the flow of information in the State.

The Committee divided on the clause (Mr Fogarty in the chair).

Ayes 42
Noes 24

Majority for the clause 18
Clause 6

Mr DELZOPPO (Narracan)—I move:

2. Clause 6, lines 36 and 37, omit "The Minister may, on behalf of the Crown, authorize the Keeper of Public Records to" and insert "The Keeper of Public Records may".

The amendment will allow the keeper free range to go about his business without Ministerial interference. If proposed section 13A is inserted in the principal Act in the form proposed in the clause, the keeper will have to obtain permission before he can go about his lawful business of protecting archival material. It is only reasonable that the Opposition propose this amendment, having developed the argument for the freedom of the keeper’s activities.

The Committee divided on the question that the words proposed by Mr Delzoppo to be omitted stand part of the clause (Mr Fogarty in the chair).

AYES

Mr Cain  
Miss Callister  
Mr Cathie  
Dr Coghill  
Mr Crabb  
Mr Culpin  
Mr Ernst  
Mr Fordham  
Mr Gavin  
Mrs Gleeson  
Mr Harrowfield  
Mrs Hill  
Mr Hill  
Mr Hockley  
Mr Jolly  
Mr Kirkwood  
Mr McCutcheon  
Mr McDonald  
Mr Micallef  
Mr Norris  
Mr Pope  
Mrs Ray  
Mr Remington  
Mr Roper  
Mr Rowe  
Mrs Setches  
Mr Sheehan  
Mr Shell  
Mr Sidiroiuos  
Mr Simmonds  
Mr Simpson  
Mr Spyker  
Mr Stirling  
Mrs Toner

Tellers:  
Mrs Gleeson  
Mr Shell

PAIRS

Mrs Hirsh  
Mr Mathews

NOES

Mr Brown  
Mr Coleman  
Mr Cooper  
Mr Delzoppo  
Mr Gude  
Mr Heffernan  
Mr John  
Mr Kennaett  
Mr Leigh  
Mr McGrath (Lowan)  
Mr Maclellan  
Mr Perrin  
Mr Pescott  
Mr Plowman  
Mr Reynolds  
Mr Richardson  
Mr Ross-Edwards  
Mr Stockdale  
Mr Tanner  
Mr Weideman  
Dr Wells  
Mr Williams

Tellners:  
Mr Lea  
Mr Smith (Glen Waverley)

Ayes: 41  
Noes: 24  
 Majority against the amendment 17
The clause was agreed to, as were clauses 7 to 9.

Clause 10

Mr DELZOPPO (Narracan)—I invite honourable members to vote against this clause.

The effect of clause 10 is to delete the following words from the Act:

21. (1) The Keeper of Public Records shall at least once in every year and not later than the 30th day of September in each year lodge with the Minister a report on the carrying out of his functions under this Act during the year ending on the preceding 30th day of June.

(2) The Minister shall cause every report lodged with him under this section to be laid before both Houses of Parliament within three weeks after receiving the report or if Parliament is not then sitting within three weeks after the next meeting of Parliament.

During the second-reading debate I drew the attention of the House to the fact that the last report of the Minister was a bit shonky. It was for the year ended 30 June 1985 and although the Minister had a statutory responsibility to table it, he did not do so. I could question the Minister on this and he could reply on this clause—which he has not done on other clauses—whether more than one draft of this report was given to him by the keeper and whether the original draft was sanitized by the Minister because it was unacceptable and critical of the Government.

These are matters the Committee would like to know more about. Moreover, the Opposition will not sit idly around and see the right of the keeper to make annual reports to Parliament removed. This procedure alerts citizens such as those interested in genealogy as well as the press to various matters. The press has taken a great interest in the reports of the keeper over a number of years. Given that, and the points raised during the second-reading debate, the Opposition opposes clause 10 which effectively—if passed—would eliminate the report of the keeper to Parliament.

The Committee divided on the clause (Mr Fogarty in the chair).

\begin{align*}
\text{Ayes} & : & 42 \\
\text{Noes} & : & 23 \\
\text{Majority for the clause} & : & 19
\end{align*}
The Bill was reported to the House without amendment, and passed through its remaining stages.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL

This Bill was returned from the Council with a message relating to amendments.

It was ordered that the message be taken into consideration next day.

TELEVISING OF PROCEEDINGS

The SPEAKER—Order! Before putting the last question I desire to advise the House that I have given permission for the commercial television channels and the Australian Broadcasting Commission to update their video library footage of question time. Two cameras will be installed during question time on Tuesday, May 6 under the usual arrangements of no sound recording or arc lights.

ADJOURNMENT

Land tax—Victorian Women’s Trust Ltd—St Mary’s Knoxfield School for Deaf Children—Chlorination of Boolarra water supply—Association of Draughting, Supervisory and Technical Employees—Treatment of industrial waste—Plumbing apprenticeships—Closure of Gelantipy Primary School

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—I move:

That the House do now adjourn.
Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—I raise with the Treasurer a matter which refers to the sale of a property by an individual who has more than one property, and the way in which the Land Tax Office then secures from that individual a whole year's land tax.

As the Treasurer is probably aware, land tax is levied on an annual basis, a calendar year basis, and if an individual sells a house after 31 December that is, on 1 January, or the middle of April, the Land Tax Office assesses a whole year's land tax for that individual given that the site value of his holdings is in excess of $58,000. That is grossly unfair if, for instance, a settlement is made in January or April. When one makes a property settlement, taxes are levied between the purchaser and the vendor normally on a proportional basis—for the period occupied by the vendor and the unexpired period held by the purchaser.

I understand and accept that if the property that is being sold is worth less than $58,000 and is the only property held by the new purchaser, land tax is not levied.

However, the lot falls on the vendor, who finds himself or herself settling the property—and it might be a second property—and then being encumbered with a full year's land tax. No rebate is received at the end of the year. The land tax is not adjusted to take into account that that person has not occupied that property for a full year. If the property is settled in April, tax for the last six or eight months is also charged to the vendor.

That is grossly unfair, and I ask that the Treasurer investigate the matter. If the honourable gentleman is unable to fully explain the ramifications or provide justification for this situation tonight, I ask him to obtain advice and inform me of the outcome next week.

Mrs SETCHES (Ringwood)—I refer the Premier to the editorial in tonight's Herald relating to the establishment of the Victorian Women's Trust, which was announced yesterday by the Premier at the State Bank Centre in Bourke Street.

The editorial alleges that funds from the Victorian Women's Trust Ltd will be used for Government purposes, such as setting up the women's branch of the Department of Labour and for producing a Government document on budgetary matters relating to women's issues. That is not my understanding of the purposes for which those funds are to be used.

Honourable members may recall that $1 million was set aside to be invested in perpetuity and that the interest is to be used to assist organizations and groups that place a major emphasis on women's needs, aims and objectives. It was my understanding that the interest was to be distributed by members of the trust to those groups whose activities the trust believed were in line with the aims and objectives it has set.

I understand that a number of submissions have been received by members of the trust and that they are making decisions about the allocation of this year's interest to those groups. Although I support the development of a Budget document that relates to women's issues—and I know the Federal Government has produced a women's Budget document, as have the South Australian and Western Australian Governments, which is a good thing—I should not like to think that funds from the Victorian Women's Trust Ltd would be used for that purpose. I am sure the funds were not intended to be used in that way.

The Herald has made a grave error in publishing such an editorial. One must also bear in mind that, traditionally, women have found it extremely difficult to establish avenues of funding for their activities. They have certainly had much trouble in persuading financial institutions to allow funding of their aims and objectives.

The guarantee loan fund established by the trust will allow for the distribution of funds by women for women, while the $1 million is invested in perpetuity by the trust. I understand that the trust is the first of its kind in Australia and one of the few that has
been established throughout the world. It is a forward-thinking and exciting prospect for women.

I should be pleased if the Premier could clear up the uncertainty that might be generated by the editorial, which states that funds in that trust will be put into the two areas that I have mentioned, which is not correct. I ask the Premier to set the record straight in that regard and also in regard to the interest that will be disseminated by the trust.

Mr PLOWMAN (Evelyn)—The matter I raise for the attention of the Minister for Education relates to transport assistance for parents whose children attend the St Mary’s Knoxfield school for deaf children. I know the Minister is aware of that school and the work that it does. He would know of the very valuable service the school provides for deaf children. However, because of the particular problems of the students who attend the school, particularly young children, most of them have to be conveyed to the school by taxi. They travel from all over suburbia and from as far as Deer Park to attend that school.

Families whose children attend the school, because of the special problems that their children have, receive an allowance from the Federal Department of Social Security of some $85 a month, which amounts to $1020 a year.

One of my constituents, Mrs Dorothy Koole from Mount Evelyn, who has contacted the Minister on previous occasions, during this term alone will spend some $1850 conveying her daughter to the school. The family, who are from Deer Park, will be required to pay $4088 this term.

The total cost of conveying deaf children to the St Mary’s school for the first term will be $24,453 and the conveyance allowance that will be paid amounts to only $1400, which leaves a deficit of $23,053.

Following publicity in the Sun newspaper last year, the Minister examined the matter and generously agreed to assist with a $10,000 assistance scheme.

Mr Cathie interjected.

Mr PLOWMAN—Perhaps the Minister will be able to correct me. I am advised that the integration task force will not provide any further financial assistance to offset the conveyance costs of parents of children who attend the school, despite my constituent’s understanding that the Minister gave an indication that further assistance would be forthcoming.

In light of the plight of parents of children attending the school and the fact that they do not receive additional assistance, the school may simply be forced to close. I therefore ask the Minister, on behalf of my constituents and other people with deaf children throughout suburban Melbourne, to give consideration to some further assistance to this school, so that it can continue its valuable work in providing assistance to children who have hearing problems.

Miss CALLISTER (Morwell)—I raise for the attention of the Minister for Water Resources a COWSIP application from the Morwell Water Board for chlorination of the water supply of the township of Boolarra.

However, before raising my matter of concern, I convey to the Minister the appreciation of the small township of Traralgon South, whose bore water supply scheme was opened by an honourable member for Gippsland Province from another place. It was certainly a significant occasion for that community and one that oozed pride for the locals. Many warm comments were made by the Traralgon Shire President about the Government’s efforts to assist the township.

I wanted to convey that appreciation to the Minister, which I am sure the Minister will understand as it is a big step forward for the township. I am sure it will provide a water supply not only for domestic use but also for the local school, the local hall and other community facilities and will assist in the suppression of fires in the district.
The application was made under the COWSIP program, which is important for smaller rural areas so far as improvements to water supplies are concerned. The application was for the chlorination of the water to improve its quality for the residents.

I ask the Minister whether he can provide details of decisions that have been made by him and the department regarding the application made by the Morwell Water Board.

I again commend the program because it is important for the people in smaller rural towns and will give them access to a decent water supply as well as improve the quality of the water.

Mr GUDGE (Hawthorn)—I direct to the attention of the Minister for Public Works a matter which I raised with him earlier this week. The response given to the Opposition and to the architects in this State was unsatisfactory.

The Minister, in September last year, indicated that a union known as ADSTE—the Association of Draughting, Supervisory and Technical Employees—was the only appropriate union to represent architects in this State. He said the Opposition would be critical of him were he not to recognize a local organization. I have no difficulty about the Minister recognizing a local organization—quite the opposite. I encourage him to do so.

I take exception to the proposition that ADSTE is the only union that can properly represent architects, especially following recent happenings over the past several months. A couple of references have been made to the Industrial Relations Commission of Victoria. The most important was a reference that took place on 25 March, to which the Minister and I both referred on Tuesday this week.

During the course of that reference it was made clear by the Industrial Relations Commission of Victoria that it did not recognize either ADSTE or the Australian Association of Architects—AAA—the other competing employee organization, as being the appropriate organization to represent architects at this time.

I refer to page 3 of the transcript of proceedings before the Industrial Relations Commission of Victoria which states:

At this stage we are not prepared to make a final conclusion that ADSTE or AAA are bona fide associations of employees with respect to the trades for which the Architects Board is constituted.

The other evening the Minister indicated that AAA could be recognized as an association of employers. I assume that was a slip because that is not what is in the transcript of proceedings. If the Minister did not mean to say that then he should correct it for the record and for the benefit of architects generally.

The Minister went on to say that the commission’s decision was to allow ADSTE to prove itself to be the No. 1 organization. I just read part of the decision of the commission on page 3, and it did not say anything like that. It made reference to both organizations. The commission indicated that ADSTE should be given the opportunity of demonstrating that it could recruit members and that AAA should be put into a situation where it could demonstrate it is a genuine bona fide representative body of employees.

I understand the concern that the Minister, and the commission for that matter, might have about the work of AAA because it is a recently established body which grew out of a dispute on site. It is important that the AAA is recognized as a bona fide organization by the Federal Conciliation and Arbitration Commission in exactly the same way as the organization known as ADSTE.

I make the further point that ADSTE has been in existence for in excess of 40 years. At no point in that time has ADSTE made representations to the commission or any other tribunal to represent architects. It has been a recent aberration. Some people may inquire why. I confess to being one person who believes that ADSTE has taken a step in seeking industrial power to be the appropriate organization because it believes it has a friendly Government in Victoria and a friendly Minister.
The Opposition believes the commission has made an impartial decision to allow both organizations to be represented. I ask the Minister to make the position clear once and for all: is the Minister intending to support one union against another union or is he intending to give AAA equal opportunity to be represented on the public works site agreement?

Dr COGHILL (Werribee)—I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Water Resources concerning the treatment of industrial waste, particularly toxic waste in the metropolitan area. I direct his attention to the implications in the Government strategy on a proposal by Trifoleum Pty Ltd to establish a commercial solvent and oil treatment plant in the Laverton North area.

This proposal is important because, as honourable members would be aware, the Minister initiated through the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works a strategy for the disposal and treatment of toxic waste in Victoria. As I understand it, the current stage that has been reached is that the Board of Works is conducting consultations widely within Victoria—not just within the metropolitan area—on the criteria which should be adopted for the determination of the sites that will ultimately be selected for a toxic waste treatment facility.

This becomes especially topical in the Werribee area because of assertions that the Werribee sewerage farm has already been selected as the site for such a facility regardless of any consultative process or decision-making process about the criteria and about identifying areas and ultimately selecting a site.

I seek confirmation from the Minister of the process being followed by the Government through the Board of Works and an indication from him of the relationship between this industrial waste treatment facility and the private company Trifoleum Pty Ltd. As I understand it, oil treatment, and commercial solvents recovery in particular, is one of the functions that has been proposed for the board's industrial waste treatment facility. If this is so, it seems that some sort of consistent approach is needed both to the industrial waste treatment facilities and the provision of facilities of this nature.

This becomes a particularly important issue in the Werribee area because of the inconsistent approach being taken by Liberal Party members who happen to be Werribee councillors. I refer particularly to the activities of Glen Clark and Peter Hudson. Both of those individuals have been active, as have many others in the community, in indicating their opposition to Werribee being selected for the establishment of a Board of Works facility and in putting forward a view that the criteria should not enable that area to be selected.

The only group in the community to make a comprehensive submission to the Board of Works on what the criteria should be is the Werribee branch of the Labor Party.

The other relevant matter is that the two councillors, together with other councillors have facilitated the Trifoleum Pty Ltd proposal. They have been encouraging the proposal. It seems to me that that is a rather hypocritical attitude if there is a close similarity—which I believe there to be—between the Trifoleum Pty Ltd proposal and the Board of Works proposal.

Will the Minister confirm and clarify the process which is being followed by the Board of Works and assure the House and the people that the process that is being followed is a genuine attempt to find the criteria that should be used for site selection? Will he indicate the relationship between privately funded facilities of this nature and the Board of Works treatment facility which will be located somewhere in Victoria according to the criteria determined by the Board of Works?

Mr HEFFERNAN (Ivanhoe)—I direct the attention of the Minister for Education to TAFE training. I have received two letters from constituents about the employment of apprentices. Both constituents operate small plumbing firms and they employ two apprentices.
Part of the training schedule involves probationary training. That part of the training has been completed and the apprentices wish to enter the block system which TAFE undertakes on behalf of the employers.

My constituents have received letters from the Swinburne Institute of Technology stating that, at this stage, no positions are available for the apprentices. This matter is of concern to my constituents as it is a further cost to be incurred by the employers. The first year training of any apprentice means that the return to the employer while the person is in training is small. Most employers accept that.

In the second year of apprenticeship training, the person is beginning to learn the necessary skills to do the job and employers receive a reasonable financial return for the outlay of wages. In the second, third and fourth years the financial return to the employers is far more lucrative. By deferring the first year, the schooling period is then transferred to the second, third and fourth years of the apprenticeship, which are the most important years in financial return to the employer.

I ask the Minister to examine the situation because the plumbing firms involved have accepted the responsibility of supplying apprenticeships to young people.

Mr LEA (Sandringham)—I refer the Minister for Education to the fact that a small east Gippsland school, Gelantipy Primary School, was today closed down without notice. I suggest that some notice could have been given by the Minister about the closure of the school. The children involved will have to travel an extra 30 to 40 miles to Buchan to attend another school.

I understand a family with four children is moving into the district and, if some notice had been given, say, until the end of term, the matter could have been resolved to the satisfaction of the parents. Such undue haste and lack of concern for the parents in the small school community is lamentable and I ask the Minister to review the position.

Mr CAIN (Premier)—The honourable member for Ringwood raised with me the question of the women’s trust and comments made about it today. I should point out in some detail what the trust is about. It is a company, limited by guarantee, that was established as a major initiative arising out of Victoria’s 150th anniversary year.

There are eight directors of the company and it operates as a separate body, quite independently of the Government. The Government provided $1 million to the trust at its inception and, as I indicated, it is currently seeking further donations from both corporations and individuals to maximize the amount available to it to invest and provide funds for projects for women.

Some $50 000 worth of approval had been given to requests and applications already made to it. The recipients of these grants are determined by the directors and the Government has no say whatever. As the name implies, it is a trust and the trust is responsible for its administration and the distribution of the funds.

Community interest has been shown by the fact that already 50 applications have been received for assistance. As well, I am pleased that, at the launch yesterday, the State Bank reinforced its interest and support through the establishment of a guarantee loan fund for women.

It is one of the most exciting developments for women in recent years and the first of its kind in this country. The State Bank has been providing assistance by way of accommodation for the trust administration and a very good partnership has been entered into between the trust and the bank. Mr Bill Moyle has said that it will guarantee, on a 50-50 basis, by the State Bank and the women’s trust, loans for women who want to start a business if they do not qualify for loans through the normal channels.

Management advice will be made available to women for assistance in the business about which the application for the loan is made. The trust has also received assistance from the ANZ Bank through its philanthropic trust, and it has been able to fund projects.
in the order of $20,000 that the trust could not fund on the basis of its restrictions and requirements to satisfy the payment of money from the trust.

I note that the honourable member for Ringwood felt compelled to raise the matter because an editorial that appeared in the Herald tonight in the early edition was incorrect. The matter was corrected later and I am not sure how many editions were involved.

I understand that Miss Loula Rodopolous, the convenor of the trust, rang the Herald and pointed out the mistake that had occurred. It is as well the correction has been made because two clear mistakes were made. It was said that the trust fund would be used to provide a women's branch or something of that order in the Department of Labour. That is untrue.

The directors of the trust are responsible for allocating grants. It was never its intention or the Government's intention that any part of the fund should be used to fund Government departments or agencies. We intend to establish a women's employment branch within the Department of Labour and it will be a strategy for women's employment to ensure that employment opportunities are available to a wider range of women, especially those with language difficulties.

Secondly, there was a suggestion that the funds were used to publish a document outlining the impact of the State Budget on Victorian women. That is not so. Again, I refer to the reasons I gave earlier. We will be publishing such a document but it will be produced by the women's policy co-ordination unit in my department and it is intended that as many women as possible should be made aware of the Government programs and services that are available. It will be widely supported by women.

The Herald editorial tonight misrepresented the role of the trust and, in particular, the independence of the directors of the trust. The trust is the first of its kind in this country. Some people have said that there are few of these types of initiatives in the world. We regard it as important and I hope it is supported by all sections of the House.

Mr Kennett interjected.

Mr CAIN—I regret the continuing derisive interjections of the Leader of the Opposition because I do not think members of the Opposition really understand the meaning of equal opportunity. For a start, it is clear from the lack of women on the Opposition benches what they think about equal opportunity. There are sixteen women members of Parliament in this place and fourteen of them sit on the Government benches. They are turning away in droves; one can see them running out the door!

Mr Kennett—It is like the inflation rate. You are leading the country!

Mr CAIN—The Leader of the Opposition, and today the honourable member for Berwick, just continued to deride and scoff at the need to redress the balance that is weighted against women in the community. They are very brave in this Parliament until the honourable member for Kew is sitting there hearing what they have to say. I am sure she does not agree with the views that they continually express, both explicitly and implicitly, about women, putting them down all the while. I know that the honourable member for Kew supports the Victorian Women's Trust Ltd. I believe she also supports the principle of equal opportunity.

Mr Kennett—Your party doesn't.

Mr CAIN—At this hour only four members of the Opposition are present. I do not know how they regard themselves as being an alternative Government when they do not have people like the honourable member for Kew on the front bench. Perhaps I should also include the honourable member for Benambra.

Mr Kennett—What about the honourable member for Greensborough? You sacked her.

Mr CAIN—The Leader of the Opposition talks about sacking people. He sacks people if they do not agree with him. Anybody who disagrees with him gets sacked from the front
Adjournment 24 April 1986 ASSEMBLY 1643

bench. The benchmark he uses is that members of the Opposition front bench must agree with him. If they do not, they are out. I remind the House of what happened to the honourable members for Berwick, Benambra, Forest Hill, Polwarth and Kew. Anybody who suggests to me that the Liberal Party looks like an alternative Government without those honourable members in the shadow Ministry is talking nonsense.

I think many of those honourable members support the point I am making now. They are for equal opportunity; they are for redressing the balance that has affected women in this Parliament and this State for years. It has taken this Government—

Mr Kennett—This long.

Mr CAIN—I acknowledge that there is a long way to go. The Leader of the Opposition should be the last person to talk about equal opportunity or anything else in that regard. As I said, any member of the Opposition front bench who disagrees with him is sacked. Voice an objection and you are out the door!

I am saying that equal opportunity programs are needed to cope with the attitudes that are continually expressed by the Leader of the Opposition and the honourable member for Berwick.

(To Mr Kennett)—They are needed because you are just so far in the past and you do not live in the real world at all. That is why equal opportunity policies are required.

I shall not mention the National Party members, since none of them is present; but the Leader of the Opposition, the honourable member for Berwick and others in the Liberal Party believe women are good for making the tea and baking the scones. They believe that is the role women should play, and that is the role women play in the Liberal Party. Anything beyond that—

Mr Kennett—That is simply not true.

Mr CAIN—I invite the Leader of the Opposition to have a look at the ranks of the Liberal Party. Talk about equal opportunity in political parties! Look at the results! Of the sixteen female members in the two Houses of this Parliament, fourteen—all but two—are from the Government side of the House. It speaks for itself.

The SPEAKER—Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting.

Mr CAIN—The message has got through to everybody except the four members of the Opposition who are present. Let the record show that four members of the Opposition are here representing their electorates at 6.55 p.m. on Thursday evening; the rest have given it away, just as the electorate has given away the Opposition.

The Government will continue to give high priority to initiatives for women, and that will be reflected by women continuing to give their support to the Government.

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—The Leader of the Opposition raised what he termed—

Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—On a point of order, Mr Speaker, this House has just been subjected to one of the most atrocious attacks I have ever heard by the Premier concerning the lack of attendance by members of the Opposition. The Premier has just walked out the door. It should be noted that at 6.55 p.m. on a Thursday evening the Premier has absented himself.

The SPEAKER—Order! I do not intend to allow the House to fall into a shambles because the Leader of the Opposition is upset about some matter. There is no point of order.

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—I understand that the Leader of the Opposition has a personal interest in the matter he raised, so I assume he would like to hear the answer. He raised a matter that he alleges creates an anomaly in the land tax payment system. The alleged anomaly apparently arises where a vendor owns two or more properties. In that
circumstance, the Leader of the Opposition says that the vendor bears an unfair burden because of the timing of land tax payments. I shall have that matter investigated and provide the Leader of the Opposition with an answer as soon as possible.

Mr CATHIE (Minister for Education)—The honourable member for Evelyn raised the question of problems being faced by families seeking transport assistance for students at St Mary’s school for deaf children at Knoxfield. He indicated that most of those students have to travel by taxi and that that imposes a high cost on the families concerned.

Under the regulations, assistance can be provided for families who make use of Government buses on routes where there may be vacant seats for the children. Where no such bus is available, I have no power under the existing regulations to make funds available to assist in the transport of children to non-Government schools, and that is the difficulty. I have therefore sought a review and advice from the State Education Board as to the transport of all disabled children and the needs of those children throughout the State.

The honourable member for Ivanhoe raised the issue of the placement of apprentices at Swinburne Institute of Technology, especially in the area of plumbing and gasfitting. This year we have had many apprentices to place—in fact, at 3 March, some 10,364, only 9 per cent less than the record number of apprentices requiring places last year.

Problems have been experienced, especially in the carpentry and joinery area, because not even the industry predicted the large number of first-year apprentices who would require places. Some are still unplaced, although some strategies have been put in place to ensure that those who are still unplaced can be picked up. So far as I am aware, the problems in respect of plumbing and gasfitting apprentices at the Swinburne Institute of Technology have been solved and those apprentices have been placed. I shall check on the matter to make sure that is the case.

The honourable member for Sandringham raised a matter a long distance from his own electorate, but he is no longer here. The matter relates to Gelantipy. The honourable member apparently was not present last night either, because the matter was raised then by the local member, the honourable member for Gippsland East. I have nothing to add to the reply that I gave last night.

Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Water Resources)—The honourable member for Morwell raised the question of the funding of the Boolarra water supply, which is under the management of the Morwell Water Board. Funding is coming from the COWSIP—the Country Town Water Supply Improvement Program—on a tripartite basis, that is, with Federal and State funds and funds raised locally by the Morwell Water Board.

The Boolarra water supply system will be improved by funding to the value of $48,800. Under that program the works to be implemented in the next few months include: installation of a high lift pumpset; modifications to chlorination equipment and pipework; construction of a new rising main; construction of two new chlorine detention tanks; and construction of a distribution main from those tanks to the existing network of mains. Those works are part of an improved program to ensure the quality and supply of water to that community of some 500 residents.

The honourable member for Werribee raised the matter of the process of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works in consulting all over the State to locate a site for an industrial waste treatment facility. The matter has previously been raised in the House, and I mention that a couple of councillors from Werribee have waged a campaign to discredit the progress of the Board of Works.

I shall make several points clear about the matter. The Board of Works has consulted with councils and local communities on the criteria for the selection of a site. It has invited local communities to come forward if they are interested in providing a site for the industrial waste treatment facility. At this stage, it is clear that no decisions about the site have been made, and the site will not be selected until September or even later this year.
The opportunity is being provided for communities to consult about the criteria to be used in the selection of the site and to ventilate all their views on those criteria. Unfortunately, the campaign being waged in Werribee has created a lot of concern in the local area because it has been claimed that the Board of Works has already determined that the facility will be located on the board's Werribee farm site.

I categorically deny that any decision of that type has been made. Communities will have an opportunity of taking part in the site selection and, later in the year, when possible sites have been located, people will have the opportunity of commenting on them.

The honourable member for Werribee also raised the matter of the Trifoleum Pty Ltd plant that is currently the subject of an application to the Werribee council. The council is granting a permit for the company, and, as the honourable member for Werribee pointed out, the process is similar to part of the process envisaged by the Board of Works. Councillors Clark and Hudson have been creating a hornet's nest of fear about the location of the Board of Works industrial waste treatment plant. However, they have accepted the idea that Trifoleum Pty Ltd should be granted a permit. The process used by the industrial waste treatment facility is similar to the process used by Trifoleum Pty Ltd with regard to the extraction of solvents and waste oils from industrial waste.

I am surprised that a similar outcry against Trifoleum Pty Ltd has not been raised by councillors Clark and Hudson. That demonstrates their insincerity in dealing with the important community process of discussing a site for the industrial waste treatment facility. That facility is a necessity and, sooner or later, a site will be found for it.

Mr WALSH (Minister for Public Works)—The honourable member for Hawthorn raised the matter of the Association of Draughting, Supervisory and Technical Employees and the Association of Architects of Australia. I repeat what I said some time last year that any bona fide association would have a right to be recognized, and I stick by that comment. At that time, I had been in contact with the Association of Architects of Australia and gave an assurance that if it were recognized it would be treated as a bona fide organization.

The decision of the Full Bench of the Industrial Relations Commission has given that right, and I indicated that when I spoke about this matter on Tuesday night.

I interpreted the decision of the Industrial Relations Commission as indicating that ADSTE was a genuine union eligible to enrol architects but unable to do so to date. The Association of Architects of Australia has architects as members, but some question exists as to whether it is a bona fide employee organization.

I shall quote from the decision of the Industrial Relations Commission, which stated:

We do believe that both ADSTE and AAA should be given the opportunity to demonstrate that they should be recognized, in ADSTE's case by recruiting significant membership and in AAA's case by demonstrating that they will act as a genuine employees' association in an industrial relations system.

The ruling continues:

On the evidence we believe that some employers may have intimidated Architect employees against joining ADSTE, but that alone would not explain ADSTE's failure to recruit significant membership.

The commission also states:

As to AAA, other comments need to be made. To demonstrate 'bona fides' as an employees' association in an industrial relations system naturally does not mean that AAA should call a round of strikes.

I inform the honourable member for Hawthorn that the decision to recognize AAA will be made in October. I reiterate what I said last time I spoke on this matter that AAA has not made any attempt to contact me. I am available if AAA wishes to contact me, and the same right is extended to ADSTE.

The motion was agreed to.
The following answers to questions on notice were circulated—

LOANS TO DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
(Question No. 105)

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West) asked the Minister for Consumer Affairs, for the Minister for Community Services:

In respect of all moneys borrowed by each department, agency and authority within her 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 she 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 SPYKER (Minister for Consumer Affairs)—The answer supplied by the Minister for Community Services is:

The Department of Community Services Victoria does not borrow money.

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES IN DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
(Question No. 143)

Mr DICKINSON (South Barwon) asked the Minister for Consumer Affairs, for the Minister for Community Services:

1. What is the number of permanent and part-time employees respectively in the Department of Community Services?
2. What was the total wages bill for the financial year ended 30 June 1984?
3. What percentage of this bill was paid in overtime and penalty rate allowances?

Mr SPYKER (Minister for Consumer Affairs)—The answer supplied by the Minister for Community Services is:

The Premier will furnish an answer on my behalf.

PUBLICATIONS OF DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
(Question No. 380)

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West) asked the Minister for Consumer Affairs, for the Minister for Community Services:

1. What is the name of each book, brochure, pamphlet or publication produced by each department, agency or authority within her 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 SPYKER (Minister for Consumer Affairs)—The answer supplied by the Minister for Community Services is:
The time and resources necessary to answer this question cannot be justified. However, the annual reports of the department contain lists of major publications produced during the period and most can be inspected at the departmental library.

PROPERTY OWNED OR LEASED BY DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
(Question No. 417)

Mr GUDE (Hawthorn) asked the Minister for Consumer Affairs, for the Minister for Community Services:
In respect of departments, agencies or authorities within her administration:
1. Which buildings are—(a) owned by such bodies; and (b) leased, indicating in respect of those leased the name of the lessor, the length of the lease, the cost and the use being made of each building?
2. What land is—(a) owned by such bodies; and (b) leased, indicating in respect of land leased the name of the lessor, the length of the lease, the cost and use of such land?

Mr SPYKER (Minister for Consumer Affairs)—The answer supplied by the Minister for Community Services is:

1. (a) Nil.
(b) Not applicable.
2. (a) Nil.
(b) Not applicable.

FINANCIAL RECORDS OF DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
(Question No. 467)

Mr WILLIAMS (Doncaster) asked the Minister for Consumer Affairs, for the Minister for Community Services:
1. Which departments, agencies or authorities within her administration maintain—(a) an assets register; (b) accounting records on an accrual basis; or (c) records showing sources and application of funds?
2. In cases where assets registers are maintained, whether provision is made for depreciation of such assets in accordance with accepted accounting principles; if not, why?
3. Which bodies do not maintain such records, indicating when they will be requested to do so?

Mr SPYKER (Minister for Consumer Affairs)—The answer supplied by the Minister for Community Services is:
The Treasurer will furnish an answer on my behalf.

CHILD CARE PROGRAMS
(Question No. 471)

Mr PERRIN (Bulleen) asked the Minister for Consumer Affairs, for the Minister for Community Services:
1. What child care programs are conducted at 12 and 14 June Crescent, Templestowe, indicating the annual cost of these programs and the maximum number of children who can be accommodated?
2. How many children were actually accommodated at these premises as at 30 June 1984 and 1985, respectively?
3. Whether these premises are fully utilized; if not, why?

Mr SPYKER (Minister for Consumer Affairs)—The answer supplied by the Minister for Community Services is:

1. There are no departmental child care programs at Nos 12 and 14 June Crescent, Templestowe.
However, the premises situated at Nos 6 and 8 June Crescent, Templestowe are departmental family group homes. Each home has a capacity of four children, other than children of the family group home parents. The annual cost of the programs was $61,334 and $52,083 respectively.
2. As at 30 June 1984, there were four wards in No. 6 and four wards in No. 8. On 30 June 1985, there were two wards in No. 6 and two wards in No. 8.

3. The inner eastern region attributes the relatively low utilization of the units to the changing demographic characteristics of the ward population. The family group home program was previously designed to admit children up to the age of twelve years. Currently more than 71 per cent of the region's ward population are adolescents. The region is therefore currently in the process of changing its resource distribution to meet the needs of the adolescent population.

STAFF OF MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES
(Question No. 499)

Mr I. W. SMITH (Polwarth) asked the Minister for Consumer Affairs, for the Minister for Community Services:

1. How many members comprise the Minister’s personal staff, indicating the position, classification and salary of each?

2. Whether their costs are provided for in the Budget; if so, under what item; if not, what other organization or body, partly or wholly, funds their cost?

Mr SPYKER (Minister for Consumer Affairs)—The answer supplied by the Minister for Community Services is:

1. My personal staff is comprised of four members—
   Ministerial Adviser, Grade III, Exempt 41(A), Salary $41 047 plus 15 per cent commuted allowance—$6157.
   Ministerial Adviser, Grade III, Exempt 41(A), Salary $37 505 plus 15 per cent commuted allowance—$5625.
   Private Secretary Grade III, Exempt 41(A), Salary Range: $26 527—$27 309 plus 20 per cent commuted allowance—$5305.
   Confidential Secretary Grade III, Exempt 41(A), Salary Range: $23 090—$23 906

2. Funds are provided in the Budget Program/Object 182/1/1102—Salaries Wages and Allowances.

WORKERS COMPENSATION COSTS OF DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
(Question No. 521)

Mr STOCKDALE (Brighton) asked the Minister for Consumer Affairs, for the Minister for Community Services:

In relation to each department, statutory authority or other body within her administration:

1. In respect of each of the years ended 30 June 1984 and 1985, whether she will provide details of—(a) the total amount of workers compensation premiums incurred; (b) other workers compensation costs incurred; (c) the estimated cost of workers compensation incurred including claims incurred but not reported; and (d) any other expense associated with injuries subject to workers compensation claims?

2. What is the amount of accident compensation levy expected to be incurred in relation to the year ending 30 June 1986?

3. What is the total amount of other workers compensation costs expected to be incurred in relation to the year ending 30 June 1986?

Mr SPYKER (Minister for Consumer Affairs)—The answer supplied by the Minister for Community Services is:

The Treasurer will furnish an answer on my behalf.

PRIVATE EMPLOYERS’ WORKERS COMPENSATION INSURANCE
(Question No. 557)

Mr STOCKDALE (Brighton) asked the Treasurer:

In respect of private employers’ workers compensation insurance business handled by the State Insurance Office:

1. For each of the years ended 30 June 1983, 1984 and 1985—(a) how many inspections of employers’ wages records or other accounts, books or records were carried out; (b) how many firms were contracted to conduct
such inspections; (c) how many officers or employees of the State Insurance Office were engaged on such inspections; (d) how many man-hours were occupied in such inspections; and (f) what was the cost of carrying out such inspections; and (f) what was the amount of additional premium or other revenue gained as a result of such inspections?

2. In relation to the 1985–86 financial year—(a) how many such inspections does the State Insurance Office expect will be carried out; and (b) what is the expected cost of carrying out such inspections?

3. How were the firms of accountants contracted to carry out such inspections selected?

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—The answer is:

The information requested by the honourable member relates to the commercial operations and practices of the State Insurance Office. Such information would not normally be provided, consistent with the requirement placed on the office to compete on equal terms with the private sector insurers.

However, having regard to the introduction of WorkCare, which led to the cessation of the writing of this class of business, and following consultation with the Chairman of the State Insurance Office Board, the following answer is supplied.

1. (a) The number of employers' wages record inspections conducted by external accountants during the years ended 30 June 1983, 1984 and 1985 were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year ended 30 June</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>608</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, State Insurance Office (SIO) staff conducted 401 inspections in 1983–84 and 172 in 1984–85. Figures are not readily available for 1982–83. Inspections by State Insurance Office staff were of a preliminary nature only.

(b) the following number of independent accountants were engaged for wages records inspections:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year ended 30 June</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(c) The number of SIO employees who, from time to time, conducted wages records investigations were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year ended 30 June</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>10 inspectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>10 inspectors plus 1 inhouse accountant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>7 inspectors plus 1 inhouse accountant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(d) The approximate number of man hours spent on inspections by SIO employees were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year ended 30 June</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>1328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is no record of the number of SIO man hours spent on inspections conducted during the 1982–83 financial year.

(e) Fees paid to firms of chartered accountants for the conduct of inspections were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year ended 30 June</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>$6,246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>$59,278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>$189,206</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cost of wages books checks, including overheads, conducted by SIO inspectors was approximately:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year ended 30 June</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>$36,122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>$10,374</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Separate figures for the 1982–83 financial year are not readily available.

(f) Additional premium, excluding statutory charges, detected as a result of these inspections was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year ended 30 June</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>$716,692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>$479,199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>$1,719,622</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. During the year ending 30 June 1986, it is proposed to inspect the wage records of selected employers' liability policy holders insured with SIO prior to the introduction of WorkCare. It is not possible accurately to estimate the costs of these inspections.

Session 1986—56
3. In order to achieve the proposed program of inspections for the year ending 30 June 1986, SIO commenced approaching leading firms of chartered accountants in August 1985.

All those approached had a high reputation for efficiency and expertise within the accounting and business community, and could therefore be seen to be independent.

Those who showed an interest were then interviewed and appraised to determine their capacity consistently to produce an agreed output.

Generally SIO preferred larger firms, capable of high volume production, so as to streamline control functions.

ETHNIC AFFAIRS COMMISSION
ANNUAL COSTS AND BUDGET
(Question No. 586)

Mr STOCKDALE (Brighton) asked the Minister for Ethnic Affairs:

In respect of each department, agency and authority within his administration, what was the annual cost in 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85, respectively, and the Budget estimate for 1985-86, for each of the following types of payments and allowances—(a) personal and travelling—(i) domestic travel; (ii) overseas travel; and (iii) removal and relocation expenses; (b) car mileage; (c) tea money; (d) expense of office; (e) entertainment; and (f) any other allowances paid to employees?

Mr SPYKER (Minister for Ethnic Affairs)—The answer is:

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<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Personal and Travelling</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(i) Domestic travel</td>
<td>18 169.07</td>
<td>24 958.80</td>
<td>26 782.75</td>
<td>35 220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Overseas travel</td>
<td></td>
<td>22 696.00</td>
<td>9 445.00</td>
<td>5 680</td>
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<tr>
<td>(iii) Removal and relocation</td>
<td>1 573.50</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Car mileage</td>
<td>11 248.34</td>
<td>10 803.06</td>
<td>8 643.91</td>
<td>8 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Tea money</td>
<td>751.00</td>
<td>397.00</td>
<td>125.50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Expenses of office</td>
<td>3 031.46</td>
<td>7 288.49</td>
<td>8 030.52</td>
<td>7 170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) Entertainment</td>
<td>3 563.18</td>
<td>5 168.00</td>
<td>8 375.30</td>
<td>8 275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) Any other allowances</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION, FORESTS AND LANDS
MIDDLE MANAGERS’ COURSES
(Question No. 675)

Mr WILLIAMS (Doncaster) asked the Minister for Education, for the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands:

In respect of each department, agency and authority within her administration, how many women have attended potential middle managers' courses for the years 1983, 1984 and 1985, and what is the estimate for 1986?

Mr CATHIE (Minister for Education)—The answer supplied by the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands is:

Records to obtain information accurately to answer your question have not been kept. However, in 1983, when the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands was formed from the former Ministry of Conservation, Forests Commission and Department of Crown Lands and Survey, there were 20 women in positions of significance in middle management and professional areas.

During the period from 1983 to 1986, the number of women in the middle management and professional areas has increased to a total of 100, a significant growth.

In the initial period of amalgamation, these women were provided with opportunities for personal and professional training and development within the organization, not in formal middle manager’s courses, but through involvement in project teams, consultative committees, task forces and working parties associated with the amalgamation of the former agencies into the department.
With the amalgamation significantly under way in 1985, action was taken to involve women in potential middle manager's courses with five women participating. It is planned for an increased number to be involved in 1986.

**STATUS OF WOMEN IN DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**
*(Question No. 694)*

Mr Williams (Doncaster) asked the Minister for Consumer Affairs, for the Minister for Community Services:

In respect of each department, agency and authority within her administration:

1. How many women are—(a) First Division officers or officers of comparable status; and (b) Second Division officers?
2. What total percentage of First and Second Division officers are women?

Mr Spyker (Minister for Consumer Affairs)—The answer supplied by the Minister for Community Services is:

The information requested is readily available from the Public Service Board's annual report and deals with the period up until 30 June 1985.

**NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL**
*(Question No. 839)*

Mr A. T. Evans (Ballarat North) asked the Minister for Education, for the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands:

1. How much revenue has the National Safety Council received for fire control activities from the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands and/or the Forests Commission of Victoria, since September 1984?
2. What is the average hourly charge by the National Safety Council for the use of its helicopters?
3. Whether the Minister will ascertain and advise the House what is the proposed capital expenditure to make each of the Canadair aircraft ready and available for fire bombing?

Mr Cathie (Minister for Education)—The answer supplied by the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands is:

1. $1 771 000
2. BELL 205 (crewed and equipped for rapelling, firebombing and winching) $1430 per hour
   BELL 212 (crewed and equipped for rapelling, firebombing and winching) $1686 per hour
   BELL 412 (crewed and equipped for rapelling, firebombing and winching) $1742 per hour
   BOELKOW 105 (crewed and equipped for rapelling, firebombing and winching) $1040 per hour
3. The latest information available to me is that the purchase price of a Canadair CL 215 firebomber is approximately A$8 million. This does not include the cost of spare parts, crewing and operational infrastructure, which I am not able to estimate.

**PROPOSED NEW BRIDGES AT ECHUCA**
*(Question No. 849)*

Mr Hann (Rodney) asked the Minister for Transport:

Whether he will lay on the table of the Library all files, memoranda and reports on the proposed construction of new road and rail bridges over the River Murray at Echuca?

Mr Roper (Minister for Transport)—The answer is:

There are a great number of documents which exist in several areas and different locations of the Ministry of Transport relating to the construction of bridges over the River Murray at Echuca. In view of the volume of material in existence and its location, it is impracticable for it to be laid on the Parliamentary Library table.

However, if the honourable member wishes to peruse the papers, I should be happy to make arrangements for the officers of the Ministry of Transport to assist him.
UNIFORM FISHING CODE  
(Question No. 851)  

Mr AUSTIN (Ripon) asked the Minister for Education, for the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands:  

Whether the Government has taken any action to establish a uniform fishing code to set health and hygiene standards; if so—(a) how is the code to be implemented and enforced; (b) what input has there been from the fishing industry in the development of the code; (c) what will be the cost to both industry and the Government of implementing and administering the code; (d) what problems will the code overcome; and (e) what benefits will accrue to consumers and to the industry?  

Mr CATHIE (Minister for Education)—The answer supplied by the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands is:  

In 1985 the Government set up a working party to develop an over-all plan for a seafood quality improvement program. The working party using the expertise and facilities of the Food Technology Unit at RMIT has now completed a survey of fish handling in Victoria.  

In addition, the working party has produced a draft code of practice for the quality and marketing of fish in Victoria. Both the report on fish handling and the code of practice will be included in the working party's report and recommendations to Government. It is anticipated that the report of the working party will be presented to Government in May 1986.  

The working party is comprised of representatives from relevant Government departments, the Food Technology Unit at RMIT, the Victorian Fishing Industry Council and a consumer representative.  

The draft code of practice will be circulated and discussed with all sections of the Victorian fishing industry before it is presented to Government.  

I shall be in a position to answer the other points raised in your question after the working party has presented its report and recommendations.

GOULBURN GROUP OF COUNCILS  
(Question No. 938)  

Mr McDONALD (Whittlesea) asked the Minister for Local Government:  

1. In respect of each municipality in the Goulburn group of councils—(a) how many voters are enrolled; (b) what are the administration costs per ratepayer; (c) what percentage of rate revenue is used for administration purposes; (d) what is the urban/rural voting bias; (e) what is the number of male and female councillors, respectively; (f) what is the population; and (g) what is the councillor representation per head of population?  

2. In respect of each of the above, what is the average for the Goulburn group of councils and Victoria, respectively?  

Mr SIMMONDS (Minister for Local Government)—The answer is:  

The honourable member's questions are covered in detail on the attached chart.  

The information contained in the chart was collated by the Local Government Commission from information which has been provided by the councils at various times to the Victoria Grants Commission and the Policy and Research Division of the Local Government Department.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>No. Voters</th>
<th>Ave./ward per hd (d)</th>
<th>Admin. (+/hd) per Rd (e)</th>
<th>Admin. (−/hd) per Rd (f)</th>
<th>Admin. (+/hd) Rate Rev (%) (g)</th>
<th>Admin. (−/hd) Rate Rev (%) (h)</th>
<th>Voting Bias R:U (%) (i)</th>
<th>Male Councillors</th>
<th>Female Councillors</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Represent Ratio</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alberton (S)</td>
<td>5127</td>
<td>1709</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>40</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Alexandra (S)</td>
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<td>815</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>98</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4640</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arapiles (S)</td>
<td>1582</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1810</td>
<td>201.1</td>
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<td>Ararat (S)</td>
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<td>990</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>60</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4320</td>
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<td>Avoca (S)</td>
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<td>707</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>114</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>Bairnsdale (S)</td>
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<td>83</td>
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<td>Ballan (S)</td>
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<td>130</td>
<td>82</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>55</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>20030</td>
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<td>Beechworth (S)</td>
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<td>93</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Benalla (C)</td>
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<td>Bega (S)</td>
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<td>162</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>105</td>
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<td>Broadford (S)</td>
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<td>110</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2680</td>
<td>297.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questions on Notice
A
Municipality

Buln Buln (S)
Bungaree (S)
Buninyong (S)
Charlton (S)
Chiltern (S)
Cohuna (S)
Colac (S)
Dandenong (C)
Deakin (S)
Dimboola (S)
Dunmunkle (S)
Eaglehawk (B)
East Loddon (S)
Geelong West (C)
Gordon (S)
Goulburn (S)
Grenville (S)
Hampden (S)
Huntly (S)
Kaniva (S)
Kara Kara (S)
Kerang(B)
Korong (S)
Korumburra (S)
Leigh (S)
Lexton (S)
Mclvor(S)
Mans/ield (S)
Marong(S)
Metcalfe (S)
Mildura(C)
Minhamite (S)
Mirboo(S)
Mortlakc (S)
Nathalia (S)
New. & Wood (S)
Ncwstead (S)
Newtown(C)
Numurka (S)
Omeo(S)
Orbost (S)
Otway(S)
Phillip Island (S)
Pyalong(S)
Queenschffe (B)
Romsey(S)
Rosedale (S)
Sebastopol (B)
Seymour(S)
South Gippsland (S)
Stawell (S)
Stawell (T)
Strathfieldsaye (S)
Swan Hill (S)
Talbot & Clunes (S)
Tambo(S)
Traralgon (S)
Tullaroop (S)
Tungamah (S)
Violet Town (S)
Wangaratta (S)
Wannon(S)
Warracknabeal (S)
Warragul (S)
Warrnambool (S)
Wimmera(S)
Wonthaggi (B)
Yarrawonga (S)
Yea(S)

22 April 1986
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ASSEMBLY

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Population Represent
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10200
4000
9040
2080
2140
4750
6520
58600
6150
4730
3100
8000
1480
14330
2930
2230
5050
7540
3420
1840
1100
4360
3100
7010
1400
1220
2350
4810
11060
2330
17160
2060
2360
3510
3350
3960
2260
10430
6480
1610
6390
3790
3450
620
3290
5340
7140
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6260
2270
6430
13910
12690
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4110
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1410
2780
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3980
11970
8230
2890
5890
4910
3910
481890

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602.7
173.3
237.8
527.8
724.4
4883.3
683.3
394.2
344.4
888.9
164.4
1194.2
325.6
247.8
420.8
837.8
380.0
204.4
122.2
484.4
344.4
467.3
155.6
135.6
195.8
320.7
1228.9
155.3
1906.7
228.9
262.2
292.5
279.2
440.0
150.7
1158.9
540.0
134.2
532.5
252.7
383.3
68.9
365.6
296.7
793.3
781.1
980.8
695.6
189.2
535.8
1545.6
1057.5
153.3
679.2
685.0
153.3
236.7
156.7
231.7
354.4
331.7
997.5
685.8
240.8
654.4
409.2
325.8
540.8


The following answers to questions on notice were circulated—

USE OF VEHICLES BY MINISTRY FOR POLICE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

(Question No. 346)

Mr BROWN (Gippsland) asked the Minister for Police and Emergency Services:

In respect of motor vehicles operated by each department, agency or authority within his 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 MATHEWS (Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—The answer is:

Ministry’s Central Administration—Nil.

Office of the Co-ordinator in Chief of Disaster Control—Nil.

Country Fire Authority—These vehicles are allocated to officers throughout the State. As a central record is not kept of each vehicle’s trips, the amount of time and resources required to provide detailed information cannot be justified.

Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board—Nil.

Victoria Police—Four Traffic Operations Group vehicles, namely:

(i) South Gippsland Highway and Bass Highway

(a) Vehicle BZS 589

(b) 1 officer

(c) Patrol duties

(ii) South Gippsland Highway and Bass Highway

(a) Vehicle BYP 681

(b) 1 officer

(c) Wide load escort and patrol duties

(iii) South Gippsland Highway

(a) Vehicle CJU 594

(b) 2 officers

(c) Patrol duties

(iv) South Gippsland Highway

(a) Vehicle BZT 581

(b) 2 officers

(c) Patrol duties

Seven District Headquarters, Morwell, vehicles, namely:

(i) South Gippsland Highway

(a) Vehicle MYM 414

(b) 1 officer

(c) Day shift patrol duties

(ii) South Gippsland Highway

(a) Vehicle MYM 414

(b) 2 officers

(c) Evening shift patrol duties
(iii) South Gippsland Highway
   (a) Vehicle CBG 046
   (b) 1 officer
   (c) Patrol duties

(iv) South Gippsland Highway
   (a) Vehicle MYM 455
   (b) 1 officer
   (c) Day shift patrol duties

(v) South Gippsland Highway
   (a) Vehicle MYN 380
   (b) 1 officer
   (c) Attend car accident and day shift patrol duties

(vi) Bass Highway
   (a) Vehicle MYN 136
   (b) 1 officer
   (c) Day shift patrol duties

(vii) South Gippsland Highway
   (a) Vehicle MYN 016
   (b) 1 officer
   (c) Afternoon shift patrol duties

(viii) Bass Highway
   (a) Vehicle MYM 428
   (b) 2 officers
   (c) Day shift patrol duties

(ix) Bass Highway
   (a) Vehicle MYM 428
   (b) 2 officers
   (c) Evening shift patrol duties

Other departments, such as the Criminal Investigation Branch, Drug Squad and various task forces, are also allocated vehicles. However, detailed information about such vehicles' movements on 1 July 1985 cannot be provided as the information is not recorded.

Victoria State Emergency Service—Nil.

PROPERTY OWNED OR LEASED BY MINISTRY FOR POLICE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES
(Question No. 403)

Mr GUDE (Hawthorn) asked the Minister for Police and Emergency Services:
In respect of departments, agencies or authorities within his administration:
1. Which buildings are—(a) owned by such bodies; and (b) leased, indicating in respect of those leased the name of the lessor, the length of the lease, the cost and the use being made of each building?
2. What land is—(a) owned by such bodies; and (b) leased, indicating in respect of land leased the name of the lessor, the length of the lease, the cost and use of such land?

Mr MATHEWS (Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—The answer is:
1. (a) The Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board owns 47 fire stations in the Metropolitan Fire District. The board also owns the following properties:
   2-6 Flockhart St, Abbotsford
   627 Victoria St, Abbotsford
The following buildings are leased by the Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board:

170 Forster Rd, Mount Waverley; Lessor: Coats Patons (Aust.) Ltd; three-year lease; 1985 rental: $20 520; fire equipment services workshop.
20 Market Rd, Sunshine; Lessor: Lerina Nominees Pty Ltd; two-year lease; 1985 rental: $36 470; fire equipment services workshop.
6-8 Anderson Rd, Thornbury; Lessor: Gill Nominees Pty Ltd; five-year lease; 1985 rental: $55 000; warehouse and manufacturing.

2. (a) The following vacant land is owned by the Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board:

523 Clayton Rd, Clayton
332-336 Hampshire Rd, Sunshine
30-32 McIntyre Rd, Sunshine
96-100 Mahoneys Rd, Thomastown.

(b) The Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board leases vacant land at 15A Anderson Rd, Thornbury, from the Estate of Cecchin on a five year lease at a rental of $7560 in 1985 for car parking.

3. The Country Fire Authority, which is responsible for some 1300 fire brigades throughout the country area of Victoria, owns or leases numerous properties which are used as fire stations, accommodation for fire fighters, workshops and offices. The time and effort in providing details cannot be justified.

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**VICTORIAN TEACHING SERVICE CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION COMMISSION**

(Question No. 549)

Mr HANN (Rodney) asked the Minister for Education:

1. On how many occasions the Victorian Teaching Service Conciliation and Arbitration Commission has met formally since its establishment?

2. What is the total amount of salary paid to each member of the commission since his appointment?

3. What is the total cost of the operation of the commission since its establishment?

Mr CATHIE (Minister for Education)—The answer is:

1. The Victorian Teaching Service Conciliation and Arbitration Commission was established in September 1982, and since that date it has met formally on 243 occasions and has conducted hearings in relation to the determination of units in the Teaching Service on 25 occasions.

2 and 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salaries</th>
<th>1982-83</th>
<th>1983-84</th>
<th>1984-85</th>
<th>1985-86 Budget</th>
<th>1985-86 Exp. to Date 28.2.86</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W. Stelmach</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>63 350</td>
<td>70 200</td>
<td>70 000</td>
<td>46 200</td>
<td>179 750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Conway</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>54 400</td>
<td>58 000</td>
<td>59 500</td>
<td>41 570</td>
<td>153 970</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TRAVEL DETAILS OF OFFICERS OF THE MINISTRY FOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

(Question No. 554)

Mr WILLIAMS (Doncaster) asked the Minister for Housing, for the Minister for Planning and Environment:

In respect of each department, agency and authority within his administration:
1. What number of senior public servants have used—(a) overseas; and (b) domestic air travel since April 1982?
2. What various travel guidelines and procedures applied during the period in respect of the relevant ticketing arrangements?
3. What flight expenses were—(a) incurred; and (b) reimbursed?
4. Which individuals and/or organizations acted as—(a) agents; or (b) were consulted in connection with overseas and domestic flight travel, respectively, indicating why?

Mr WILKES (Minister for Housing)—The answer supplied by the Minister for Planning and Environment is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department, Agency or Authority</th>
<th>Number of Senior Public Servants Travelled</th>
<th>Flight Expenses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overseas</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment Protection Authority</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Conservation Council</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorian Archaeological Survey</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Control</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Authority</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorian Conservation Trust</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loddon/Campaspe Regional Planning Authority</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic Building Council</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The travel guidelines and procedures are those set by the Protocol Branch of the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Overseas Visits Committee.

Session 1986—57
Questions on Notice

AMNESTY ON ILLEGAL FIREARMS

(Question No. 572)

Mr WEIDEMAN (Frankston South) asked the Minister for Police and Emergency Services:

In respect of the amnesty on illegal firearms commencing on 1 October 1985:

1. How many illegal firearms were surrendered to the relevant authorities?

2. Whether he will identify the type of weapon and number—(a) handgun/automatic/other (Black Powder); (b) rifle/automatic/other; and (c) machine gun?

3. Whether he will identify by region/area of receipt and collection the number returned via police stations and authorized gun dealers, respectively?

4. What method is used to record the receipt of the firearms?

5. Whether the receipt for the surrendered firearm is required to be countersigned by a police officer of a particular rank, if so, what is the rank?

6. What method is used to record the disposal and destruction of the recovered illegal firearms?

7. What method is used to determine if the surrendered firearm has been used for any illegal activity?

8. Whether any firearm recovered has ever been the property of any State Government body or institution?

Mr MATHEWS (Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—The answer is:

1. In the amnesty period from 1 October to 31 December 1985, 1645 firearms were surrendered to police or licensed gun dealers.

2. For the purposes of the amnesty, surrendered weapons were categorized as handguns, rifles, shotguns or prohibited weapons including machine guns. The numbers surrendered in each category were 158, 1063, 416 and 8 respectively.

3. By police district, the numbers of firearms surrendered were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>To Police</th>
<th>To Gun Dealers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Altona</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avondale Heights</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barwon</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Highlands</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheltenham</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corangamite</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dandenong</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Gippsland</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gippsland</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenelg</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goulburn</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heidelberg</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loddon</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malle  e</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malvern</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maroondah</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moonee Ponds</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prahran</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Goulburn</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Murray</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Port</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wimmera</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>552</strong></td>
<td><strong>1093</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Surrendered firearms were recorded in the gun dealers register of transactions or in a police miscellaneous property book.

5. No.

6. Firearms surrendered to gun dealers were purchased by the dealers and any resale is entered in the gun dealers register. Firearms surrendered to police are either offered for sale by public auction or retained as weapons of interest by the Forensic Science Laboratory.
7. Surrendered unusual firearms are compared with records of unusual firearms previously used in illegal activities.

8. No such firearms were detected.

**STATUS OF WOMEN IN DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION, FORESTS AND LANDS**

(Question No. 712)

**Mr WILLIAMS (Doncaster)** asked the Minister for Education, for the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands:

In respect of each department, agency and authority within her administration:

1. How many women are—(a) First Division officers or officers of comparable status; and (b) Second Division officers?

2. What total percentage of First and Second Division officers are women?

**Mr CATHIE (Minister for Education)**—The answer supplied by the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands is:

The information requested is readily available from the Public Service Board's annual report and deals with the period up until 30 June 1985. However, statistics as at April 1986 show there are two women officers of comparable status to the previous First Division and 100 officers of comparable status to the previous Second Division.

This is a total percentage of 4.5 per cent women officers of comparable status to the previous First Division and 10 per cent women officers of comparable status to the previous Second Division.

**GUN DEALERS LICENCES**

(Question No. 716)

**Mr WILLIAMS (Doncaster)** asked the Minister for Police and Emergency Services:

With respect to the answer given on 29 October 1985 to Question No. 309, whether the Minister is aware of the answer to question No. 598 given by the then Minister for Community Welfare Services on 6 October 1982, which referred to approval having been granted to Mr William Halley, Prison Officer in the Correctional Services Division, to act as a licensed gun dealer in his spare time; if so—(a) whether the Minister considers the answers to questions Nos 309 and 598 to be consistent; (b) whether the answer given to question No. 598 breaches the principles of the Freedom of Information Act, and if not will he review the answer given to question No. 309?

**Mr MATHEWS (Minister for Police and Emergency Services)**—The answer is:

I am aware of the answer to question No. 598 given by the former Minister for Community Welfare Services.

The answer is not inconsistent with my answer to question No. 309 which sought details of the names of all persons whose gun dealers' licences had been cancelled. I remain of the view that the disclosure of such personal details would be unreasonable.

**PEACE STUDIES**

(Question No. 861)

**Mr CROZIER (Portland)** asked the Minister for Education:

1. How many schools include “Peace Studies” in any part of the curriculum, indicating the schools involved?

2. Whether the teaching of “Peace Studies” as a separate subject is approved by the Government?

**Mr CATHIE (Minister for Education)**—The answer is:

To answer the first question it is crucial to define “Peace Studies”. The usage which is generally accepted in Victorian schools and which is supported by the Ministry's Peace Education Task Force is a broad definition which focuses on conflict and conflict resolution at all levels of human activity from the interpersonal to the global.

If the broad definition were taken then every school in the State would contain within its curriculum some aspect of “Peace Studies”. For example, every history course includes to some degree a consideration of conflict and conflict resolution. Similarly, most literature has some form of personal or community conflict as its basis.

If a narrow definition is taken which defines “Peace Studies” as a separate subject dealing solely with questions of nuclear disarmament then virtually no school offers this form of curriculum.
The Peace Education Task Force, as part of its investigation of the extent of Peace Studies in Victorian Government schools, found that:

- in primary schools “most of the work of teachers has been of an incidental nature” and “the great emphasis in schools appeared to be in teaching children to work and play co-operatively and in teaching basic values such as caring, fairness and understanding of different values held by people.”

- of 97 schools surveyed, 29 indicated that they taught peace related topics such as the United Nations in Social Studies, 26 integrated aspects of peace into other subjects and 59 indicated that peace related values such as co-operation were dealt with, incidentally or informally, in various studies such as study of family life.

- in post-primary schools a similar pattern emerged. A telephone survey of approximately one in three post-primary schools indicated that approximately 80 per cent believed that they included in their curriculum some aspect of peace education, either formally or informally. However, only one school indicated that peace education was taught as a separate subject. Of those surveyed 13 per cent indicated that peace related issues were integrated into existing subjects, 14 per cent indicated that separate units were offered within existing subjects, while 68 per cent claimed that peace education was incorporated into their teaching in some way.

In general, the approach was more likely to be formalized at senior levels of post-primary schools and there was a greater concentration on global questions such as the nature and cause of war and ways of achieving world peace at these levels.

In the report of the Peace Education Task Force, which is currently with the Minister for Education, the inclusion of peace related considerations across the existing curriculum is strongly favoured over a separate subject approach.

Broad Government policy as expressed in Ministerial Paper No. 6, Curriculum Development and Planning in Victoria, is that matters relating to conflict and conflict resolution, the use and misuse of world resources and questions of social justice are all legitimate areas for study, provided that they are dealt with objectively and even-handedly. The final form in which these considerations are introduced into the curriculum of individual schools is a matter for each school community, through its school council.

**ELECTRICAL TRANSMISSION LINES**

(Question No. 891)

Mr DICKINSON (South Barwon) asked the Minister for Education, for the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands:

Whether the Minister will liaise with the Department of Industry, Technology and Resources and the Shire of Barrabool to plan for the location of electrical transmission lines underground in coastal holiday resort areas; if so, will the Minister give an undertaking to investigate such a proposal with a view to its early implementation?

Mr CATHIE (Minister for Education)—The answer supplied by the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands is:

The Minister will liaise to the extent necessary with the Department of Industry, Technology and Resources and the Shire of Barrabool in the planning of the location of electrical transmission lines underground in coastal holiday resort areas.

The proposal is a matter for determination by the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources.
Questions without Notice

Tuesday, 6 May 1986

The SPEAKER (the Hon. C. T. Edmunds) took the chair at 2.7 p.m. and read the prayer.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

NUNAWADING PROVINCE BY-ELECTION

Mr AUSTIN (Ripon)—I refer to the police report into the role of the mountain district cattlemen in the Nunawading Province by-election. Will the Premier confirm that the report states that full co-operation was received from all people the police approached, except members of the Australian Labor Party; that it further found that no direction and no finance had been given by the Liberal Party to the mountain district cattlemen; and, finally, that paragraph 95 on page 211 of the report indicated that the police had been used for political purposes?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I cannot comment on the assertions of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. The matters to which he refers are properly within the domain of the police and the Chief Electoral Officer. The Government has made it clear that it will not intrude into those matters. However, if the Opposition wants to do so, it is a matter for it to decide.

The Government has strong views about the independence and detachment of those officers in respect of any complaints and investigations into those matters. That is where the matter will remain, so far as the Government is concerned. The honourable member can canvass the gossip and leaks as much as he likes, but I shall not be commenting on them.

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS (Leader of the National Party)—I direct a further question to the Premier. Having regard to the fact that the report of the Nunawading Province by-election inquiry has been seen by many people, apart from those mentioned by the Premier previously, will the Premier give an undertaking that those matters will now be debated in this House prior to the adjournment of the sitting?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I will not be giving any such undertaking for the simple reason that I do not regard those matters as being in the domain of Parliament.

The Leader of the Opposition may not know what the process is, but I believe the Leader of the National Party ought to know what it is. The Chief Electoral Officer has a role to play in this matter. He has already indicated publicly that he is dealing with the matter, and that is where it should remain.

The Chief Electoral Officer deals with all complaints and all inquiries, whether they concern the mountain cattlemen or what happened in Gippsland South or any other electoral matter. They are matters for him, whatever they are.

The Government has said—and I believe this is the correct approach—that this is not a matter in the domain of politicians. The Act lays down a course of conduct and several responsibilities. The Government has taken no part in that process, nor will it.

Let me make it very clear that the role and the discretion of the Chief Electoral Officer are matters for him; they are not Government business and they will not be Government business under this Government.

The Chief Electoral Officer, like other statutory office-holders in the State, has an independent and detached role. Rumour has it that the Leader of the Opposition rings up the Chief Electoral Officer about this matter. I believe the honourable gentleman has no right to ring him up on this matter, nor does any other honourable member have any such right.
The Chief Electoral Officer has a perfect entitlement to make a decision free of any pressure of that kind, and I believe he will do so.

THIRD-PARTY INSURANCE

Mr ROWE (Essendon)—In view of the public concern about the present situation with compulsory third-party insurance in the State, can the Premier indicate to the House what steps the Government has taken to remedy the situation?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—Unless reforms are undertaken, the costs of transport accident insurance in the State may prevent many Victorians from being able to own and run motor cars because the cost of claims over the past six years has risen by some 370 per cent. Recently the Premiums Advisory Committee recommended to the Treasurer an increase in third-party premiums to around $500, which is an increase of 176 per cent on the present premiums.

Our reforms and proposals will be announced on Thursday. We believe they provide a package which will stabilize the costs of the system and ensure that transport accident insurance is fixed at a level that will enable all Victorians to pay it.

Yesterday I was somewhat surprised that the Opposition should suddenly believe it has found some wisdom on this issue, after being in office for some 27 years. It put out a package that, predictably, was shallow and really did not do anything.

When the Opposition was in government, it sat year after year and watched the costs of third-party insurance spiral and did nothing about those costs. If yesterday's effort is the best the Opposition can do on this issue, it is clear that it has not learned anything over the past four years in the relative sterility of being in opposition because it cannot put together a reasonable and cogent package.

I want to make one thing clear: the Government is not prepared to increase the tax burden on Victorians to pay for third-party insurance. The Leader of the National Party laughs. I do not know what his party's package is, but, that is the effect of the Liberal Party package. It will put a new tax on all families because it proposes to place a surcharge on the licences to fund a shortfall that has already occurred within the consolidated revenue.

If the Liberal Party is to fund the $600 million or $700 million shortfall, which taxes does it propose to increase to pay for it? Will the Liberal Party increase taxes or introduce new taxes? It should make up its mind because two new taxes are contemplated.

Mr KENNEDY (Leader of the Opposition)—On a point of order, I can understand the Premier and the Government being embarrassed, but the Premier is now debating the issue. I suggest that he has answered the question and that the House should proceed with question time.

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—On the point of order, as I recall, the question asked the Premier what steps the Government is taking. The Premier is outlining the steps the Government is taking. Obviously the Opposition does not like the steps the Government is taking, but it is nonsense to suggest that the Premier is debating the issue.

The SPEAKER—Order! I do not uphold the point of order. The Standing Orders make it clear that a Minister may not debate a reply to a question, but I do not uphold the point of order.

Mr CAIN (Premier)—It is not the Government's intention to seek to solve the problems by imposing a new levy on licence-holders. A levy of $30 per licence would mean that some families would have to pay an additional $120 a year. It is not the Government's intention to fund any shortfall from consolidated revenue and increase taxes as a consequence.

Mr Kennett interjected.
Mr CAIN—Honourable members should consider what the proposal of the Liberal Party will do to a one-car family where four or five drivers share a car. The Government’s proposals will recognize that that is not the way to treat Victorian motorists. It is a set of proposals that recognizes the need to ensure that people are cared for as a result of motor accidents.

Mr DELZOPPO (Narracan)—On a point of order, the Premier is comparing two policies, so it is obvious he is debating the question. My point of order is that he should not be able to do so.

The SPEAKER—Order! I do not uphold the point of order, but I direct the attention of honourable members to Standing Order No. 127 regarding the debating of matters in replies to questions without notice. I ask the Premier to round off his remarks.

Mr CAIN (Premier)—The Government will be undertaking a fundamental reform that does not try to patch up things by levying more taxes on people. It will be a fundamental reform that recognizes the shortcomings of the current system and addresses them as the people would wish them to be addressed.

FRINGE BENEFIT TAX ON MOTOR VEHICLES

Mr STOCKDALE (Brighton)—I refer the Treasurer to the statement of the Federal Treasurer last week that the fringe benefit tax is pitched at all employers and will apply to Commonwealth, State and local government authorities. Has the State Government bought or leased vehicles since that tax was foreshadowed in September; does the State know how many thousands of taxable vehicles are owned by State departments, agencies or authorities; and has the State Treasurer calculated how much tax the Victorian community will have to pay, through the State Government, for those vehicles?

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—In respect of the details, it is not possible to give any indication of the total number of vehicles within the public sector. We are currently in the process of assessing the total impact of the new tax package on the State Government position and, when that assessment is made, it will be allowed for in the Budget.

TEACHER HOUSING

Mr HANN (Rodney)—Is the Minister for Education aware of the widespread concern expressed by teacher unions, school councils and more especially by the teachers currently living in teacher housing about the Government’s decision to introduce market rentals as from 1 July 1986? If the Minister is aware of this concern and the fact that proceeding with this policy could well discourage people from taking up country positions, is the Government prepared to review the policy?

Mr CATHIE (Minister for Education)—The Government is aware of changes made by the Federal Government in its taxing programs and policies that will affect all Government housing and all Government housing employees.

The State Government is currently addressing that issue but I do not believe attracting teachers from the city to the country is a key factor. Members of the Opposition may well laugh but the Government has tried a number of incentive packages to attract teachers from the city to the country.

Unemployed primary teachers have been trained in order to place them in post-primary schools in the country. Special training programs have been offered to students taking Diploma of Education courses so that they can be placed in country high schools and secondary schools throughout the State and the Government will continue to carry out many of the recommendations in the Blackburn report, which considered the whole issue. I do not believe there is any single answer to the problem.
THIRD-PARTY INSURANCE

Mr SEITZ (Keilor)—Can the Treasurer inform the House whether the Government intends to fund third-party insurance from either the Consolidated Fund or from driver licence increases?

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—As all honourable members would be aware, during the course of this financial year the Government decided that, on a one-off basis, some $30 million should be allocated from the Consolidated Fund to assist in the financing of the compulsory third-party insurance scheme in Victoria.

The Liberal Party has made an announcement that, in its view, it is necessary for money to be taken from the Consolidated Fund to meet the existing unfunded third-party insurance liabilities. In other words, the Liberal Party is asking the Government to pay approximately $475 million next year out of the Consolidated Fund to meet the unfunded liability.

Mr Stockdale—Tell the truth!

Mr JOLLY—Members of the Liberal Party obviously like their own policy; they are upset about it.

Mr Kennett—At least we have got one!

Mr JOLLY—The unfunded liability, as it falls due, should be met from the Consolidated Fund. There are only two ways in which it can be met and they are either to increase taxes and charges or to borrow. Yet the Liberal Party says that it is totally opposed to both options.

If unfunded liability were raised in 1986–87 by taxes and charges, and that was related back to the number of vehicles in the State, the cost would amount to $190 for every vehicle in Victoria. That is the sort of tax slug that would be imposed by the Liberal Party if its scheme were to be implemented.

Alternatively—and I understand that they are trying to think on their feet which is almost an impossibility for members of the Liberal Party—the Opposition has said that the funding should be met by borrowing. Given the tightness of the Australian Loan Council provision, the only way that that can come about under the global limit concept is to slash capital expenditure in such areas as education and health. Is that what the Opposition wants?

The Opposition does not want to build any schools; it does not want a maintenance program, and one should remember the order of magnitude one is talking about here—it is some $475 million in 1986–87.

In addition, I have had the opportunity of obtaining preliminary estimates on the cost of the proposal put forward by the Liberal Party. On examination of the cost estimates one finds that rather than the $183 premium about which the Liberal Party was talking, the proposal would cost each vehicle owner approximately $300. That would be another slug on Victorian taxpayers.

If the Liberal Party wants to attempt to refute those claims, it should make the details of its costing available for public scrutiny. I totally reject its approach and its suggestion that there should be a drain on the Consolidated Fund in years ahead. That is financial irresponsibility and the Government rejects it.

STATE INSURANCE OFFICE

Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—I ask the Treasurer whether it is a fact that the State Insurance Office purchased a building site on the corner of King and Collins streets for a new headquarters at a cost of $10 million and whether the State Insurance Office further spent approximately $6 million on consultancy fees relating to the proposed headquarters, which are not now being proceeded with.
Given this absurd waste of taxpayers' funds, will the Treasurer make available to me all documents relating to the purchase of the site and the consultancy fees paid to some of the friends of the Labor Party?

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—That was a fairly pathetic question from the Leader of the Opposition. As he would know, I have answered similar questions on numerous occasions in this House. The Opposition has previously asked questions about the investment policies of the State Insurance Office and in answer to them I have clearly stated that those investment policies relate to property as well as other forms of investment. I have consistently said that, within the established framework of legislation and regulations, the State Insurance Office can follow its own investment policies, and property investment is one policy it follows.

The Leader of the Opposition has a pathetic record in this area. He is economically illiterate—and he knows that—but he hopes that by shouting he will improve his rationality. I assure him and other honourable members that it does not; it only makes him out to be a dill! I have said that before. I repeat, the State Insurance Office makes its own decisions on investments and operates within the law and the regulations.

PROTECTION FOR MARATHON RUNNERS

Mr SHELL (Geelong)—In view of the tragic accident that occurred during the recent Sydney to Melbourne ultra-marathon, can the Minister for Sport and Recreation inform the House of the steps the Government is taking to reduce the risk of such accidents occurring in future?

Mr TREZISE (Minister for Sport and Recreation)—There is no doubt that in recent years there has been a large increase in the number of walkers, cyclists and runners who are using the roads for various events, including competitive and fundraising events for certain organizations. Although one regrets what occurred in the recent Sydney to Melbourne ultra-marathon, it is not a new occurrence. In 1958 the late Russell Mockridge, who was possibly the greatest Australian cyclist, was killed in an accident that occurred at an intersection on Dandenong Road.

Be that as it may, the Government, through the Director-General of Sport and Recreation, Mr Harvey Parker, established a working party to examine ways of removing the dangers to competitors and other road users. The matter has been discussed with other Ministries in an attempt to work out a better system. It would involve better consultation between organizers of events with the police about the times the events would take place, the routes they would follow and the number of competitors.

Through this method, perhaps in the future a better system can be developed to ease the dangers to competitors and to motorists and also to reduce the hazards to people who drive along normally, as occurred the other day.

It is hoped that this working party will arrive at a solution to ease the situation so that the Government will not have to take the drastic step of prohibiting these events on the highways and roadways.

CLOSURE OF ONE-MAN POLICE STATIONS

Mr AUSTIN (Ripon)—I refer to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services his assurance given at a public meeting at Branxholme on 14 April when he stated that it was not the Government's wish or intention to close any one-man police stations, and I ask how he reconciles that assurance with the recent statement made by Assistant Commissioner Glare, that the Marnoo station is recommended for closure.

Mr MATHEWS (Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—It is the prerogative of the Chief Commissioner of Police to recommend the closure of police stations if he sees
fit to make that recommendation. He has not to my knowledge made any recommendation in the case of the Marnoo police station.

**CLOSURE OF RAILWAY STATIONS**

Mr WHITING (Mildura)—Can the Minister for Transport inform the House whether it is intended that the railway stations at Nhill and Kaniva are to be closed to passenger traffic from 1 July 1986; if so, for what reason?

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—I thank the honourable member for his question. As the honourable member would be aware, a review is currently occurring and it is an ongoing review—it has been ongoing for some years—of stations and their requirements throughout the country area.

A number of stations have been closed from time to time. I shall seek advice from the State Transport Authority as to Kaniva and Nhill stations and I shall also provide information relating to passenger usage from those stations to the honourable member.

**NUCLEAR POWER PLANT**

Mrs TONER (Greensborough)—I ask the Premier whether, in view of the Chernobyl disaster in the Soviet Union last week, about which all honourable members would be concerned, he can inform the House whether there have been plans for a nuclear power plant in Victoria and whether he can assure the House that the Victorian community will never be put at risk in the way that the people in the Soviet Union were put at risk last week.

Mr CAIN (Premier)—There were suggestions some time back that the State Electricity Commission had plans to develop nuclear energy; two locations, I believe were mentioned, one at French Island. I can assure the House that any such plans that may have been made no longer exist. As the honourable member would be aware, the House has legislated to ensure that a nuclear reactor will never be built in this State.

If there is one among the very large number of achievements of which this Government is proud, it is that legislation, because what occurred at Chernobyl recently—I put it this way—was a chilling fulfilment of the fears that many people have had about nuclear power.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr CAIN—I regret that that response is treated with derision by the honourable member for Mildura and others. I do not know what the Opposition yahoos who interject on issues like this feel about the prospect that thousands of people will be afflicted with cancer in the years ahead. Is that something that delights them? Are they pleased about it? Are they displeased about a Government that does all it can to ensure it does not occur here? Are they not concerned about the health, welfare and safety of Victorian people, because that is the issue? The Leader of the Opposition interjects and says I am stupid. The Leader of the Opposition says that they supported the Bill.

The honourable member for Balwyn has always asserted that the Liberal Party did not say "Yes" or "No". Which is it? Does the Liberal Party support the Act? The Leader of the Opposition indicated that the Liberal Party supports the Act. If that is the view of the Opposition, I am delighted. However, it has never been the view of the honourable member for Balwyn. He is silent because he has always asserted that the Liberal Party recognized the mandate the Government had on this issue but that it did not support the Act nor oppose it. I am delighted that the Leader of the Opposition has indicated that he supports the Act.

I shall refer honourable members to what occurred ten or eleven days ago. The unthinkable happened in that a major nuclear reactor appears to have almost completely
melted down. No one can be certain of the amount of radiation that has been released. The measured quantities are sketchy and make it difficult to work out how much of the population of Europe has been affected. The Leader of the Opposition appears not to regard this as a matter of consequence.

Mr Kennett—It has nothing to do with Government business!

Mr CAIN—It has everything to do with Government business if the people of this State can be assured that, so far as this Government can assure them, they will not be subject to that type of action. The Government can do no more than that. It is necessary to make that point so that people like the Leader of the Opposition—who now says he supports the Act—realize how necessary it is for the community to assert with all its vigour and authority that nuclear risks should not be taken in Victoria.

It was said that a disaster such as the Chernobyl disaster could not happen, and the honourable member for Balwyn probably said that. However, it can happen, and everyone in this State would wish to ensure that it cannot happen here. The Government will continue to ensure that.

YOUTH GUARANTEE SCHEME

Mr GUDE (Hawthorn)—I ask the Minister for Labour whether it is a fact that funding of the Youth Guarantee Scheme has dried up and, in particular, that the funding for new placements this financial year is no longer available, and that participating firms have been told that there is no clear-cut commitment for funding next year.

Mr CRABB (Minister for Labour)—The honourable member for Hawthorn seems to be confused, and it was difficult to work out what his question was about. The Government's commitment with the Youth Guarantee Scheme was that it would create 1250 work/study positions, and that has been done. The scheme has been successful, and a further 1250 trainees will be employed next year and the following year.

With regard to the traineeship program, I am pleased that, after a fairly difficult gestation period, the Government has got the program off the ground. The first traineeships in Australia were agreed to two weeks ago at the Industrial Training Commission, and they will be established in the retail area. Those jobs are not funded by the Government, although the Commonwealth Government provides a subsidy of $1000 a position for training on the job. The Commonwealth Government also provides off-the-job training—that is 25 per cent of the time spent at technical and further education colleges.

I assure honourable members that all components of the Youth Guarantee Scheme are alive and well. I am confident that by the target date—the end of 1988—every young person in this State will have an acceptable position in training, education, work or an acceptable combination of all three.

VISIT BY GREEK DEPUTY MINISTER FOR CULTURE

Mr SIDIROPoulos (Richmond)—Will the Minister for Ethnic Affairs inform the House of the outcome of the recent visit to Victoria by the Greek Deputy Minister for Culture, Mr George Papandreou?

Mr SPYKER (Minister for Ethnic Affairs)—The visit by Mr George Papandreou, the Deputy Minister for Culture of Greece, was an outstanding success. He had the opportunity of meeting a large number of Greek people who live in Victoria and, I am delighted to say, many members of this House, who will have been most impressed by the knowledge he had of the people of Greek origin who are living in Melbourne.

Following the recent extremely successful Italian conference, the Minister has agreed to the Victorian Government hosting a Greek conference in March next year to examine issues of Greek people who have settled into this country as Australian citizens and of
those who face certain difficulties when returning to Greece. The agreement to the conference clearly demonstrates the responsibility that the Greek Government in the past has taken for its former citizens.

Many Governments of other countries, including Italy, have not taken up their responsibilities for their previous citizens. The Victorian Government wants to ensure that those Governments take responsible roles, particularly for social security arrangements such as the agreements already made between the Federal Government and a number of overseas Governments to ensure that wherever people choose to live they may do so with a minimum of difficulty.

The other concept which the Victorian Government has asked the Greek Deputy Minister for Culture to take back to his Government—and he is the son of the Prime Minister—concerns the very great wish among the Greek community in Melbourne for a Greek cultural centre. Of course, the cultural centre would be available for use by all Victorians. The Greek community wants to ensure, as part of the post-war migration program on which a large number of Greeks came to Australia, that their history, culture and language are maintained as part of Australia’s multi-cultural society.

I reiterate that I am delighted with the success of the visit and the response that the Greek Deputy Minister for Culture has given to the positive proposals the Victorian Government put to him. I shall be pleased to host a Greek conference in March next year and I hope the proposed cultural centre will get off the ground, as it will be of great benefit to all Victorians.

PURCHASE OF NEW BUSES

Mr BROWN (Gippsland West)—Will the Minister for Transport explain why last Friday’s announcement of an order of 100 new buses for the Metropolitan Transit Authority put the cost at approximately $16 million, although the Minister’s announcement of June last year for the calling of tenders put the cost at $10 million? Will the Minister confirm that the announcements he made, although eleven months apart, in fact refer to the same 100 buses?

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—I thank the honourable member for the question. Of course, Governments of which he was a member did not have much interest in new buses, trams or trains. The announcement I made concerned a major replacement program for the total metropolitan fleet. The Treasurer and I have decided to replace several of the oldest buses rather than continuing the ad hoc arrangements that applied to transport stock under the previous Government, which allowed buses to wear out completely before replacing them with new vehicles. That contract has been given to the MAN company.

In future, the annual replacement of some of the oldest buses is intended to be carried out so that the situation does not occur where from time to time contracts of amounts for 100, 160 or 200 buses are required.

The announcement on Friday was for the successful tenderer for 100 buses that are the last of the massive old bus orders. The Government expects that, in future, although the numbers in the contract may be larger, fewer buses will be required every year as there will be a constant improvement in them.

Those people who benefit from Government bus services, particularly those who use services previously operated by the Melbourne/Brighton Bus Lines Pty Ltd, will be delighted to know that the very antiquated buses on those routes are being totally replaced.

GAY LIBERATION ORGANIZATIONS

Mr McNAMARA (Benalla)—Can the Minister for Police and Emergency Services give details of discussions that he recently had with gay liberation organizations relating to alleged police harassment and will he ensure that those discussions will not interfere with
police charges against gay brothels, including such venues as "Steamworks", or did the "gays" make the Minister an offer that he could not refuse?

The SPEAKER—Order! The latter part of the honourable member's question was inaudible.

Mr MATHEWS (Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—Far be it for me to speculate on the habits of honourable members on the corner benches. Arising from recent discussions, a decision has been taken that a liaison committee should be established where interchange of views on matters of mutual concern can take place between members of the Victoria Police and members of the homosexual community in Victoria.

I believe that nothing but good can come from that development and I, of course, give the honourable member the assurance he seeks, that there will be no interference on the part of the Government in the laying of charges by the police on any matter whatsoever.

NATIONAL DRUG OFFENSIVE

Mrs HIRSH (Wantirna)—Can the Premier give details to the House of the public response to the phone-in organized as part of the National Drug Offensive, including the performance of Victorian agencies in dealing with this response?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I thank the honourable member for the question because during the month of April, as a result of that campaign, approximately 13 000 calls were received by the national drug information lines, 3440 of which were from Victorians. Of those 13 000 calls received, approximately 444, or 3.4 per cent, have been referred for telephone counselling. It was thought that those callers needed more assistance than was available from the printed material.

Telephone counselling is carried out through the Victorian alcohol and drug direct line. This has been operated since 10 April to receive calls from the public directly, as well as from the national drug information line, again for counselling purposes.

This service has received almost 1200 counselling calls and those calls were generated by the national drug information line. Information kits have been sent to Victorian callers and to local radio advertisers. Officers of Health Department Victoria are meeting regularly with the Victorian association of alcohol and drug agencies to monitor the impact of the national campaign on those agencies. There was a concern that they could not handle the expected increase in calls, but I can inform the House that, at the last meeting on 21 April, agency representatives were able to report that the response was being adequately managed by alcohol and drug agencies.

A departmental health officer is in frequent contact with individual agencies to monitor the effect of any substantial increase in referrals and to advise on appropriate action. The Government is pleased with what has been achieved in this short space of time since the national campaign commenced. I am delighted that no objections have been made during my response.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr CAIN—Honourable members are not going to break their silence now, are they? I was commending honourable members for their attention because when the drug program was first announced it was derided by the Opposition. It is clear from the response to the national campaign against drug abuse that it has been well received by the Victorian community and is enabling more Victorians at risk from drugs to obtain advice, and, if necessary counselling.

The figures speak for themselves and I am delighted that we have been able to achieve that positive result and I hope it continues.

I am delighted with the less than raucous response of members of the Opposition because they now seem to recognize how important is this drug abuse campaign.
ALLEGED FRAUD IN PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Mr GUDE (Hawthorn)—I refer the Minister for Public Works specifically to claims of corruption and fraud within the Public Works Department and the Minister's advice to the House that he would refer my freedom of information requests to the Fraud Squad.

Can the Minister advise the House why he has not forwarded all freedom of information requests to the Fraud Squad, as indicated to me as recently as early this week by Detective Sergeant Cosgriff and Detective Senior Sergeant Robinson?

Mr WALSH (Minister for Public Works)—In answer to the honourable member's question about not providing all freedom of information requests to the Fraud Squad, I point out to the House that my internal auditor has investigated all allegations made by the honourable member for Hawthorn and nearly all of the freedom of information requests that he has put to my department. We have found nothing substantial—

Mr Kennett—Nothing at all!

Mr WALSH—Nothing substantial that can be sent to the Fraud Squad for investigation.

Mr Gude—Starkey!

Mr WALSH—A name has been mentioned by the honourable member for Hawthorn. That name went to the Fraud Squad in September or October 1985—about six months before the request by the honourable member for Hawthorn for freedom of information on that matter.

I asked an officer of my department to request the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to provide a member of the Victoria Police Force to interview the honourable member for Hawthorn about allegations that he made in this House on corruption in the Public Works Department. I have since been informed by an officer of my department that the honourable member has been interviewed by the Police Force and nothing substantially different from what my departmental officers know has been discovered. The honourable member ought to get his facts straight before he raises questions of corruption in the House.

PETITIONS

The Clerk—I have received the following petitions for presentation to Parliament:

Conservation of historical property

TO THE HONOURABLE THE SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED,

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF THE UNDERSIGNED CITIZENS OF VICTORIA SHEWETH THAT WHEREAS:

1. The historic property of Buda in Castlemaine is under public ownership, and is open for public enjoyment and education throughout the year as a unique regional example of the nineteenth century gold rush prosperity so seminal to Victoria's history.

2. It is included in the registers of the National Estate and the Historic Buildings Council and its house is rated "classified" by the National Trust.

3. Its collection of artworks and domestic effects comprises items which belonged to the historic owners, represents one of the few genuine displays of nineteenth century life, and includes pieces and designs by the founder, the noted silversmith, Ernest Leviny and his family.

4. Its garden was included in the highest category of the Historic Gardens Study—Garden State Committee National Trust 1980—has associations with the great Government Botanist, Baron von Mueller, and is believed to be the only garden of its type open to the public in regional Victoria throughout the year.

5. It is a prime asset of the tourist industry so vital to Castlemaine and district, a potential employer, and the focal venue of a region acknowledged to be a national centre for the rapidly-increasing world interest in historic gardens.

6. Such a property warrants the same public support given to other repositories of art and artefacts, to other educational institutions, to other venues of recreation and to other aspects of the tourist industry.
7. The property currently has insufficient receipts and no other means to provide adequate administration, publicity, restoration and maintenance and is in real danger of being broken up and subject to increasing decay.

8. Significant public effort and funds have already been successfully invested as stopgap measures, and these would be senselessly wasted if more serious reinforcement is not forthcoming.

Your petitioners therefore pray that your honourable House will:

"Conduct an inquiry at the earliest possible opportunity into the needs of the endangered historical property of Buda in Castlemaine, with a view to providing public funds which would ensure its conservation and adequate public presentation, for the benefit of present and future generations".

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Mr Kennedy (1560 signatures)

School bus route

TO THE HONOURABLE THE SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED:

The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the State of Victoria sheweth concern about overcrowding in excess of legal limits, and safety levels on a fixed route school bus service transporting students from the Mount Eliza, Karingal and Frankston areas to Haileybury College in Keysborough.

Your humble petitioners therefore pray that:

1. The Metropolitan Transit Authority, as sole licensing authority, takes immediate steps to permit an additional bus to operate on the abovementioned route.

2. The Metropolitan Transit Authority takes such action as prayed for in point one, to ensure legal loading limits as determined by the Road Traffic Authority are observed in the interests of safety and comfort of users of this service, in accordance with stated MTA policy.

3. The Metropolitan Transit Authority recognizes that 106 users and potential users of this bus service constitutes sufficient numbers to make an additional bus on this route economically viable.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Mr Cooper (293 signatures)

Sale of homemade produce

TO THE HONOURABLE THE SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED:

The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the State of Victoria sheweth our concern that food prepared in home kitchens can no longer be sold at local community markets and your petitioners therefore pray that the State Government propose amendments to the Cleanliness Regulations 1984 and the Food Act to allow for home made food products to be sold at these markets.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Mr Dickinson (2744 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:


Members of Parliament (Register of Interests) Act 1978—Summary of variations notified to 30 April 1986—Ordered to be printed.

National Parks Act 1975—Order in Council—

(a) declaring that Wilsons Promontory Marine Reserve, Wilsons Promontory Marine Park, Shallow Inlet Marine and Coastal Park, Corner Inlet Marine and Coastal Park, and the Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park to be areas of land to which certain provisions of the Act and certain regulations thereunder shall apply;

(b) amending Schedule Four to the Act to add land contained in the Parks and Reserve to that Schedule; and

(c) specifying which provisions of the Act and Regulations are to apply.

Police Regulation Act 1958—Determination No. 450 of the Police Service Board.

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Building Control Act 1981—No. 98 together with documents required by s. 32 of the Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 to accompany the Statutory Rule—

AA 1074—1980 Steel Tubes and Tubulars Threaded or suitable for Threading with Pipe, Threads of Whitworth Form.

AA 1155—1974 Metric Units for use in the Construction industry

Am I. 1979

AA 1159—1979 Polyethylene (Polythene) Pipe for Pressure Applications

AA 1170—

Part 1—1981 —Dead and Live Loads

Part 2—1983 —Wind Forces

Am I

AA 1200—1981 SAA Boiler Code

AS 1221—1983 Fire Hose Reels

AS 1225—1984 Clay building bricks

AS 1250—1981 SAA Steel Structures Code

Am I. 1982

AS 1288—Parts 1 to 3 1979

AA 1432—1983 Copper Tubes for Water, Gas and Sanitation

AS 1445—1977 76 mm Pitch Corrugated Hot-dipped Zinc-coated or Aluminium Zinc-coated Steel Sheet

AS 1475—

Part 1—1977 Unreinforced Blockwork

AA 1477— Unplasticized PVC (UPVC) Pipes and Fittings for Pressure Applications (Metric Units):

Parts 1 to 6

1973, Am 1, 2, and 3

Part 1—UPVC pipes for Pressure Applications.

Part 2—Moulded UPVC Fittings for Pressure Applications.

Part 3—Fabricated UPVC Fittings for Pressure Applications.

Part 4—Post-formed UPVC Bends for Pressure Applications.

Part 5—Solvent-welding Joints for UPVC Pressure Pipes and Fittings, and Part 6—

Rubber Ring Joints for UPVC Pressure Pipes and Fittings

AS 1480—1982 SAA Concrete Structures Code

AS 1481—1978 SAA Prestressed Concrete Code

AA 1509—1974, Corrig.

AS 1530—

Methods for Fire Tests on Building Materials and Structures

Part 1—1984 —Combustibility Test for Materials

Part 2—1973 —Test for Flammability of Materials

Part 3—1982 —Test for Early Fire Hazard Properties of Materials

Part 4—1975, —Fire-Resistance Test of Structures

Am I and 2

AS 1538—1974, Corrig.

SAA Cold-formed Steel Structures Code

Am I

AS 1562—1980 Design and Installation of Metal Roofing

AA 1567—1985 Copper and Copper Alloys Wrought Rods, Bars and Sections

AS 1579—1973 Arc Welded Steel Pipes for Water and Gas

AS 1611—1973 Asbestos Cement Corrugated Sheets for Roofing and Cladding

AS 1639—1974, Corrig.

Am 1 1974

Design and Installation of Corrugated Asbestos Cement Roofing

AS 1640—1974 SAA Brickwork Code—Metric Units

AS 1653—1985 Calcium Silicate Building Bricks


AS 1664—1979, Corrig.

SAA Aluminium Structures Code

AS 1668 SAA Mechanical Ventilation and Airconditioning Code
Part 1—1979
—Fire Precautions in Buildings with Air-handling Systems
Part 1, 1979
Part 2—1980
—Ventilation Requirements
AS 1670—1983
SAA Code for Automatic Fire Alarm Installations
AS 1682—1979
Fire dampers
AA 1684—1979
SAA Timber Framing Code
Supps 1 to 22
Am 1. 1981
Am 2, 1981
AS 1691—1985
SAA Domestic Oil-fired Appliances Installation
AS 1694—1974
Physical Barriers used in the Protection of Buildings against Subterranean Termites
AS 1711—1975
Asbestos Cement Pressure Pipes
AS 1720—1975
SAA Timber Engineering Code
Am 1, 1981
AS 1726—1981
SAA Site Investigation Code
AS 1735—
SAA Lift Code
Part 11—1982
—Fire-rated Landing Doors
AS 1736—1975
Code of Practice for Pliable Roof Sarking
AS 1757—1975
Concrete Interlocking Roofing Tiles (Without Weathering Check)
AS 1758—1975
Code of Practice for Fixing of Concrete Interlocking Roofing Tiles (Without Weathering Check)
AS 1759—1975
Concrete Interlocking Roofing Tiles (With Weathering Check)
AS 1760—1975
Code of Practice for Fixing of Concrete Interlocking Roofing Tiles (With Weathering Check)
AS 1769—1975
Welded Stainless Steel—Tubes for Plumbing Applications
AS 1835—1983
Seamless Steel-Tubes for Pressure Purposes
AS 1836—1983
Welded Steel Tubes for Pressure Purposes
AS 1841—1985
Portable Fire Extinguishers—Water (Gas Container) Type
AS 1842—1985
Portable Fire Extinguishers—Water (Stored Pressure) Type
AS 1844—1985
Portable Fire Extinguishers—Foam (Gas Container) Type
AS 1845—1985
Portable Fire Extinguishers—Foam (Stored Pressure) Type
AS 1846—1985
Portable Fire Extinguishers—Powder Type
AS 1847—1985
Portable Fire Extinguishers—Carbon Dioxide Type
AS 1848—1985
Portable Fire Extinguishers—Halon Type
AS 1851—
Maintenance of Fire Protection Equipment
Part 1—1985
Am 1 and 2
Part 2—1981
—Fire Hose Reels
Part 3—1985
—Automatic Fire Sprinkler Systems
AS 1859—1980
Flat Pressed Particleboard
AS 1903—1976
Reflective Foil Laminate
Corrig. Am 1. 1979
AS 1904—1976
Installation of Reflective Foil Laminate in Buildings
Corrig. Am 1. 1979
AS 1905—
SAA Fire Door Code
Part 1—1984
—Fire Resistant Doorsets
Am 1 and 2
Part 2—1984
—Fire Resistant Roller Shutters
AS 2049—1977
Terra Cotta Roofing Ties
AS 2050—1977
Code of Practice for Fixing of Terra Cotta Roofing Tiles
AS 2057—1981
Soil Treatment for Protection of Buildings against Subterranean Termites
AS 2118—1982
Rules for Automatic Fire Sprinkler Systems
Am 1 and 2
AS 2159—1978
SAA Piling Code
AS 2185—1973
Fibrous Plaster Products
AS 2220—1978
Rules for Emergency Warning and Intercommunication Systems for Buildings
INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED PERSONS’ SERVICES BILL (No. 2)

This Bill was returned from the Council with a message relating to amendments.

It was ordered that the message be taken into consideration next day.
MENTAL HEALTH BILL (No. 2)
This Bill was returned from the Council with a message relating to amendments. It was ordered that the message be taken into consideration next day.

RACING (AMENDMENT) BILL (No. 2)
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.

SOUTHGATE PROJECT BILL
This Bill was received from the Council and, on the motion of Mr WILKES (Minister for Housing), was read a first time.

SUPREME COURT (RULES OF PROCEDURE) BILL
This Bill was received from the Council and, on the motion of Mr MATHEWS (Minister for the Arts), was read a first time.

APPROPRIATION MESSAGES
The SPEAKER announced that he had received messages from His Excellency the Governor recommending that appropriations be made from the Consolidated Fund for the purposes of the following Bills:
- State Electricity Commission (Amendment) Bill
- Road Construction Authority (Lands) Bill
- Lotteries Gaming and Betting (Amusement Machines) Bill

CHILDREN'S COURT (AMENDMENT) BILL
Mr MATHEWS (Minister for the Arts)—I move:
That this Bill be now read a second time.

Its purpose is to restructure Children's Courts to ensure that they are more responsive to the needs of children. To a large extent the Bill has been influenced by the recommendations of the Carney report. It should, however, be seen both in light of the major focus on laws relating to child welfare and the significant changes which have been taking place within the court system which make it more responsive to community needs.

In order to place the provisions of the Bill in perspective, I shall first of all deal with the principal thrust of the Carney committee recommendations and then outline the major provisions of the Bill.

THE CARNEY REPORT
In December 1982 the Government commissioned a major review of child welfare practice and legislation by a four-person committee chaired by Dr Terry Carney. This review was established to honour the Government's pre-election promise to "review and reform Victorian legislation on child welfare and children's rights". The report was delivered in 1985 and presented a comprehensive analysis of the issues. The principal thrust of the recommendation relating to the Attorney-General's portfolio was to ensure that there was a single expert court to deal with all matters related to children, that it be divided into distinct components to deal with both criminal and non-criminal matters and that these components be kept separate.
The Bill implements the major thrust of these recommendations, which will be outlined in turn.

DIVISIONS OF THE COURT

The Bill establishes two separate divisions in the Children's Court: a Family Division and a Criminal Division. This step recognizes the force of the view in the Carney report, which at page 238 states:

Adjudication in offender matters is based on a philosophy focusing on the individual responsibility of the young offender whereas in protection matters responsibility for the acts or omissions by adults should not be attributed to the child.

The jurisdiction is set out in section 14 of the Act. In both family and criminal matters the many substantive, procedural and dispositional differences require that the cases be treated separately.

The Bill accommodates these differences and requires that, except for special circumstances affecting a particular child, both divisions must not sit at the same time in the same court. This is to protect children in the Family Division from the potentially disturbing influences which may arise out of criminal proceedings.

Certain basic principles of operation are set out for each division. They are based on drawing on those in the Carney report. In the Family Division emphasis is placed on the need to protect the family and cultural connections of the child, and to ensure that the welfare and interests of the child are the paramount consideration. In both divisions the principles require the court, as far as possible, both to ensure that a child understands the proceedings and to take into account any wishes expressed by the child.

PRELIMINARY CONFERENCE

The Bill gives the court power to order a preliminary conference in all matters coming before the Family Division. The object of such a conference is to provide an informal forum at which the parties may discuss matters in dispute and where possible reach agreement. It is consistent with developments in many other jurisdictions. If the parties reach agreement they will be at liberty to seek an order from the court implementing that agreement: provided the court considers it is in the best interests of the child. If there is no agreement, the matter will proceed.

Preliminary conferences will be conducted either by clerks of court or by specially appointed court counsellors, who will have particular skills in the area of child welfare.

COURT LIAISON OFFICE

The Court Liaison Office is established by the Bill. The primary functions of the office are to co-ordinate throughout all Children's Courts the convening of preliminary conferences and the provision of reports on the outcome of any conference, as well as the provision of any other relevant reports, such as a pre-sentence report.

The office also has valuable broader functions related to the dissemination of information regarding the operation of Children's Courts. It will be particularly valuable in ensuring the consistency of approach to the tasks outlined and in providing a central source of information.

OPEN COURT

At present Children's Courts are not open to the public. This has led to criticism that it conflicts with fundamental principles of justice which dictate that justice is best served by a public hearing before an impartial tribunal. It is also recognized, however, that sometimes it is in the best interests of an individual for confidentiality to be preserved.

The Bill reconciles these two approaches by providing a basic principle that a court hearing should be conducted in public, but giving an extensive discretion for the magistrate to exclude individuals, groups or the entire public from a hearing.
The restriction upon publishing identifying information regarding a Children's Court hearing remains.

The Bill also strengthens the power of Children's Courts to deal with contempts of court and ensures that only a fully qualified magistrate may constitute the court.

It therefore represents a significant development in both the child welfare and the court systems. It adopts and develops a number of the Carney report recommendations, and will result in a Children's Court more responsive to the needs of children. 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 Thursday, May 8.

CRIMES (AMENDMENT) BILL (No. 2)

Mr MATHEWS (Minister for the Arts)—I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this Bill is twofold:

(a) to give accused persons who are legally represented the right to give unsworn evidence but to remove from them the right to make an unsworn statement; and

(b) to give courts a discretion in the sentencing of persons convicted of murder and other offences for which a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment must now be imposed.

This Bill is designed substantially to implement the recommendations of the Law Reform Commission of Victoria in its first two reports, report No. 1, "The Sentence for Murder", and report No. 2, "Unsworn Statements in Criminal Trials". They have been the subject of extensive consultation and have received general approval.

Although the subjects are connected, they are best dealt with separately. I shall first of all deal with the provisions regarding unsworn statements and then with those relating to sentence for murder and other offences.

UNSWORN STATEMENTS

Currently the making of an unsworn statement of facts in a criminal trial is governed by section 25 of the Evidence Act 1958. It is a right exercisable in all trials whether for summary or indictable offences. Section 25 provides that a defendant may make an unsworn statement "in lieu or in addition to" any sworn evidence. In practice, however, these are treated as alternative options. It can be—as is commonly used—read from a prepared document.

By section 399 of the Crimes Act 1958 a defendant is a competent but not compellable witness in his or her own defence. Section 399 (3) provides that the failure of a defendant to give sworn evidence is not to be made the subject of comment by either the prosecution or, unless the defendant makes an unsworn statement, by the judge.

Where the accused chooses to make an unsworn statement, the judge may not direct the jury that the statement is of no probative value, nor that it represents a lesser type of evidence. The weight to be attached to the statement is solely a matter for the jury. The judge may, however, point out to the jury that the maker of this statement is not subject to cross-examination and that exposure to such examination is a useful means of determining accuracy.

In September 1985 the Law Reform Commission released its report No. 2 which reviewed the use of unsworn statements in criminal trials. After extensive consultation and research it recomended that:
(a) where an accused person is represented, the right to make an unsworn statement should be replaced by a right to give unsworn evidence—the procedures to be adopted were set out; and

(b) an unrepresented accused person should retain the existing right to make an unsworn statement.

The Government accepts these recommendations. It considers that the major issue concerning unsworn statements is the need to balance the protection of an accused person in circumstances where it would be unfair to force that person to give evidence on oath, against the need to ensure that the accused does not present prejudicial and inadmissible material to the jury.

Total abolition of the right to make an unsworn statement would be unfair because it may force an accused person to give sworn evidence. This would be contrary to the fundamental principle in criminal law of the right to silence. The proposal strikes the necessary balance between the needs of the accused and the community in the proper conduct of criminal trials.

The scheme adopted is principally the following:

1. The right of an unrepresented defendant to make an unsworn statement of facts as presently permitted by section 25 of the Evidence Act 1958 and section 418 of the Crimes Act 1958 is retained.

2. (a) the right of a represented defendant to make an unsworn statement in a criminal trial in any court is replaced by a right to give unsworn evidence not subject to cross-examination;

(b) such unsworn evidence is to be elicited by defence counsel putting questions to the defendant and the defendant responding;

(c) before such unsworn evidence is given, defence counsel must notify the judge of the intention to do so, and the judge must inform the jury of the choices open to a defendant and of the implications of these choices.

3. Where an unsworn statement is made or unsworn evidence given by the accused:

(a) he or she is subject to the law of perjury in making such statement or giving such evidence;

(b) if in a jury trial he or she asserts his or her own good character or puts forward a defence making imputations against the character of the prosecutor or the witnesses for the prosecution, other than the accused’s spouse or former spouse, the court has the discretion to permit evidence of prior convictions, other criminal conduct or bad character of the accused to be called.

4. Where an unsworn statement has been made or unsworn evidence has been given, the judge at the end of the trial must remind the jury of the defendant’s choices and their implications including his or her liability to be prosecuted for perjury.

THE SENTENCE FOR MURDER

Until 1975 Victorian law prescribed death as punishment for murder. Since that time the penalty for murder has been a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment. The first such sentence was imposed on 2 June 1975, and since then 113 persons have received that sentence. One has been released.

The mandatory life sentence has been the subject of sustained criticism in Australia and elsewhere, because of its absolute nature and its indeterminacy.

Effectively a life sentence means incarceration for an indeterminate period. The Adult Parole Board reviews progress of life prisoners periodically and may recommend release. Estimates of the length of time such people are likely to serve in prison are difficult to
make, although a reasonable indication may be obtained by reference to the time that people who have had death sentences commuted spend in custody. These figures indicate that sentences served by such people ranged from a minimum of thirteen months to a maximum of 27 years and 4 months; the average being between fourteen and fifteen years.

In September 1985 the Law Reform Commission released its Report No. 1 which reviewed the law concerning the sentence for murder. Its major recommendations were:

(a) maximum penalty for murder should remain as life imprisonment but judges should have a discretion to set a fixed term of imprisonment in appropriate cases;

(b) judges should be empowered to set a non-parole period as part of the sentence;

(c) a mechanism should be provided to deal with an existing prisoner's sentence to life imprisonment.

These recommendations were formulated after extensive consultation and are in keeping with similar recommendations made by law reform bodies in England and New Zealand and with changes to the law made in South Australia in 1981 and in New South Wales in 1982.

The Government accepts these recommendations and Part 3 of the Bill implements them. Its principal features are that:

1. Section 3 of the Crimes Act 1958 is amended to provide that a person convicted of murder, is liable to imprisonment for a maximum period of the term of his or her natural life.

2. The judge imposing a sentence for murder, whether a term of years or a life sentence, may at the same time fix a non-parole period, in accordance with the provisions for parole—that is, minimum terms—governing the sentencing of other offenders.

3. When a person has been sentenced to life imprisonment with a non-parole period, the Adult Parole Board when ordering the release of that person on parole is required to set a period of not less than five years during which the person must be under the active supervision of the parole board.

4. A single judge of the Supreme Court may set a non-parole period for each person currently serving a life sentence for murder, upon a report from the parole board, the Director-General of Corrections, and any other relevant person or body. The decision is reviewable by the Full Court.

Both measures represent a significant step forward in the criminal law of this State. They reflect an appropriate balance between the rights of accused and convicted persons and the rights and needs of the community. They may be viewed as part of the Government's over-all strategy to improve criminal justice and reflect its responsiveness to the need for change and a more humane trial and correctional system. 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 Thursday, May 8.

TAXATION (INTEREST ON OVERPAYMENTS) BILL

The debate (adjourned from April 10) on the motion of Mr Jolly (Treasurer) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

Mr STOCKDALE (Brighton)—The Bill was described by the Treasurer in his second-reading speech in these terms:

The Bill will enable the Government to give fair treatment to taxpayers who have overpaid tax.
If the Bill went as far as that, the Liberal Party would embrace it enthusiastically. The Opposition’s support for the Bill is a little less enthusiastic because the Bill is only a small step in that direction. However, as it tends towards creating greater equity in the tax system and as it is fair to taxpayers by giving them back some interest on the money that the relevant tax authority has had, the Opposition supports the Bill.

It seeks to rectify what has been a clear anomaly. Increasingly taxation laws both at Federal and State levels, particularly in Victoria, have provided for heavy fines, penalty interest and other rather draconian measures to be imposed in some cases on taxpayers who have had to pay tax as assessed by the tax authority.

It follows that from time to time the tax authorities have subsequently been proven to be wrong in their assessment of tax or even in their view of whether a particular tax is payable. Where that happens by way of decision, for example, of a relevant tribunal or by a court, a refund is due to the taxpayer, and in those circumstances it is only appropriate that the taxpayer should be protected from the cost that is occasioned by his having paid the tax and in some cases having waited many months or even years to obtain what was rightfully his all along—either a full or part refund of the amount originally paid allegedly due as tax but subsequently held not to be due.

That goes to the nub of the matter. The Bill deals with the refund to the taxpayer of his money that has been taken from him by force of law, in many cases by draconian penalty provisions when in fact he did not owe that money. The Bill provides that when such a refund is made it shall attract interest during the period that the taxation authority has had the use of the taxpayer’s money. It would usually operate from the time the tax was paid to the relevant authority, or in other circumstances as detailed in clause 7, from another date.

The essence of the matter is that it is a refund to the taxpayer of his own money due to him and, therefore, interest is payable upon it. An interest rate is detailed in clause 7 as being one specified from time to time by the Governor in Council and published in the Government Gazette. Sub-clause (3) provides that until an order is made by the Governor in Council the interest rate payable shall be calculated at the rate of 13.796 per cent per annum.

In his second-reading speech, the Treasurer defined the concept underlying that rate “as the average yield to maturity of the longest term Commonwealth bond sold in the most recent bond tender”. He stated that the Bill established a mechanism, to which I have just referred, to allow an adjustment to be made from time to time, and that it is proposed that future adjustments should be made on the same criterion as that used in the fixation of the original rate, that is, the longest term Commonwealth bond rate in the most recent bond tender.

Of course, that reflects generally the pattern of the relevant Commonwealth legislation, the Taxation (Interest on Overpayments) Act 1983, which approached this matter in similar terms. However, it does involve some anomalies, which is why the Opposition says the Bill goes only part of the way towards rectifying the injustice of a taxpayer who has been forced to pay tax when that tax was not due.

The first and most obvious is the discrepancy between the usual penalty rate payable by the taxpayer and the amount the taxpayer is repaid in the event of the repayment of tax. Usually, the penalty tax is a minimum of 20 per cent.

I say “a minimum of 20 per cent” because honourable members would recall in the last session the Government proposed—and to some extent passed—amendments which introduced draconian measures to compel taxpayers to pay amounts of tax that were in dispute. The taxpayer now faces at least a 20 per cent interest rate and in some cases the provisions in the Stamps Act, for example, enable a penalty to be imposed on late payments involving even disputed items of up to three times the relevant tax rate, in addition to penalty interest.
On the one hand, there is a charge of 20 per cent on amounts deemed outstanding and, on the other hand, on refund an interest rate of only 13.796 per cent, or the Commonwealth bond rate.

A case can be made out for that distinction on grounds of principle. The purpose of the penalty rate is to force the taxpayer to pay the disputed amount. Where an amount is to be appropriately levied on an individual, a view might be taken that that person ought to be faced with a penalty which more than equals the amount of interest he would earn by keeping the sum within his own resources. I shall later refer honourable members to the impact of tax on those arrangements.

If an individual retained the amount of tax due, although he might earn interest of 14 or 15 per cent in the current market, he would still be paying tax on it. Therefore, the 20 per cent is a substantial impost on him. From practical experience, in disputes with Federal Government departments, subsequently resolved in my favour, when faced with the 20 per cent income tax penalty interest rate one has no choice but to pay the disputed amount, even if one is reasonably certain the payment will ultimately be refunded.

Mr Perrin—It is not even a tax deduction!

Mr STOCKDALE—I shall return to the point raised by the honourable member for Bulleen. That situation is extremely unfair. The taxpayer often must borrow to meet the cost of the interest. Where taxpayers are subsequently successful in contesting the levy of tax, in most cases they would not have made provision in the normal course of their affairs for taxes which they regard as being not applicable to them. There is a strong possibility, even a probability, that the taxpayer will often be forced to borrow and in most circumstances he will not be able to take advantage of the long-term Commonwealth bond tender rate. He will be faced with borrowing under overdraft provisions on normal commercial rates. On today's market, compared with the 14 per cent for the Commonwealth long-term rate when the Bill was drafted, he would be facing 18, 19 or 20 per cent or more on the overdraft rate applicable at that time. Those rates have decreased since then but the rate paid by a taxpayer borrowing will still be a significant margin above the Commonwealth bond rate. However, if he is successful in contesting that case, and is held not liable to the tax, he has still incurred the interest cost and, therefore, faces a higher interest rate than that provided in the Bill.

As the honourable member for Bulleen interjected earlier, not only will he face a higher interest rate but also, when he borrows, the interest he pays on the borrowing will usually not be tax deductible. It is not a deductible expense incurred in earning one's income. On some occasions, particularly with State taxes, where duty or tax may attach to a transaction in the nature of a trading operation, for example, the sale of shares in a trading context, or where it is a revenue expense of some other revenue transaction, the State duty may be deductible but in many cases it is not deductible.

The person concerned faces relatively high interest rates, but further, the tax laws operate against him so that when he pays interest he will, in many cases, not be allowed a deduction for it; but when he receives the interest payable to him on the money held by the taxing authority, that interest will attract income tax. That has led to a proposition that the Opposition does not endorse, but one that has been advanced by the Australian Taxpayers Association as being worthy of consideration. I have undertaken to put it to the Treasurer and to invite him to consult with the association in relation to it. That proposition hinges upon the unequal application of the tax laws.

The proposition is this: that the amount of any payment in the nature of interest ought to be deducted from other duty or tax payable by the taxpayer, rather than being paid to him as interest. Rather than coming to him as income in his hands, it would be used to defray any other outstanding item of tax due from him to the relevant authority. That would tend to offset the interest disadvantage of persons who in many cases would not be allowed a deduction in respect of interest paid for income tax purposes but who would be liable for income tax on the interest received. I raise that with the Treasurer on behalf of
the Australian Taxpayers Association and Mr Risstrom, and invite the Treasurer to consult with the association.

Anomalies do exist. The Opposition is particularly concerned about the anomaly facing a taxpayer who must borrow to pay tax that is subsequently held to be not due. Of the three elements I have raised, that one requires further examination.

It has also been suggested that the Treasurer should examine the possibility of relating the interest on any refunded tax not to the long-term Commonwealth bond rate, but to the appropriate overdraft rate, whether below or above $100,000, chargeable, say, by the Commonwealth Bank or the State Bank on private loans. That would more accurately reflect the opportunity cost to the taxpayer on the money held by the relevant tax authority.

That brings me to the cost of the measure. I have consulted with the Treasurer on the matter, and I accept what he puts: that it is extremely difficult to estimate accurately the cost of the measure. When pressed he ultimately drew attention to the ebbs and flows and the uneven distribution through the years of the refunding of these sorts of overpayments, but he estimated that it would be of the order of $1 million per annum over a period.

The Bill does not propose an inordinate impost on the State revenue; especially is that so when one has regard to the quality of the payments involved. All it does is redress an imbalance in the legislation as between the taxpayer faced with an overpayment of tax and the taxpayer faced with a refund, particularly in view of the fact that a strong case can be made for the argument that it is in reality the taxpayer's money.

The Opposition supports the measure, which takes a significant step towards fairer treatment of taxpayers who have overpaid tax. The Opposition is therefore happy to support the measure.

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley)—The Bill is interesting. I often become cynical about the operation of Governments, particularly in their arrangements with private enterprise. I applaud the recognition by the Government that occasionally individuals make payments to the Government that are not due.

Here honourable members see a situation where the Government is apparently to pay interest on overpayments that are made by way of taxation. I listened with interest to the honourable member for Brighton who went into detail on the measure and put various propositions to the Treasurer. I shall not do that but shall attempt to speak to the Bill in simpler terms.

The National Party wants to know how the Bill will affect contractors and taxpayers in respect of overpayments to the Government. Like many other honourable members, I regularly receive complaints that the Government is slow in paying; it has a bad record in payments to contractors. People in private enterprise who operated as the Government does would go broke; and one sees that happening in respect of Government enterprises. Many Ministers of the Crown in this Government would go broke in private enterprise. Most of them are academics who have had no experience in private enterprise, and they are trying to run this State. One example is the Treasurer, for whom I have the highest regard. He is an economic theorist, who has not really had the opportunity of going into the practical world and operating a business effectively and profitably. One sees a classic example in what is happening to Victoria's rail services.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fogarty)—Order! We are dealing with a taxation Bill, not the railway services.

Mr JASPER—I concede precisely what you are saying, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I understand your point. Nevertheless, the Bill recognizes that the Government sometimes does things wrongly and inadvertently overcharges people. The Government is saying that it is now prepared to pay interest on those overpayments.

I shall allude to various aspects where people are so affected by Governments and where it will be necessary for interest to be paid, and I am highlighting the fact that many of the
people within Government circles—Ministers and people in Government departments—do not have much understanding of what goes on in the practical world of business; people who do not understand that those who have overpaid the Government must pay interest at overdraft rates on the money that has inadvertently been overpaid. The overpayments should be returned quickly and with interest.

I mentioned particularly that the inefficiencies of the Government are highlighted in the rail service. I have the greatest respect for the former Minister of Transport, but he put into effect changes to the transport system that are now——

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fogarty)—Order! The honourable member is off the rails, and I ask him to return to the Bill.

Mr JASPER—When one sees what is happening with the Victorian transport system, one recognizes the need for this type of legislation. The point I am making is that our transport system has the highest loss ever incurred by the Victorian transport system, and nothing is being done about it.

Problems are experienced not only as a result of the Government claiming money wrongfully on many occasions but also by contractors who undertake legitimate work for a Government agency and then have to go through a rigmarole to obtain payment.

If the Government had considered that matter the proposed legislation would not contain so many potential problems. Every member of Parliament will have experienced the same situation as I have experienced in the electorate I represent of contractors, who have provided services and goods to the Government, not being paid.

Mr Jolly interjected.

Mr JASPER—This matter has much to do with the Bill as it is related to what the Government should be doing. The contractors were owed money to August last year. By making representations to the Ministry of Housing I was able to extract payments totalling $22 000 owed to a particular contractor in August 1985.

The core subject of the debate is whether the Government is paying its accounts properly and whether it is imposing charges that should not be imposed. The National Party understands the needs of the Government, but it is not sympathetic to what the Government is doing in running its businesses. The second-reading speech highlights the lack of understanding of the Government. All the Government is doing is making provision for interest to be paid on overpayments that have been made by an organization or an individual to the Government, but there is no provision for repayment of the actual overpayment that has been made.

The Government talks about interest rates payable on amounts owed, but what about providing that right to a person who remains unpaid after having undertaken business with the Government? It is typical of the attitude the Government has in claiming all the taxes it can and charging the highest possible rates of interest, yet people who do not pay Government charges by the due date are charged interest at the rate of 20 per cent.

The proposed legislation provides that the interest rate payable on overpayments by a particular individual or organization will be calculated at 13.796 per cent. It is absolutely ridiculous that, on the one hand, the Government charges 20 per cent interest on overdue accounts, but will pay only 13.796 per cent interest on overpayments. It is an anomaly. The Government should speak with people in business and ask them what happens if they do not pay their accounts to the Government by the due date. If they do not pay by the date, such as within fourteen days, they are charged interest at the rate of 20 per cent. However, the Government does not do much about paying back the money due to other people who have made overpayments.

There is no doubt the Bill is a step in the right direction. However, if the Government can pay 13.796 per cent interest on overpaid amounts, surely it can pay 20 per cent interest!
Clause 9 is interesting. It indicates that if the amount of interest is less than 50 cents, it will not be paid. I should like a response from the Treasurer explaining why that provision has been included in the Bill. In highlighting this problem I direct the attention of the Treasurer to the need for payment of just debts that the Government has incurred. I shall provide two classic examples that fall within the ambit of the Bill. The Treasurer will be aware that in many cases no provision is made in legislation for overpayments made to the Government. In many cases people must rely on the generosity of the Treasurer to make an *ex-gratia* payment. The first example—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fogarty)—Order! I hope it will be related to the Bill.

Mr JASPER—Absolutely, because it relates to interest that should be paid by the Government on overpayments. The first case concerns an inter-family transfer of land. All the relevant papers were signed by both parties and the solicitor handling the transfer left the papers at his office when he left for Melbourne. The transfer was subject to approval of finance from the Rural Finance Commission. Due to the efficiency of the solicitor's office, the papers were sent to Melbourne and the transfer fee of $5250 was paid. However, the Rural Finance Commission subsequently did not approve the finance for the deal to proceed and, therefore, it fell through. The solicitor contacted the State Taxation Office indicating that $5250 had been inadvertently paid. The State Taxation Office indicated that it had no objection to repaying the money.

I have made strong representations to the Treasurer and the Department of Management and Budget to ensure that the money is paid. The verbal response of the department to me was that, technically, there is no provision for the Treasurer to repay that money. The transaction has been completed and consummated, the money has been paid to the State Taxation Office and no refund is available.

However, it was indicated that if special representations were made to the Treasurer an *ex gratia* payment may be made. I hope that when the money is refunded, interest will be paid on the amount!

It is not taxation, but money that could have been claimed by the Government but paid by the solicitor before it was due to be paid. I ask the Treasurer to provide a response on whether interest will be paid on that amount!

The second example I shall highlight relates to clause 6 (4) which operates when an overpayment is made where a relevant commissioner has applied an amount to be paid to him by one person against the liability of another person to pay an amount of relevant tax. In 1979 a firm called Bruni and Bisogni (B.T.F.) Homes and Joinery Pty Ltd went into receivership. The people concerned operated a large construction firm at Cobram. Parts of the business were sold off. One of the sections of the business was Northern Victoria Builders Suppliers Pty Ltd, which was bought by one of the employees. One of the former partners was also involved in the transaction.

Inadvertently from that time until the end of the last financial year the firm of Northern Victoria Builders Suppliers Pty Ltd under new owners continued to pay pay-roll tax believing that it would incur pay-roll tax, but the level of salaries being paid by the business would have exempted it from the payment of pay-roll tax. I was approached by one of the principals of the company to take up the matter with the Commissioner of Pay-roll Tax, which I did. I applaud Commissioner Sebo for his response, investigation of the situation and assistance in trying to clarify a difficult situation.

The commissioner told me in a detailed letter that an amount of $13,000 had been paid in pay-roll tax and that approximately that amount was owed by Bruni and Bisogni Pty Ltd, which went into receivership. The office is holding the pay-roll tax paid by the new firm in lieu of the debts that are owed to the Government. He said that the moneys will not be released because of the debt owed by the company that went into liquidation. The commissioner further stated that the office would wait to see what payment was made in
the final wash-up by the receiver and that it probably would not receive the full 100 cents in the $1.

Northern Victoria Builders Suppliers Pty Ltd—the new firm—has been paying pay-roll tax from 1979 until 30 June 1985 and that money is being held against a debt of another company that has gone into liquidation. The commissioner says that the amount will not be repaid to the company. He further said that, even if it were established that the money could be paid to the company, he would be looking only at repayment for the previous twelve months.

The company is in a difficult situation. It is being held to ransom for the deeds of another firm that has gone into liquidation. The new company had little to do with the original firm except that it bought one of its subsidiaries. Even if the firm can establish its bona fides, repayment, as I said, will be made only for the previous twelve months.

I ask the Treasurer to examine the situation because not only does he need to examine interest on overpayments that are made by businesses, industry and individuals to the Government, but also he needs to examine payments that are inadvertently made to the Government and provision must be made for those overpayments.

I have raised two specific examples for the attention of the Treasurer and I hope he will respond and point out that by introducing the Bill action will be taken to repay money that on many occasions is inadvertently paid to the Government.

The National Party supports the Bill and I trust the Treasurer will provide a positive response to the genuine concerns that have been expressed.

Mr PERRIN (Bulleen)—The Bill is a measure which can be loosely described as long overdue. It is obvious that, for the various organizations that overpay tax to the Government, a need exists for consolidated revenue and taxation authorities to pay interest on those overpayments.

As I have had a longstanding career in the accounting profession, I am conscious of the fact that interest on overpayments of taxation and on payments that are in dispute in the Commonwealth sphere are subject to interest from the Commonwealth taxation authorities, especially in the area of Commonwealth income tax.

It is rather interesting to me as a practitioner in the taxation field and, as a registered tax agent, that in 1986 the House is debating a Bill which at long last proposes to make payments of interest to businesses in the Victorian community that have may tax overpayments. When one examines what has happened in the Commonwealth sphere, one would have thought that this type of legislation would have been passed by the Victorian Parliament in the past. Nevertheless, be that as it may, the House is now debating such a Bill.

The honourable members for Brighton and Murray Valley have made it clear that the opposition parties support the Bill, although there are some areas where the Bill could have gone further. A Bill such as this should have been introduced many years ago.

When one examines the areas covered by the Bill and especially those involving interest payments—including business franchise fees, the energy consumption levy, financial institutions duty, land tax, pay-roll tax and stamp duty—one realizes that they form a composite body of the types of taxes most placed on the business community.

I am conscious of the enormous burden that the taxes place on the business community. I am also conscious of the fact that some people in the business community, on many occasions, pay their taxes before they are due. This places an enormous burden on businesses. At present businesses face an environment with high interest rates and the interest on moneys borrowed in the form of overdrafts is at a record level of approximately 20 per cent.
Many firms have to borrow money to pay their taxes and any businesses that overpay taxation have to pay those types of interest rates on the funds borrowed. Many businesses pay their taxes grudgingly because of the additional costs and burdens that taxes place on them.

As the honourable member for Brighton said, when penalties are applied for non-payment of tax, it is not an income tax deduction for the business concerned. When one examines the areas covered by the Bill, one realizes that a number of businesses will benefit from the payment of interest.

I refer to what I call the community perception of taxation. I refer to the *Australian Accountant* of March 1986 which contained an interesting survey about the attitudes and opinions on taxation, tax avoidance and tax evasion. The first survey questions asked: "What do you think about the level of income taxes in this country?" Some 86 per cent of the people surveyed—there were 750 in New South Wales—said it is either a little too high or much too high. Therefore, the community perception is that taxation levels are far too high.

A further question asked was, "What number of people are cheating now compared with five years ago?" Some 69 per cent of those surveyed considered that either a lot more or slightly more were cheating compared with five years ago. The community perception is that cheating of the taxation system is getting worse as time goes on.

In response to the question about the greatest causes of dissatisfaction with the present taxation system, 31 per cent considered the burden of taxes was not shared fairly; 27 per cent felt the tax rates were too high; and 14 per cent said the laws were too complex. In conclusion the survey made two points:

The biggest problems that seem to exist with the present income tax system are, first, the burden of taxes is seen not to be shared fairly and, second, the rates of tax are perceived as being too high.

Of the respondents who thought they knew what direction the level of evasion had taken some 69 per cent thought that more people evaded now (ie September 1984) compared with five years ago. Similarly a majority of respondents (72 per cent) thought people were now more prepared to go in for tax avoidance schemes compared with five years ago.

The community generally believes there is more tax evasion and that people are not prepared to pay their fair share of taxes.

Many people are prepared to pay their taxes even though they believe they are overpaying and that the taxation commissioner is wrong. They hope they will be refunded the overpaid taxes at some future stage. Many are prepared to pay their taxes and then make formal complaints about the assessments. Obviously the community perception is wrong.

The pay and protest idea is obvious in the business community. Objections are lodged in good faith in the hope that refunds on the overpaid taxes will be made and that interest will be received on those funds because the various statutory bodies that have requested the funds be paid will realize they are wrong.

Not only should those who have overpaid receive interest on the funds overpaid but also the appeal provisions of the Bill should be sufficiently swift to ensure that any disputes over the payment of taxes are resolved quickly to minimize the amount of overpayment and interest that must be paid. This will ensure equity to those in the business community who have paid the full amount of their assessments in the hope of receiving some funds back at a future time.

I wish to echo the concerns raised by the honourable member for Brighton about information provided in Ministers' second-reading speeches on Bills like this. In his speech the Treasurer did not reveal the cost of the measure to consolidated revenue. The Honourable member for Brighton clearly outlined how he had come across the estimated cost of $1 million a year. That method of obtaining information is totally unsatisfactory. It is incumbent on the Treasurer or any other Minister when introducing such a measure to outline to the House the effect of the proposals on consolidated revenue.
That could have been done in this case and should have been done with any similar Bill. Honourable members should automatically be provided with the estimated cost to consolidated revenue. Members of the Opposition should not have to dig the costs out from other sources or confront the Treasurer in the corridor in an attempt to try to get the figures from him. That should be a matter of principle.

I shall not canvass all the matters covered by the honourable member for Brighton but I point out that although members of the business community receive refunds on overpayments together with interest, the interest on the refunds is taxable. Given that company tax runs at approximately 46 to 49 cents in the $1, the main recipient of the $1 million to which the honourable member for Brighton referred, will be the Commonwealth consolidated revenue. That $1 million will incur a tax payment of 49 per cent, which will go to the Commonwealth Government.

Perhaps at the next Australian Loan Council meeting or when the State Treasurer next meets with the Federal Treasurer they will consider the effect of this measure on Victoria's consolidated revenue and the Victorian Treasurer will seek to recover the approximately $500 000, that will be directed to the Federal consolidated revenue. Victoria's revenue should be protected as much as possible.

The honourable member for Murray Valley referred to the payment of accounts by the Government. The Government appears to have a double standard in that it pays its accounts whenever it feels like it; often payment is made 60, 90 or 120 days after the account is due. Interest is not paid to the contractors who are owed that money. The next Liberal Government will address that double standard. The Opposition already has a private member's Bill before Parliament that will allow for interest to be paid not only on overpaid taxes, which are dealt with in the Bill, but also on late accounts due to be paid by the Government.

I am concerned about the percentages that are set in the Bill. Clause 7 sets a rate of interest of 13·796 per cent. That figure is unwieldy. I cannot understand why the Government did not round off that figure to 13·8 per cent. That would be a lot more workable, especially if one were doing a quick mental calculation.

The Opposition supports the measure. The Bill is belated, as has been stressed by other honourable members, but it provides some type of equity to taxpayers who have paid up and gone through the processes of appealing and objecting to an assessment and who, after lengthy delays, received their money back. The level of interest included in the measure should be higher, given the types of overdrafts necessary to pay the initial debts. However, despite that, the Opposition supports the Bill.

Mr RAMSAY (Balwyn)—I emphasize to the House and the Treasurer the importance of the Bill and the importance of making it fair. In presenting the Bill to the House, the Treasurer indicated that the Government was attempting to give fair treatment to taxpayers. All honourable members would support that, but the Bill as it is presently worded falls short of that commendable objective.

The Bill introduces a sound principle, namely, if a taxpayer has overpaid his tax and a refund is to be made, depending on the time elapsed between the overpayment and refund by the Government, interest should be paid to the taxpayer or the company concerned. However, the Government must consider whether the Bill will achieve that proposition in a satisfactory way.

It is important to recognize that the Bill does not deal with insignificant sums of money; the taxation Bills to be affected by the measure are considerable revenue raisers for the Government. In some cases, the Bill does not affect many taxpayers but involves huge sums of money. For example, persons liable to pay the energy consumption levy are few in number. However, the money raised by that levy is considerable. The Financial Institutions Duty Act, which is to be affected by the measure, affects almost every citizen
in small amounts. However, large organizations that are directly responsible under the legislation—financial institutions themselves—deal in millions of dollars.

The Treasurer has often proudly proclaimed that land tax is being paid by a reduced number of taxpayers due to exemptions that have been introduced. However, thousands of taxpayers pay millions of dollars in land tax. The impact of the Bill on some of those taxpayers may be considerable. Similarly, the Pay-Roll Tax Act and the Stamps Act affect a number of taxpayers to a large degree in terms of the quantum of tax that may be due at a certain time, and the opportunity for significant overpayments that may later be refunded is considerable. The measure affects a significant number of taxpayers and significant amounts of money. This matter must be addressed with care.

The Treasurer referred to the Bill as a reciprocal provision. A person who is late in paying his tax pays penalty tax and may pay interest on the money that was due earlier to cover the delay in payment. The Bill enables interest to be paid to a taxpayer where an overpayment has been made because of a successful appeal. However, honourable members must examine this provision to ascertain whether that is true.

If one considers the rate of interest the Treasurer proposes should be paid on the tax refunds, it is hard to see the Bill as reciprocal in any way. Penalties for late payment often include a high rate of notional interest on the penalty payment. That is to encourage people to pay their tax on time. However, if it is good enough for the Government to collect extra money through a penalty rate of interest on late payments, how can it be regarded as a reciprocal provision if, when making a refund, the rate of interest is significantly lower?

As the Treasurer indicated, the rate of interest is the average yield or maturity of the longest term Commonwealth bond sold in the most recent bond tender. The figure suggested in the Bill is 13.796 per cent. In terms of current interest rates, that can be regarded as only an extremely modest interest return. If one considers the matter on the basis of the rate of interest applicable to the taxpayer and the rate of interest applicable to the fund, any fairness in that equation is extremely difficult to see.

That is brought out in even starker relief when honourable members recognize that in order to pay some taxes when they fall due, some people are often obliged to use an overdraft facility or some other type of borrowing. One can be quite sure that the rate of interest to which such persons would be committed would be considerably higher than the long-term bond rate to which the Treasurer has referred.

Honourable members are considering a situation of equity. The initial rate of interest as determined by the Bill is far from adequate. I urge the Treasurer to give serious consideration to changing that provision when the Bill is between here and another place. I am sure he would find support for such a change in another place, and the Bill could be dealt with later this week.

The question of equity goes even further. I shall refer to the status of interest payments on an individual or a company so far as Federal tax provisions are concerned. If a penalty interest payment has been made by a taxpayer because of failure to pay tax on time, that penalty is not a deductible item. At the other end of the spectrum, if a person receives an interest refund on an overpayment of State tax, that interest refund will be taxable. As in most tax laws, the individual misses out on both ends of the spectrum. The interest on the refund will be taxed.

I stress to the Treasurer that the Opposition supports the measure because it is a move in the direction of fair treatment of taxpayers. However, the Bill does not go far enough. I urge the Treasurer to consider how the Bill could be improved between here and another place and to get the Bill right before it becomes law. The Opposition wants fair treatment for taxpayers; it wants tax evasion ruled out once and for all. However, when a person has overpaid his tax, we should be more generous in the treatment of that overpayment and ensure that the extra costs the individual has incurred as a result of the overpayment,
through no fault of his own, are fully refunded by the Treasurer at the time the refund is made.

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—I thank honourable members for supporting the proposed legislation. The Bill complements the position taken by the Commonwealth Government.

Some honourable members have indicated that, although they do not fully support the Bill, because they want a higher rate of interest to apply, they recognize that it is a step in the right direction. If there is a clear case of overpayment of taxation, the taxpayer will receive interest on that overpayment.

Some honourable members stated that a higher rate of interest should apply rather than the Commonwealth bond rate and a comparison was drawn to the penalty that applies where a taxpayer is late in paying his taxation or stamp duty.

The reason for the 20 per cent penalty is to ensure that taxpayers do not take a financial advantage over their competitors by not paying their taxation on time. Clearly, taxpayers have a range of opportunities in investing in the short-term money market which could yield up to 20 per cent and, for that reason, a harsh penalty has to apply for people who do not pay their taxation on time.

The Commonwealth bond rate that will apply in the Bill will bring Victoria on line with Commonwealth legislation. Only one other State, Western Australia, has followed the Commonwealth example.

I am prepared to examine the interest rate issue further, but I indicate that taxpayers who receive interest payments resulting from an overpayment of taxation will not all be in similar circumstances. The overpayment may have resulted in investment forgone by the individual, or the need to borrow to meet the taxation payment, or a person may have had to take out an overdraft for a limited time, but in all circumstances, I believe, it is appropriate to follow the Commonwealth example of setting the Commonwealth bond rate as the relevant rate to determine the interest for the overpayment of taxation.

Two other issues were raised during the debate; one related to organizations or individuals who received interest payments from taxation authorities being required to pay income tax on the amount received. I shall further examine that matter and am willing to consult with the Taxpayers Association. I am also willing to seek the views of the Federal Treasurer on that issue. The Commonwealth Government is in the position, where there is an overpayment of income tax, of taxing the amount received by way of interest compensation under the proposed legislation, so I shall seek the views of the Federal Treasurer on that matter.

The honourable member for Murray Valley referred to clause 9 where it is indicated that the proposed legislation will apply only where the overpaid amount is 50 cents or more. That clause is included for administrative reasons and there may be a case for the amount to be larger than 50 cents. The honourable member also noted that there are circumstances where mistakes can occur and that under the proposed legislation there is no provision to refund the taxpayer for that overpayment, but rather that an ex gratia payment has to be made. I am willing to investigate the examples that the honourable member for Murray Valley has referred to the House and shall look at the general principle applying in those circumstances.

I thank honourable members for their support of the proposed legislation. All honourable members agree that it is a step towards improving the equity of the taxation system.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time, and passed through its remaining stages.
ALPINE RESORTS (AMENDMENT) BILL

The debate (adjourned from April 10) on the motion of Mr Fordham (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

Mr PESCOTT (Bennettswood)—The Opposition supports the Bill with one qualification that I shall come to later. The first part of the Bill is designed to increase the size of the Falls Creek Alpine Resort by 315 hectares. Increasing the size of the resort will offer the public more facilities for alpine activities. Victorians will have the opportunity of using one of Victoria’s greatest assets, the snowfields.

When working overseas for many years I talked with people who thought Australia was only a dry, arid continent and I surprised some of them when I informed them that Australia’s snowfields cover more than the entire area of Switzerland. Most of Australia’s snowfields are situated in Victoria. Recently a person who knows the Falls Creek area well wrote to me and suggested that there was a good case to extend the Falls Creek area by a greater area than is proposed in the Bill.

The 1983 recommendations of the Land Conservation Council proposed that an area to the south west of Mount McKay should be included in the proposed increase of the Falls Creek Alpine Resort. The reason for including that area cannot be understood clearly by those who have not been skiing on that site. The letter that I have forwarded to the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources stated:

From the peak of Mt McKay the southern slope drops 1200 feet, from 6000 feet to 4800 feet at an average fall of 1 in 2. There is no better expert slope in Australia and it is very important in the tourist sense just to have it there. There are large rocks and the bottom is thickly timbered so negotiating such a unprepared slope is currently hazardous for all but the most expert. Hence it needs preparation and lesser gradients built in which will involve ski trails in the area of addition requested. Being a south facing slope it holds snow beautifully, often being skiable long after the Falls Creek lifts have closed down. This is often its best time, in spring snow.

The writer of the letter obviously knows the area and I ask the Minister to examine whether this additional area could be included in the Bill.

The second aspect of the Bill deals with a mistake in the 1983 amendments to the Town and Country Planning Act, which unintentionally reduced the role of the Alpine Resorts Commission as a planning authority.

The effect of the amendments to the Town and Country Planning Act in 1983 was to create an unnecessary duplication. It made the Minister for Planning and Environment the permit-issuing authority for applications relating to alpine resorts. Therefore, the commission was preparing management plans and the Ministry was administering them. The two functions are now being brought under the same body, the Alpine Resorts Commission.

The third aspect of the Bill relates to another tidying-up provision, but it needs more discussion. It deals with the dual actions of the cancellation of a lease of land in an alpine resort and the requirement to remove buildings and improvements therefrom. Where land is needed by the Alpine Resorts Commission to improve a resort, a lease may be cancelled subject to an appeal to the Minister. If that were to happen, it would obviously be a very serious thing.

The Opposition accepts the Minister’s statement in his second-reading speech that the separate rights of appeal under the current Act arise from what is basically the same set of circumstances and that is likely to be cumbersome and expensive to administer and could lead to inconsistent appeal decisions.
However, we have reached a time of uncertainty in the alpine resorts industry and we are not sure what the future might be. In other words, we are not sure whether circumstances will arise more often in future years where the Alpine Resorts Commission might wish to remove buildings from leasehold land in the name of improving a resort.

As the Minister knows, the land available for development on the mountain tops is limited, and we have yet to see how the Alpine Resorts Commission will act when it gets into gear. Thus far, the commission has been in its infancy. It has been learning to walk and gathering experience in areas under its control.

What happens when the commission can walk easily and wishes to start to run? What if, in later years, the commission were to become too dictatorial about alpine resorts and the way they should be run? This could happen because of either an over-assertive commission or the advent of weak management committees. If that were to occur, there would be one simple appeal to the Minister, after this amendment, and not a two-stage defence: firstly, on whether the buildings and improvements should be removed; and, secondly, on the cancellation of the lease. One event could be exclusive of the other.

If the leaseholder were to remove the buildings and redevelop the land himself, the Minister, as the last bastion of appeal, is likely to have views influenced by the commission under his responsibility.

At present, for example, the skiing industry is in turmoil over the massive hikes on site valuations in the Victorian alps and is worried that it may not be able to afford site rentals.

The SPEAKER—Order! I should advise the honourable member that it is not my intention to restrict his remarks, except to the Bill that is before the House. It has long been a practice, which makes for good debate, to try to confine the debate to the Bill without extending it too far.

If the honourable member wishes to go into site valuations and other matters that may be generally related to the principal Act, I believe him to be out of order. I suggest that he makes a passing reference to that matter and confines his remarks to the subject-matter before the House.

Mr PESCOTT—Mr Speaker, naturally, I agree with the comments you have made. I shall make only a passing reference to this area. However, it is relevant to the Bill because, as I was about to say, the proposed site increases will mean that the owners of the buildings in question are likely to allow their buildings to fall into a state of deterioration because they will not be able to afford to look after them in the way in which they have looked after them in the past.

If the buildings at the alpine resorts are not properly maintained, the Alpine Resorts Commission is likely to step in and say, “This means that we want to develop the area, because the area that was in good condition is no longer in good condition. Therefore, it must be redeveloped”. If the increases in site values proposed—in some instances of more than 2000 per cent—are proceeded with, it will be relevant to the Bill, Mr Speaker, because those areas in alpine resorts that are now well maintained may not be well maintained in future because the owners will not be able to afford to do so.

The SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member has made his point.

Mr PESCOTT—Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am also making the point that Victoria has not had a long history of administration of the snowfields under the Alpine Resorts Commission. Therefore, the skiing industry and Victorians in general are uncertain about the future. They know, for example, that the Apline Resorts Advisory Council, which was promised when the original 1983 legislation was introduced, has not been formed. The Government has not kept its commitment in this area. Why, then, can it be expected to give the public a fair hearing on appeals?

One of the main aims of the commission was to make the snowfields more widely accessible to the community at large. However, the Government’s projected increase in
charges, which is way above the consumer price index pegged rate that was promised at the last election, will lead to the contrary occurring.

Skiing is likely to become more expensive under this Government. In fact, it will become so expensive that properties will not be maintained, or at least their owners will find it very difficult to maintain them in the way they have done in the past. The amendment contained in this Bill relating to appeals is likely to come into use more often.

Information that I have received today indicates that the Government wishes to force private clubs and flats to open their doors to the public. Perhaps the Government does not know that these clubs are already open to the public to a great extent and that they provide the cheapest form of skiing possible. The reason why people club together is to contain costs.

The draft lease that is being circulated by the Alpine Resorts Commission for comment—and honourable members are talking about the possibility, through this Bill, of these leases being revoked—represents one of the more outrageous propositions that has been made in this State. If enforced, the draft lease will send people from the mountains and will result in the greatest exodus that has occurred since Moses led the people of Israel through the Red Sea and away from Egypt. That was an epic occasion, when the Red Sea divided and Moses took the people through the sea.

The SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member is quite obviously entertaining the House with his analogies about what Moses did. However, the Bill before the House is quite specific, as the honourable member said in his opening remarks, and I insist that he confine himself to the Bill.

I know a number of other honourable members are desirous of speaking on this matter. If I allow the honourable member to go as far away as the Mediterranean, I shall have difficulty in containing the comments of other honourable members to Victoria.

Mr PESCOTT—I admit the Red Sea is a long way from Victorian alpine resorts, but the analogy is accurate. If the proposed draft lease is enforced Victoria will see an exodus from its alpine resorts. I know it is only a draft lease and it may never be enforced, but I use this occasion to recommend to the Minister that it should never be enforced. A flood of leaseholders would leave the Victorian snowfields if they were unable to maintain their properties or if they did not like the provisions being forced upon them by the Government.

I have a copy of the draft lease circulated by the Government and I am happy to make it available to the House. The House has never before seen anything like the invasion of privacy that it contains. Leaseholders who have been on the mountains for many years are being told that their rights to keep private the buildings that they own no longer exist. It might be different if there were no buildings in mountain areas but the Bill relates to the removal of privately-owned buildings and the right of appeal if the Government decides that it should take away the rights of leaseholders. The Opposition believes the draft lease is a proposition about which the Government should be deeply ashamed. It should never have been drafted. It is preposterous.

The Opposition is also concerned about how this proposal would be policed. It instructs a leaseholder to accommodate any member of the public in a private lodge if a bed is available. The alpine resorts would need to be policed in a Gestapo-like manner if people were forced to establish whether beds were empty. That is the sort of activity that would lead to people leaving the alpine resorts and thereby allowing the resorts to be badly maintained, thus affording the Government and the commission the opportunity of moving in and taking over the area.

Leaseholders in alpine resorts are on the verge of confusion. The Government must be vigilant in ensuring that this mechanism is carefully watched and that the overall increase in costs to lodge owners will not pass the increase in the consumer price index. The Opposition asks that the Minister agree that the pro forma lease as currently drafted will never be used. The Opposition will propose an amendment to clause 8 to provide for an
Mr JASPER (Murray Valley)—I am delighted to speak on behalf of the National Party. The beauty of alpine areas in Victoria is almost unsurpassed in Australia and possibly the world. It is a magnificent area in the high country and in winter is a beauty to behold. Anyone who has not been to the high country in winter has had his or her education sadly neglected.

It has been interesting to observe the expansion of the sport of skiing over the past twenty years. In the five years to 1984, an average expansion of 7 per cent a year occurred with people touring alpine areas in winter, participating in winter sports or merely viewing the area and being part of the winter scene. However, the 1985 winter season saw an expansion of 31 per cent in the estimated number of visitors to all alpine areas, with the exception of Mount Buffalo.

I support the actions of the Government because it recognizes the growth of the tourist industry and the potential for further development that will bring more people to Victorian alpine areas.

I am one of the few members of Parliament who has been an active skier for many years. I have skied extensively at Falls Creek, which has great potential because of excellent access facilities and superb snow for downhill or Nordic or cross-country skiing—or langlaufing, as it used to be called. Years ago, on many, many occasions, the former honourable member for Benambra, the Honourable Tom Mitchell, who lived in Kurrajong and knew the beauty of and had a great love for the alpine areas of Victoria and southern New South Wales, passed on to Parliament his views about the region. He skied at Falls Creek in the 1930s and 1940s when there were no ski tows on the mountain and skiers trudged up every slope down which they would then ski.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, another member of Parliament, the Honourable Bill Bridgford, a member in another place, became interested in the sport of snow skiing and developed ski tows at Falls Creek, initially in the bowl area. He commenced the alpine development company that expanded the building of ski tows over the top of the mountain and down into what is known as the ruined castle area.

That company has been sold to Falls Creek Ski Lift Pty Ltd, which is carrying on the tradition of expanding the number of ski tows available for people who are interested in downhill skiing.

The Bill expands the area under the control of the Falls Creek Committee of Management. That area includes Mount McKay, which provides skiing for advanced skiers on the southern and eastern slopes. That area is needed so that Falls Creek can complement its existing slopes and achieve the correct mix of beginner, intermediate and advanced levels of skiing.

In years gone by I used to ski on Mount McKay which was outside the area of control of the Falls Creek Committee of Management. Mount McKay is a magnificent skiing area with vast open spaces and slopes that cater for all levels of skiers.
The previous speaker claimed that a further area around Mount McKay should be brought under the control of the Falls Creek Committee of Management. However, the State Electricity Commission is not keen for the area controlled by the committee of management to be extended to the northern slope because this area provides for power lines and the water pipeline for the Mount McKay power station. It also exempts Roper Saddle, which is an area of flat land which could be made available in the future for car parking spaces and a further small area to be included around the Rocky Valley dam site.

The National Party supports an increase in the area provided at Falls Creek for the benefit of skiers. Falls Creek has an excellent mix of ski clubs and private flat and commercial developments.

At present 3500 beds are available at Falls Creek and during the peak season as many as 5000 day visitors enter the car parking area to use this magnificent skiing area. Last year a total of 208 000 visitors entered Victorian ski resorts and there were 360 000 skiing days.

An enormous expansion of development is continuing in the alpine area. I have a good knowledge of the Falls Creek area. An increasing number of people are using that area and its facilities and at the peak of the ski season 5000 visitors a day use the area and there is provision for 1700 car parking spaces and 30 bus parking spaces. The potential exists for considerable expansion in the future use of the Falls Creek area.

The previous speaker referred to the new leases to be issued by the Alpine Resorts Commission. There has been much controversy over this issue and, as a person who is interested in skiing, I have had a lot of contact with people in the Falls Creek area who have commercial and private developments. They have expressed concern about the proposed changes to the leases and I know the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources is aware of those concerns and will take them on board.

Clause 8 provides for changes to section 29 of the principal Act. That section covers the leases under which the people in the alpine resorts operate. Concern has been expressed to me about the operation of these leases.

The leases which were negotiated prior to the commencement of the Alpine Resorts Commission in March 1984 will continue until their expiration. The leases for commercial developments at Falls Creek have a life of 33 years and the leases for ski clubs have a life of twenty years. Those leases are not affected by the Bill.

However, all leases which were negotiated after the commencement of the Alpine Resorts Commission in March 1984 are subject to the Bill. Unfortunately, there are many queries regarding the operation of those leases. Section 28 of the Alpine Resorts Act provides for the lease of Crown land to various people. Section 29 provides for the land being required by the Alpine Resorts Commission, either at the expiration of the lease or where it may be reasonably required by the commission. The National Party is not concerned with those leases which were entered into prior to March 1984 but is concerned with the leases which were negotiated after that time.

Major concern has been expressed about the commission believing it may reasonably require the land. Under section 29 of the Act the commission could require land and buildings controlled by a particular lessee. Under the Act, the commission, if it reasonably requires the land, can require the buildings and improvements on the land to be removed in not less than 60 days from the service of notice. The cost of the removal, demolition of the buildings or improvements and repairs for any damage to the land can be charged to the lessee.

The National Party believes this is a totally abhorrent action to be taken against people who have genuinely undertaken leases of 33 years for a commercial development at Falls Creek or for twenty years for a ski club.

I contacted a number of interested parties for their comment on the proposed legislation. Generally the responses to most clauses have been positive, especially those covering the
expansion of the area that will come under the control of the Falls Creek Committee of Management.

I want to quote from one letter I received from the owner of a lodge at Falls Creek. His concern typifies that of many people in the Falls Creek area.

I will read some of the paragraphs from his letter because it is important. He says that there needs to be adequate compensation for the acquisition of a lease and a right to seek independent arbitration if an appeal is lost. He goes on:

1. The obvious reason is fairness. Why should a government agency be able to sell a lease, require investment as part of that lease, and then take it all back without compensation?

That is the current position. There is no provision in section 29 of the Act for any compensation for a lessee if the commission decides that it requires the land. He continues:

Also that they can charge the costs of removal of buildings to the party they have just taken the lease from, as a parting indignity.

2. This gives you a good case to show this government's present attitude to small business people. All take and no give.

3. The present situation severely limits investment in alpine areas. There has been very little investment interest in the snowfields since the ARC took over except that which was conceived before the takeover.

I repeat that point because I want to make sure that the Minister is aware of it. The other point that is made in the letter is that the lodge owner claims that, since the commencement of the Alpine Resorts Commission, there has not been much investment in Falls Creek and probably other alpine areas because of the restrictions of sections 28 and 29 of the Act concerning leases and the ability of the commission to resume land and buildings without the payment of compensation. The only developments that he indicates have taken place at, say, Falls Creek, are the ones that were in the pipeline prior to March 1984. He continues:

Uncertainty over security of tenure is a definite problem, if the ARC (the Government in effect) has the right to cancel the lease with no compensation and no effective right to appeal (except to the Minister who controls the government instrumentality) what security is there to offer an investor or a bank? who will invest?

I have indicated to the Minister in personal discussions that it would be extremely fair in examining a matter that is brought to his attention to consider a claim for compensation against the Alpine Resorts Commission, but we do not know who the Minister will be at the time. That particular Minister may not be sympathetic to the lessee and the problem that the particular lessee finds in that area. As the Leader of the National Party has rightly indicated, there is no provision for compensation in the Bill.

The National Party seeks an absolute assurance from the Minister today that he will consider a change to the Bill to provide adequate compensation for an aggrieved party. The people who have had leases signed prior to March 1984 should be assured that those leases will continue to their conclusion.

The problem is that, as those leases run to their expiration, people will not be prepared to invest or maintain their properties. If, at the end of the lease, a person has no right to a continuation of the lease, and no right to compensation, section 29 will create an even worse situation in that the commission, if it reasonably believes it requires the particular area of land, can order that the buildings be removed from the area within 60 days. The lessee's only right is an appeal to the Minister.

Clause 8 amends section 29 of the principal Act and proposes that there can be an appeal to the Minister concerning the land and the buildings. Therefore, one can understand the concern expressed in the letter from which I read; and it is only one example of many letters I have received expressing concern.

There needs to be consideration by the Government on this matter and I seek an explicit assurance from the Minister that a change will be made to the Bill to allow for compensation to be paid in the future. No one in their right mind would take on a lease at Falls Creek or
any other alpine resort for a development without the ability to be able to maintain that lease or at least recoup some form of compensation. That is what people are looking for and that is what they need.

The Bill is a move in the right direction. The National Party supports the Bill and supports what the Alpine Resorts Commission stands for. The commission should be expanding the resorts under its control. It is an important development for Victoria's tourism and it can be a big plus in producing wealth for the State and in attracting tourists who will spend in the area.

The Bill does not deal with the leases. They are of great concern and, once again, I would like some comment from the Minister that there will be consideration of the draft leases or the comments being made by management committees on the leases and the charges that will be made on properties in the alpine areas.

The Bill is for the good of Victoria, for the expansion of tourist areas and the alpine resorts and is a natural development that can be worked on in the future for the good of the State.

Mr LIEBERMAN (Benambra)—The Bill deals with part of the electorate of Benambra and I am proud to have the ski resorts of Falls Creek, Hotham and Mount Buffalo situated in the electorate I represent.

When the Alpine Resorts Commission was first established—and the Bill seeks to amend some of the provisions of the original alpine legislation—I expressed strong concern that the dynamic development of the ski industry in Victoria, which is one of our winners, without a doubt, in creating new investment and employment, would be retarded and put at risk if the administration and the legislation supporting the administration was too draconian.

Even if the draconian provisions, such as the cancellation of leases, for example, without compensation were never invoked, it would still create a shadow of uncertainty over the snow industry in Victoria.

In the original debate I said that the failure to provide reasonable and just compensation for people who had otherwise complied with the terms and conditions of their contract with the commission and the Government of the day was wrong.

I said that some people would face the arbitrary loss of their investment without compensation and some would even face the prospect of removing the improvements from the area at great cost, again without compensation.

Three year down the track I still feel as strongly as I did then that the Government is legislating unnecessarily and unreasonably in these areas. If one traces the history of Falls Creek, one sees that the early development on the mountain occurred because enterprising people with a vision took the time, trouble, and effort and raised the capital to build that magnificent village now known as Falls Creek.

As other speakers have mentioned, the village has 3000 beds and 5000 visitors, at least on a daily basis, during the season.

It is an incredibly successful investment that has been brought about by reasonably sensible administration by Governments of my colour or that of the present Government. I was for a short time Minister for Minerals and Energy and I was responsible for the State Electricity Commission which was the landlord for Falls Creek at the time.

In 1986 we should, on a bi-partisan basis, be creating legislation that will reinforce the zeal and the confidence of people to invest in ski resorts such as Falls Creek. In the early days—I was a practising barrister and solicitor full time before I entered Parliament—I acted for some licensees and lessors in the mountains—because it is my home country—and in those early leases when the clubs and those who established lodges began, the leases provided for fairly lengthy terms and there was a guillotine clause in those documents the
effect of which was that in the event of a national emergency—because this area is part of the hydroelectric scheme for the whole of Australia—such as war, the Government could move to terminate contracts and leases. That eventuality was at least spelt out in the documents. Although this caused some trepidation to people and it was virtually impossible to obtain a loan on a proposed investment from banks or traditional lending institutions, the situation was put in proper perspective. People said, "If there is war, we are all in it anyway". On balance it did not become a determining factor against making the investment in the first place. That is my knowledge of the history of the matter.

Unfortunately the policy of the Alpine Resorts Commission has been to pick up the principle that one needs to go in, as a landlord, and have the power to terminate a lease and cut off the investor at the pass, taking away from him his cash flow and depriving him of any right of compensation and, what is more, to have the right to enforce the obligation to remove the buildings from the site. I believe that provision needs review.

In 1986 we should be asking ourselves the question: If we have an Alpine Resorts Commission that is supported by us—by and large all honourable members want to see it do well—that is charged with the sensible management and planning of our resorts such as Falls Creek, and that has the expertise and resource base to get good advice, planning, management and economic terms and the commission makes a recommendation to the Minister that it should have power to grant leases for 20 or 30 years so that it can encourage people to build and invest in lodges, upgrade existing lodges, resorts and facilities, why, in 1986, when we are finding it difficult to compete with other States which are attracting investment from us should we put in this draconian clause that says that if a 20-year or 30-year lease is given and it is discovered in two or three years' time that an error has been made and the building is not exactly where the commission would like it to be, or the commission would like to see someone else have that site, it can send a letter requesting that the buildings be moved and no compensation is to be paid? The buildings will cost only $200 000 to remove but they cost $2 million to build.

Mr Fordham—That has never happened!

Mr LIEBERMAN—I know that it has never happened but I make the point in 1986, now we know we are on a winner and when there is a permanent village established that will contribute to Victoria's economic activity forever, there is no reason for such clauses to be included in leases because—and the Minister said by interjection that this has never happened—no Minister whether Labor or Liberal would ever want to enforce such a right.

I ask that while the Bill is between here and another place and in the Committee stage the Minister sees fit to make a major review of the provision in the Act and the consequential amendment in this Bill that affects it to move away from including in the leases those clauses that are not needed.

If Parliament is saying, "Look here, we want the right through the Alpine Resorts Commission to terminate a lease that the commission has granted not long ago", perhaps we should be asking whether the Alpine Resorts Commission is needed in the first place. Perhaps we should be saying to ourselves, "We do not trust the commission; we will certainly give it power to grant leases and to allow people to invest millions to build buildings and roads but we want a right to cancel whatever it decides, whatever contract it enters into on behalf of the people of Victoria.

If Parliament has that doubt about the judgment, acumen and ability of the commission to look to the future in terms of leases, it is really saying that the commission should not be there anyway.

I have confidence in the commission's ability to make good commercial judgments, and therefore I argue on behalf of the Opposition that we should review the situation. The reason for it is obvious. If we are after the investment dollar in Victoria, if we want ski resorts developed and to reach their full potential, as I am confident they will, and we want the jobs that will be created by that investment, which are there—there are thousands
of jobs and permanent jobs that will spin off into the summer months, and we have not even touched upon that potential—we ought to be saying that the Act of Parliament and the amending Bills should be pitched towards encouraging investment and encouraging the lending institutions to lend to approved investors on the basis that it is a sound commercial proposition.

I have had some experience in acting for lending institutions and I can tell you that when they read the lease and the Act of Parliament and they see the Bill amending it, they will say, ‘Look, I am sorry; there is no way that we can treat this as a normal commercial transaction and lend “X” per cent of the valuation based on the anticipated cash flow. We want other collateral and security’. Frankly, that other collateral and security will be regarded as our major security.

Any responsible lending institution requires security. It is hard enough to obtain money on leasehold; it will be virtually impossible in my view to get money on leasehold at reasonable commercial rates if there is a guillotine clause that says one may receive a letter from the Minister or from the commission with the Minister’s approval terminating the lease and saying that the building should be moved. “Sorry about that, but it has been decided” to use the wording of the proposed amendment, “that the land on which the building stands is reasonably required by the commission.”

That is another point I wish to make; the phrase used is, “if the land is reasonably required by the commission”. At least in the early days when starting off the developments of the resorts in the Kiewa hydroelectric area——

Mr Fordham—They are exactly the same words.

Mr LIEBERMAN—I know, and I spoke about them then when that Bill was before the House. At least in the early days reference was made to wartime emergencies as being the reason why a lease could be cancelled. At least we had an idea why the lease could be subject to cancellation then.

The simple phrase, “is reasonably required by the commission” does not give any warmth to anyone. It is cold enough in winter, but if an investor goes to an institution in Collins Street or any other place to raise $2 million on commercial terms to invest in Victorian ski resorts and the lending institution notes that phrase, that the land if it “is reasonably required by the commission” can be acquired by the commission and the investor’s security taken away from him, the lending institution will want securities, guarantees, high interest rates and fall-back arrangements before agreeing to lend.

I know that the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources wants to encourage investment in Victoria. I entreat him, while the Bill is between here and another place, to note and to have regard to what has been said and to seize the opportunity now before the leases become official documents. He should determine that there is no reason for a guillotine clause in these leases in 1986 because it is well known what is intended to be done; it has been decided that there should be new lodges, restaurants and other infrastructure, that it has been planned and that, therefore, there is no reason to be hesitant any longer about the need to cut some investor off at the socks.

If the Minister takes the advice, and he would act on advice at the time, that under national security arrangements there must be a guillotine clause on leases in the event of wartime emergency, that is understood, and lending institutions would understand that, but not otherwise, because it is not necessary.

I have had discussions with people who have invested in mountain resorts for years, who have done well and have provided good amenities. One of my constituents put the case about this issue extremely well. He has made a plea to the Government that the clause should be reviewed and compensation should be provided if the Government of the day wants to acquire someone’s investment for the reason of equity and fairness in any commercial agreement.
Why should compensation not be provided for in the event of a guillotine clause being inserted? What is wrong with compensation being paid? After all, it is fair. Why should a Government agency, no matter how well intentioned or administered, be able to take away a lease from someone, to require that lease to be handed to someone else for someone else's advantage and to the detriment of another person who in good faith has been investing in that lease for many years? Why should there not be provision for compensation if that momentous decision is made?

The real problem is that in the interests of Victoria investment needs to be promoted and in the interests of good investment there is no reason for accepting a guillotine clause now. The Minister should take steps to review it. I shall support and praise him if he is prepared to do that because it would be an important initiative and a turning point in marketing the resorts and their future investment potential.

I am not familiar with clauses in leases in New South Wales for Thredbo and other areas, but New South Wales is now building a tunnel through a mountain and to move people from the capital city, Sydney, in warmed, air-conditioned trains with music, entertainment and meals on the way to the resort where the trains will pull in to an air-conditioned and heated lounge.

The SPEAKER—Order! Although I have not been in the Chamber I have been monitoring the honourable member's remarks during the debate and I must ask him to come back to the Bill. If he wishes to deal with clauses of the Bill, he will have the opportunity when the House goes into Committee, when he will also have the opportunity of dealing with amendments. Further, what occurs in other States is outside the ambit of the Bill.

Mr LIEBERMAN—I have concluded my reference to the fact that other States are really marketing and getting on with the job. Victoria wants to be able to do better. I do not think Victoria is doing as well in attracting investment to this State, although I have a firm belief Victoria will do better than other States provided it has the right basic policies and legislation.

Mr Speaker, I shall take heed of your advice and talk in more detail in the Committee stage on clause 8 because the shadow Minister will deal in part with the concern I have at that time and will move an amendment to provide at least some more equitable review mechanism for a decision to cancel a lease and the means of appeal if a lease is to be cancelled.

Clause 10 deals with expanding the size of Falls Creek and is a welcome proposal. It will provide an opportunity for more investment and more facilities at Falls Creek. One problem that will need to be faced in the not-too-distant future is that making the area larger but then restricting its potential will inhibit the dynamics of that investment for Victoria.

The Minister should have the courage to say to people involved in the conservation movement that in the event of reasonable requirement for the expansion of alpine resorts in Victoria, such as Falls Creek, in years to come a proper review of economic and social advantages and disadvantages will be undertaken by the Government of the day and, if necessary, that sacred land lines drawn on maps—that have been drawn in large part without proper research anyway—will be the subject of review, giving everyone whether conservationist or otherwise an opportunity of making submissions. I urge the Minister not to make it a closed shop and not to make these decisions behind closed doors.

I shall support the Minister and encourage him to stand up to those people and say that he will not allow Victoria to be held back unreasonably without good, proper, carefully managed and planned investment to give economic growth to the State and to maintain and improve the quality of life for all Victorians.

I urge the Minister to stand up and be counted. He is responsible for economic development in the State. He should not allow himself to be stood over by people who,
although their arguments are made in good faith, do not take into account the real 
potential of the State and who in some ways are selfish in their aims.

Mr MACLELLAN (Berwick)—I have been most impressed by the remarks of the 
honourable members for Murray Valley and Benambra and the knowledge they have 
brought to the discussion on the Bill. To me the Bill shows two conflicting attitudes. One 
is that it seeks to expand the resort, which is welcomed by all, but then it adopts and 
continues a thoroughly authoritarian view about how alpine resorts and ski use and 
occupation ought to be managed.

If the buildings referred to in clause 8 were the sorts of Army huts that formerly were 
erected by minor clubs or associations during a working bee over the summer, one could 
understand why the authority controlling the resort might desire, and need, to have the 
power to cancel the lease and order the removal of the buildings.

However, those primitive and unsophisticated days have passed and lodges and club­
houses are no longer of that character. Multi-million dollar developments have been 
constructed and it is inappropriate to continue with the argument that the controlling 
authority—now the Alpine Resorts Commission—should continue to have a power, which 
is completely arbitrary, to cancel leases and order demolition of improvements and 
buildings at the expense of the former lessee.

On the one hand, the Bill demonstrates the desire to open additional areas of land for 
skiing and, on the other hand, picks up outdated and inappropriate arbitrary views about 
the management of the alpine area. I accept what the honourable member for Benambra 
said earlier in the debate. It would be impossible to seek finance from an agent or 
development company at economic and commercial rates of interest if those people 
lending the money had no security over the continuance of the lease or over the buildings 
and improvements to be erected. For many years Government departments such as the 
railways have leased lands and have allowed improvements to be made on those lands; 
when the lease is to be transferred the new tenant can purchase the improvements from 
the former tenant. When the lease comes to an end, common practice has been to apply 
for compensation for the improvements erected by the tenant but that is only paid when 
the landlord has agreed to those improvements.

If one considers that the area in this case is inappropriate for a large scale development, 
the large scale development should not be approved. The problem should not be cured by 
imposing a completely arbitrary power so that the landlord can cancel the lease or order 
the demolition of buildings.

Clause 8 (2) states “is reasonably required by the Commission for the improvement of 
the alpine resort”. That cannot be challenged or adjudged in any way. The commission 
can say that it wants the building concerned because it will improve the facilities of the 
resort and, therefore, it will cancel the lease. The commission can say that it can erect a 
better building on the site and, therefore, it can cancel the lease and seek to have the 
improvements demolished.

I point out to the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources that the Bill does 
not provide that the commission, after discussions or consultations with the Minister, or 
with the approval of the Minister, can then cancel the demolition. It states simply that the 
commission can do it on its own initiative. The Minister is not brought into the matter 
until the commission takes action. It does not matter whether that action is bona fide, 
reasonable, arbitrary, insensitive or wrong. Until an appeal is made to the Minister, no 
other course is available, and that is the weakness of the measure. The Bill does not apply 
Ministerial control to the problem when it first arises. The Minister is asked to accept 
responsibility for sorting out the problem after it has become a problem.

The Minister does not require too much imagination to understand that, if the 
commission has given signals to a tenant that it does not like him, wants him to move out
of the resort or get out of the lease, and follows it up with a proposal to cancel the lease, or order the demolition of improvements, no protection is available for the tenant.

The commission has enormous scope to apply intense pressure on a lessee. The commission can say, “You can have a choice: either agree to the cancellation of the lease or we will cancel it and order you to demolish the improvements”. That might involve $100,000 in demolition costs, so a tenant would conclude that it would be wiser to pack up and go away and not even bother to appeal to the Minister.

The Bill provides 60 days in which that appeal can occur. It does not say, “60 days or such longer period as the Minister thinks reasonable”. It says simply “60 days”. Information could emerge after 60 days which demonstrated that the commission’s action was unreasonable.

I suggest the Minister should examine some of the English cases which were the subject of comment by former Lord Chancellors of England concerning the utterly arbitrary action by Government departments in land tenure, leasing, acquisition and demolition of improvements. Case after case demonstrated that the British bureaucracy was out of control in exercising these arbitrary powers and left Ministers of the Crown in embarrassing situations.

Why is an appeal to the Minister included in the Bill? How will the Minister pick an argument with the commission under his control, with which he has to work, and then overrule it on appeal? If an appeal mechanism is sought, the person examining the matter should have some independence. It is troublesome for Ministers to be forced to deal with these matters. Ministers are often involved in early discussions and that may prove to be prejudicial to their independence.

It is undesirable for Ministers to take on a judicial role when millions of dollars are invested in property and commercial interests. Not only the tenant is involved but also those people who have provided moneys to the tenant for construction of the improvements. The arbitrary nature of the direction of the Alpine Resorts Commission is further reinforced by the lease that it proposes. Clause 8 (2) states:

If land is leased in an alpine resort and the land is reasonably required by the Commission for the improvement of the alpine resort . . .

If one combines that with a lease agreement that states that every night on which a bed is vacant the tenant must ring up the landlord and tell him and he must make the bed available to the landlord through his booking office and accept any person the landlord sends who wishes to sleep in the bed, that is a perfect illustration to the Minister and the House of the arbitrary direction in which this measure is heading.

The demolition of buildings may have been justified in 1949 when the Army demolished a few Army huts at Broadmeadows, and where groups of scouts, clubs or associations took the huts and second-hand materials to the mountains and erected ski lodges. It would be appropriate for a Bill to cater for that situation, but this measure relates to condominiums; people who have invested in flats and buildings; and lodges that have been constructed for millions of dollars. I point out to the House that the construction costs in these mountain areas are extremely high.

Mr McNamara—$10,000 a square.

The SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Benalla is out of his place and out of order.

Mr MACLELLAN—The amount suggested by the honourable member for Benalla is not an inappropriate figure for the House to take as guidance. It is unfortunate that proposed legislation still contains the old arbitrariness of what the commission decides as being good shall be good. The commission is to be given the power to decide what should be allowed to be leased or not leased and that will be the final decision. Tenants must pay
for the demolition of buildings, even if they were the commission's mistake. If they do not like it, they must lump it or appeal to the Minister.

However, the commission knows that the Minister to whom they shall appeal is the Minister responsible for the commission. Officers of the commission can say, "He is our Minister, we have been briefing him and telling him what has been going on". The Minister has all the prejudicial background and is expected to come up with an independent and impartial decision on an appeal that should not be required. Honourable members would hope and pray that the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources would come to the correct decision, but in a month or two perhaps the Minister for Transport will be the Minister responsible for the Alpine Resorts Commission!

One would have only to imagine him as the Minister to imagine what a hearing one would get of one's appeal! Take some of the likely characters in Cabinet and imagine them in the position of Minister and think of that. We might have the Minister for Local Government. Imagine what decision one would get from his Ministerial adviser; I suppose the Ministerial adviser would sit in on the appeal.

Mr Shell interjected.

Mr MACLELLAN—The honourable member for Geelong would not make the Cabinet, so honourable members probably would not have to worry about the possibility of him making a decision on these matters, but the honourable member for Niddrie may be revived as a Minister, and one can imagine the sort of decision one would get from him.

The SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Berwick is well aware of the procedures of the House. During the course of the debate I have made an attempt to hold the debate to the Bill before the House. I believe I have been lenient in allowing passing reference to be made to certain matters, but the honourable member for Berwick is now going off on another tangent. He ought to come back to the Bill before the House.

Mr MACLELLAN—I refer specifically to page 3 and to the provision that:

(2A) If notice is given under section (2) the lessee may within the time specified in the notice, being not less than 60 days after service of the notice, appeal in writing to the Minister against either or both of the following:

(i) The cancellation of the lease...

The SPEAKER—Order! I suggest to the honourable member for Berwick that the matter would be better dealt with in the Committee stage rather than dealing with specific clauses during the second-reading debate.

Mr MACLELLAN—I direct your attention to the particular part of the clause to which I am referring, Mr Speaker. I am referring to the principle of arbitrariness, the principle of the lack of sophistication in an appeal mechanism and the principle of a Minister being the appeal court and lacking independence, and lacking the appearance of independence and lacking disinterest in the matter because the Minister has Ministerial responsibility for the commission and is therefore not in a position to make an independent review, such as would a judicial person who would disqualify himself because he had that background.

The SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Berwick has made the point in respect of the principle and, to ensure that debate is held at a reasonable level, he should not go into the specific details of the clause. He should save those matters until the Committee stage, in line with the general practice of the House. The honourable member should return to the principles of the Bill.

Mr MACLELLAN—The principles of the Bill are that the area should be increased in size and the arbitrariness of the Bill will therefore apply to new areas that are not currently covered by the resort. So that is a further principle in the Bill, and I direct your attention, Mr Speaker, and that of the House to the fact that page 4 of the Bill shows shaded areas in respect of which anyone who has the temerity to seek a lease and build a lodge there is likely to have his lease cancelled and to be told to pull down his lodge. As the honourable