Wednesday, 15 April 1987

The SPEAKER (the Hon. C. T. Edmunds) took the chair at 2.4 p.m. and read the prayer.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

NUNAWADING PROVINCE BY-ELECTION

Mr LIEBERMAN (Benambra)—I ask the Minister for Property and Services to explain on what basis he, as a non-lawyer, came to the conclusion that the eight legal opinions recommending prosecution with regard to the Nunawading Province by-election were not satisfactory.

Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Property and Services)—The Opposition is busy trying to drum up a case of Government interference, which the Government completely rejects. I believe the integrity of the Chief Electoral Officer is being questioned.

The Chief Electoral Officer has made it clear in his statement of 8 May, when he made his announcement on the Nunawading by-election, that he had had no interference in making that decision. When called before the tribunal, he made the same statement, which has been reported in the press during this week.

The Opposition is trying to drum up some fairytale of Ministerial interference, which I completely reject.

Mr B. J. Evans—We want to know whether it is true.

Mr McCUTCHEON—I have rejected it; it is not true. The matter to which the honourable member for Benambra refers is, in fact, a comment reported from the hearing before the tribunal. I find it difficult to actually comment on that statement as I was not there.

I would want to reject any interpretation—

Mr Ross-Edwards—Of course, you would want to!

The SPEAKER—Order!

Mr McCUTCHEON—I would want to reject any interpretation of that evidence that suggested that the Director-General of Property and Services was passing on an instruction from me to the Chief Electoral Officer. I would want to reject any interpretation that I considered there was an element of doubt in the legal opinions. My view, as I stated yesterday, was that the Chief Electoral Officer should have access to any resources he required in making his decision.

The Opposition is putting the Chief Electoral Officer’s statements—which he has made publicly twice—into disrepute. I believe the Leader of the Opposition has sought to do that, because he originally made a statement on 10 May—after Mr Richardson’s statement of 8 May last year—as was reported in the Sun of that date, that he had no animosity extended towards Mr Richardson or his independence. However, he is now raising the matter as though the statement that the Chief Electoral Officer—

Mr Kennett—You are the one!

Mr McCUTCHEON—The Leader of the Opposition is questioning the statements by the Chief Electoral Officer, and that is disgraceful. The Government’s position is very clear—that there should be no interference in the decision-making process, and there was none.
Mr ROSS-EDWARDS (Leader of the National Party)—I direct a further question to the Minister for Property and Services in respect of the same matter. Could the Minister name the eight people who gave the opinions that have been referred to as recommending that some action be taken in this matter?

Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Property and Services)—I do not believe it is appropriate to name the opinions that have been referred to in the tribunal. That is a matter before the tribunal and, as honourable members well know—certainly the Leader of the National Party should be aware—there is a question before the tribunal, which it is seeking to resolve, on whether documents should be released. The naming of those documents is part of the inquiry of that tribunal.

GOVERNMENT TAXES AND CHARGES

Mr CULPIN (Broadmeadows)—Can the Premier advise the House of the impact of specific measures taken by the Government in achieving restraint in the current financial year with respect to Government taxes and charges?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—The Opposition fears the truth. The Government has kept its promise about taxes and charges. This financial year Government taxation receipts will have fallen by 2 per cent in real terms.

It has only recently become clear why the Opposition has been so consistently irrational on the issue of taxes.

Mr Williams interjected.

Mr CAIN—The honourable member for Doncaster is an experienced old hand. He has never heard such an inept Opposition and inept Liberal Party in this place during the time he has been here.

I shall give the House an example. The Opposition has been thrashing around in this House and on 131 occasions in the past six months its members have asked for more spending. It then makes promises of cuts in taxes and charges. The Opposition is finding it impossible to tell the truth about taxes and charges because it is keeping faith with its puppet masters outside. We all know who those puppet masters are; they are the Andrew Hays of this world!

Does the Liberal Party know what Mr Andrew Hay said about its taxation policy? He said that the Liberal Party does not have a policy on taxation. The Opposition will not acknowledge that the Government has raised the threshold for payroll tax, exempted employers of apprentices from payroll tax and abolished a number of stamp duties paid by business—all moves that have encouraged investment in this State.

The Government substantially reduced the number of individuals who now pay land tax compared with when the previous Government was in office. The Government has increased the range of pensioners who are eligible for land tax exemptions on their homes as from 1 January 1987.

Does the Opposition understand or does it prefer not to understand that the average increase in electricity and gas charges in this State has been much less than the consumer price index, or is it still starry-eyed about the massive increases it introduced into this State in the three years prior to the Labor Government taking office?

It must be said that those masters of the Liberal Party, led by Mr Andrew Hay—the moral tutor of the Liberal Party—are turning the heat on Liberal Party members and requiring them to do everything possible to tear down the basic guarantees and structures upon which this State and this country have been built.

The people of the new right are impatient. They are declaring that the policies of the Leader of the Opposition are weak and inadequate. I do not know what the policies are.
Mr Hay may know what they are. The people of Victoria do not know what they are. I do not believe the Opposition has a policy!

I ask the Opposition to inform the House of its policy on taxes.

Mr DELZOPPO (Narracan)—On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I would not want to be inconsistent so I direct your attention to Standing Order No. 127. The Premier is debating the question and I ask that you, Mr Speaker, bring him back to order.

Mr SPEAKER—Order! I uphold the point of order and ask the Premier to respond to the question.

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I come back to the commitment made by the Labor Party that it would give good government. I believe it has done that. It has been sensitive to the needs of both individuals and business. The prices peg will ensure that the basket of Government charges, to which reference has been made, will increase by no more than an average of 6 per cent.

It should be remembered that in 1981–82, the guidelines put forward by the Liberal Party were that general Government charges would increase by 12·5 per cent in a year when the consumer price index was 10·4 per cent. That says something about the genuineness of the Opposition and its concern about increases in taxes and charges.

The Government has taken a whole range of measures in the removal of stamp duty on marine insurance and in other areas to reduce the burden on people. I appreciate the quandary of the Leader of the Opposition in particular and the Opposition generally, who have been thoroughly skewered by Mr Hay, the moral tutor, as I said. The problem that this State faces with the Opposition is very simple: a radical rump is seizing the heart of the Liberal Party and squeezing it dry of all blood and human concern.

The Liberal Party does not care about people. Gone is the willingness that once was there of the Liberal Party, as we knew it, to show concern and compassion for ordinary men and women. The Liberal Party has been taken over by radicals on the right who are squeezing the might out of the Liberal Party. The Government resists that nonsense and continues to resist it and will give the people of Victoria the kind of Government they expect and to which they are entitled.

NUNAWADING PROVINCE BY-ELECTION

Mr DELZOPPO (Narracan)—I ask the Minister for Property and Services why all the legal opinions obtained by the Chief Electoral Officer were handed to the Director-General of Property and Services and discussed with the Minister before the Chief Electoral Officer had made his final decision as to prosecution, in light of the Premier's oft-repeated statements that there would be no Government involvement in the Chief Electoral Officer's statutory responsibility.

Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Property and Services)—The Opposition is continuing to draw inferences that are contrary to the clear statements made by the Chief Electoral Officer in announcing his decision. It might be worthwhile running through the announcement made by the Chief Electoral Officer on 8 May 1986. If members of the Opposition listen they will get the facts straight and will be able to ask more relevant questions.

On 19 March 1986 the Chief Electoral Officer received the so-called "police report"—it came from the request that he made to the Chief Commissioner of Police—and included in that was advice from the Director of Public Prosecutions. Another advice—one other, not eight others—had been sought on a hypothetical basis.

Honourable members interjecting.
Mr McCUTCHEON—Members of the Opposition show how much they misunderstand the process because these requests were made by the Chief Electoral Officer and by the Acting Chief Electoral Officer during the course of that period.

The Chief Electoral Officer received the particular police report and the opinion of the Director of Public Prosecutions and reported to the public of Melbourne that there was a borderline case. Two days later, on 21 March 1986, the Chief Electoral Officer said that he had requested advice from the Solicitor-General and a junior counsel on matters relating to that report, which had been given to them.

All this was reported on 8 May last year by the Chief Electoral Officer in determining his decision and making it public. The implication being made by the Opposition is incorrect and the Opposition ought to take the facts as reported by the Chief Electoral Officer into account. The Opposition should stop dreaming up all sorts of conspiracy theories and other things.

I have said categorically that there has been no interference by the Government in the work of the Chief Electoral Officer and he has made that very clear also. As I said yesterday in the House, it is not appropriate that the Government should interfere, and the Government did not.

TEACHING SERVICE CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION COMMISSION

Mr HANN (Rodney)—Can the Minister for Education advise the House why the Victorian Teaching Service Conciliation and Arbitration Commission is continuing to operate when the Government made a decision, in principle, some months ago to transfer the industrial relations responsibility of the Teaching Service to the Industrial Relations Commission?

Mr CATHIE (Minister for Education)—The Government has always made it clear that, as a matter of policy, it believes the proper way to approach industrial relations for those who work within education is through the Industrial Relations Commission. The difficulty that the Government has had, as the Deputy Leader of the National Party well knows, is that when the Teaching Service Conciliation and Arbitration Commission has attempted to operate and brought down a decision, it has finished in court.

This body has been set up for approximately four or five years and is not able to operate properly and is still subject to challenge in the courts about a particular decision. Given that fact, the Government is discussing the possibility of bringing all employees under the Industrial Relations Commission with teacher unions and other organisations.

PEGGING OF PRICES

Mrs HILL (Frankston North)—Can the Minister for Labour advise on the progress of the implementation of the Government's prices peg program over the past six months?

Mr CRABB (Minister for Labour)—The Government is very pleased with the progress made in implementing the prices peg program. It is also pleased with the positive reception it has received from manufacturers and retailers.

Honourable members will remember that the audited figure on the total 170 items in the basket, which was received from the Retail Traders Association and which was audited by Price Waterhouse, was $310.99 when it was started on 6 March. That was confirmed in an independent survey, which was published and which caused some small difficulty in some country areas.

I take this opportunity of drawing to the attention of the House that, notwithstanding the indexed price, on a month-by-month basis comparisons are being made between individual stores; some will be dearer and some will be cheaper than the indexed price.
depending on the circumstances of the individual store. It is a fact that small retailers compete on the basis of convenience and service and, in most cases, cannot match the low prices charged by high volume outlets.

The most pleasing part of the progress of the Government's prices peg program is that today the Government received the first indexed monthly figure for the total price of the 170 items in the basket. I am delighted that the price of those items has fallen by 39 cents. That is not a lot but every little helps!

The stability in prices that has been maintained over the past month is a vindication of the prices peg program and a commendation of everyone who has supported the program, namely, retailers, manufacturers, the National Party and the Government. In fact, everyone except the Opposition.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr CRABB—The Liberal Party seems disappointed that the price for the basket has fallen by 39 cents. What a wonder! The fact is: rises in food prices, amongst other things, have been deeply concerning consumers in the State and this has been recognised by the National Party, the Government and the entire community. The Government has taken successful action to address those issues.

MIDLAND MILK PTY LTD

Mr I. W. SMITH (Polwarth)—Why did the Premier not take action to assist residents of Bell Street, Preston, who contacted him in December last year for help to counter excessive noise problems caused by the night-time activities of Midland Milk Pty Ltd?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER—Order! The House will come to order.

Mr I. W. SMITH—The decibel readings taken by the Environment Protection Authority show the noise level to be in excess of the legal limits.

An Honourable Member—What has that got to do with Government Business?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I might well ask what that has to do with Government Business also; but it has something to do with the desire of the honourable member for Polwarth to demonstrate the depth of his invective.

All I want to say is that the matter has not come to my attention. If a concern is expressed by the honourable member for Polwarth or any other member about those matters and the concern proceeds through the proper channels, I expect it will be attended to by the local government authority that is responsible in these matters.

My understanding is that anybody can make a complaint if they wish; I know nothing of the matter to which the honourable member refers.

UPDATE OF ECONOMIC STRATEGY

Mr ROWE (Essendon)—Will the Treasurer indicate to the House what steps the Government has taken to honour its commitment pronounced in the Budget to update the economic strategy?

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—The honourable member has taken an active interest not only in the most recent update in the economic strategy but he was also involved in the formulation of advice for the initial economic strategy, which has been an outstanding success. I am pleased that it has not even received the criticism of the Opposition; that is how successful it has been.

I am also pleased to inform the House that on 29 April the Government will be launching the updated economic strategy and it will continue the thrust of its economic
policy of the past three years. One of the outstanding improvements has been the increase in private investment in this State and, of course, the number of jobs that have been created in Victoria since the economic strategy was put in place.

The thrust of the strategy is to build on the competitive strength of Victoria and to take advantage of the fact that the Australian dollar has depreciated substantially over the past four years.

I take the opportunity of reminding the House of the considerable progress made in the economic strategy area, particularly with regard to technology. Honourable members would be aware that in July last year the Government produced a detailed document on technology, which was met with wide acclaim among the business community and certainly there has been a lot of positive action since that announcement.

The Victorian Investment Corporation has been established as an investment vehicle to take minority equity positions in areas of competitive strength in technology. Mr Alan Tapley, formerly of Alcoa of Australia Ltd, is the Chief Executive of the Victorian Investment Corporation and his expertise in the private sector has certainly added a new dimension to the operations of the public sector in Victoria.

The areas in which the Victorian Investment Corporation has invested in equity terms—and I stress in a minority holding with the private sector—have been biotechnology, information technology, advanced materials—particularly ceramics—and advanced manufacturing technology.

I should also point out that, to date, the Victorian Investment Corporation has been involved in eleven ventures and is currently examining 25 other opportunities. Among those eleven ventures, one of the most important has been the Australian Medical Research and Development Consortium. The Government is fortunate that Dr John Stocker is the Chief Executive of that organisation. Formerly, he was the most senior non-Swiss person in F. Hoffman La Roche and Co. Ltd, and his expertise is of great assistance to that corporation.

That organisation is concerned with marketing the output of our great scientific and medical research institutes here in Victoria. Another one of the eleven ventures is the computer power.

Honourable members should note that a recent Economic Planning Advisory Committee paper lists 37 Australian companies as being at the forefront of high technology investment in Australia. I am pleased that 18 of the 37 companies identified by EPAC were in Victoria and that most of those have had some involvement either with the Victorian Investment Corporation or the Victorian Economic Development Corporation.

The Government's economic strategy has ensured that Victoria has the lowest unemployment rate, and the updated economic strategy will ensure that Victoria will have the strongest economy of all States in the period ahead.

MIDLAND MILK PTY LTD

Mr Richardson (Forest Hill)—I refer the Premier to his statement to the House that he took no part in Cabinet discussions on the special deal with Midland Milk Pty Ltd and ask: will the Premier inform the House whether he withdrew from the Cabinet room during those discussions and subsequent discussions regarding the dairy industry and Midland Milk Pty Ltd, and why was the special deal allowed to proceed since it broke an interstate agreement to which his Government is a party?

The Speaker—Order! Much of the question asked by the honourable member for Forest Hill refers to a matter that occurred in Cabinet. Generally, since I have been a member of this place, that type of question is not allowed; therefore, I rule that the question is disallowed.
Mr RICHARDSON—I shall rephrase the question. I ask the Premier why the special deal with Midland Milk Pty Ltd was permitted to proceed since it broke an interstate agreement to which his Government is a party.

Mr CAIN (Premier)—Last week I made the position clear in respect of the matter to which reference has been made, and I thought the honourable member for Forest Hill would have understood. The honourable member made a number of assumptions in the question he asked that I do not believe are correct.

I have made my position clear; the rules the Government has laid down regarding any issue in which a Minister may have a potential conflict are clear. Last week I indicated what those guidelines were and I again indicate that no Minister takes any part in any proceedings that relate to a matter in which there may be a potential conflict.

If I must stress the point any further, I am happy to make available the guidelines that the Government has laid down. When the Labor Party came to office, no guidelines existed. The intent of the guidelines is to ensure that the integrity of the Government is beyond reproach. The Government has set the pace in respect of these matters for the rest of the country; a number of matters to which the Government has directed attention with respect to the conduct of Ministers in the Cabinet process are emulated in other States. If the honourable member for Forest Hill, for his own edification and not for some reason of wishing to be vindictive, as other members seem to have as their objective, wants further information about how a Cabinet should behave, I shall be happy to provide that.

In considering this question and the previous question, I wonder about the intellectual capacity and the size of the minds of members of the Opposition who covet my job.

NUNAWADING PROVINCE BY-ELECTION

Mr STEGGALL (Swan Hill)—Did the Minister for Property and Services consult with the Premier, other Ministerial colleagues, members of Parliament or the Secretary of the Australian Labor Party, Mr Peter Batchelor, before deciding to seek a ninth and more favourable opinion on the charges relating to the Nunawading Province by-election how-to-vote card scandal?

Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Property and Services)—All I can say in reply to the honourable member is that I have made very clear to the House, in answering questions on the matter, the proceedings that were adopted by myself and the Government.

I emphatically deny the assertions by the National Party and the implications in the questions that came from the Liberal Party that there is a conspiracy or a cover-up of any kind. I have made very clear the role that I played and it is my view that the issue has been turned over by the Opposition and the National Party to no useful purpose.

PETITIONS

Lilydale High School

TO THE HONOURABLE THE SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED:

The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of Victoria, in particular, the community of the Lilydale High School, wishes to express their opposition to the deferment of the administration staff upgrade at the school, which was promised to begin June 1986.

Your petitioners therefore pray that funds be made available immediately.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Mr Plowman (520 signatures)
Drivers' licences

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled:

The humble petition of the residents of the Shire of Donald, who are citizens of the State of Victoria, sheweth that they are concerned and disadvantaged by the lack of photographic facilities for drivers' licence applicants in the area.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the necessary facilities will be provided.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Mr W. D. McGrath (744 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:

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

- Crimes Act 1958—No. 75.
- Food Act 1984—No. 67.
- Supreme Court Act 1986—Nos 72, 73, 74.
- Town and Country Planning Act 1961:
  - Melbourne Metropolitan Planning Scheme, Amendment Nos 386 Part 2, 387 Part 1A.

PUBLIC SERVICE (AMENDMENT) BILL

Mr Cain (Premier) moved for leave to bring in a Bill to amend Part V of the Public Service Act 1974 and for other purposes.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

FORESTS (DUNSTAN AGREEMENT) BILL

Mr Cathie (Minister for Education) moved for leave to bring in a Bill to ratify, validate, approve and otherwise give effect to an agreement with A. Dunstan Timber Sales Pty Ltd and for other purposes.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

VICTORIA STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE BILL

For Mr Mathews (Minister for Police and Emergency Services), Mr Fordham (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources) moved for leave to bring in a Bill to reconstitute the Victoria State Emergency Service and for other purposes.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.
Psychologists Registration Bill

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport) moved for leave to bring in a Bill to make provision for the registration of psychologists, to repeal the Psychological Practices Act 1965 and for other purposes.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES (AMENDMENT) BILL

Mr WILKES (Minister for Housing) moved for leave to bring in a Bill to amend the Residential Tenancies Act 1980 and the Administrative Law Act 1978 and for other purposes.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

JURISDICTION OF COURTS (CROSS-VESTING) BILL

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—On behalf of the Minister for the Arts, I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the Jurisdiction of Courts (Cross-Vesting) Bill 1986 is to establish a system of cross-vesting of jurisdiction between Federal, State and Territory courts. The Bill is the result of extensive consultations between the Commonwealth and the States in the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General. Under the cross-vesting scheme, the Commonwealth and each State and the Northern Territory will enact reciprocal legislation in similar terms to this Bill. The proposed legislation will resolve difficulties that presently exist in determining the jurisdictional limits of Federal, State and Territory courts without detracting from the existing jurisdictions of those courts. I take this opportunity of thanking the Special Committee of Solicitors-General for its work in the development of the proposed legislation.

BACKGROUND

Under the present system, several difficulties have arisen. First, there is considerable uncertainty about the jurisdictional limits of Federal and State courts. Secondly, related proceedings which should be heard together must sometimes be heard by different courts. These problems produce anomalies, inconvenience to litigants and a waste of public resources. It is notable and unfortunate that the shortcomings of the present system are particularly evident in the areas of trade practices and family law, which touch the everyday lives of very many people in the community.

Not surprisingly, there is growing frustration in the community and the legal profession with a system of courts in which geographic and other jurisdictional limitation get in the way of the efficient resolution of disputes. Despite efforts by the High Court of Australia to resolve many of the jurisdictional problems that have arisen, problems still exist which require legislative action for a solution. Governments and Parliaments have a responsibility on behalf of the community to find solutions to these problems which at present impede the efficient administration of justice.

THE CROSS-VESTING SCHEME

The essence of the proposed cross-vesting scheme is that State and Territory Supreme Courts will be vested with all the civil jurisdiction—except certain industrial and trade practices jurisdiction—of the Federal courts—the Federal Court and the Family Court—and the Federal courts will be vested with the full civil jurisdiction of the State and
Territory Supreme Courts. This will ensure that courts will not have to determine the boundaries between Federal, State and Territory jurisdiction. The scheme, although simple in concept, amounts to a radical change in the Australian judicial system. The Bill seeks to cross-vest jurisdiction in such a way that Federal and State courts will, by and large, keep within their ‘proper’ jurisdictional fields. To achieve this, the proposed Commonwealth and State legislation makes detailed and comprehensive provision for transfers between courts which should ensure that proceedings begun in an inappropriate court, or related proceedings begun in separate courts, will be transferred to an appropriate court.

The provisions relating to cross-vesting will need to be applied only in those exceptional cases where there are jurisdictional uncertainties and where there is a real need to have matters tried together in the one court. The successful operation of the cross-vesting scheme will depend very much upon courts approaching the legislation in accordance with its general purpose and intention as indicated in the preamble to the Commonwealth and State legislation. Courts will need to be ruthless in the exercise of their transferral powers to ensure that litigants do not engage in ‘forum shopping’ by commencing proceedings in inappropriate courts or resort to other tactical manoeuvres. I have every confidence that the courts will approach the legislation in accordance with its spirit and purpose.

SPECIAL FEDERAL MATTERS

The Bill provides for the compulsory transfer from the Supreme Court to the Federal Court of any ‘special Federal matter’ unless it appears to the Supreme Court that, by reason of the particular circumstances of the case, it is both inappropriate for the matter to be transferred to the Federal Court and appropriate for the Supreme Court to determine the proceedings. The expression ‘special Federal matter’ refers to matters of special Commonwealth concern, being matters that at present are within the exclusive jurisdiction of the Federal Court. An example is judicial review of decisions taken under Commonwealth enactments, under the Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

An important part of the agreement between the Commonwealth and the States is that a committee of the Chief Justices of State and Territory Supreme Courts and the Chief Judges of the Federal Court and the Family Court be established to monitor the operation of the scheme and to report regularly to the Standing Committee.

Provision is also made for review of the arrangements. After a trial period of three years, each party to the scheme would have the right to withdraw from it upon giving notice to the other parties.

CONCLUSION

Victoria's participation in the scheme is consistent with the Government's efforts to make the court system more accessible and more efficient. An important part of this objective is giving courts greater flexibility to resolve disputes in accordance with the justice of the case, without being hamstrung by unmeritorious restrictions on jurisdiction. The cross-vesting scheme will allow multifaceted litigation to be resolved in one hearing by the most appropriate court. This will save precious time, minimise expense for the parties and increase the capacity of courts to satisfy the needs of litigants and the community. I commend the Bill to the House.

On the motion of Mr JOHN (Bendigo East), the debate was adjourned.

It was ordered that the debate be adjourned until Tuesday, April 28.
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Mr RICHARDSON (Forest Hill) (By leave)—Mr Speaker, I raise a point of order with respect to a ruling you made during question time about the inadmissibility of a question. I asked the Premier whether he would inform the House if he withdrew from the Cabinet room during discussions on a particular matter.

You ruled the question as inadmissible on the grounds that it related to Cabinet. I put it to you, Sir, that you were in error and I ask you to reconsider your ruling. The reason I put it to you that your ruling was in error is as follows: there is no reference covering inadmissibility in either May or the Standing Orders which supports your ruling.

Furthermore, there is no reference in the notes which have been provided for your use which would support your ruling. The only reference occurring in May is on page 342 where it states:

Among the subjects on which successive administrations have refused to answer questions upon grounds of public policy are discussions between Ministers or between Ministers and their official advisers or the proceedings of Cabinet or Cabinet committees; security matters including the operation of the security services...

The earlier part of that quotation is particularly relevant. You will note, Mr Speaker, that the key words are "successive administrations have refused to answer questions", not that successive Speakers or the Standing Orders have ruled them to be inadmissible.

However, it goes on to state that the proceedings of Cabinet discussions between Ministers and their policy advisers or proceedings of Cabinet committees are subjects about which successive administrations have refused to answer questions and not that successive Speakers or the Standing Orders have ruled them to be inadmissible.

Therefore, I put it to you, Sir, that the question asked of the Premier whether he withdrew from the Cabinet room during the discussion of a particular subject, to which he himself had already alluded previously—particularly in the light of his statement that he took no part in discussions on that subject—lies outside the matters of confidentiality of Cabinet discussions which is referred to at page 342 of May.

I was not asking the Premier to divulge what was discussed in Cabinet. The honourable gentleman indicated to the House last week the subject of discussions in which he said he took no part. The question did not intrude upon the privacy of Cabinet discussions. The matter discussed was already one of public knowledge because the Premier had already referred to it.

My question directed itself to the Premier's action as he had not taken part in those discussions. The question was simply whether he withdrew from the Cabinet room during such discussions. There was, in my view, no basis either in Standing Orders or at pages 342 and 343 of May upon which that question should have been ruled inadmissible.

I do not ask that you, Sir, should rule upon the matter now but that you should consider the points I have made in support of my contention and that at a later time you should make a ruling on this matter.

It is important that that process should be carried out because, if it is not and your ruling today is left in the public record as it stands, you, Sir, will have created a precedent that will last for all time in the proceedings of the House.

I suggest to you, Sir, in light of the circumstances of the question that was asked today and the ruling you gave, that it is not a precedent that would serve the House well over the next few hundred years, or for however long this House may be in existence.

I do not ask that you rule immediately, Sir, but that you give consideration to the matters I have raised and, after having given such consideration, announce your ruling to the House.
Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources) (By leave)—Mr Speaker, the honourable member for Forest Hill, in his opening comments, challenged your ruling. It is my strong belief that your ruling from the Chair is very much in accordance with past practices of this House under successive Speakers and, of course, successive Governments.

The principle of the sanctity of Cabinet discussions—and the word “proceedings” was mentioned by the honourable member—not being within the generally accepted purview of question time, that is, the administration of the Minister to whom the question is addressed—and therefore not being subject to scrutiny, is proper and is a precedent in this House.

If there is some doubt in your mind, Mr Speaker, I should welcome a clear statement from you today or, after consideration, at a later time. However, I have no doubt from my knowledge of Standing Orders and previous rulings of your predecessors in the chair that your ruling today is very much in accordance, and quite properly so, with the precedents followed by this House. I share the hope of the honourable member for Forest Hill that this institution will last for hundreds of years and I am certain that your ruling will stand for that period.

Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition) (By leave)—Mr Speaker, I have heard what the Deputy Premier has asked of you, but the question at issue is whether by giving the ruling you have established a precedent.

The honourable member for Forest Hill said that there has been no previous ruling on such an issue and that the ruling given by you, Sir, today, in all good faith, does set a precedent that is not supportable by the evidence sought and quoted by the honourable member for Forest Hill.

Therefore, I urge you, Mr Speaker, even if it requires time to consider your verdict, to bear in mind that if you stand by your ruling you will have set a precedent and will enshrine in our records, particularly for incoming Speakers in the years ahead, a ruling that is not in the spirit of May as it currently stands.

I argue strongly that this is not a political issue but is an endeavour to ensure that you, Sir, do not set a precedent that will bind this Parliament today and in the future, based on an historical analysis that shows no such ruling has ever been given.

The SPEAKER—Order! While the point was being elaborated upon by honourable members I have considered the matter raised by the honourable member for Forest Hill and I am prepared to respond to it now.

I have been in this House since 1967 and, as sure as I am standing here, I am certain that I have heard my predecessors rule as I did today in respect of matters affecting the sanctity of Cabinet.

When the honourable member for Forest Hill asked a question along the lines of, “Did the Premier walk out of the Cabinet meeting”, I believed he was asking a question about the physical matters associated with the meeting of Cabinet, so I ruled his question out of order. I allowed the honourable member to rephrase the question, which he did immediately, and he received a response from the Premier.

I do not believe my action was unique; I believe similar incidents have occurred previously. However, if it has set a precedent, that is the purpose of being in the position of a Presiding Officer. One does set precedents; all precedents from the past are now compiled for reference. On this occasion it may be referred to as an action taken by the present Presiding Officer.

I do not wish to split straws on the matter but I do not believe the honourable member was denied his rights. He was able to ask a question. If a precedent has been set that is causing some concern to the honourable member, in the future another Presiding Officer
can change the precedent by establishing another precedent. Therefore, I do not uphold the point raised by the honourable member for Forest Hill.

**ANIMAL PREPARATIONS BILL**

The debate (adjourned from March 26) on the motion of Mr Jolly (Treasurer) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

**Mr AUSTIN (Ripon)**—The Bill will re-enact the law relating to the registration of animal preparations and the regulation of the sale and use of those preparations. It will also repeal the Stock Foods Act 1958, the Stock Medicines Act 1958 and the Sheep Branding Fluids Act 1963 and will amend the Agricultural Chemicals Act 1958 and certain other Acts.

The Bill comes about because of the report of the Public Bodies Review Committee, that was tabled on 8 March 1986. It should be recognised that the findings of the committee—which is made up from members of the three political parties—were unanimous and, therefore, the Opposition supports the Bill.

The Stock Medicines Board is to be abolished. It would in any case cease to be on 8 May if legislation were not passed to continue its existence.

The Opposition agrees with the Government's decision that there ought to be a single national registration system for all animal preparations. Currently discussions are being held with the Commonwealth and all States to endeavour to establish a uniform registration system that will operate right across the land.

In its findings, the Public Bodies Review Committee considered that the Stock Medicines Board had been effective in carrying out its functions prescribed under the Stock Medicines Act and it had also worked closely with the technical committee on veterinary drugs. However, in its deliberations, the committee found some deficiencies which existed in the total control of the registration system and that was the reason it was decided that the Act needed redrafting.

Clause 4 sets out the objects of the Bill which are:

(a) To protect domestic and export trade by making provision to ensure that unacceptable residues do not occur in food derived from stock;

Honourable members will recognise the importance of that object, the dangers that have existed in the past and the necessity for responsible people and Governments to do all they can to ensure that that effect is minimised in every way possible. The other objects are:

(b) To protect consumers by setting adequate standards for the safety, efficacy and quality of animal preparations;

(b) To protect and promote animal welfare by ensuring that animal preparations are safe and effective.

Honourable members would agree that they are desirable objects.

Part 3 of the Bill relates to the Animal Preparations Board, which is to consist of seven members appointed by the Ministry—and this is of concern to the Opposition—of whom four shall be officers of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs; one shall be a person whose name is included in a panel of not less than three names submitted to the Minister by a body that the Minister considers to be representative of veterinary surgeons; one shall be a person whose name is included in a panel of not less than three names submitted to the Minister by a body that the Minister considers to be representative of veterinary surgeons; one shall be a person nominated by the Minister administering Part II of the Health Act 1958.

The Minister must appoint one of the members referred to under the officers of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs to be chairman of the board.
The Opposition is concerned about the make-up of the Animal Preparations Board and it is particularly concerned that there is no person who is an end user of animal preparations to be appointed to that board. It was our intention to move an amendment to overcome that situation, so that included in the panel would be not less than three names submitted of persons representative of primary producers.

Apparently, on advice from the Clerks, there is some technical problem in moving such an amendment and so we will not be able to go ahead with it. In another place the Opposition will ask the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs to give consideration to ensuring that there are representatives on the board who are primary producers or end users of the products. That makes commonsense!

With those remarks, I confirm the fact that the Opposition supports the Bill.

Mr STEGGALL (Swan Hill)—As a member of the Public Bodies Review Committee, which looked into this subject, I am pleased to join in the debate on the Bill. The Stock Medicines Board served this State and its area of expertise well over the years, but the committee believed—and this has been reflected in the proposed legislation and I congratulate the Minister for introducing the Bill in this way—the Stock Medicines Board required changes to its procedures and area of operation to enable it to deal with modern foodstuffs and products used in primary industry.

Although the committee did not recommend the name of the Animal Preparations Board—it had some difficulty in recommending a name and in its report it recommended the Stock Medicines and Animal Foodstuffs Board, which is similar to that in Western Australia—the recommendations of the committee have been accepted by those with which it has had contact, and also, obviously, by the Government.

The Bill encompasses almost all the points recommended in the report and the areas that are not provided for in the Bill will be covered by the regulations.

The committee recommended that the new board be responsible for evaluating and registering all stock foods except for pet food formulation, pesticides and stock medicines for use in Victoria. It recommended that the board participate in the existing Federal clearance system for new drugs and medicines used for new purposes. That is the intent of the Bill.

The proposed legislation provides guarantees of confidentiality of product formulae submitted by applicants at the time of registration and that has been a problem with some companies. That has been provided for in the Bill.

The committee recommended that appeal provisions be built into the proposed legislation with the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and it also recommended that temporary permits be allowed and that labelling requirements be better than they have been previously.

The Bill reflects closely the intentions of the report of the Public Bodies Review Committee in that the operation of the Animal Preparations Board will depend heavily on the department, the Minister and the wholesalers, manufacturers and retailers who will use the products that go through the board.

I hope it will play a responsible role because it will deal in areas that can be confusing. The board could be a vehicle for hindering or making things difficult in respect of stock medicines in primary industry throughout Victoria. The same was true of the former Stock Medicines Board, but our experience was that that was not a problem in most cases.

Part 2 of the Bill deals with control over animal preparations.

Clause 4 sets out the objects of the Bill and provides:

The objects of this Act are as follows:

(a) To protect domestic and export trade by making provision to ensure that unacceptable residues do not occur in food derived from stock;
(b) To protect consumers by setting adequate standards for the safety, efficacy and quality of animal preparations;
(c) To protect and promote animal welfare by ensuring that animal preparations are safe and effective.

I believe the Bill provides the vehicle that allows these objectives to be achieved.

The board will consist of seven members; comprising four representatives of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs; one representative of the pharmaceutical chemists; one representative of the veterinary surgeons and one member nominated by the Minister.

I believe this was the first report that was completed by the Public Bodies Review Committee. The approach to the subject by all committee members was sincere and first-rate, as it has been in all of the committee’s deliberations, but this is the first of its reports that have been brought into proposed legislation.

The National Party supports the Bill and hopes the board will be able to carry out its duties and responsibilities in a proper, efficient and workable manner.

Mr DELZOPPO (Narracan)—Before dealing with the Bill, I declare that I am a registered pharmaceutical chemist, but neither I nor any member of my family currently has any interest in a pharmacy.

Mr MacIellan—But do you take medicine?

Mr DELZOPPO—That is a leading question, to which I shall decline to reply as my reply may incriminate me with other honourable members.

Mr MacIellan—What about Grecian 2000?

Mr DELZOPPO—On the question of Grecian 2000, I advised a number of people during my 32 years in pharmaceutical practice. If the honourable member for Berwick had come to my pharmacy, I would have given him the same sincere advice that I gave to the rest of my customers.

Part 2 of the Bill deals with applications for the registration of animal preparations. Honourable members will be aware that the Bill requires that people who formulate new products for animal use must have those products registered.

After the Minister had delivered his second-reading speech, I circulated the Bill to a number of interested parties within my electorate, including some pharmacists and veterinary surgeons and I received a reply from Dr Chris Parris, a veterinary surgeon, who directed my attention to several points concerning Part 2. In his letter Dr Parris says:

The basic principles of the Bill are obviously good. However, I do have some worries regarding its implementation.

1. On page 5, line 31, subsection (3) I would like to see a time limit for the submission of applications to the board from the time subsection (2) has been completed. Unless this occurs there could well be unreasonable delays in the registration of products.

That is a reasonable request which the Government should take on board and, while the Bill is between here and another place, either by way of amendment or by way of regulation, ensure that a person who does research and brings forward an animal preparation that he wishes to sell can do so as quickly as possible after the application is made. It is in the interests of both the manufacturer and the user of the product that that should be the case.

Dr Parris continues:

2. Similarly a minimum frequency for meetings of the board should be laid down in the Act.

I put it to the Minister that that could well be done by amendment of the Bill or by regulation. The point Dr Parris makes is that long delays between meetings of the board could be costly and could prevent a preparation from being registered as quickly as possible.

Dr Parris makes the further point:
3. I would like to see that the prescribed fees are not prohibitive to the registration of products for which there is a limited market nor prohibitive for companies with a small market share.

He is saying that some veterinary products have a very narrow market indeed; they are used specifically for only occasional diseases or occasional conditions in various animals. Products that have only a small demand, but which meet a necessary demand, may not be brought forward for registration or renewal of registration if the registration fees are too onerous.

Dr Parris also mentions the monopoly situation of the big companies and says that, if registration fees are too high, the large companies will be in a position to manufacture and register products and that this monopoly situation will not be in the public interest.

The fourth point he makes is:

Prescribed fees should be used only by the Animal Preparations Board and under no circumstances should such fees be used for general Government revenue raising . . .

He makes the point concerning one brand of teat dip. Honourable members will be aware that teat dip is applied to the teats of cows before milking to prevent the animals from developing mastitis. Dr Parris makes the point that the current registration fee for one brand of teat dip is $1800.

That is not in the public interest. It is in the public interest to prevent mastitis at the lowest possible cost. I put those suggestions forward to the Minister for Consumer Affairs so that the Minister can reply to those points in closing the second-reading debate.

I ask the Minister for Consumer Affairs to raise those matters with his colleagues to see if those points that I have mentioned can be picked up either by amendment or regulation between here and another place.

Mrs TONER (Greensborough)—It gives me great pleasure to follow my Parliamentary colleagues on the Public Bodies Review Committee in the debate. The Bill is the culmination of that committee's examination of the Stock Medicines Board, the report of which was tabled in Parliament in May 1986.

The proposed legislation contains the major recommendations in that report. The committee recommended that the Stock Medicines Board be abolished and be replaced with an organisation that has wider powers and responsibilities. The proposed legislation sets in motion procedures establishing the Animal Preparations Board but provides a safeguard with the continuum of the Stock Medicines Board until the establishment of the new Board.

The Bill provides for a single registration system for all types of animal preparations and for greater control in the sale and use of animal preparations. It is an important amendment with the increasing number of products coming onto the market. It is essential that new products coming onto the market do not pose a risk either to animals or society.

I am pleased that discussions are occurring between State Governments and the Commonwealth Government regarding the introduction of a uniform registration system. It is a vital that such a system be implemented because a national agreed procedure and standard for registration of all types of animal preparations will be extremely beneficial to the community.

The Minister for Consumer Affairs appreciates the difficulties when there is a plethora of new products on the market, and that applies to products used for animals as well as human beings. Governments must be vigilant to ensure that certain dangerous products do not get into the human food chain.

The establishment of a body which is able to exercise wide powers and responsibilities takes cognisance of those points that I have outlined. I commend the Bill to the House and agree with the sensible suggestion put forward by the honourable member for Narracan.
Mr COLEMAN (Syndal)—The animal industry has been at the forefront of the development of artificial insemination and a range of husbandry practices. Legislation in this area was introduced almost ten years before legislation controlling human medicine practices. The animal industry has been at the forefront of procedures that are now being undertaken by the medical profession.

The Public Bodies Review Committee in dealing with policing and punitive powers in chapter 3, 3.2.7 stated:

Additional powers need to be granted in any proposed new stock medicines legislation to assist the transition from a registration system based on point of sale to one based on sale and use. Effective regulation of stock medicines use requires inputs from all the parties involved. Reliance on detection by the regulatory authority alone (in this instance, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs) is unlikely to be highly effective. The committee feels some responsibility must be borne by manufacturers, importers, vendors and users of stock medicines if Victoria is to have an effective system of stock medicines regulation.

However, the structure of the Animal Preparations Board follows closely on the structure and membership of the Stock Medicines Board. Its membership will comprise four officers from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs; a veterinary surgeon; a representative of pharmaceutical chemists and one member nominated by the Minister for Health. The input on decision making by manufacturers, users and vendors is limited.

The rural community is finding that many professionals in that area are becoming more powerful. I instance a number of difficulties that have been outlined to me. A product called Opticure has been on the market in Victoria for some time. That product is used for the treatment of pink eye in sheep and cattle. It is a chloromycetin derivative and within the past twelve months that product has been withdrawn from sale because it is a chloromycetin derivative and should be obtained only on the advice of a veterinary surgeon. If a beast has pink eye, a limited number of options are available. For treatment in this instance there are no other products available that may be purchased by rural producers through the normal purchasing outlets.

Pink eye is a painful disease for cattle or sheep. It could be treated by the use of Opticure, but that product has been withdrawn from the market and other remedies for curing the problem are far less humane.

Many people will say that kerosene and diesoline may be used for the cure of pink eye. It is an instance where a product has been withdrawn from sale without another product being put in its place.

Recently, considerable publicity was given to the detection of an animal preparation found particularly in bobby calf meat. That is of concern to exporters but little work has been done to find a substitute product for the treatment of mastitis, other than a penicillin injection.

That is another area where it seems that the users' requirements are not being fully recognised by the veterinary fraternity. A recommendation of the Public Bodies Review Committee was that someone who is able to bring a balance to what seems to be a fairly biased type of committee ought to be placed on the board. I recognise that the bulk of the work deals with registrations where chemical knowledge is essential, but some of the decisions made in the withdrawal of product area need input from a user representative.

There is a problem—advice is being sought from the Clerks—in increasing the membership of the board, simply because it requires that a message be given today. Honourable members would want consideration to be given, while the Bill is between the two Houses, to the fact that users are the best people to articulate problems they identify when decisions are being taken by the board and should therefore be represented on it. The Minister for Consumer Affairs may follow up this point.

The rural community is becoming increasingly apprehensive about the way in which its affairs are being dealt with. This would be one way of ensuring that people in the rural community are given a voice on a body which will have a direct effect on their incomes.
The Animal Preparations Bill seeks to do away with the old Stock Medicines Board and establish a new board to ensure that the practices relating to animal preparations are in order and will assist the livestock industry in this country.

It is interesting to note that the national debt has increased considerably since the decline in incomes to primary industries began. In order to bring about a surge away from the indebtedness, primary industries will need to rise once again to the forefront of export earnings.

Primary producers are always conscious of the role the animal plays in the export earnings field. The meat and wool industries are important in this regard. In recent years there has been neglect in some of the preparations of fluid applications used to control lice and other parasites that host on sheep. Only four or five years ago people in the grazing industry were concerned that some of the applications were leaving scarring on the skins of animals.

I hope that before new medications or rinses are released proper research will be done so that the open market does not become the testing arena. It is also disconcerting, bearing in mind the value of the wool industry and the excitement that has been generated in the past two or three months about increased wool prices, that the Australian Wool Board issued a news release two months ago indicating that concern has been expressed by some overseas scouring plants that diazine, one of the components used for fly control in the sheep industry, was affecting the scouring factory environment. As an export country we need to be aware that the chemicals used to control various parasites in the livestock industry do not present difficulties if and when residue of the products remain in our commodities which are exported to overseas markets.

The proposed legislation provides that the new board shall comprise four members from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, one representative of veterinary surgeons, one representative of pharmaceutical chemists and one person nominated by the Minister for Health. The National Party expressed concern, as did the Liberal Party, that there is not a representative from either the farmers or users, because input from those areas could be helpful to the board.

I hope the board will ensure that when in good faith farmers use preparations that have been placed on the market to increase productivity and income return on their livestock enterprises, they know that proper research and trials have been undertaken because nothing would cause the National Party more concern than the sale of a chemical that causes ramifications in the livestock industry. The board has a real responsibility to ensure that any chemicals or commodities that are released to the livestock industry as animal preparations will be safe and effective. I hope the board will exercise that responsibility with discretion in the best interests of the livestock industry.

Dr WELLS (Dromana)—I have pleasure in commending the work and findings of the Public Bodies Review Committee and the Government for bringing forward the Bill. It was obvious to me in my years of practice as a veterinary surgeon and since that it is desirable that in each State of Australia the organisation of these matters be streamlined as much as possible, and that a single State authority should be responsible. That is an important step forward in the proposal. It will help in a number of ways, such as favouring the efficacy of preparations that are sold.

This is a move which has taken firm hold only in recent years, even in the field of human medicine. Many years ago there were many more products on the market that were, with the best will in the world and perhaps sometimes without goodwill, not effective. This move will also help, as was mentioned by another honourable member, in the control of the use of various therapeutic preparations. The community recognises the need to ensure that drugs that are used to combat infectious diseases—bacterial, fungal and parasitic infectious diseases—are not squandered by being spread around unnecessarily.
The more a drug comes into contact with a disease-causing living agent, the more opportunity there is for the agent to develop resistance to that drug. Many of the antibiotics that are used in the veterinary field are also used in human medicine, and it is important that we preserve and protect these drugs for attacking those diseases.

I listened with interest to the discussion about the desirability of placing on the proposed board a member who represents rural Victoria. As a veterinary surgeon, I think that is a very good suggestion. I see no reason why we should not do it from a technical angle. If there is some reason why this could not be done at a Parliamentary level, I hope that can be solved. I am sure it is in line with the Government's current philosophy in other areas, wherever possible, of having people on boards to represent the community viewpoint in concert with that of the professionals on the board. The matter might be resolved by adding one person to the membership of the board, if necessary.

I take the point that there are many good reasons why rural Victoria would favour the overall functioning of the board and the efficiency of the proposed legislation if the community had representation on the board and people were aware of that representation and had feedback through it.

I am concerned in principle about the question of fees for registration of products. The point has been made by the honourable member for Lowan—and I am sure by others—that rural Victoria and Australia at this time face real economic difficulties which are not likely to go away easily. The steady cost price squeeze over recent years has meant, as I think few metropolitan Victorians realise, that increasingly rural Victoria has moved into very dangerous economic times and farmers have great difficulties in remaining economically viable.

It is not just domestic matters that are affected; rural products still present the single biggest group of export earners we have. It is important that we not increase the cost burden on these preparations. One other reason that makes it more unusually important is that the discovery, development and testing of these compounds and drugs is inordinately expensive.

A comment was made earlier about large and small firms involved in the preparation, development and sale of these materials. I regret to say that over recent years small firms are less able to compete because of the cost of development, testing and approving the efficacy of the compounds. It is becoming very much a big company league. Even so, the cost of development and testing is still so high that we should do nothing that adds unreasonably to that cost.

The development of a modern antibiotic is not something that can be sustained by a market in any one country. It requires virtually a worldwide market to make it profitable for companies to venture the tens of millions of dollars that are involved in the preparation of a major therapeutic substance. For each substance that goes to market a thousand or more have certainly been tested, and those costs have to be allowed for. It is undesirable and unacceptable for a Government of any political persuasion to benefit from these fees by having them higher than the bare minimum necessary to account for the administrative costs concerned. There is no case for considering that this is a profit-making area; it is one in which we should do nothing other than encourage the production and sale of proven therapeutic products.

The capacity to pay of the user of drugs in the animal field is very much less than it is in the human field, yet the same drugs are frequently used in both places, and it makes it very difficult for a farmer to use antibiotics at a high cost. Therefore, we should keep that cost as low as possible.

I turn to simplified uniform management of this area within the State, and point out that the move towards selling products that can be proven from experimental techniques to be effective for the conditions for which they are sold is highly desirable. I am not saying that we should wipe out overnight everything that does not have a perfect demonstration
of efficacy. It is difficult in many conditions to provide that proof. One does not wish to knock out small companies against big companies either, but we need to favour a system that will encourage the testing for efficacy of the preparations put forward.

That is something to which the board can continue to address itself. The old board has been doing that, more so in recent times, but we need to look and, wherever reasonably possible, ensure that what is sold will be effective if used properly, and if the diagnosis was correct in the beginning.

Finally, as has been pointed out by previous speakers, it is extremely important for animal products to have a national registration system. Without casting aspersions on anyone or any previous organisation, I note that from a sheer economic and numerical viewpoint alone, on an impersonal basis, it is ludicrous to think that a nation of sixteen million people can justify or support half a dozen different registration systems.

From my work over the years with various manufacturers and companies, I know it is not just a question of the cost being too much for people to bear so they do not venture forth at all; it is also a question of frustration that may destroy their efforts in having to go from one board to another in other States and throughout the nation. The sooner we have a national registration system in Australia the better.

I commend the Government on the Bill.

Mr SPYKER (Minister for Consumer Affairs)—I thank honourable members for their contributions. It reflects their good work and the good work of the Public Bodies Review Committee in the consensus it reached. This is an important area.

Although we may talk about exports in the metal industry and other areas, we come back to the stable commodity, and we rely on the rural sector for that. We are pleased that there is a reasonable return for farmers from wool and beef. It is a shame that the same cannot be said about other sectors in the rural industry. All honourable members recognise the importance of rural exports and how important it is to maintain high standards.

The honourable member for Greensborough raised the matter of new products on the market. There are hundreds of new products coming on to the market every month.

We must ensure that those products are effective and that the diseases with which the rural sector is confronted are eradicated as quickly as possible so that Australia can maintain its high standard and its world reputation, which is most important for an exporting nation.

Mention was made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition of the composition of the Animal Preparations Board. Three names have been submitted by the existing body to the Minister for consideration as representatives of veterinary surgeons, pharmaceutical chemists and another person nominated by the Minister for Health.

The suggestion was made that serious consideration should be given to having on the board a representative from the rural sector. I give the undertaking that I shall raise the matter with the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs while the Bill is between here and another place. I understand the difficulties that the Opposition has in moving an amendment in this House.

The honourable member for Narracan mentioned that fees should be kept to a minimum. The Government is conscious that people, not only in this area but also in the rural sector generally and other sectors in the community, are having a difficult time and that fees and costs should be kept down to an absolute minimum so that this State can remain competitive in the marketplace.

The honourable member for Dromana referred to a national registration board. I strongly support him in his view because, unfortunately, although we are all proud to be Victorians, we tend to be a little parochial on many issues. We must consider the issue on a wider horizon; we actually act and operate as a nation rather than six separate colonies within a
federation. Unfortunately, that sort of parochialism gets the better of us all from time to time, and we tend to exploit it for our benefit.

I am sure the cost to the primary industries would be significantly reduced if a national registration board were established. I believe it was mentioned in the Minister's second-reading speech that that would be one of the aims and objectives of the measure.

There is probably a need for cooperation on all sides to achieve that; certain people will need to make compromises if that is to be achieved. However, I am sure that the costs to the primary sector would be significantly reduced, and overseas organisations would deal with only one body rather than the bodies of six individual States.

Again, I thank all honourable members for their contributions to the debate, which have been worth while. As a result of recommendations of the Public Bodies Review Committee, the former Stock Medicines Board will go out of existence and will be replaced by the Animal Preparations Board. The transformation will be able to take place as smoothly as possible as a result of the cooperation of honourable members on all sides of the House.

The motion was agreed to.

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

AGRICULTURAL ACTS (AMENDMENT) BILL

The debate (adjourned from March 26) on the motion of Mr Jolly (Treasurer) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

Mr AUSTIN (Ripon)—The Opposition supports the Bill. It is a fairly non-controversial measure which contains a number of machinery provisions that cover a very wide spectrum indeed. The Bill is a result of the work of the Public Bodies Review Committee, as was the Animal Preparations Bill. That committee was given the task of examining some seventeen statutory bodies that came under the jurisdiction of the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

The Bill amends the Marketing of Primary Products Act, the Tobacco Leaf Industry Stabilization Act, the Wheat Marketing Act, the Swine Compensation Act and the Broiler Chicken Industry Act. Those amendments require a submission regarding the annual reports of the various boards under those Acts and includes recommendations from the Auditor-General for the preparation of financial statements and auditing.

I should like to address the various specific areas contained in the Bill. I shall deal firstly with the amendments to the Tobacco Leaf Industry Stabilization Act. Those provisions abolish the Tobacco Quota Committee and the Tobacco Quota Appeals Tribunal. The functions of that tribunal will in future be referred to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. The quota committee and the quota appeals tribunal will cease to exist as at 22 October 1987.

In its deliberations, the Public Bodies Review Committee also made two other recommendations: firstly, that a tender pool be established into which vendors placed nominated quantities of quota for sale; and, secondly, that an upper limit of 100 000 kilograms be placed on quota entitlements vested in any individual company or business enterprise.

Those two recommendations were not adopted by the Government. As I understand it, the industry generally agrees that they should not have been so adopted. I have always had an objection to placing limits on quotas in various industries. When debate took place in this House on the egg industry Bill, the Opposition was opposed to the limits that were placed on egg quotas.

In this case, again, the Public Bodies Review Committee made such a recommendation. Although it recommended that a limit of 100 0000 kilograms be placed on future quota
holders, it did concede that those who already had a quota in excess of 100,000 kilograms would be able to continue to operate on the quota on which they had operated at the time.

I turn now to the amendments to the Wheat Marketing Act. The Bill abolishes the Victorian Wheat Advisory Committee, which is a statutory authority. I understand the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs has given an undertaking to the industry—that is, to the Grains Division of the Victorian Farmers Federation—following a submission from the grains division and following discussions after that submission, to establish a non-statutory advisory committee.

I hope that initiative will be placed on the record today by the Minister for Consumer Affairs, and that he will take up the matter with the Minister in the other place. As I understand it, the Grains Division of the Victorian Farmers Federation would like such an undertaking to be placed on the Hansard record in this place.

It was also indicated to me by the Victorian Farmers Federation that that advisory committee, when set up, would have representatives from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the Victorian Farmers Federation and the flour miller industry. It is important that the Victorian Farmers Federation be well represented in its pursuit of looking after the interests of wheat growers in this State.

I refer to the Swine Compensation Act which the Bill will amend by allowing the Treasurer, on the recommendation of the Minister, to make payments from the Swine Compensation Fund for projects which would be of benefit to the pig industry.

In recent times, modern technology has been responsible for the eradication of many of the traditional diseases found in the pig industry. Because of that, the fund has built up. It makes sense to use some of that surplus money for the benefit of the industry generally. However, the Bill stipulates that the credit balance in that fund must not fall below $500,000.

The Bill also establishes the Swine Industry Projects Advisory Committee. It will comprise five members appointed by the Minister; two from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and three chosen from a panel of at least five names submitted to the Minister by an organisation. It is not stipulated what that organisation is that the Minister considers will represent the swine industry in Victoria. To clarify that matter and to ensure the industry is properly represented, the Opposition will move an amendment during the Committee stage. The Opposition supports the Bill and wishes it a speedy passage.

Mr STEGGALL (Swan Hill)—The Bill amends the Marketing of Primary Products Act and gives clear directions to various organisations about their accounting, reporting and auditing responsibilities. It brings those bodies into line with what has become accepted as normal accounting needs for these bodies and makes them responsible to report to Parliament each year.

The Bill also places objectives into the Tobacco Leaf Industry Stabilisation Act which were not there previously but which are necessary.

The Public Bodies Review Committee has a responsibility covering seventeen primary industry organisations. It is interesting that this powerful review committee is being used solely by the Government to examine agricultural bodies. I wonder why this has happened! I am sure the Government would not allow such a committee loose on metropolitan bodies. However, it has allowed the committee to examine a large number of bodies covering complicated areas of the agricultural industry.

I doubt whether the committee will ever complete the task of reviewing the seventeen bodies. The make-up of the committee is interesting in that apart from three country members and one member from Geelong, the balance of the members are from the metropolitan area. The workload placed on country representatives is enormous.
The only body not operating within the electorate I represent is that covering the tobacco leaf industry. The remaining bodies all, in some way, have a production base in the electorate I represent.

I am finding it a burden being involved with so many bodies. Some of the areas that the Public Bodies Review Committee is investigating have built up their operations over many years. I have difficulty convincing members of the committee of the importance of some of these bodies, their past practices and the way they operate.

The Victorian Wheat Advisory Committee was examined by the Public Bodies Review Committee. After some months of investigation and a virtual rewrite of its original report, the committee finally submitted its report to Parliament.

The committee members believed they were probably doing the right thing in recommending that the committee be made a non-statutory committee; in other words, an advisory committee to the Minister.

Many arguments were advanced by all political parties about the need to cut down on statutory bodies and it was decided that the Victorian Wheat Advisory Committee could take on a purely advisory role and be placed back on the track from which it had strayed over the years.

I note that the Bill abolishes the Victorian Wheat Advisory Committee. However, in the same Bill is the creation of a new, similar committee, the Swine Industry Projects Advisory Committee. With hindsight, it may have been better for the wheat industry to have retained its committee as a statutory authority. However, I agreed with the Public Bodies Review Committee report that the wheat industry should be represented by a non-statutory body.

For the sake of the honourable member for Ripon, I make some comment about what happened between the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and the Victorian Farmers Federation when negotiating the new wheat advisory committee, which is to be an advisory committee and not a statutory authority.

The advisory committee's terms of reference are little different from the Parliamentary committee's recommendation. This organisation, which the Bill removes from the statutes, will operate a little differently from the recommendations of the Parliamentary committee and I am sorry about that. I regret that the Government did not accept the committee's recommendations although I understand why.

When the National Party delved into the operations of the present Victorian Wheat Advisory Committee—which is important to someone like myself who represents a big wheat-growing electorate such as Swan Hill—it was found that a little empire had been created in the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs that was influencing areas of administration that had been handed to the department over the years by various Ministers. This was the first time that the organisation had been examined closely and it was understandable that it would need some slight trimming. However, the recommendations have not been fully adopted. I believe the terms of reference of the new advisory committee are:

To make recommendations as to the wheat varieties most suitable for production in different regions of Victoria having regard to their yield, grain quality, disease resistance and agronomic characteristics.

That is the main function of the Victorian Wheat Advisory Committee in its new form. The second term of reference is:

To monitor the yield and quality of wheat delivered in particular regions and where necessary recommend changes to boundaries of regions to which recommended lists of varieties apply.

That is a natural follow-on for such a committee. The third term of reference is:

To evaluate the performance of new lines derived from the Victorian wheat breeding program and make recommendations covering their registration and addition to recommended lists. To evaluate and make recommendations concerning the addition of interstate varieties to the Victorian list.
That is another prime function of the committee. The fourth term of reference is:

To provide advice on any other matter concerning the production, distribution, disposal, marketing or processing of wheat in Victoria referred to it by the Minister.

Here is where the recommendations and terms of reference differ. It is not an important difference but it allows the advisory committee and the department to delve into areas that are of no direct significance to the department but are the responsibility of the Australian Wheat Board and, in some cases, of the Grain Elevators Board. The committee will be able to go into those areas—perhaps that is fair enough but one needs to await events.

The Public Bodies Review Committee recommended that the membership of the new Victorian Wheat Advisory Committee should comprise representatives of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the Australian Wheat Board and the Victorian Farmers Federation. Two other organisations have been added: the Bread Research Institute and the Flour Millers Council of Victoria which will supply one nominee each. That is fine but the original idea of the advisory committee was that, if necessary, it would seek input from areas from which it needed that information.

I believe the new advisory committee will function well. The changes made will in no way hinder it. There is some concern that the terms of reference will allow the committee to go into areas which those involved in the wheat industry, particularly in the marketing of wheat, believe should be the responsibility—and demand that it be the responsibility—of the Australian Wheat Board. Most of the other functions carried out by the previous committee, which were added to the committee's area of responsibility over the years, are missing but I hope the new body will continue the job to the best of its ability.

The fundamental issue the new advisory committee will need to determine is the issue of Victorian wheat varieties—finding varieties, testing them, ensuring their standards and quality and that they are marketable and will meet the requirements of the country's varied markets, bearing in mind that wheat growth in the Mallee and the Millewa area is of far different quality and end use from that grown in the southern Wimmera and the higher rainfall areas of Victoria. Australia has built up markets for the various types of grain.

At present a downturn is being experienced in the wheat industry and it is expected that wheat growers will turn away from grain this year. I am a little nervous about how we will produce enough grain for Australia's world market share. It has been suggested that anything up to 25 per cent of land normally used for grain will not go into wheat this year but will go into alternative crops. There may be serious problems in supplying the market.

The electorate of Swan Hill is at the heart of the financial downturn and the problems associated with the growing of wheat. Wheat growers do not have very many options for alternative crops, although legume grain crops were introduced and were successful last year. It was the first year that legume crops were successful right across the area and I hope this year will be similar because for many wheat growers it was the grain legume production last year that allowed them to maintain their business operations this year.

The area is suffering enormous stress and strain. I shall not go into it in any detail in the debate on this Bill but the problem is at its worst in the Mallee region and I know from discussions I have had with many members of this place that few, if any, of them have any concept of what is happening there at present.

The role of the new advisory committee in continuing research and assessment of wheat varieties is critical. A mistake was made some years ago that came to a head for the first time last year. It concerned the variety of Millewa wheat. The variety has been a good one in the Mallee and Millewa areas but this year it succumbed to rust problems of a type that has not been seen for a long time, and, as a result, many crops that may have been in the 15 or 16-bag category ended up in the 7 or 8-bag category or even less. In some cases the grain was discounted for quality.
This is an excellent example of the activities that the advisory committee will be undertaking. The advisory committee, its experts and its advisers, must ensure that similar mistakes do not occur again and that recommendations are not made for varieties of wheat that will break down. That is not a criticism of the former committee. The problem is that the new varieties being introduced and developed in plant research stations throughout Victoria seem not to have the same genetic strength of the old varieties and at present there appears to be a breakdown period after seven years. This is a problem farmers are trying to address. Varieties to grow and end users to grow for, whether one is growing for high protein flour, biscuit flour or whatever, are some of the most difficult decisions facing farmers at present.

Interestingly enough, I happen to be one farmer who last year changed my variety of wheat to Millewa. Many farmers still have not purchased their seed wheat this year because they are confused about exactly what variety of wheat they should use. One thing the farmers know is that they will not be using the Millewa variety. That is where the Victorian Wheat Advisory Committee has an important role to play.

Members of the committee are well aware of the need to advise on different varieties of wheat and, therefore, they must establish a close liaison with the officers of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs in Melbourne and in country areas. So far the liaison has been good but more attention is required to circulating information.

Farmers have recently heard of a variety of wheat that has deteriorated. It is hoped that sooner or later the quality and standard of the grain resulting from the research institute's endeavours will be the best available. The Plant Variety Rights Bill that is being debated in the Federal Parliament will open up a whole new ball game in grain growing. I am not sure how the Australian Wheat Board will handle the introduction of hybrid wheat varieties when it considers the market for which they are being produced.

Australia produces some of the best quality grain in the world and, on the export market, the Australian wheat standards are very high but Australia still must compete with other countries that export hybrid wheat varieties.

Clause 28 relates to the Swine Compensation Act. Over the years farmers have contributed to the Swine Compensation Fund, which now contains $1.4 million. The fund was established to compensate farmers for any disease that may afflict the swine or wipe them out completely. In the past decade enormous improvements have been made in combating diseases that afflict swine.

The fund has not been substantially drawn on and, touch wood, it is hoped that it will not be needed to deal with any outbreak of disease in pigsteries in the State. After many years of negotiation with both the former and present Governments it has been decided to draw from the Swine Compensation Fund to finance research in the swine industry. The fund is 100 per cent grower funded.

If the money contributed to the fund had been invested rather than held in the general Government revenue accounts, the interest revenue that would have accrued would have been substantial and could possibly have been used to finance any research operation undertaken by the swine industry. Nevertheless the industry is happy with the Government's proposal to draw approximately $900,000 from the fund.

The Swine Industry Projects Committee will decide which projects will be undertaken. The establishment of this committee has made me change my opinion about the change of status of the Victorian Wheat Advisory Committee as a statutory authority. The Bill details the composition of the Swine Industry Projects Advisory Committee and its functions.

The honourable member for Ripon stated that the Opposition was not happy with the wording of the provision that details the way in which members will be appointed to the committee. The advisory committee is to consist of five members: two will be officers from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and three will be chosen "from a
panel of at least five names submitted to the Minister by any organisation that the Minister considers to represent the swine industry in Victoria”. That wording is not good enough. The National Party will support the amendment foreshadowed by the honourable member for Ripon.

If one considers the record of the Government since 1983, one will soon realise that too often the Government has ignored promises and guarantees that it has made. If the Minister doubts the sincerity of my remarks I remind him of the promise made by a former Minister about the restructuring of local councils. That Minister lost responsibility for that portfolio and the incumbent Minister was defeated eventually on the proposal to restructure local councils, which would have made a mess of that tier of government. For that reason the National Party will not accept the wording of new section 108 (2) (b).

With that one exception, the National Party does not oppose the proposed legislation. I repeat: I am not sure that making the Victorian Wheat Advisory Committee a non-statutory authority is wise, but I did agree to that recommendation. The Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs has drafted the terms of reference for that committee and has asked for nominees. I still believe the department will establish that committee.

It will be watched closely by the grain industry of Victoria to ensure that the functions of that advisory committee are up to the standards achieved in the past. The National Party will support the Bill.

Dr WELLS (Dromana)—I shall comment on two sections of the Agriculture Acts (Amendment) Bill. The first relates to the Marketing of Primary Products Act 1958. I commend the Government for its emphasis on the need to submit annual reports promptly and efficiently. Victoria should be looking to see that all marketing boards, statutory authorities and other Government instrumentalities submit their annual reports on time, especially in these days of modern equipment. This would polish the administration of these bodies. Time lost in this regard often amounts to money lost and opportunities lost because we miss other opportunities before we realise what the situation is.

I support the Government’s proposal to make the adjustments and to encourage a submission of reports on time. Statutory periods should be set and systems should be adopted to make it mandatory for those reports to come in. If they do not come in, a stronger system should be implemented; for example, relevant legislation not continuing to be available for the board.

I turn, then, to the section relating to Part 5—amendments to the Swine Compensation Act 1967. I shall make several general comments; the first relates to the Swine Compensation Fund. I support the general move to see that these moneys are used as effectively as possible. However, in these days of modern increasingly rapid and frequent travel, it is more difficult to keep a country free of diseases not established in them. Some of these diseases can be costly indeed and we know from experience, in a country such as Australia surrounded by water, that we can use a test and slaughter policy effectively for a number of important viral diseases of some mammals and birds and that experience is well founded.

It is important for that reason that these policies are adopted. Because Australia is surrounded by water, it has a better than average chance of retaining this freedom which is of great commercial benefit to us so long as we nip in the bud the outbreak.

In the past certain diseases have entered countries and not, at first, been accurately diagnosed for some perverse reason they have been a little different. However, once such diseases have been identified, we must have the capacity to remove them effectively and money must be available for that purpose.

I am attracted to the comment of the previous speaker that we might well have looked at investing the surplus above the $500 000 level and used the income from that for research and development purposes. Certainly, in these times of high interest rates, that has some attraction for me. However, if the decision is to use this money in a one-off
exercise, we must ensure that it is used as effectively as possible; and that brings me to the membership of the board and to the committee of five members who will advise the Minister.

Although it is desirable to have several officers of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs on the committee and to have other representatives from the rural community and industry, I make the comment to the Treasurer for transmission to the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs that whatever can be done should be done to ensure that broader research interests also have maximal access to this committee for their viewpoints to be put forward because there is no doubt that research is the continuing lifeblood of any economic community.

This is particularly so in primary industry areas and especially so with systems as complex as those involving animals. I am not sure how one would do this with a board consisting of as few as five members.

Many years ago I was a member of the Chicken Meat Advisory Committee, advising the Federal Minister for Agriculture on a much larger committee. Their representation from far and wide across the research areas of the nation worked effectively.

Looking back, I would not like to have seen that representation being just from one sector such as a department of agriculture. It is difficult to reconcile what I am saying now with the proposal that the membership should come from the industry itself alone. Naturally, I consider that one would wish to nominate representatives from industry to be on that committee; however, I know from experience over many years that the capacity for a committee to advise upon research that may not in the first instance, for example, appear to be directly applicable to the industry, is something that should be retained.

I am not referring just to infectious disease work; I am thinking about economic trends, the marketing of products and the development of new products. I am thinking, for example, of Australia being one of the great granaries of the world and, increasingly, with other countries in the world producing their own grains, we should perhaps be looking towards how we might further process our grains through, for example, livestock.

Some of the nation's major companies have said that, given certain further reductions in the cost of production through the price of grain, for example, the pig industry could become a much more significant exporter for this nation. That, of course, is a two-edged sword with benefits from both sides, both within the nation and in terms of export income. These are the sorts of things that should be kept in mind.

I realise that this is a one-off fund and that the continuing research comes more from Federal Government resources; but we ought to look carefully at what is done with these current funds. For that purpose, I invite the Government to look in the broadest way possible at the membership of the committee to advise the Minister.

Mr W. D. McGrath (Lowan)—The Bill institutes a number of changes. It amends the Marketing of Primary Products Act 1958, the Tobacco Leaf Industry Stabilization Act 1966, the Wheat Marketing Act 1984, the Swine Compensation Act 1967 and the Broiler Chicken Industry Act 1978. All of these components, in their own way, are important to the economy of the State.

The Victorian Wheat Advisory Committee, has played an important role in the Victorian wheat industry over a number of years. One person with whom I have closely associated on the advisory committee is Mr Jim Nuske of Dimboola. He has made a tremendous contribution to the wheat industry over many years.

He is now retired but he still has an active interest in agricultural politics and the wheat industry, as it continues to be a major source of export earnings.

Over the past ten years the Victorian Wheat Advisory Committee has undertaken a lot of research and much concern has been expressed by wheat growers in Victoria and Australia about some of the varieties that have been released and their susceptibility to stripe rust and other diseases. In 1956 the olympic wheat variety was released and that
stood the test of time extremely well with regard to both quality and quantity of grain that was produced. It was grown over a wide area and performed well in all districts of Australia.

In the past decade wheat varieties from dwarf varieties have been developed. As the honourable member for Swan Hill mentioned, although some of the varieties performed well for a few years, they became susceptible to various diseases and their performance broke down. I refer to varieties such as egret, which did not have the necessary milling or protein qualities. It produced large quantities of grain but its quality was low. It was not in the best interests of the Victorian wheat industry for that variety to be grown for milling purposes at that time. Most of that variety was used in animal food manufacturing.

Since that time a number of other varieties have been used, such as condor and oxley, which have performed quite well. The honourable member for Swan Hill referred to the Millewa variety which let down many Victorian wheat growers this year. Despite the fact that in March and April last year the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs warned farmers of the susceptibility of that variety to stripe rust, many farmers were not advised early enough and were committed to sowing that variety. That had disastrous results for the 1986–87 wheat harvest. Many of the crops that had the potential to produce fifteen to twenty bags an acre produced a harvest yield of eight to ten bags an acre and its quality was downgraded.

The Victorian Crops Research Institute at Horsham has a vital role to play in the years ahead in developing consistency in the wheat varieties that will come on stream. It has hundreds of new varieties in its trial plots and its new hothouses and trial areas allow the institute to carry out a great deal of valuable research.

I am hopeful that when new varieties come on stream they will stand up to the various viruses that have been beset the wheat industry in recent years, especially the stripe rust virus that is currently causing growers so much concern.

Last week it was announced that a crops research seed storage will be established at the Victorian Crops Research Institute. Scientists from around the world will be able to telephone the centre and have access to the seed stocks and research findings that will be recorded on computers. It will be a genetic laboratory for many legumes, especially peas, lupins, fabia beans, chick peas and other varieties of grain. That is an exciting development for Horsham and Australia and it opens up a new field for scientists around the world.

The centre will cost some $445 000, which is being provided by the Department of Primary Industry, the Australian Oil Research Council and the Australian Legume Research Council. As alternatives are examined, the centre will play an important part in ensuring that alternative crops of high quality are available to the wheat industry.

The seed storage will establish Victoria as one of the leading centres in legume genetic plants, and leading world scientists will come to Australia to examine the seed banks that will be available when the storage opens.

The Victorian Wheat Advisory Committee will no longer be a statutory body. The committee has twelve members comprising four from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, two from the Australian Wheat Board who are nominated by the board, four from the Victorian Farmers Federation, the Director of the Bread Research Institute and a person nominated by the Victorian Flour Millers Council. The chairman is appointed by the Minister and is one of the four officers from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. I hope the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs acts responsibly and ensures that the right people are appointed to the committee because it will have an important role to play in the years ahead.

There is concern about the rezoning of various varieties of wheat, and that is mainly caused by the large quantities of wheat that are now transported by road due to the Government's policy of high rail freight rates. Wheat that arrives at a seaboard terminal by road comes from a number of different zones and there are many different varieties.
That could create some difficulty in achieving uniformity in the type and quality of grain being sought by countries buying grain supplies from Australia.

One of the roles of the Victorian Wheat Advisory Committee will be to ensure that the wheat varieties specified for the various zones are concentrated together. The Grain Elevators Board will also have a role to play. It will be necessary for the committee to spell out to growers the importance of growing specified varieties of wheat in various zones to form a uniform package when the importing nations purchase supplies from this country.

The honourable member for Swan Hill identified the concerns of the National Party about the Bill. In identifying those issues, the National Party hopes the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs in another place will address those concerns and ensure that they are acted upon. Therefore, the National Party supports the Bill.

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—I thank honourable members for their support of the proposed legislation. As honourable members are aware, it arose from recommendations of the Public Bodies Review Committee, the all-party Parliamentary committee which has been an effective committee within the Victorian Parliamentary structure.

Concerns were raised about the structure of the advisory committee and I shall certainly discuss the position with the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs and ensure that he is well aware of the issues before the Bill is debated in another place.

I understand that amendments to the proposed legislation will be moved and I shall be prepared to facilitate the passing of the Bill. It is recognised that the proposed legislation will assist the industry and I am grateful for the support given to it.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time and committed.

Clauses 1 to 13 were agreed to.

Clause 14

Mr AUSTIN (Ripon)—The clause deals with the pecuniary interests of members. Proposed section 21A (1) states:

A member of the State Board who has a pecuniary interest in a matter being considered or about to be considered by the State Board must, as soon as practicable after the relevant facts have come to the members' knowledge, declare the nature of the interest at a meeting of the State Board.

I mention the matter because, while the debate was occurring earlier this afternoon, I received information from people associated with the tobacco industry who were concerned about the pecuniary interest clause being too wide and that a grower representative could find himself or herself in a difficult position.

Although I do not wish to labour the point any further at this stage, I foreshadow that the matter will be canvassed in another place at a later stage.

Mr STEGGALL (Swan Hill)—I failed to mention this clause during my remarks in the second-reading debate. The National Party is also concerned about the pecuniary interest of members dealt with in the clause. The National Party is not worried about the fact that the clause exists, but the extent to which it will be applied. I wonder whether it will include such items as levies or any general financial issues relating to tobacco growers, in which case, if the clause is read to the letter of the law, tobacco producers or quota holders may be unable to participate in voting.

I do not believe that is the intention of the clause but it could be interpreted that way. The matter will be addressed in full detail on behalf of the National Party by Mr Evans in another place.

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—I understand the concern expressed by honourable members that the pecuniary interest clause may be too wide-ranging. I shall certainly ensure that
advice is received about the application of the clause so that the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs is aware of the concerns raised. If necessary, he can take whatever action is required to make sure the provision covers only the original intention of his objectives.

The clause was agreed to, as were clauses 15 to 27.

Clause 28

Mr AUSTIN (Ripon)—I move:

1. Clause 28, lines 29 to 31, omit paragraph (b) and insert—

“(b) three are chosen from a panel submitted to the Minister by the Victorian Farmers Federation of the names of at least 5 people whom the Federation considers to represent the swine industry in Victoria.”.

2. Clause 28, line 32, omit “an organisation” and insert “the Victorian Farmers Federation”.

I mentioned this matter during the second-reading debate. The term “an organisation” is too wide. It is the expressed view of the pig council of the Victorian Farmers Federation that the amendments outlined be inserted in the clause.

The pig council of the Victorian Farmers Federation is the only body that is an affiliate of the national body and it makes sense that the representatives on the committee should come specifically from the pig council of the federation.

Some concern was expressed about actually inserting the name “Victorian Farmers Federation” because of the possibility of a name change to that organisation. That organisation has undergone a recent name change and I should have thought that the current name of the organisation would be fairly secure for a considerable time.

Mr STEGGALL (Swan Hill)—As I said during the second-reading debate, the amendments sought by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the National Party are not unrealistic. They are not too much to ask and they will clarify the situation for the swine industry. I find that a rather strange name for an industry.

There is only one organisation in Victoria involved in this industry and that is the Victorian Farmers Federation. The Government should ensure that the people who will be giving advice on which research projects should be undertaken by the department and by other people will take into account submissions from primary industry groups and individuals who put up the money in the first place.

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—The Government is willing to accept the change to the composition of the panel, in line with the thinking of the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs in the other place, so I have no hesitation in accepting the amendments.

The amendments were agreed to, and the clause, as amended, was adopted, as were the remaining clauses.

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

HOUSING (AMENDMENT) BILL

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

Mr RAMSAY (Balwyn)—As a serious housing situation has developed in Victoria in recent times, it would have been of some relief to honourable members to discover that a Bill was to be introduced to correct some of the problems faced by members of the community seeking accommodation.

Victoria has a waiting list of 32 644 people looking for houses in the public sector. The Auditor-General in his recent report stated that some $19 million is now outstanding in unpaid rental to the Ministry of Housing and rent debates are imposing the significant cost of $60 million a year.
Mr Wilkes—It will be $70 million this year.

Mr RAMSAY—That makes the need for action to be taken even clearer. Furthermore, there are now 1342 vacant Ministry-owned houses. Many of them have been vacant for more than three months. It is obvious that something is wrong and members of Parliament and the community should have been able to look forward to correcting errors and resolving problems by the Housing Act.

However, after examining the Bill one can only stare in amazement. Mr Speaker, I do not know whether you have played the game Trivial Pursuit but I point out that it is a good parlour game in which questions of little consequence are asked and the answers allow one to move a counter around the board. It appears that the House is being asked to play Trivial Pursuit with this Bill.

In the same way that the American Express advertisement asks how many times do the words “American Express” appear on the American Express card, one is forced to guess how many times the male pronoun appears in the principal Act. Three pages of the Bill are devoted to making the Housing Act gender neutral. I am sure that honourable members will be delighted to know that the Act will be gender neutral on the passage of this Bill. It does not matter whether there are 32,644 men, women or children on the housing waiting list; it is important that Victoria should have gender neutral legislation.

If that matter is too difficult to deal with, honourable members might like to examine clause 3 of the Bill under the heading “objects”. The House is asked to consider the removal of the word “ancilliary” and the substitution “ancillary”. That is an example of trivia that the House is being asked to consider in amending the Housing Act. “Ancilliary” is a misprint in the original Act, but a whole clause of the Bill has been introduced to correct that misspelling.

Clause 4 refers to the power to create and extinguish easements and so on. That provision might involve a major alteration to sections of the Housing Act, but in fact the House is being asked to substitute the word “purposes” for the word “puposes” in section 16 (3). It is ridiculous for this House to be asked to consider spelling corrections. I call on the Government to re-examine its approach to Parliament and not to waste the time of the House with this trivia. Honourable members would be better occupied if they were playing Trivial Pursuit.

There is also a problem with the Government’s attempt to frame legislation in plain English. Clause 5 endeavours to ensure that the Director of Housing has the power to enter at any reasonable time the land on which a Government-owned movable unit has been placed, if it is no longer leased to the person to whom it had previously been leased. The House is asked to give the director the power to enter any such land to arrange for the removal of the movable unit. Proposed section 18 (3) would state:

For the purpose of inspecting or removing a movable unit owned by the Director after a hiring agreement is determined, a person authorised in that behalf by the Director has power to enter at any reasonable time the land on which the unit is situated and the unit itself.

I direct to the attention of the House the use of “determined” in the clause. In plain English “determined” may mean that a situation has been arranged after a hiring agreement has been established. According to the clause, it has been determined.

But that is not what it means; it means that the agreement is finished, all over, done, terminated, but the Government is persisting in using these antiquated words with their ambiguous meanings. The word “determines” appears in the amendment to the Act.

When inquiries were made to Parliamentary Counsel on why this was so, we were referred to the Act in which the word “determines” appears; that has been continued on.

The Government stands condemned on the grounds that, when the housing crisis in Victoria is acute, with people clamouring for more houses and because high levels of
interest rates are preventing a number of people acquiring their own homes, it has introduced proposed legislation with trivia that is not set out in plain English.

For what purpose was this done? The only items of significance in the Bill concern the question of insurance. There is a provision enabling the director to act as an insurer for houses that may be under mortgage to the Ministry.

The Opposition has no difficulty in accepting this idea, but it is interesting to note that, on the question of the significance of the proposed legislation, clause 10 which deals with this insurance power states:

Any contract of insurance entered into before the commencement of section 9 which would have been valid if section 9 had been in operation at the time it was entered into...

The proposed legislation is saying, "We are not really doing anything new so far as insurance is concerned." In the past it has been the practice of the director and, indeed, it was the practice of the former Housing Commission years ago to act as a self insurer for rental properties and to make insurance available to persons buying houses from the Ministry. That clause achieves nothing. It is confirming a situation that has been operating for some time.

As I mentioned earlier, the main portion of the Bill—in fact the main three pages—lists "Schedule 1 Gender Neutral Language". It is a shame—and I am sure the Minister would agree—that the Government and Parliamentary Counsel have spent funds to have an officer draw up 52 amendments that are included in Schedule 1 to give the Housing Act gender neutrality.

If that is the best the Government can find to do with its money it is a disappointment to those who are dependent on public housing. The Ministry's money could have been spent in a better way by tackling some of the real problems of housing. I suggest that the Minister go away and get on with the job rather than asking Parliament to debate this sort of trivial nonsense.

Mr J. F. McGrath (Warrnambool)—The National Party supports the Housing (Amendment) Bill, which the honourable member for Balwyn has pointed out amends the Housing Act 1983 and seeks to do three things. It seeks to empower the Director of Housing to act as an insurer in some cases and it further seeks to clarify and extend the powers of the director in relation to movable units and standards of habitation. It further seeks to make various other amendments to the Housing Act 1983, to which the honourable member for Balwyn has referred, and those are matters that ought to have been picked up when the original legislation passed through Parliament. However, there is no constructive point in criticising those matters.

The provisions of the Act have been under scrutiny for three years and some of the anomalies are now being picked up by these amendments to the Act. The deficiency in relation to insurance in the Act is an important matter to be addressed.

It can be rightly said that the Ministry wanted money from what it spent on human resources to prepare the Bill and bring it before the House and that there would have been a cost saving if the Government had not entered into this pedantic exercise. However, it is important that the insurance aspect is put in place because, if a portable unit is lost, that is significant.

Clause 11 provides for the substitution of "director" for the definition of "permanent head". The Bill refers also to the cost of repairing a property that has been allowed to deteriorate. That situation must be frequently investigated to ensure that, although it is difficult to fulfil the requirements of adequate housing the housing is of an appropriate standard.

The Bill deals with the right of the Director of Housing to compel tenants to comply with the standards of habitation and, if they do not comply with those guidelines, they are forced to respond not only in terms of cost but also in terms of any interest accrued.
The Bill removes the need prescribed for conditions of movable unit hiring contracts to be prescribed by regulations. It has been proved that, providing we facilitate the utilisation of these units on an efficient basis, they are a popular sort of housing for a section of the community, particularly those who are aged, as they are able to have this facility placed adjacent to a neighbour. Those facilities have been utilised in Warrnambool to great advantage and we look forward to more, if that is possible. We realise that that is difficult.

Mr Wilkes—There are problems, but they are being ironed out.

Mr J. F. McGrath—I take up the Minister’s interjection that there are a number of problems but they are being ironed out.

The Bill raises a number of problems and I do not believe it is necessary to get involved in the cut and thrust introduced by the honourable member for Balwyn.

The Bill is straightforward; it does not have many pages or a lot of words. It is disappointing that it has been necessary to correct spelling, but that is the way it goes and, on behalf of the National Party, I have pleasure in supporting the proposed legislation and wish it a speedy passage.

Mr Lea (Sandringham)—I am grateful for the opportunity of speaking on the Housing (Amendment) Bill. The Ministry of Housing has a difficult situation with the numbers on its waiting lists, but it has always shown compassion and a caring attitude when doing its job.

The 1983 Act abolished the Housing Commission and its home financing arrangements, and the more fully accountable Ministry of Housing was established under the direction of the Director of Housing, who was empowered to take over all the former Ministry’s contracts.

The Minister now suggests amendments to that Act. The key provision in that Act is the power for the Director of Housing to insure and reinsure on demand by occupiers of Ministry houses. I ask the Minister to inform honourable members whether there is any subsidised funding for people paying small premiums as a result of the director undertaking the reinsurance.

I commend the honourable members for Balwyn and Warrnambool for supporting higher standards of habitation of housing. I notice that, not only has the Minister been attempting to upgrade standards and retrieve funds from people who are derelict in their duty to look after Ministry houses and units, but that he has also been attempting to collect rental arrears. I understand that more than $12 million is owing in rental arrears. The Ministry is caring but, in a reassuring way, is trying to retrieve some of this cost to the taxpayers, and I commend the Minister for that.

I also commend the fact that the non-compliance of these housing units with habitation standards is being supervised more forcefully, and I hope that will lead to an improvement in the standard of Ministry houses.

I take up the point concerning car parking on Ministry land. Good notice is usually given of parking requirements, and I hope that will always be the case. I understand that people who infringe the parking requirements are brought before a Magistrates Court in the normal way.

I agree with the comments of the honourable member for Balwyn about gender neutral language. Counsel’s time and taxpayers’ money could have been better spent.

In general, the Bill is a machinery measure that seeks to improve the working of the Ministry of Housing. Like my colleague, the honourable member for Balwyn, I do not oppose the Bill.

Mr Wilkes (Minister for Housing)—I thank the honourable members for Balwyn, Warrnambool and Sandringham. In spite of what the honourable member for Balwyn said
about the Bill, it is a machinery measure. The honourable member was a Minister in the previous Government and would be well aware that, from time to time, administrators of various agencies require amendments to legislation to make their jobs a little easier and more efficient. On this occasion they requested certain amendments to the Act, and I agreed. Although those amendments may seem innocuous to the honourable member, I assure him that the officers of the Ministry believe them to be important in facilitating their operations.

The honourable member for Sandringham raised a question concerning reimbursement of reinsurance. The answer is, “No”.

I take his point in respect of parking infringement notices. Since the Bill gives the Ministry certain powers, it would ill behove the Ministry not to utilise those powers in respect of non-compliance with parking signs on Ministry estates.

The honourable member for Balwyn raised the question of rental arrears. Rental arrears have always been a problem when economic conditions and disposable incomes are reduced substantially for tenants in Ministry houses. The Auditor-General was prepared to lump together vacated arrears and rental arrears. However, when pressure is applied to reduce rental arrears, there seems to be a corresponding increase in vacated arrears. It is like the dog chasing its tail: the Ministry goes in the front door as the tenant goes out the rear door. That is one of the facts of life about attempting to reduce rental arrears owing to the Ministry. Nevertheless, as the honourable member for Sandringham pointed out, the Ministry is concentrating on rental arrears and is attempting to sort the “can’t pays” from the “won’t pays” while showing compassion, where necessary, and applying pressure to those who can afford to pay.

The honourable member for Balwyn also raised the question of the huge waiting list. Unless we can in future put in place schemes that involve private and public development of housing working side by side, we will have difficulty in reducing those lists. It is by joint venture that it can be achieved, and it is through that medium that the Ministry hopes to be able to reduce the lists substantially in the future.

I thank honourable members for their contributions. I am of the opinion that there may be legislation dealing with the agreement that will give the honourable member for Balwyn the opportunity of making the points that he wants to make about the matters which he raised today.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time and committed.

Clauses 1 to 19 were agreed to.

Clause 20

Mr WILKES (Minister for Housing)—I move:

Clause 20, lines 7 and 8, omit paragraph (c) and insert—‘(c) in clause 6(1)—

(i) for ‘‘, having’’ substitute ‘‘has’’; and

(ii) omit ‘‘makes a direction under section 66,’’.

In moving this amendment, I echo the remarks of the honourable member for Balwyn. It is of a minute, technical nature; unfortunately, it is necessary.

Following the making of a declaration of non-compliance in respect of a house that is in a state of disrepair and where an order has been placed on that house, it is imperative that the Ministry notify any prospective or intended purchaser or mortgagee of the property as soon as possible by lodging a copy of the declaration at the Titles Office so that it can be brought to the attention of anyone searching the title to the property. Under the existing set-up, it will be too late for that to be done unless this amendment is accepted.
The amendment was agreed to, and the clause, as amended, was adopted, as was the remaining clause and the schedule.

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

**WATER ACTS (AMENDMENT) BILL**

The debate (adjourned from March 19) on the motion of Mr McCutcheon (Minister for Water Resources) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

Mr DELZOPPO (Narracan)—The Water Acts (Amendment) Bill is a short Bill which does three things: firstly, it provides for a temporary transfer of water rights; secondly it regulates those transfers and thirdly, it amends sections of the Water and Sewerage Authorities (Restructuring) Act.

Considerable community discussion has occurred about the introduction of the transfer of water rights. The transfer of water rights will enable irrigators who have a water entitlement in respect of their farms to transfer or sell their water surplus to neighbours.

Honourable members would appreciate that in periods of drought or water shortage some farmers will have surplus water while their neighbours will have a shortage of water and in this way the water will be fully utilised. Minor adjustments of water can be made both within and across various irrigation districts.

Owners of water entitlements pay for this water each year whether or not they use that water and, depending on the water availability, owners are entitled to buy extra sales of water in proportion to the basic water right.

The Opposition circulated copies of the Bill widely to irrigation areas of the State and to the Victorian Farmers Federation. I received a letter dated 3 April from the Victorian Farmers Federation which stated:

I have already explained that to the House. The letter continues:

The Victorian Farmers Federation supports the introduction of both permanent and temporary transfer in constituted irrigation districts and for private diversion.

I point out that the Bill deals only with temporary transfers and I understand that it is proposed when new water laws are introduced that the permanent transfer of water may be considered. The letter goes on to state:

This follows a comprehensive program last year and a number of inquiries.

The Minister mentioned those inquiries in the second-reading speech. The letter continues:

There is very clearly strong support for this position in the irrigation community.

Unfortunately there exists a small but vocal minority view which opposes the introduction of permanent transfers as it breaks the traditional nexus between land and water.

The Opposition did inquire into the number of people who were against the temporary transfer of water and found it to be as the Chairman of the Victorian Farmers Federation Irrigators and Water Users Committee states, that it is a small but vocal minority. The letter continues:

While the federation accepts that there has to be administrative constraints on transferability because of salinity, channel capacity, drainage and speculation the Federation believes the minority opposing permanent transfers have failed to grasp its major benefit.

A fear has been expressed in irrigation districts that people with financial resources could buy up a number of water entitlements and that they could, for want of a better term, corner the market and force the price of water up. It would be similar to a water futures
market, but I am told by the federation that the likelihood of speculation is rare. The letter continues:

Quite clearly there is increasing pressure on available water resources from urban, commercial, environmental and irrigation use. Within the current irrigation framework some irrigators have more water than they require while others have less. By allowing permanent transfers to proceed this will redress this imbalance and allow irrigators to enhance their security levels through legal entitlement.

The letter canvasses and supports permanent transfers of water entitlements and, as I pointed out, the Bill deals only with temporary transfers of water entitlements. The letter continues:

We would suggest that in the future permanent transfers have a major role to play in ensuring equitable treatment with other competing demands while at the same time encouraging more efficient use of the resource within the irrigation community.

The Victorian Farmers Federation would welcome your support for the current Bill and the adoption of a policy supporting permanent transfers at the earliest opportunity.

The letter is signed by Peter Fleming, Chairman of the Victorian Farmers Federation Irrigators and Water Users Committee.

Clause 3 includes new section 65H. This new section deals with by-laws governing temporary transfers of water rights. New section 65H states:

(1) The Rural Water Commission may make by-laws for or with respect to the temporary transfer of water rights within an irrigation district.

(2) Without limiting the generality of sub-section (1), by-laws may—

(a) prescribe procedures for applications for approval; and

(b) fix any fees payable to the Rural Water Commission for processing and approving an application; and

(c) set the minimum amount of water rights that must be retained by the owner of any holding; and

(d) set the maximum amount of water rights that may be held by the owner or occupier of any holding; and

(e) set limits on the transfer of water rights into and out of an irrigation area, having regard to—

(i) drainage and salinity criteria; and

(ii) the need to protect the water rights apportioned to other holdings within the irrigation district in which the irrigation area is located;

(f) prescribe any other terms and conditions in relation to a transfer; and

(g) prescribe irrigation districts within which water rights may be temporarily transferred."

The by-laws that will be framed under this new section are wide-ranging. I was disappointed to find, on telephoning the Rural Water Commission to inquire about the by-laws, that the Minister for Water Resources had issued an instruction to staff that officers of the commission were not to speak to members of the Opposition and, I presume, the same instruction has been issued for members of the National Party.

The Minister was keeping those by-laws unto himself when it would have been more fruitful if he had tabled them when making his second-reading speech on the Bill, so that both my party and the National Party could examine the by-laws to see what the Minister had in mind. It is to be regretted that the Minister has not done so. I believe he will produce them in the later stages of dealing with the Bill. The opposition parties will then have little opportunity of learning what is in the mind of the Minister in regard to those by-laws.

I am forced to say that it is most unlike the Minister to take this attitude because he has been cooperative in the past. I am sorry that he has had a hardening of attitude. I understand that he is under enormous pressure in his other portfolio as Minister for Property and Services and I understand his concerns about his relationship with the Chief Electoral Officer during the Nunawading Province by-election period. However, I realise that matter is not covered in the Bill so I shall not proceed down that path any further.
The Minister owes the House an explanation as to why he has not produced the by-laws for scrutiny. He has a duty to the House to say what he has in mind. I am sure the National Party will also ask questions on this point.

Clause 5 seeks to amend section 59 of the Water and Sewerage Authorities (Restructuring) Act. Section 59 (1) of that Act is a sunset provision that applies to the restructuring of water and sewerage bodies in Victoria. It states:

This Act, unless sooner repealed, shall cease to be in force at the expiration of three years after the date of commencement of this Act.

Three years from that date was 7 June 1986. On 3 December 1985 the House passed a Bill, with which the opposition parties agreed, to extend the sunset clause until June 1987. The situation now is that, unless legislation is enacted, all water boards and sewerage authorities will go out of existence on 7 June this year. That would be a disaster, hence, the necessity for the proposed legislation.

In amending the Water and Sewerage Authorities (Restructuring) Act the Bill will ensure that all water boards reconstituted by Order in Council under the restructuring Act can continue in existence until 7 June 1988.

I use this opportunity to direct the Minister's attention to the situation of the Latrobe Valley Water and Sewerage Board. On 20 November 1985, when the Water Acts (Amendment) Bill, which sought to extend the sunset clause of the Act by one year, was being debated, I mentioned to the Minister the situation of the Latrobe Valley board. During debate on the measure I said:

I am a little disappointed that the Government has been rather tardy in considering the future of that board. For some eight or nine years, I was a member of that board and am well acquainted with its work and the value of the work it is doing in the Latrobe Valley region.

As a delegated authority of the Environment Protection Authority, it not only has a responsibility for the environment, along the Latrobe River in the Latrobe Valley region, but also, that responsibility extends right from the Latrobe Valley to the New South Wales border.

During that debate I also made the point that it was necessary for amendments to be made so that the Latrobe Valley Water and Sewerage Board did not go out of existence on 7 June 1986.

More than twelve months later the same situation applies. I said the Minister was tardy in November 1985 and I have now run out of superlatives to describe the Minister because the board is in exactly the same position it was in in November 1985. The Minister should have done something about that situation. There has been much uncertainty in the Latrobe Valley about the future of the board. It is the only water organisation that has not been restructured. The Minister has not given sufficient reason for his inaction. During his reply in the second-reading debate the Minister should say what he has in mind for the board and what arrangements will be made for the provision of water and sewerage facilities in the Latrobe Valley. Perhaps he may offer an excuse for failing to act.

The Latrobe Valley Water and Sewerage Board is not subject to the Water and Sewerage Authorities (Restructuring) Act, except for section 59, which extends the life of the Public Bodies Review Committee recommendations, which initially would have meant that the board would cease to exist on 7 June 1986 and be replaced by a Latrobe Valley regional water board.

The powers and responsibilities of the future board are unknown. I must admit that in the Latrobe Valley there is a great void of knowledge about the future of the board. The Latrobe Valley Water and Sewerage Board has played a major part in the development of the Latrobe Valley since 1954. It is rather poor that the Minister has allowed the situation to continue where a body with an excellent record is left in limbo and does not know what the future holds for it.

The Water Acts (Amendment) Bill of 1985 extended the life of the Latrobe Valley Water and Sewerage Board a further one year, as I have stated. It also provided for all other
boards, whether reconstituted or not, to continue in existence from 7 June 1986 to 7 June 1987. All water boards, with the exception of the Latrobe Valley board, have been reconstituted.

As I mentioned, the Water and Sewerage Authorities (Restructuring) Act is, in effect, only interim legislation. It requires action by the Minister until the restructured boards are permanently constituted. I understand the Minister could be waiting for the new water law to be instituted, which will spell out the permanency of the reconstituted boards, but in my opinion the Latrobe Valley board is a special case. In the main it acts under its own legislation. It should continue to function as it has in the past and all speculation about its future should be removed.

There is an expressed view that the Latrobe Valley Water and Sewerage Board could be accommodated within the proposed new Water Act. I am not sure that that is the case.

The powers and functions of the Latrobe Valley Water and Sewerage Board are spelt out under its own Act and are somewhat different from those of other sewerage and water boards. For example, the Latrobe Valley Water and Sewerage Board does not provide sewerage and water reticulation services but acts as a bulk agent in carrying out the major disposal of sewerage and the provision of water, and the reticulation of those services is left to smaller local boards. It plays a regional part in Gippsland, and the uncertainty that surrounds the board should be removed.

If we wait until the new Water Act is enacted—I understand it is the intention of the Minister for Water Resources that the Bill be introduced in the spring sessional period of Parliament this year and that it lie over until the autumn sessional period of the following year, 1988, and I cannot see that a time schedule any shorter than that could take place—another year will go by and the Latrobe Valley Water and Sewerage Board will still not know what it is doing.

I criticise the Minister for Water Resources in that he has been tardy in dealing with this matter. I understand that the Minister has other things on his mind, but he owes it to the Latrobe Valley Water and Sewerage Board to set the record straight and to confirm the permanency of the Board by letting it operate under its own Act.

I wish to hear the response of the Minister in the second-reading debate, but the Liberal Party does not oppose the Bill generally.

Mr STEGGALL (Swan Hill)—It is interesting to see the long awaited proposed legislation on the transferability of water rights in the form of temporary transfers. The Bill is in three Parts. The first Part allows the transferability to happen—it is an enabling section; the second Part gives governing powers to the Minister and to the Rural Water Commission, and the third Part contains penalty provisions.

This subject has been around for a long time and has been negotiated throughout the irrigation areas. Many meetings have been held on the subject and in spite of all the consultation that has taken place we still do not have a clue what the proposed legislation is all about.

As the honourable member for Narracan mentioned, the Minister for Water Resources would not allow the documents relating to by-laws to be circulated. The Bill comes before the House in a form that makes it very difficult to comment on the actual workings of the transferability of water rights. The measure contains so many unanswered questions that I assume that during the Committee stage the Minister will make clear his intentions on the subject, such as how he intends to run, fund and manage the scheme and who will be eligible to use it.

I understand that the Minister is to produce a table—as indicated to me by his staff—of the by-laws, but the Liberal Party and the National Party will be disadvantaged by to the actual workings of the Bill.
Transferability of water entitlement applies in other parts of Australia; it is in force in New South Wales and South Australia. The system operates in those States on a permanent basis of transfer with conditions. The proposed Victorian legislation will operate on a temporary basis of one season at a time. That is a good way of introducing it in Victoria. The Bill will not affect many people. For those whom it will affect, it is important to know the rules for transfers that are to take place.

I am most concerned about the by-law section of the Bill. It indicates that people who live in an irrigation district can transfer their water rights on a temporary basis to anyone else in an irrigation district in Victoria. It does not tell us much about the transferability of water entitlement.

The by-law-making powers give the Minister and the Rural Water Commission the right to do just that. They can prescribe procedures for applications for approval, and that is not a problem because it deals with the forms that have to be filled in. The by-laws may fix any fees payable to the Rural Water Commission for processing and approving an application. Does that mean that a fee will be set for a certain number of megalitres, or is there to be a fixed fee per transfer? From discussions that have taken place, I believe the fee will be $70 and $100 per transfer, irrespective of volume.

The by-laws will also set the minimum amount of water rights that must be obtained by the owner of any holding. That leaves it up in the air. Are we talking about 80 per cent of the water right being held, 30 per cent, or whatever? From discussions I understand it is about 30 per cent, but in the consultation phase concerning permanent transfers, it was thought that the figure was more like 70 per cent.

The by-laws have the ability to:

(d) set the maximum amount of water rights that may be held by the owner or occupier of any holding; and

(e) set limits on the transfer of water rights into and out of an irrigation area, having regard to—

(i) drainage and salinity criteria; and

(ii) the need to protect the water rights apportioned to other holdings within the irrigation district in which the irrigation area is located.

That is an interesting by-law because the proposed legislation indicates that water rights should be apportioned to other holdings owned by the transferor or within that district.

For the first time water rights may be transferred from one district to another. In some areas that is a sensible operation, particularly on district boundaries.

The Rural Water Commission will also have the ability to prescribe any other terms and conditions in relation to a transfer; and prescribe irrigation districts within which water rights may be temporarily transferred.

The Bill is meant to cover all irrigation districts—pump districts, gravity districts and all districts relating to the rivers and streams in Victoria. However, the temporary transfer of water rights will be allowed only in prescribed areas.

Honourable members do not know what those prescribed areas will be. One can make a wild guess, based on the discussions that have occurred and the information one has gleaned, that the prescribed areas will be the Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District, the Campaspe irrigation district and the Macalister irrigation district. However, one needs to know for sure, as one also needs to know some of the reasons why the temporary transfer of water title will not be allowed.

As I understand it, if a water right is apportioned to land which is in excess of the needs of the farmer—which means he has a water right for more water than he uses, which happens for various reasons—under this Bill the farmer will be able to transfer to someone else within the same district a percentage of his water right. He will transfer that to someone who wishes to have more water right for one year only, and with that transfer will go the sales component of the water right.
For example, one can use the figure of 100 megalitres as the amount being transferred from A to B. The financial arrangements for that transfer will be worked out between A and B. A will have to pay a transfer fee of what we understand to be between $70 and $100. A, the transferor, will also be responsible for paying the water right. He will have to pay the Rural Water Commission for the part of the water right that he transfers. According to the Bill, the rate will still be levied on A.

Nothing in the Bill makes mention of the situation regarding sales. If B uses the 100 megalitres and finds that in the Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District there is plenty of water and the storage is full, he receives 100 per cent full sales for that. However, he will not know until the end of the season how much of that water sale he will use.

According to the Bill, it seems that the Minister expects that the person who transfers the water right will be responsible not only for the water right but also for the sales. That matter needs to be clarified and defined so that the cost of the sales allocated to a transferred water right will be the responsibility of the transferee.

For some reason, despite all the consultation that has taken place, one point has caused much confusion throughout irrigation districts. It is a fact that at present sales through a water right have been able to be transferred from one property to another if both properties have common ownership. The point does not seem to be addressed in the Bill in any way and, as I understand it, the sales movement that has occurred for quite a few years, up until now, will not be allowed to happen. I hope the Minister will explain the situation.

A person who owns two properties and has had the ability to transfer water sales from one property to another, under the same ownership, will not be able to do so under the Bill; in fact, that person will be required to effect the transfer under this measure. The circumstance is not covered and it needs to be clarified.

As I understand it, the original proposition was that the transferability of water entitlements was to be considered as an extension of the existing arrangements for transfers and amalgamations of allocations between properties that are worked as a single farm unit. However, somehow it has got lost on the way through. I hope I am wrong, but it is just as likely to crop up in the by-laws document, which honourable members have not seen but on which they are required to make a judgment without being able to ascertain how it will work.

Because the operations of the Rural Water Commission are what might be called a little different from what they have been over the years, it is difficult to find anyone who is able to explain some of these finer details. The people at the commission are very good to me. They say, "I am sorry, but that information needs to be obtained through the Minister's office, and I suggest that you telephone that office". Of course, I have done so, but the Minister's office has not been very brilliant in answering some of the questions I have put, because I do not believe those questions have been asked within the Ministry or by the people who drafted the proposed legislation.

Another point that has not been addressed or even mentioned in the second-reading speech relates to the unallocated water right of the system. There are some 20 000 megalitres or thereabouts of unallocated water right in the Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District. Does that unallocated water become available for temporary transfers; will it be left in place as a reserve; or will it be used at present for flushing the river system? Will the Rural Water Commission do anything with that unallocated water right?

The economics of the transferability of water right entitlements are interesting. I am told that it cannot occur in the pump districts, because the budgets are too small. If someone who has a water right is not using it and transfers it to someone who will use it, that person would normally be working on sales, which would result in a drop in income for that district.

In other words, the unused water right—of which there is a significant percentage in this State—in the small pump districts causes difficulties because of the small budgets. In
regard to areas where there is an unused water right on one property, they are not allowed
to be involved in the scheme because, if that occurs, it will change the financial arrangements
within that pump district.

The same situation would occur in the Goulburn–Murray Irrigation District, the
Macalister irrigation district or the Campaspe irrigation district. Of course, they operate
on a vastly larger scale and much higher volumes are involved.

My electorate of Swan Hill covers the pump districts of Robinvale, Nyah and Tresco.
With the exception of Robinvale, the two smaller ones would benefit to a large extent.
Many people come to my office each year trying to get rid of a water right which they do
not use, which they have never used, but for which they have always had to pay.

When this Bill was on the agenda, I thought it might contain an answer to that problem.
However, that has not occurred, and small districts will not be able to participate in the
scheme—as I understand what might be contained in the by-laws—because it would
distort the finances.

Could the Minister inform the House what type of financial distortion will occur in the
Goulburn–Murray Irrigation District when some of these large volumes of water are
transferred? In some instances, properties have water rights of 200 megalitres that have
been paid for but not used. These rights could be transferred to someone else who has
used up his or her water right in addition to the 200 megalitres of water that has been
transferred.

When it is all worked out, the Rural Water Commission might miss out on that 200
megalitres of water sales. I wonder whether anyone has done that exercise. Water users
would be interested in the result, if it has been carried out.

The Minister introduced this financial management strategy and from time to time has
been asked a few questions about it. The Government and the Rural Water Commission
have tried to make the sale of water a commercial proposition on the user pays principle.
The Government hopes to eventually reap a return on its operation thereby keeping the
operating costs of the commission at 1984–85 actual dollar levels right through until the
end of 1989.

The Minister well knows that what he has done by introducing this strategy has been
disastrous. The honourable gentleman found that he could not get the cost down. I am not
sure why he could not achieve that. I am also not sure that the Minister knows exactly
what he is doing. The fact is that his actions will slow down this operation and have a
negative financial effect on the Goulburn–Murray Irrigation District.

This proposed scheme will place greater pressure on the water industry than ever before.
The water industry in Victoria is in turmoil because of the Government’s rationalisation
policy. The attitude has been to start; stop; maybe operate for six weeks; no, hold back
and so on.

The staffing in the head office of the Rural Water Commission is a mess. The key
operator for the water scheme is the director of operations. That position has been vacant
for six to eight months. That is a vital position for providing input into the transferability
of water entitlement program and I should have expected that the Minister would have
had that position filled as soon as possible. He does not seem to be able to fill that position.
Things are not going so well at the Rural Water Commission, according to my information.

Mr McCutcheon interjected.

Mr STEGGALL—I am pleased to hear that the Minister is to announce the appointment
of a new director of operations. I hope the position will be filled by a person from within
the commission. No-one wants a political appointment to be made to that position.
Victoria has had to suffer the Labor Party’s policy of politicising just about every position
in the Public Service. The Rural Water Commission has not missed out, as the Minister

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well knows. He also knows that the Department of Water Resources has not missed out. Of course, those two authorities are now being melded together.

Should the Minister make a political appointment to the position of director of operations, heaven help those involved in the water industry. That is a key position and requires a person with the appropriate knowledge to make the transferability of water rights program work.

The Minister has not had the best of days today. From now on he will be known as the Minister for hypotheticals. It would seem that many of the strategies adopted by the Rural Water Commission at the moment are hypothetical schemes that the Minister has not been able to implement. The planners in the commission are bright fellows, just as are so many in the Department of Management and Budget and the Department of Water Resources. However, it has been the Minister who has introduced this financial management strategy and forced the rationalisation of operations on the water industry, and the staff of the commission should not be blamed for the situation that has eventuated.

Regionalisation has a direct relationship on the transferability of water program as the system has been set up. If the Minister ever cares to inform anyone about the applicable by-laws, the various water districts can be set up by local communities. However, the process of regionalisation can be described only as a complete disaster. It started off in turmoil and that turmoil certainly has been evident in the electorate I represent.

I wonder whether the Minister remembers Pyramid Hill. I do not know whether he has been invited back there lately but he did not seem to accept any of the invitations that were offered to him on his last visit. In September 1986, the Minister produced proposals for the regionalisation of management at Pyramid Hill. Those proposals cleared up many people's fears and gave water users an idea of the Government's direction with personnel and their positions. They also almost tagged the positions so that people could understand the structure.

The battle of Pyramid Hill was lost by the local people when they had to accept the proposals. They did not accept them readily because water plays a significant part in the survival of Pyramid Hill and it was important to the community that the system worked efficiently.

The Minister might also have run into some problems with stock and domestic issues in other parts of the State on that same trip.

Regionalisation was laid down in this document and it was accepted but when someone in the Ministry worked out the cost savings of the scheme it was discovered that the financial management package could not be delivered under that proposal. That was discovered in September last year. People then began to talk about the fact that it was just a glance or a quick look at what regionalisation could be and how it could be improved.

It appears that later during the year no-one had worked out what the functions were to be for the people in the regions and the people at head office, or who would make up the head office staff and the regional staff, whether the regional staff and the regions were to be the same or different or what the Rural Water Commission was now to become—either a maintenance and operational authority that would shed itself of its construction duties. No-one could work out who would leave or stay or make decisions and the whole lot ended in such a mess that a stop was put to the whole regionalisation issue and it has now become stuck.

To my knowledge it has not started up again except that regional managers have been put in place throughout the State. They do not have regions or their own staff and they do not know what their function is or what they are doing. They are as embarrassed as billyo. The Minister has done nothing to alleviate that embarrassment and work out the problems that he and the department have created. Believe me, the problems are enormous when one takes into account a Bill such as this on the transfer of water entitlement. The Bill will need great understanding by people in regional water offices and the district offices that
are still there. Numerous decisions have to be made on the proposed by-laws that the Minister may or may not give Parliament today.

Unless the morale is improved and the whole staffing structure, the financial targets and the reasons for the existence of the Rural Water Commission are clarified by the Minister he will have trouble right through to the end and the end will come when he faces an election if, in the meantime, the Premier does not remove him from that portfolio. With everyone wondering what on earth is happening and it being said that all new appointments will be stopped and that another 200 staff members will need to be shed throughout the State and at head office, what will happen and how will anything be achieved? All sorts of bright ideas are coming forward.

The Minister for Water Resources has an important responsibility. Melbourne people and the majority of members of Parliament do not appreciate the importance of the role of the Minister for Water Resources but those who represent country areas, particularly irrigation areas, rank the Minister for Water Resources at the top of importance in Cabinet. Yet, we are not getting that quality of Minister in the field. The Minister very rarely visits the country and when he does he arrives in a cavalcade of other Ministers. Although the Minister said that he would go back to the Murray–Goulburn District Irrigation Board when he promised that he would meet with the board and discuss these matters before the introduction of the Bill, he did not do so.

Now, the Rural Water Commission will attend all district advisory boards throughout the State to work out the details for each of those districts and the transferability of water entitlements will be applied to each district. At present there is enabling legislation available but all the special deals and arrangements will need to be negotiated. I hope it will happen soon. I also hope that when it happens it is made clear because in other consultations with the Minister on subjects such as the financial strategy package nothing has been made clear and people have left those meetings very confused.

The National Party is very concerned at the level of service that will be provided and the level of delivery. Will the Minister continue to rip the people out of the coalface? Will more reliance be placed on computerisation? Computers are good for compiling information but, when it comes to devising how much water has gone down the channel and what is happening at the other end, they do not work at all well.

For example, an irrigator in the electorate I represent recently had his irrigation water cut off and when he asked the bailiff to explain why the channel had been closed the bailiff said that the irrigator had had the water for four days and had had enough to irrigate his property on the first irrigation. Unfortunately, instead of having six revolutions of water down the channel, the irrigator had only one and, as a result, he had not received very much water at all. Irrespective of those problems, everyone in the country is working towards trying to make new technology work.

The sitting was suspended at 6.27 p.m. until 8.4 p.m.

Mr STEGGALL—Before the suspension of the sitting for dinner I dealt with the operations of the water bailiffs and the way in which they were trying to come to grips with the present changes in technology and some of the practical problems that exist in the delivery of water through the use of computers. Admittedly, computers are an aid and the system will improve.

One of the major problems being faced at present is staffing in the Rural Water Commission of Victoria. The Minister does not appreciate those problems and the fact that the transferability of water entitlement will make more work for the staff. They will have to make more decisions that will have to be addressed quickly.

Until the Minister for Water Resources sorts out the problems faced by staff in his department and gives them direction, he will have trouble delivering the necessary back-up services to provide an effective transferability scheme. These problems will have to be sorted out, even if it is done on a temporary basis.
The previous speaker quoted a letter from the Victorian Farmers Federation and dealt with the permanency of the transferability of water entitlement. I ask the Minister and the Government not to rush into this scheme which should be introduced temporarily so that they will have an opportunity of closely examining its operation. Problems will be faced in the delivery and coordination of the transfers because a considerable volume of water will be transferred between irrigators. I hope the Minister will address the question that I raised earlier about unallocated water rights being introduced by the Rural Water Commission.

The Minister is well aware that staffing in his department is in a mess; many temporary appointments have been made and the people working for the commission do not know whether they have a future or what duties they will be given. This situation is unacceptable when a change such as that being undergone in the department at present is being introduced and should not be allowed to drag on.

The Minister must sort out the uncertainty of the staff in not knowing which direction the commission is heading. It is high time the Minister set a realistic target. For three years the Minister has planned changes in his department and he has made a mess of them.

The morale of the staff of the commission is at rock bottom only because they do not know what form the system will take or who will be making the decisions in the regions or at head office. The Minister would also be aware that the staff will come under more pressure at Budget time when they must work out the cost effectiveness of the transferability of water entitlements.

If the Minister had not falsely and wrongly caused a $68 million loss through the financial strategy package, irrigators in the water districts would, by and large, have broken even. On a State basis that amount of money is peanuts compared to the enormous deficits and losses brought about by other departments.

When asked about this matter in question time, the Minister for Water Resources said there was no problem with morale. In that case, why is he considering the appointment of facilitators throughout the regions to facilitate these changes that will disrupt many of the districts? That is, if he ever gets the regions under way!

Also the Minister might answer the question concerning the housing issue for the Rural Water Commission. I can understand other departments being in a complete and utter state of confusion over housing but the Minister for Water Resources is the Minister in charge of the housing problems. If he cannot sort out the problems of housing in the Rural Water Commission, the Ministry of Education and the police have very little chance.

The other area concerns the role of the Department of Water Resources in all of this and the confusion it is adding to the system. The Department of Water Resources has grabbed the functions of the Rural Water Commission of Victoria and the Minister is pleased that the Department of Water Resources, being his administrative arm in many ways, is getting into areas previously covered by the Rural Water Commission of Victoria.

It is imperative that the rural water system operates efficiently and effectively; and hopefully the transferability of water entitlement will achieve that aim. A clear message needs to be put out as to where the water industry in this State is headed. The Minister has had three years now to point the direction but he has gone backwards ever since to the situation now where none of his staff have any faith in him.

The Bill is an enabling one. It does not show the true picture of how transferability in the water sector will operate. I hope, before the night is out, that the Minister will do something about getting that message through so that we can understand what form the transferability of water entitlements, on a temporary basis, will take in Victoria.

Mr HANN (Rodney)—It is interesting to note that the whole question of the transferability of water entitlements has been under discussion now for a number of years.
In fact, the first committee that inquired into it was the Public Bodies Review Committee when it conducted its inquiry into the water industry.

That committee, in its twelfth report, recommended that approval should be given to this issue of transferability of water rights. The justification for that approval was that in certain instances there are irrigators with surplus water right, particularly in the horticultural areas around Shepparton and also in some of the larger grazing areas. Some people with surplus water right who do not actually use that water right each year would have a desire to either transfer it on a permanent basis or on a temporary basis; but certainly they would prefer to transfer it and allow somebody else to use it rather than meeting the cost of that water right as they do under the present system whereby it is tied to the individual landholder who has a financial responsibility, each year, to pay the cost of his water right.

It is probably most appropriate that the Bill is being dealt with on 15 April because today is the day that water rate payments are due throughout the irrigation areas. I hope that my wife has paid ours; I understand she has. In that sense, I suppose I declare a partial interest in this matter because I am an irrigator within the Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District.

A consultant study was conducted on this question of the transferability of water entitlements and the Department of Water Resources also prepared a discussion paper or issues paper on the matter. A general acceptance seems to have been indicated that there ought to be some form of transferability. It has been partly supported by irrigators for the simple reason that no extra water is available within the irrigation system to allocate to those irrigators desperately short of water.

I refer especially to people occupying holdings subdivided after July 1959. Those individuals find that the water right on their properties is totally inadequate and a number of constituents in those circumstances have constantly made representations to me over the years seeking an increase in their water allocations.

Mr McCutcheon interjected.

Mr HANN—If the Minister waits until I finish what I am saying, he will get the answer to his question. To interject halfway through tends to confuse the answer for him; he is too impatient.

I was about to say that one of these constituents, in particular, has made representations to me virtually every year and in some instances twice a year. The Minister would be aware of this person because most of the letters have been referred to him. The difficulty is that there was an expectation back in 1964, when the Water Act was reviewed, as there had been an expectation prior to that date, that landholders who had subdivided their properties would receive an increased allocation. The answer to the Minister’s question is that the Salinity Committee, of which I was a member, determined that there was no extra water to be allocated, that the additional water that Victoria was to gain from Dartmouth was committed to a range of things.

It was committed, first of all, to the Barmah Forest and to an unknown quantity that is required to ensure that the Barmah Forest is flooded. Therefore, an unknown quantity is required for that purpose but it amounts to tens of thousands of megalitres.

The committee determined in its deliberations, on the question of salinity control, that virtually the only immediate solution to the disposal of saline waste water is river dilution; so the recommendation was made by the committee that the extra water available from Dartmouth should be reserved for that purpose to provide dilution in the River Murray.

The consequence of that decision was that these people—and it was not just the individual landholders on the subdivided properties but also a fairly significant number of landholders, particularly on 40-hectare to 100-hectare or 100-acre to 200-acre properties—were affected by the current formula because it was inadequate in applying to that acreage. Those
landholders also had an expectation that at some time in the future they would see an increase in their water right.

The first inquiry was carried out by the Public Works Committee and it was entitled the Northern Water Allocation Inquiry. It continued for approximately eight years. The total transcript of that evidence would have been about 3 feet high. Numerous individuals gave evidence to the committee, only to find that the inquiry was subsequently referred to the salinity inquiry which finally determined, much to their displeasure, that there really was no additional water to allocate.

What I was leading to when the Minister for Water Resources so rudely interjected was that transferability will be one option for some individuals. Their only dilemma will be that they will not have an automatic guarantee that they will benefit. That is a question to which no-one knows the answer. Presumably, someone with a smaller water right has a greater need and may be prepared to pay a little more than a person with larger water right.

In addition to the people like the person to whom I referred with regard to the subdivided holding, many people, especially those involved in the major horticultural industries, such as the tomato growing and wine industries, have expressed to me a desire to be able to purchase additional water rights. Those industries have the potential to maximise the return on water, but, until this time, that has not been allowed.

Support exists within the irrigation industry for the concept of transfer of water entitlements; however, there are also concerns. The honourable member for Swan Hill referred to a number of those, especially in reference to the need to protect specific individual irrigation districts. The ongoing effects if a water entitlement is transferred from a district such as Pyramid Hill, could ultimately affect the viability of the local town and its various services as it would affect the land values, which would affect the rating values of the properties concerned. It could also aggravate the salinity problem because of the need to leach the saline soils with irrigation.

If an area is changed from a relatively intense irrigation area to a dry area, a significant impact on the social structure of the community will occur, and that issue must be addressed.

The practicality of supply must be considered. Once again, the honourable member for Swan Hill highlighted some of the difficulties that irrigators experience, especially if they are a long way from the source of the irrigation supply. A whole range of reasons can be given why those land-holders have difficulty in getting an adequate water supply while they are irrigating.

Many of Victoria's irrigation channels have not been upgraded for 40, 50 or more years. The weed problem in individual channels is becoming more serious all the time. In recent days I learned of an irrigation channel in the electorate I represent that is suffering from a weed problem. The weeds cannot be controlled because weedicides cannot be used in the channel, especially during the irrigation season, and yet the weed growth is retarding the flow of water. That is a difficult problem with which the Rural Water Commission must cope. Obviously, it would be impractical to allow significant transfers of water entitlement to sections of irrigation supply channel that could not properly supply the water. That issue must be addressed by the Rural Water Commission.

Concern has been expressed to me by a number of people, especially in the Echuca north area, about the impact on an individual property if a significant portion of water right is transferred. The by-laws included in the Bill effectively cover that issue because they indicate that limits will be set on the transfer of water rights into and out of an irrigation area having regard to drainage and salinity criteria. Not only the area but also an individual property must be assessed in that regard because if too much water is allocated to a property or if too much is taken away, a property may be adversely affected.
Another concern I have about the transfer of water rights is that if more restrictions are not placed upon it—especially if we move further down the track towards permanent transfer—a bank manager may say to one of his irrigation clients, “You have a bank commitment of $20,000 at the end of the month and you must pay that commitment”. In that case, a person may be tempted to sell off portions of his water right to obtain immediate cash. In the situation of permanent transfer—and I am sure we will reach that stage—the property would be without a viable water right.

Real dangers are associated with that action and an overriding set of rules must be drawn up about what is a viable water right on a property. If that is not done, a repeat of the 1964 situation where people were subdividing properties will occur. In that case, individuals purchased properties with an expectation that they would gain extra water rights. That was a naive expectation, but that is what they believed. They subsequently found out when they took up the holdings that they were not viable.

A classic example was the property at Rochester where a local real estate agent was singing the praises of a property that had just changed hands for a large sum of money during a time when the diary industry was experiencing a difficult period. I asked the real estate agent whether the purchasers of the property were aware that it had a small water right, because I had had representations from the previous owners. The estate agent informed me that the purchasers were aware of that, but he mentioned that they came from Gippsland.

It was a matter of only weeks before the new owners approached me expressing concern about the small water right on the property. They came from a high rainfall area in Gippsland to an irrigation property and they had no idea of the amount of water that was required. A need exists to set limits on the volume of water that is left on a property so that it can remain viable. Problems will arise if water is transferred without taking that into account.

I am concerned that the by-laws have not been released to the opposition parties. From a private discussion I had with the Minister for Water Resources, I understand that he proposes to release some draft by-laws later tonight. The task of the spokesmen for the opposition parties would have been made easier if they had been given access to the by-laws prior to the debate. I indicated privately to the Minister that he would have difficulty getting the Bill through the other place if the by-laws were not presented, because one needs to understand what the Government has in mind with regard to the detail of the transfer of water entitlements.

It concerns me that individual landowners who have been able to transfer their water rights, especially their sales allocation, will now have to pay a charge to carry out that transfer, and that is wrong. I hope the appropriate by-law will be reviewed because allowing a temporary transfer of water right is a new innovation. It is an addition to the present procedures, and the only transfers that should be subject to a charge from the Rural Water Commission should be transfers of a water right itself and not the sales allocation.

My colleague, the honourable member for Swan Hill highlighted the grave problems, currently facing the Rural Water Commission.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr HANN—If there is a reason to whinge in this Parliament, for the benefit of the honourable member for Richmond, I shall whinge. I believe it will do the honourable member good to listen. He needs to examine what has happened to what was once one of the most efficient Government departments prior to the Labor Government coming to power.

Mr McCutcheon—It delivers the goods!

Mr HANN—It is struggling to deliver the goods. I say that from personal experience. How does the Minister know? He is not at the end of the system! He sits in Spring Street
and does not operate through the Rural Water Commission any more. I guarantee the Minister has probably not been down the other end of a dethridge wheel.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! If the Minister wishes to forgo his right to close the debate he is going the right way about it.

Mr HANN—You are right, Mr Acting Speaker. If one added up all the interjections made by the Minister, it would be obvious that he has gone beyond his right of reply!

If one examines the morale in the Rural Water Commission from the top level through to the local water bailiffs, one realises that it is at an all-time low. The Minister ought to examine the work face and ascertain the reason for the problem. The general manager resigned because he was absolutely disgusted with the treatment of the commission.

Mr McCutcheon—He retired!

Mr HANN—He resigned! I wish the Minister would be honest. Honourable members are sick of Ministers telling lies in this House. The general manager resigned because he was totally frustrated with the way in which the commission was operating. I can well understand his position when one examines how the commission has been functioning under the financial management strategy introduced by this Minister. The Minister went around Victoria claiming that he had personally saved irrigators $800 million. That figure finally came down to something like $390 million or less. It was purely a book debt and the Minister was aware of that. However, he kept making the false statement and this resulted in a private debt of $68 million for the Rural Water Commission.

The honourable member for Swan Hill highlighted the disruption caused by the financial management strategy upon the Rural Water Commission. However, the situation is even more serious. More recently my attention was directed to the fact that the commission was not able to take up funds from the Commonwealth water resources program for surface drainage because if it did so the financial management strategy would fall in a heap.

Not only are irrigators burdened with the additional cost of meeting this private debt of $68 million incurred by the Labor Government but also the Rural Water Commission has not been able to take advantage of Commonwealth funds because of the nature of the financial management strategy.

In an earlier debate I highlighted the fact that when I was first elected to Parliament, the former State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, which was superseded by the Rural Water Commission, had a proud record for training senior public servants.

Mr Kennedy interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! The honourable member for Bendigo West is out of his place and making disorderly interjections.

Mr HANN—The Ayatollah should go back to Iran! At that time one could name a number of Government departments which were led by extremely skilled senior public servants who had been trained in the former State Rivers and Water Supply Commission. Under the present structure of the Rural Water Commission there is no way that one could train anyone because the whole structure of the department has been destroyed. People who have built up their whole careers in the department have suddenly found that their positions have disappeared. As the honourable member for Narracan interjects, they are totally demoralised. This applies from the top senior levels of the department through to the level of the local water bailiffs.

It has reached the stage where the Government has advised the water bailiffs who had been required to occupy houses when they took up their positions, that they are likely to lose them and be thrown out into the street. What is the Government on about? Does the Minister understand why the staff of the commission is so demoralised when policies like that are adopted? No clarification or determination has been made by the Minister about
whether he intends to keep the houses which are essential to the whole operation and management of the commission. One sees a formerly very effective commission totally destroyed and its management completely disrupted.

Mr Jasper interjected.

Mr HANN—The honourable member for Murray Valley has good reason to interject because the area he represents has been affected in the same way as the area I represent. He saw the sad situation where, because of the regionalisation proposals, a district engineer actually passed away because of the strain and suffering he experienced with respect to his career structure. His position was destroyed and there is no doubt that the decisions of the Government had a direct bearing on his death.

That situation highlights the low morale in the Rural Water Commission. The honourable member for Swan Hill highlighted the lack of effective policy and direction within the commission and the sad fact that it no longer has a sense of purpose. The Minister does not know what is going on. The sooner the Minister visits the irrigation areas and determines exactly what is going on, the better off we will be.

The board is not representative of the bulk of the irrigation districts. The bulk of the responsibilities of the Rural Water Commission lie in the Goulburn–Murray Irrigation District and yet that district has only one representative on the board to represent irrigators. That is an indictment of the Government and demonstrates its failure to recognise the importance of the Goulburn–Murray Irrigation District.

After the next election, when this Government is thrown out of office, many changes will be made. The National Party believes the water industry, which has generated enormous wealth and important employment opportunities throughout northern Victoria in particular as well as other areas, is a vital industry. This Government fails to understand the importance of irrigation in a nation which has such a dry climate.

Although the National Party is prepared to support the proposed legislation, it has grave concerns about the direction in which the Rural Water Commission is going. Before the proposed legislation is passed by both Houses of Parliament, the National Party wants to examine the proposed by-laws.

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley)—I compliment my colleagues, the honourable members for Swan Hill and Rodney for their contributions to this most important debate. I note that the Deputy Leader of the National Party expressed surprise that the Labor Party is not proposing that any of its members speak on this vital issue which affects the Victorian economy.

The honourable members for Bendigo West and Richmond were happy to interject when the Deputy Leader of the National Party was making his contribution on the Bill, but they are not prepared to give their opinions of the irrigation system in Victoria. I suggest to members of the Government who represent electorates in metropolitan Melbourne that the Minister for Water Resources should arrange for them to visit other parts of Victoria, particularly the irrigation districts in north-eastern Victoria and the Goulburn–Murray area to discover what the lifeblood of Victoria and Australia is.

There is no doubt in my mind that water is the lifeblood of the Victorian and Australian economies. If honourable members do not understand that, they are obviously not aware of what is going on in country Victoria. The Murray Valley electorate includes the Goulburn–Murray basin, which is vital to the wealth of the Victorian economy because of its agricultural interests.

I am delighted that the Minister for Local Government has come into the Chamber because he does journey into country Victoria. The Minister should have some understanding of the importance of water to Victorian country areas and to many municipalities.
If the Minister for Local Government were to analyse the situation relating to the shires of Cobram and Numurkah, which he proposed to amalgamate, he would understand there was no need to amalgamate these vital municipalities, which have developed together through the irrigation system. Those municipalities do not need to be amalgamated to be efficient or to provide services to the people living in their areas.

The municipalities have a significant number of irrigation areas within their boundaries and there is no need for them to have an expanded area. Their submissions to the Local Government Commission were strongly along that line. They are achieving steady expansion and are operating effectively. It was not necessary for the Minister for Local Government to tell them that they should amalgamate to become more efficient and to provide additional services.

I hope the Minister learned about the vital part being played by water provided through those municipalities within the Murray Valley electorate and the importance of water to the Victorian economy.

The Deputy Leader of the National Party said that the National Party believes the Department of Water Resources is vital to the Victorian economy. It is disappointing that the Government chose—and I say this advisedly—its most junior Minister to take on that portfolio. Although the Minister has worked hard to grasp the importance of his department, he must also travel to country areas and talk to people connected with the irrigation system and learn about how water is provided to their properties. The Department of Water Resources should have a much higher profile within the Government.

Some time ago the Minister told me about his belief concerning the importance of his department. He said that there was a lot more work attached to the department than the Government gave credit for. I pay tribute to the Minister for recognising the importance of his department to the Victorian economy.

The development of irrigation schemes and irrigation districts throughout Victoria has created an enormous boost to the economies of the districts where water has been provided. After the second world war many properties were broken up and farmed by soldier settlement schemes where people took on land that could not, in its own right, produce sufficient wealth for a family to live on. However, the provision of irrigation water totally changed the economy and the production capabilities of properties farmed by those people.

In the electorate of Murray Valley, the shires of Cobram, Numurkah and, to a lesser extent, Tungamah, are reliant on the water provided through the irrigation system by the Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District. Dairying, fruit and other agricultural industries that have been developed in that area are vital to the wealth of local farmers.

Since I entered Parliament in 1976 the provision and delivery of water through irrigation districts has been vital not only for the immediate areas but also the private water diverters along the River Murray. Over the years I have had extensive representations from people involved in irrigation areas concerning the problems they have had with water and the provision of water to their properties.

The most important problem that has overridden every other problem involving water in my electorate has concerned anomalies in the provision of water to various properties. That has arisen because after the second world war the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, as it then was, allowed landowners to transfer water from one property to another. Before 1959 there was a shifting of water rights and, in many cases, inadequate water rights were provided for those properties.

Mr Simmonds interjected.

Mr JASPER—If the Minister for Local Government will sit back and listen, he may also learn something. People who have been involved with water in the irrigation districts have been concerned about anomalies in the allocation of water to their properties and
the various quantities of water that have been provided. I have made many representations to former Ministers responsible for water supply and to the present Minister for Water Resources and have told them that these anomalies should be addressed. The response of Ministers about attempting to address anomalies in the supply of water to various properties in the Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District has been that the Government was undertaking investigations.

This matter was undertaken originally by the Public Works Committee which, for many years, investigated these anomalies.

The usual excuse that was given by the then Ministers and the people representing the former State Rivers and Water Supply Commission was that these matters would be addressed by the Public Works Committee in a report on the investigation of water allocations in the irrigation district and that it would eliminate the anomalies of the allocation of equivalent amounts of water to those properties.

Following that, an agreement was reached to build the Dartmouth dam and I was told that the Public Works Committee had been investigating the anomalies, that it would address those matters when the Dartmouth dam came on stream and that additional water would be made available to the Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District so that there would be equality in the allocation of water to the various properties in that area.

Dartmouth dam has been on stream for many years and it is currently running at approximately 80 per cent capacity. It is a huge dam, many times the size of the Sydney Harbour and many times the size of the Hume dam.

The Minister for Water Resources, in answer to my inquiries has responded that this matter will be referred to the Salinity Committee for it to recommend what is to be done in obtaining equality in the allocation of water to the various properties in the Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District.

That problem needs to be addressed by the Minister. It is a vital problem to the irrigators within my electorate of Murray Valley. The transferability of water rights will assist in the provision of water to properties that do not have a sufficient allocation of water.

I implore the Minister to examine firstly, the anomalies in the supply of water to the various properties in the irrigation district. These have occurred mainly because of actions taken prior to 1959.

How does the Minister propose to overcome the anomalies in the provision of water rights in irrigation districts where some irrigators do not have sufficient water to obtain maximum productivity from their farming lands.

Mr McCutcheon interjected.

Mr JASPER—The Minister does not understand that if a property has too much water, that particular—

Mr J. F. McGrath interjected.

Mr JASPER—As the honourable member for Warrnambool interjected, the Minister apparently is not educated about what goes on in the irrigation districts. I suggest the Minister takes a crash course and also takes a trip up to the Goulburn-Murray area and then he will acquire a better understanding of the situation.

I want to ensure that the Minister understands what is happening. There are anomalies in the allocation of water to properties where some farmers receive too little water to farm their properties effectively and others receive too much.

Mr McCutcheon interjected.

Mr JASPER—Transferability will eliminate the problem only on a temporary basis.
Ever since I entered Parliament in 1976, Ministers of water supply have been indicating that the Public Works Committee and the Salinity Committee would come up with solutions on how to get a more equitable allocation of water for people in the irrigation districts. All that the Bill is doing is allowing for the transferability of water rights. The National Party supports the Bill because there should be the transferability of water allocations and it should be done on a season-by-season basis.

**Mr McCutcheon** interjected.

**Mr JASPER**—I shall listen to the Minister’s comments when he closes the debate. It is vital that the Minister responds to that issue and that the Minister understands what is going on.

Another matter that should be addressed is the charges for water rights within irrigation districts for those who receive water from the normal channel system and those who receive water from the various creeks within the irrigation system. The former Minister of Water Supply, Mr White, wrote a two and a half page letter to me in which he indicated the reasons for and against a differential charge; one of the reasons was because of the lesser cost to those people receiving water through the normal channel system and those receiving water from creeks where they have to pump the water. They obviously, have a higher cost structure.

The Minister also stated there was a variation in water charges according to the point of delivery of the water. In conclusion he said that the matter was too difficult and he was not prepared to tackle it at that stage. The present Minister should examine that issue because that is a matter for which I have received substantial representation over a period.

There are anomalies in the allocation of water for diverters along the River Murray. The former Minister of Water Resources visited my electorate on a number of occasions and was responsive to my representations on those issues. He visited a property 8 kilometres west of Rutherglen, on the banks of the River Murray, on which there was a large area of flats and lagoons.

Every year with the high water flow in the irrigation season, the lagoons were filled but, as the river dropped after the irrigation period, a large volume of water remained in the lagoons.

Yet, the Rural Water Commission would not allow an increased allocation to this property so that it could further expand its productivity. The farmer had a huge area under lucerne and, recently, when there was a drought, he said that he could produce a larger volume of lucerne to assist other areas of the State that were in desperate need. The former Minister, although he was sympathetic, was not prepared to allocate that water on any basis.

This is one matter that could be addressed. This property should receive a higher allocation of water as it is in the lagoons and the water is not moving down the system. It is absolutely ridiculous that this situation has occurred.

The Deputy Leader of the National Party mentioned the need for water of many vignerons to allow a greater productivity on their properties.

I highlight, for instance, Bullers Calliope Winery at Rutherglen which has had applications with the former State Rivers and Water Supply Commission and the Rural Water Commission for approximately fifteen years in an attempt to obtain a water allocation to its property to enable it to develop its vineyards further to achieve maximum productivity. I could quote one or two other wineries that applied even earlier for permission to pump water to irrigate their vineyards within the Rutherglen area. That situation should also be addressed, but the Government has swept the matter under the carpet and it has been going on for ten or fifteen years while anomalies have been occurring.
The Public Works Committee investigated the matter and the Salinity Committee made recommendations. However, the Government has come up with a system of transferable water rights, and that is supported by the National Party.

The Minister could examine these issues, which are vital to people living within the Murray Valley electorate who have difficulty in convincing the Government of the anomalies in the allocation of water to properties. A genuine attempt should be made by the Government to overcome the difficulties that those people face in obtaining adequate water supplies to enable them to achieve maximum production. Surely the Government should be trying to get maximum production from irrigated properties to assist the economy of Victoria and Australia.

Some moves have been made in the past to allow for the transfer of water rights. The Bill is a step in the right direction in allowing transferability where that is appropriate. I support the fact that this is to be done on a seasonal basis and that the matter will be reviewed.

Mr Sidiropoulos interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! I ask the honourable member for Richmond to cease interjecting.

Mr JASPER—He might as well interject, Sir, to get his name into Hansard when I respond to his interjection.

The ACTING SPEAKER—The honourable member for Murray Valley should know better.

Mr JASPER—It was not much of an interjection anyway, and it is not worth responding to. I should like the honourable member for Richmond to tell the House what he thinks should happen concerning this matter.

The ACTING SPEAKER—The honourable member for Murray Valley, on the Bill.

Mr JASPER—I am precisely on the Bill, Sir. The National Party wants to hear what the Government has to say about the matter. The Minister is learning. He is an apprentice, in our view, and he will take a long time to learn. Most apprenticeships continue at least for years. I am disappointed that the Minister is an apprentice on full pay: that really is the critical point.

Another area that the Minister should examine is what is happening with water from Lake Mokoan. I hope that what he does with that water will be balanced. The honourable member for Mildura rightly interjects that the Minister probably does not know where Lake Mokoan is.

I extend an invitation to the Minister to come to my area and see some of these places and talk to the people involved in irrigation so that he can learn what goes on. There is a proposal to shift a volume of water from Lake Mokoan into the Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District, overriding what would have been one of the best irrigation developments with the Broken River irrigation scheme. It is disappointing that, despite extensive representations to the Public Works Committee, the Salinity Committee, former Ministers and the current Minister, water should be diverted from Lake Mokoan to this area which currently has a stock and domestic water supply to many properties, when it would be more efficient usage of water to allow the project with the Broken River irrigation system to proceed. People use the water from Lake Mokoan not only for irrigation and agricultural purposes but also for recreational purposes.

The National Party wants a positive response from the Minister on Lake Mokoan because that water should be utilised in the development of the Broken River irrigation scheme.

In the development of new irrigation districts, the north-eastern Victorian district will have its district office at Cobram and a subdistrict office at Wangaratta. As the Minister
would be aware, extensive representations were made by the Shire of Cobram and interested people in that area that this should be the main office for the region as it is a vital area in the distribution of water to Cobram, Numurkah and surrounding areas. So it is pleasing that the commission and the Minister responded positively with a balanced result in the development of this new district. The National Party will watch with interest to see how the Minister handles its development.

There is currently a need for confidence to be expressed by the Minister, the commission and the board to improve staff morale within the commission. The staff are concerned about the new tack, the changes that are being made and the new districts that are being set up. It appears that little guidance is being provided to them.

Mr McCutcheon interjected.

Mr JASPER— I said it appears that way. I shall be interested to hear the Minister’s response because the information coming to me from staff in the irrigation system, especially in the Cobram–Numurkah area, is that little guidance is being provided from head office, and there seems to be uncertainty among the staff as to the future development of the new districts.

The National Party trusts that the Minister will come to country Victoria and learn what is going on. As I have indicated, most trades require a four-year apprenticeship. It will take at least that time for the current Minister to complete his course. I hope the Deputy Premier is aware that the National Party believes the Minister for Water Resources should not be the most junior Minister but should be one of the most high-powered Ministers in the Government because of the importance of that portfolio to the State of Victoria. The Deputy Premier, the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources, has visited north-eastern Victoria and my electorate on more occasions than the Minister for Water Resources.

Mr Delzoppo interjected.

Mr JASPER— He has seen it through wine coloured glasses, but the wine industry is important to the economy of the area. We want the Minister to come and see it, talk to the irrigators, have a drink of water and correct the anomalies that exist in the distribution of irrigation water within the Murray Valley electorate which is so vital to the economy of this State.

Dr WELLS (Dromana) — I congratulate the Government on some aspects of the Bill. While the measure is between here and another place, I hope the Minister will amend some aspects of the proposals.

I am pleased to support any rational proposals that will maximise the efficient use of water in Australia because water is one of our most precious and most scarce resources. All honourable members are well aware of that, but there are still rational proposals possible to improve the system, such as the temporary transfer of water rights.

The temporary transfer of the water entitlement is the correct way to proceed at this point so that information can be gained before proceeding to the permanent transfer of water entitlements.

The Government, following on from the previous Government’s work on salinity, is facing up to one of the most important problems facing rural Australia. On the one hand it is a paradox that the nation is short of water nearly always and, on the other hand, the irrigation of water poses problems by putting arable land out of productive use for long periods.

The State and the nation must spend more money both on using, to the limits of their efficiency, the water that is available and preventing long-term damage from that use.

I am concerned with Part 2 of the Bill concerning the temporary transfer of water rights. Since I entered Parliament it has been my firmly held view that too many rules and laws
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are made by regulations which do not come before Parliament at the time a Bill becomes law. It is the responsibility of legislators to know about the detail of Acts they pass. Parliament should not accept Ministerial undertakings. Parliament often fails to a significant degree to address the fine print of some of the proposed legislation coming before it. Parliament could follow the example of other democratic legislatures in other parts of the world, where there is more effective presentation of the fine print incorporated in Acts of Parliament.

I take up the point made by a previous speaker about charges for water use. It is logical that Parliament should support the principle of user pays wherever possible. However, the multiplier effect must be examined when economic production is concerned. There may be grounds, either temporary or permanent, that charges for water used for irrigation purposes, to produce either domestic or export products, should be a low rate or have no charge applied. It is no good to the State if people are taken out of the economic production of goods and are thrown on the dole because the Government has increased its water rates. Water may be a relatively small cost factor in producing those products.

Australia is a nation desperately short of water, with the exception of the far north-eastern corner of Australia, which resources have not been utilised. As a member of the Natural Resources and Environment Committee, I, with other members of that committee, have examined water uses in the State and it is obvious that there are increasing problems ahead for Victoria, particularly in providing an adequate supply for metropolitan Melbourne, where the water demand is growing at a rate that the capital resources of the State will not be able to support in the near future.

However, turning to rural Victoria, changes will have to occur. Victorians have damaged large areas of land and the State does not have sufficient water to do all the things that should be done, let alone for it to be used in wasteful ways. The Bill is a small step in the right direction. I encourage the Government to examine the efficient use of our water resources more carefully.

Previous speakers have made the point that irrigation is more important to Australia and Victoria than to most other nations. It is important for domestic and export production and will prove to be even more important for the export production of goods in the near future.

Much comment has been made about the need to recycle water. This occurs in rural Victoria at the moment. A scheme is in operation in the Werribee district that uses sewerage water from metropolitan Melbourne after purification. That scheme has worked well, but it is not the most efficient use for that water. It will not be long before recycled water is used for industry.

A local issue of importance to me as the member for Dromana, for the Mornington Peninsula and, indeed, for the people of Victoria, is the outfall sewer pipe at Cape Schanck that takes treated water from south-eastern metropolitan Melbourne into the ocean. That water is being totally wasted. Why is that so? Is it because there is no land on which it can be used? No, the land is there. The Mornington Peninsula has good arable land in a favourable climate. It is high cost land with a population in and around the area available to work in various industries. Unemployment in the southern Mornington Peninsula is at least twice the national average. It is probably higher than any other area in Victoria. The area is hungry for industry to employ these people.

The peninsula has some tourism over the summer months, but for the remainder of the year, with the exception of one major industry and three local councils, few employment opportunities exist. Great hopes are held for tourism as an employer. The evidence in other parts of the Western World indicates that is not the case. Tourism is only a minor employer of people. The basic service or productive industries employ the majority of people. In the Mornington Peninsula to the south there is less land for those purposes and it is probably not unreasonable to suggest that the peninsula will never be an area of major industrial employment, but it may be an area for favourable commercial development.
Water is pouring out to sea because the Government will not sell it to irrigators at cost that they can afford. In the free market system, that is the ultimate test, if potential irrigators will not buy the water because it is too expensive, then it is by definition, too expensive. Why should the water go to waste? It is far better for the State to give that water to any one on the Mornington Peninsula who is willing to use it in a system that stands up to reasonable technological analysis. The Mornington Peninsula is ideally suited for the development of a modern horticultural industry.

In the past five years development has occurred in high technology producing new plant species and horticulture is undergoing a revolution. The whole of south-eastern Australia is involved in the selling of competitive products, including plants. There is potential not just for domestic industry but for the employment of people, and these industries are exceptionally good training grounds for young people. They would also assist in earning export dollars for Australia.

I go back to what I said earlier. Sometimes it is worth giving something away to help establish industry and receive a return at some future time. The Minister for Water Resources should examine a system where water may be given away, even for a period of years, so that industry can be established.

The most important thing I can say in general support of the Bill is that the Government must look around the State of Victoria and pick up the outstanding areas, such as those I have just mentioned. Good State mechanisms are based upon careful regional developments. The Government must consider the southern Mornington Peninsula. Since I have been a member of this House I have been asking the Government to take action in this area because in many respects it is becoming like the western suburbs of Melbourne.

The Premier, to his credit, told the House a few days ago what his Government has done for the western suburbs of Melbourne. I acknowledge those achievements.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fogarty)—Order! Could the honourable member relate his remarks to the Bill?

Dr WELLS—Yes, I am talking about the efficiency of the use of Victorian water supplies. I invite the Premier, the Minister for Water Resources and other Government members to visit the Mornington Peninsula and to find rational ways by which we may further that area's economic and social life. That exercise should include consideration of the water that is being wasted. Let us develop a modern horticultural industry on that valuable land, nearby which are areas of high unemployment.

My final comment relates to Part 3 of the Bill. It is not meant to be a harsh criticism but I raise the matter of time. As the honourable member for Murray Valley said, this is a major step in the life of Victoria and I commend the Government for taking the time it has to undertake wide community consultation. I am not in a position to judge that consultation process but if the Government is now in the stage of preparing the measure it should get on with it as it is now more than two years since the last State election.

I do not believe honourable members would want these matters to crop up again in the pre-election atmosphere that will develop in the next year or so. I should like the measure concerned to be introduced in this place within the year to give Parliament adequate time to consider it rationally and to deal with it on its merits, improving it if possible.

Sunset clauses have real value because they ensure that things are done within a certain time. I suggest that the Minister introduces the measure within the next year if, as expected, the extension is granted on this occasion. I encourage the Government to continue to look at the fine print of water usage in Victoria not in an effort to raise more money, because that is a counterproductive process, but to keep an eye on the use of one of the most precious elements of Victorian life, namely, water.
Mr WALLACE (Gippsland South)—When I first read about the Bill being introduced I was delighted because I thought it was desperately needed to ensure the efficient use of water. I am disappointed that it has not extended as far as I thought it may. I hope the Minister for Water Resources will consider many of the points that have been raised. Perhaps honourable members are being a bit harsh because I understand the Minister may introduce further regulations, although I am not sure on that point. I am worried that we may be going the wrong way in this matter. I am disappointed that the Minister has not introduced the regulations or allowed the opposition parties to look at them so that we can judge the Bill on its merits.

I am talking in particular about irrigation right throughout Victoria. The area of which I am well aware is the Macalister irrigation area, where efficiency is certainly needed, where the water is used to its best ability and where the water can be transferred from one property to another. The Minister will be well aware, from the correspondence he has had from me, of the numerous properties that have required the transfer of water from one property to another. I jog the Minister's memory by mentioning the Pietersen family farm. Mr Simpson—Is that Bjelke-Petersen?

Mr WALLACE—No, the siphon does not go that far. The Pietersen farm is an efficient operation with two properties within about 3 or 4 miles of each other. One property is used as a turn-out property and the other is used as a dairying farm. The turn-out property does not require its total water allocation and the property that produces milk runs out of water, yet the owner cannot transfer that water from one property to another. He takes more than $2000 worth of water sales on the home dairy farm every year, yet he has water on another property that cannot be transferred, although it has been transferred during drought.

I hope the Bill will address those points. Mr Pietersen has examined the Bill, as I have sent him a copy, and I have talked to numerous people in the area about what is happening. Honourable members must ensure that farmers are not allowed to sell off their water rights at any time. The Bill does not allow it but honourable members must be careful to ensure that the water rights stay with the farm at all times and at all costs.

It is all right to transfer the water right for one or two years, or part of a year, but the farms must keep their water rights because without those water rights there is no way the farms can be viable propositions.

With the introduction of laser grading and other types of operations water will be used more efficiently than it has been in the past. The irrigation properties that currently use laser grading operate more efficiently than before with less water being used over the same period. Numerous farms would have the same problem of transferring water rights. That is one of the most important issues to be considered.

I notice that the Bill provides an extension of time by way of a sunset clause for a further twelve months. I believe this relates to the Latrobe Valley Water and Sewerage Board. It will allow the Minister to have a good look at the operations of the board. I have been critical of the board over a period but I want to be fair and ensure that what is done is right and that it is carried out correctly.

I am concerned that the Minister introduced the Bill without giving the Opposition the opportunity of knowing what else he had in mind. I hope that while the Bill is between here and another place, or perhaps even this evening, the Minister will address that point and ensure that people are able to make decisions.

Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Water Resources)—Let me respond to some of the contributions to the debate made by the honourable members for Narracan and Swan Hill, the Deputy Leader of the National Party, and the honourable members for Murray Valley, Dromana and Gippsland South. If I were to answer all the issues raised, particularly by the members of the National Party, we would be here for a week and the Leader of the Government would be upset by the delay because those honourable members led us
around the world on a Cook’s tour. We are debating a Bill that is designed essentially to provide for temporary transfers of water entitlements. In listening to the debate one wonders whether we were not dealing with the whole world in one easy lesson.

The honourable member for Narracan, on behalf of the Liberal Party, raised the question of the nature of the Bill itself, the nature of the by-laws and their content as being important in the consideration of transferable entitlements.

Recognising that fact, today the board of management of the Rural Water Commission considered the draft conditions and procedures that will be used. I have had them brought to me from the board meeting so they can be tabled in Hansard by leave of the House. I ask for leave to do so.

Leave was granted, and the draft conditions and procedures were as follows:

TEMPORARY TRANSFER OF WATER ENTITLEMENTS—IRRIGATION DISTRICTS DRAFT CONDITIONS

1. Transfers will only be permitted within the same Irrigation District and initially in only the Goulburn-Murray, Campaspe and Macalister Irrigation Districts.
2. Transfer periods will be for the unexpired portion of one irrigation period (season) only.
3. Commission holds absolute right of approval or veto.
4. Water right or announced sales may be transferred, but a minimum of 30% of total water right must be retained or used on any one holding.
5. An irrigator intending to purchase water must first obtain the approval of the Commission.
6. Applications to transfer water to a holding may be made by an occupier of a holding, but the agreement to transfer must be signed by the registered owner(s) of the holding from which water is to be transferred. Consent of parties with an interest in the land, from which water is to be transferred, must be obtained.
7. Transfers will only be permitted from a holding with an existing water entitlement to another holding with an existing water entitlement.
8. Landowners with a sales allocation or supplied by agreement and considered eligible for inclusion in the GMID may participate in the transfer of sales, but cannot purchase water right.
9. The onus is on irrigators to negotiate and arrange their own transfers.
10. The price per megalitre of water transferred will be a matter for negotiation between the vendor and the purchaser and the Commission will not be involved in this aspect.
11. Responsibility for payment of irrigation charges and drainage rates raised with respect to water right remains with the transferor. The transferee is responsible for payment for sales water used.
12. Transfers between properties not commonly owned will be subject to payment of a $60 application fee and transfers between properties commonly owned will be subject to payment of a fee of $30, these fees to cover both investigation and administration costs of processing an application.
13. Approval given to negotiate transfers will be subject to time constraints (i.e. if not acted upon within 21 days, no guarantee of approval will be given).
14. Transfers will be subject to channel capacity constraints and adequate supply works.
15. Approval of transfers will be subject to maintenance of existing levels of service and any change to this level of service will only be considered after consultation with Advisory Board.
16. Transfers must satisfy specified drainage and salinity criteria as determined by the Commission after consultation with Advisory Boards. This will include establishment of maximum volumes per holding.
17. Holdings in the Register of Orchard Plantings in the GMID may participate in TWE, but cannot transfer water and retain their entitlement of 6 ML per hectare.
18. Existing policy in relation to the temporary amalgamation of holdings and transfers of sales will cease upon the introduction of TWE.
19. Applications will be dealt with in the order they are received.

TEMPORARY TRANSFER OF WATER ENTITLEMENT—IRRIGATION DISTRICTS DRAFT PROCEDURES

1. Transferee applies to District office for approval to negotiate transfer.
2. Applicants will be required to complete application form which will include the following information:
   (a) applicant’s name;
   (b) property to which water is to be transferred;
   (c) outlet numbers;
   (d) volume to be transferred;
   (e) area/crop on which water is required.

3. Lodge application fee (non-refundable).

4. Applications will be dealt with in the order they are received.

5. Approval/refusal to negotiate transfer. Approval to include conditions, where appropriate.

6. Applicant given transfer document with advice that unless completed form is lodged within 21 days, no guarantee can be given by the Commission that transfer will be approved, but this time limit may be extended with the written approval of the Commission.

7. Transfer document, signed by the parties to the transfer, lodged with the Commission.

8. Document to include:
   (a) Signature (in presence of a witness) of transferor;
   (b) Signature (in presence of a witness) of transferee;
   (c) Consents of any parties with an interest in the property from which water is to be transferred, i.e. mortgage, lessee, share-farmer, etc.;
   (d) Property details of respective holdings;
   (e) Volume to be transferred and respective outlet numbers;


10. Register of applications maintained at each District centre to record receipt and approval of applications and to monitor trends.

Mr McCUTCHEON—I shall refer to this document, because a number of matters raised during the debate are dealt with by the draft conditions. It is important to understand that these are conditions that flesh out how temporary transfers will be controlled and directed this year with the passing of the Bill. That material will go to meetings of the Goulburn–Murray Irrigation District Council, Victorian Farmers Federation and advisory boards after Easter. I intend that the draft conditions and the means of operation and procedures will be responded to by interested parties on behalf of irrigators, so that we are dealing with a conversion that allows those conditions to reflect an efficient operating system.

I shall run through the draft conditions, because it will help to clarify many of the issues raised during the course of the debate:

1. Transfers will only be permitted within the same irrigation district and initially in only the Goulburn–Murray Campaspe and Macalister Irrigation Districts.

Those districts are ones where it is considered by the Rural Water Commission that there is real interest in enabling temporary transfers, and transfers will be taken up during this next season.

2. Transfer periods will be for the unexpired portion of one irrigation period (season) only.

A number of people indicated during the debate their concern that we do not move to permanent transfers but look at temporary transfers, so to contain those effects initially the transfers will be for one season only.

3. Commission holds absolute right of approval for veto.

That refers to any particular transfer.

4. Water right or announced sales may be transferred, but a minimum of 30 per cent of total water right must be retained or used on any one holding.
In other words, one can transfer only 70 per cent of water right and that ensures that there will be a holding of water associated with each piece of land that has an irrigation right.

5. An irrigator intending to purchase water must first obtain the approval of the Commission.

He or she makes an application to the commission and lodges a fee for which it is his or her intention to purchase and obtain water transferred to his or her block.

6. Applications to transfer water to a holding may be made by an occupier of a holding, but the agreement to transfer must be signed by the registered owner(s) of the holding from which water is to be transferred.

That is a straightforward and necessary consent that must be given by the parties with an interest in the land from which water is to be transferred.

7. Transfers will only be permitted from a holding with an existing water entitlement to another holding with an existing water entitlement.

We are not breaking new ground or creating new possibilities for irrigating land; it is transferred from one holding with an entitlement to another holding with an existing entitlement.

8. Landowners with a sales allocation or supplied by agreement and considered eligible for inclusion in the GMID may participate in the transfer of sales, but cannot purchase water rights.

That indicates that the landowners with a sales allocation or supplied by agreement and considered eligible for inclusion may participate in the transfer of sales of water.

9. The onus is on irrigators to negotiate and arrange their own transfers.

Those people who want to sell and purchase water have to make their own arrangements as to price and as to whose right they purchase on a temporary basis.

10. The price per megalitre of water transferred will be a matter for negotiation between the vendor and the purchaser and the Commission will not be involved in this aspect.

11. Responsibility for payment of irrigation charges and drainage rates raised with respect to water right remains with the transferor.

When an owner of a water right sells his right he is still responsible for paying for that water that has been transferred; therefore, he has to reclaim it. They are the conditions that are being drafted to frame the operation of temporary transfers. The obligation to pay for water right remains with the owner of that right.

12. Transfers between properties not commonly owned will be subject to payment of a $60 application fee and transfers between properties commonly owned will be subject to payment of a fee of $30, these fees to cover both the investigation and administration costs of processing an application.

An application fee of $60 and a transfer fee of $30 cover the cost of administration of the system, which is to be recouped, otherwise the cost will be paid by other consumers. In this case, the fee has been set at $90 and that will be the fee paid in order that that transfer may take place. Therefore, it is not an encumbrance on other consumers who are not involved in those transfers.

13. Approval given to negotiate transfers will be subject to time constraints (i.e. if not acted upon within 21 days, no guarantee of approval will be given).

In other words, to manage the channel system it is necessary to follow through an approval so that it is actually concluded and the management of the transfer of the water into the channel system to another property can be effectively done.

14. Transfers will be subject to channel capacity constraints and adequate supply works.

That is logical. The system cannot be asked to transfer what it is not capable of providing.

15. Approval of transfers will be subject to maintenance of existing levels of service and any change to this level of service will only be considered after consultation with Advisory Board.

16. Transfers must satisfy specified drainage and salinity criteria as determined by the Commission after consultation with Advisory Boards.
This will include establishment of maximum volumes per holding. During the course of consultations on this matter throughout the irrigation districts, real concern has been expressed that there could be some effects on salinity; so it is now to be one of the conditions on which the commission will make assessment of whether there is likely to be any impact from perhaps a run of applications for transfer in a particular area, which could lead to increases in salinity or other consequences; and the commission will make judgments on that basis in its acknowledgement of a particular position.

17. Holdings in the Register of Orchard Plantings in the GMID may participate in TWE, but cannot transfer water and retain their entitlement of 6 megalitres per hectare.

18. Existing policy in relation to the temporary amalgamation of holdings and transfers of sales will cease upon the introduction of transferability of water entitlement.

19. Applications will be dealt with in the order in which they are received.

I believe that that series of nineteen conditions picks up most of the matters raised in discussions and consultations that have been held on the matter during the past twelve months or so. There is a series of drafting procedures, which has also been incorporated in Hansard, so that the method of going about making an application and receiving confirmation of it, the sort of information that should be provided by an applicant and by the transferor, ensures that various interests are protected during the period of that transfer; and that is third-party interest in properties, with mortgages and other matters of that sort. Sharefarmers and people purchasing properties will be adequately informed that arrangements have been made about water entitlement.

I believe those conditions meet the concerns that have been raised in the discussions about transfers. The question arises whether in Victoria there will be a move towards permanent transferability. I believe the situation has to be examined step by step, and that is the intention of the Government.

The temporary transfers will need to run for a year or two from the time of introduction before the effects can be assessed; and that will depend on whether there is a wet or dry season, whether there is a greater or lesser interest in acquiring transfers and so on. However, I believe now that only time will start to give us answers on this matter.

The various issues that were raised, apart from the critical issue, probably need very little comment. I have responded in this House previously on regionalisation and the financial management strategy.

I can only confirm that the regionalisation decision has been taken and steps are proceeding in that regard; regional managers have been appointed; land has been acquired for regional offices in a number of locations; and the detailed staffing needs, budget requirements and responsibilities for each district are being worked through. The new group of regional managers is meeting on a regular basis with officers in head office, and I believe progress is quite satisfactory.

The comments made by the honourable member for Swan Hill that the financial management strategy and the morale of the Rural Water Commission were all over the place are highly irresponsible. In all seriousness, it is in the interests of the National Party that the Rural Water Commission, which is undergoing a number of changes—none of which are sudden or shock-horror, but which have been discussed and planned and are being implemented in a rational way—should make those changes, which are in the interests of the irrigators and consumers.

Those changes need to take place over a period. One cannot snap one’s fingers to implement regionalisation. The changes are being made in a responsible manner. If these changes are to occur in a responsible way, they will be made with care and with proper planning, so that there are no disruptions.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Fogarty)—Order! The Minister’s time has expired.

The motion was agreed to.
The Bill was read a second time and committed.
Clauses 1 and 2 were agreed to.

Clause 3

Mr DELZOPPO (Narracan)—During the course of the second-reading debate both the National Party and the Opposition criticised the Minister for not making available to the House some draft by-laws to which reference is made in clause 3.

In his reply to the second-reading debate the Minister mentioned some nineteen by-laws that will apply and will be given force and effect through this Bill. There was no way that the Opposition or the National Party could possibly digest those nineteen by-laws as they were read out by the Minister.

As we have no option, because the Minister refused to make available to the National Party and the Opposition a copy of those by-laws and the time to digest them before agreeing to the clause, I suggest that progress be reported.

Progress was reported.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS (BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS) 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.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

The debate (adjourned from April 7) on the motion of Mr Cathie (Minister for Education) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

Ms SIBREE (Kew)—Although this is a small Bill it is significant because it affects the restructuring of post-secondary education in Victoria. As the House would be aware, the Victorian education system is undergoing significant changes as a result of what is known as the Blackburn report, a report on post-compulsory schooling in Victoria that will have significant effects on education in the 1990s.

Although the Opposition does not oppose the Bill it expresses a number of concerns to the Minister. One concern is the rapidity with which the Minister has introduced the Bill. The Minister pointed out in his second-reading speech that the Bill is concerned with the amalgamation of two accreditation boards in the area of post-secondary education, the accreditation board covering the TAFE sector and the accreditation board covering the college sector.

The Opposition sympathises with the need expressed by the Minister for a joint accreditation board that would allow cross-accreditation between the two sectors in post-secondary education—the TAFE sector and the advanced education sector.

The Minister has informed the House several times of moves being made towards cross-accreditation, especially between the TAFE sector and the college sector, and the importance of that cross-accreditation.

Cross-accreditation between various sectors in the tertiary sector is important in a State and, indeed, in a country where the development of diverse skills is important.

However, the Opposition expresses a number of reservations about the way the Minister has set in train the procedure set out in the Bill.

The House will be aware that on 26 November 1986 the Minister announced the establishment of a committee to review the coordination of post-secondary education in Victoria. That review, headed by Dr Don Anderson, was requested by the Minister to
consider various issues and make recommendations on the functions and roles of Victorian post-secondary education with respect to:

(a) Enhancing consultative, effective and efficient decision-making in the coordination of all post-secondary education in Victoria, and the implementation of Government policies in post-secondary education;

(b) Ensuring effective interaction between State and Commonwealth coordinating bodies, in particular, the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission;

(c) Maintaining or developing appropriate relationships with the Divisions of the Ministry and other relevant agencies in the restructured Ministry of Education.

It is curious that this important and timely review announced on 26 November 1986 has, to a certain degree, been cut across by the provisions in the Bill. The haste with which the Minister is proceeding is evidenced by some of the consequences of the Bill.

The Minister rightly refers to a report prepared by a joint working party for the Minister for Education on the establishment of a single accreditation board. In April 1986 the joint working party reported to the Minister after receiving many submissions.

It is even more curious that the Minister has taken nearly twelve months to act on the report—nine months to set up the other committee headed by Mr David Smith and comprised of Mr Brian Clarke, Mr Colin Moore, Mr Brian Lloyd, Mr Lee Dale and Ms Nell Cooper. I am not questioning the propriety of this team that considered the coordination requirements of cross-accreditation. Not for 1 minute does the Opposition deny the need of students to be able to move from one sector of the tertiary education area to another when cross-accreditation is appropriate.

However, the question of the structures which might accommodate those needs hinges on the outcome of the total inquiry into post-secondary education rather than the piecemeal Bill before the House.

Mr Cathie—The Bill is based on the report!

Ms SIBREE—To a certain degree one can appreciate the piecemeal nature of the Bill when one considers the way it was drafted. The Minister believes it is based on the April 1986 report of the working party; it is partly based on that report but it is not fully based on that report.

Post-secondary education is controlled and its regulations and standards are very much in the hands of the Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission. That is the body to which the Accreditation Board for Advanced Education has been responsible. The accreditation board for the TAFE sector has been responsible to the TAFE Board. The piecemeal nature of the Bill is evident in the provisions governing the new body being set up by the Minister, the new Victorian Post-Secondary Education Accreditation Board. It is not responsible to the commission, nor to the board; it is responsible to the Minister.

The Minister knows about the piecemeal nature of the Bill because if the board is to be accountable, it should be accountable to ensure the coordination and development of post-secondary education in Victoria. There is not necessarily a need to be accountable to the Minister, although I grant that the Minister will probably do a reasonably good job. However, the Minister is developing structures from the ground up without knowing what the end result will be.

Mr Cathie—You are wrong.

Ms SIBREE—if I am wrong, what the Minister is saying to the House now is that he already has ideas about what the review by the committee on the coordination of post-secondary education will find. He has given the committee an agenda about which he has not informed Parliament or the public because the only agenda to which honourable members have access is the public comment agenda published in the Age and Sun of 26 November 1986, which charged the group, headed by Dr Don Anderson, with the task of examining post-secondary structures in Victoria.
Four or five months later the Minister waddles into the House with the most badly constructed Bill that I have seen for a long time.

Mr Cathie—Are you opposing it?

Ms SIBREE—I am not opposing the Bill, I am criticising the Minister. It is about time somebody did. In his second-reading speech the Minister actually begged criticism. He said he did not want to go into details of how the Bill would work. He did not want to speak about some of the significant changes. The Minister will have a chance to explain his untenable position within a short time.

The Minister is trying to put the cart before the horse. He may want the proposed board and the Opposition has no objection to him having the proposed board but I am advising him that he is going about it in the wrong way. He admits that in his second-reading speech, in which he obfuscates the issue.

Mr Cathie—Obfuscates?

Ms SIBREE—Yes, obfuscates—I advise the honourable gentleman to look up the word in the dictionary under “O”. He states that he does not want to go into the details of the Bill because those details can be worked out by the person reading the Bill, but when one works out those details it becomes obvious that there is a mishmash of developments and changes to the Post-Secondary Education Act that are very curious indeed.

I criticise the Minister’s method of amending the Act. The format of the Bill is illogical. For the most part Bills amending Acts are drafted to make the clauses of the Bill accord sequentially with the sections of the Act. This Bill does not.

The Bill amends the Act in bits and pieces by fixing up some definitions, changing some responsibilities, providing some regulatory function and then having a wonderful sort of omnibus ending called “consequential amendments” that is probably the most important part of the measure because the amendments repeal large areas of the Act in a very strange way.

Towards the end of the Bill clause 6 provides for proposed Part IV, which sets up the Post-Secondary Accreditation Board the Minister wants. The Minister should be questioned about the appropriateness of just tacking on towards the end of the Bill provisions covering the setting up of the Post-Secondary Education Accreditation Board.

The Post-Secondary Education Act set up the Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission. That is the fundamental part of the Act. The Act then set up the post-secondary education institutions, which are the advanced education institutions, and further provided for technical and further education. If the Minister had been properly organised in his review of post-secondary education he would not have tacked on a proposed Part towards the end of the Bill and he would ensure that the new board is accountable to the commission. That is the most appropriate place for it to go in the long run, and the Minister knows that. Of course, the Minister will have ultimate responsibility but the question of where the day-to-day accountability lies is another matter. The Minister well knows that the accreditation boards should be accountable to the commission under the Post-Secondary Education Act. I reiterate that he is going about the whole process in the wrong way.

The Minister referred to the April 1986 report of the working party on the question of accreditation. I am concerned about the section of the report referring to the need to set up an accreditation board that has fairly clear guidelines because the Opposition understands that one of the fundamental premises of the current Government is that the functions of bodies should be spelt out in legislation and one of the weaknesses of this measure is that the Government has failed to spell out the functions of the board in the very clear detail that its own advisory committee said it should be spelt out in.

The roles and responsibilities of an accreditation board were spelt out by the advisory committee. They included provision of clear guidelines for accreditation courses, the
maintenance of the State registry, an assurance that courses on the State registry of accredited courses are of a recognised standard and so on. The list included another ten functions of the board.

If the Government and the Minister had been genuine in what they are trying to achieve with the joint accreditation board, the functions spelt out by the Government’s own working party would have been set out in the measure, but they have not and one wonders why. I should like the Minister to respond to that question.

I am pleased that the Bill requires the Minister to consult with the Industrial Training Commission. Honourable members will be aware that the Industrial Training Commission sets out requirements for the training of apprentices and that TAFE provides the formal training but not the on-the-job training for apprentices. It is of considerable concern that many apprentices are not able to find the necessary places in TAFE to accommodate their apprenticeships. Hundreds of apprentices are still not able to find proper and suitable places in TAFE pursuant to their terms of indenture. This points to the real weakness in the link between groups in the technical education sector—the group that requires that technical education and the group that dictates that technical education.

I am well aware that the Technical and Further Education Board is concerned about the large numbers of apprentices presenting themselves for entry into TAFE who are not able to be accommodated and no indication is available that those places will be forthcoming. There are very real tensions between the Department of Labour and the Technical and Further Education Board on some form of coordination between the apprenticeship intake and the number of places available in TAFE to accommodate the apprentices.

I assure the Minister for Education, who is interjecting, that I am determined to go forwards rather than backwards because going forwards is moving into the future. There may be a record level of apprentices but the Government has not been able to link together properly the Industrial Training Commission and the supply and demand element of the equation in education. There must be a much stronger link than just the Minister consulting the Industrial Training Commission.

The concept of the Minister merely consulting the training commission puts the Minister into the category of a second-grade citizen because he will have to go begging to the training commission to discuss what will happen in technical and further education rather than the Minister having any proper controls over the numbers.

The Minister well knows that there are real problems because he lacks the Ministerial authority to coordinate those problems. That is so because the training commission is under the responsibility of the Minister for Labour and the technical and further education function is in another area of responsibility—and never the twain do meet. The Minister has had five years to fix up these problems and the Liberal Party has made suggestions to him on how he can achieve that.

The Government put its big toe into the water before embarking on an adventure to try to remedy the situation. It should have considered the Kirby committee recommendations that were given to it. The Government began an investigation into the Industrial Training Commission and considered the potential of allowing the commission to be a vocational commission to break its nexus and alternative options, but then it fell foul of the unions and other vested interests in the community.

The Kirby committee recommendations are now kept in the library of the Department of Labour to gather dust. Absolutely nothing has happened. The reaction of the Minister was to suggest addressing the problems of cross-accreditation but a number of other matters need to be pursued.

I cannot understand why a hierarchical structure in tertiary education is necessary. There are three sectors: the universities, the colleges of advanced education and the TAFE sector, which all provide their own important contributions to the education of not only the young but also older people in the community. The myopic viewpoint that some
vertical horizons are needed in tertiary education is and should be well and truly in the past.

More than anything else, an understanding of the vertical nature of tertiary education is needed in today's society and an understanding of the fact that a university graduate is no more or less important than a TAFE graduate. Those graduates are just as important to society.

The way in which the Minister has dealt with the Bill has not necessarily contributed to the debate because he has pre-empted the debate by establishing a joint accreditation board that is accountable to no-one but himself. The Post-Secondary Education Accreditation Board does not have to report to Parliament or to the Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission.

Mr Cathie interjected.

Ms SIBREE—Perhaps the Opposition might be able to tease some answers out of the Minister during the Committee stage. To most Victorians, post-secondary education is a sensitive and real issue; it is particularly important to those who have been excluded from that level of education. Many people might be disturbed by the fact that the Minister will be all powerful in the area of accreditation. Why should the board be accountable only to the Minister? Why should it not be accountable to Parliament?

Mr Cathie interjected.

Ms SIBREE—The Minister bleats that the board is part of the Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission. The board is accountable to no-one but the Minister; it is not part of the commission. The Bill is virtually a cut and paste job. The Minister would have to agree with that.

Mr Cathie—It is not!

Ms SIBREE—The Minister has dealt poorly with tertiary education in this State by making the board accountable only to him. I agree with him that cross-accreditation is needed. No-one would deny that students who move from a TAFE college to a college of advanced education need cross-accreditation, which should be available to them. The Bill achieves that in part but at what price?

The question one must ask is whether the price paid is that the board should be strictly accountable to the Minister and not the wider community or Parliament. If we are to address our concerns about post-secondary education, Parliament should be informed about what is happening.

This evening I received a paper from Mr John Anwyl of the University of Melbourne that deals with some of the terms of reference provided by the Minister to the committee examining the coordination of post-secondary education in Victoria.

Parliament should be considering some of the changes that have been made to post-secondary education, especially when one considers the number of students who have been turned away from this area of education during the past 20 or 30 years. That has occurred because of an increase in demand for tertiary education that has not been met by Governments and which, in part, has been caused by community expectations.

For some time the wider community has considered post-secondary education a luxury that only the rich, or the very bright have been able to achieve. It has not been considered an imperative part of Australia's economic, social, educational or cultural development. One could say that there has been a cringe mentality toward post-secondary education.

In the past ten years there has been a change in attitude to the requirements and needs of Australia and its citizens in post-secondary education. I recall that a number of years ago, when I investigated this area as shadow Minister for further education, I was alarmed at the change in the structures that control and influence education. I am sure the Minister agrees with me.
In the days of Sir Robert Menzies the structures that controlled post-secondary education were, literally, very simple and there was little involvement by the Commonwealth. The Martin report was then published and it instigated Commonwealth involvement in this area of education and made the decision-making process more complex. We moved into what might be called the second stage of deciding which boards and commissions should influence decisions on post-secondary education in Australia. The States were on one side and the Commonwealth was on the other.

Post-secondary education then moved to the stage that I described as the Star Wars stage. There was a constellation of players in post-secondary education. I give the Minister credit for at least precluding one star from the constellation by reducing the two boards to one. It is extremely complicated.

Mr Cathie—Then why don’t you support the Bill?

Ms Sibree—I am happy to support the Bill, but I take this opportunity of criticising the Minister, as he should be, and he should take the criticism in the vein in which it is meant.

The complex way in which post-secondary education is controlled in this State is muddying the waters and creating debate between sectors that are irrelevant. We all want a skilled and educated Australia and not people competing for the holy dollar regardless of whether they are being educated in TAFE colleges, in colleges of advanced education or in universities.

Mr Anwyl addressed this particular problem in his dissertation which was provided to me. He said that in his opinion the binary system has now collapsed most spectacularly because of disorderly planning.

There has been a steady demise of the diversity of educational opportunity.

Mr Cathie—But are you saying that that is your view?

Ms Sibree—It is a view that has been put to me.

Mr Cathie—I want to know whose view it is.

Ms Sibree—It is a view that I consider seriously because in this community, debate about issues, particularly on education, become sensitive, political and polarised debates. Very often, they do not get to the core of what we are all trying to achieve. We are trying to achieve an educated community.

The acting Speaker (Mr Hockley)—Order! Will the honourable member for Kew make a copy of that document available to the Minister?

Ms Sibree—I am saying to the Minister that in the view of that senior educationalist in Australia, the system has collapsed. In the paper he has presented to me, he says the situation is concerning and it is a matter that has to be addressed.

He says we should also address ourselves to the working party the Minister has established in respect of coordination.

The joint working party is concerned with the differentials between colleges of advanced education, universities and TAFE. I do not believe that should be a differential based on some sort of snob value. For too long it has been based on snob value. It needs to be overcome by understanding what each sector is doing, and by acknowledging what each sector has in common and having some sort of understanding between each sector, which is gained by this accreditation.

The problem is that the Minister is introducing this measure before the rest of the decision-making processes are fully understood and fully organised. The players in this scene are not just accreditation boards; they are State Governments, Commonwealth Governments, VPSEC, VISE, and a whole range of people who are saying that because
Victoria is a partial player in the total tertiary scene, it is necessary to implement what Victoria wants.

It is not about cross-accreditation, which is what the Bill is about, and the Minister acknowledges that. It is a matter of understanding what our community needs, what our community is prepared to pay, how we will achieve it and finally with what standards we will achieve it.

I express my concern that the community has not addressed those problems. I suspect that the community will not address them because the debate will continue to be political. John Anwyl has produced a discussion paper—which I hope goes to the review committee. It is challenging, chivalrous and says we must sit back and think about what is being done by each sector. What are the universities supposed to be doing? Are we trying to pretend to be advanced colleges of technology just because technology is the latest thing? Should we be just places of learning and research? A community discussion is needed.

In his paper, Mr Anwyl suggests that we should be conducting a 1990s post-school education inquiry. Let us start calling a spade a spade. The Minister has set the inquiry in train. The Bill is pre-empting the inquiry. The Opposition is happy to let it go through but I express my reservations about the way it is being done.

I have never seen a Bill so badly drafted. It is quite incomprehensible in many ways and I express my concern that the Minister is the only person to which this new accreditation board is accountable—nobody else. There is not a wide ranging independent body responsible for post-secondary education in Victoria, and on that basis, I express my concern.

The Liberal Party will not oppose the Bill because it is not a matter of opposing it, but the Minister should be warned that he is putting the cart before the horse.

Mr HANN (Rodney)—The National Party supports the Bill. It will introduce a single accreditation board for post-secondary education as a result of the report to the Minister for Education on the establishment of a single accreditation body by the joint working party, which reported to the Minister in April 1986.

The terms of reference given to that working party were to recommend to the Minister for Education on the establishment of a single accreditation body by the joint working party, which reported to the Minister in April 1986.

In the process of preparing its report, the joint working party was required to consult widely with relevant authorities and organisations; and in its report, the joint working party was to provide indicative, not prescriptive, guidelines about the mechanisms by which the proposed body might discharge its function.

That working party reported to the Minister that there was a need for a single accreditation board to bring together the accreditation boards operated through the Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission and also through the TAFE Board.

There appears to be considerable merit in that proposition. The working party, in its report, made the following comment in relation to the value of accreditation, and I certainly supported it. It said that accreditation was a process that leads to a responsible body certifying that a course of study is of a recognised standard acceptable to the community, industry and Government. An award given to a student who has successfully completed an accredited course is recognition that he or she has the appropriate and necessary mix of skills, knowledge, attitudes and intellectual development to make a useful contribution to the work force and society.

The working party made recommendations in response to the submissions it received. It is interesting to note that one of the important points made was that in bringing together the functions of the two accreditation boards, it was important to preserve the established elements of the accreditation processes of both systems, keeping in mind that there have
been basic differences between TAFE and the post-secondary area. I assume that the 
Minister is conscious of this fact when examining the composition of the board and also 
the number of persons on that board.

There are basic differences between what I would term practical teaching in the TAFE 
area and academic teaching in the post-secondary area.

Mr Cathie—We have certificate courses now.

Mr HANN—Surely the Minister does not want them all put into the academic area and 
into the area of advanced colleges of education. We are moving towards that unified single 
operation of the one accreditation board and the National Party is certainly happy to 
support the position. It has seen a number of changes in recent years—from the days of 
the Victorian Institute of Secondary Education, which was then changed to the Victorian 
Post-Secondary Education Commission, which took over that function, together with the 
newly established TAFE board; and now there is this accreditation process, joining together 
TAFE and VPSEC into the single Victorian Post-Secondary Education Accreditation 
Board.

The National Party will not delay the Bill. It is a fairly simple measure bringing together 
these two functions. The National Party supports the proposition and welcomes the 
passage of the Bill through Parliament.

Mr LEA (Sandingham)—I support the cross-accreditation of technical and further 
education and advanced education. I direct to the attention of the House and the Minister 
for Education that significant difficulties are involved with accreditation of TAFE subjects 
which include trade and technician courses and courses such as the tertiary orientation 
program, which are technically in the post-secondary area. The Victorian Post-Secondary 
Education Accreditation Board to be established under the Victorian Post-Secondary 
Education Commission will perform a useful function, and I shall outline to the House 
how that will work.

There has been a proliferation of courses in colleges of advanced education and in the 
technical and further education sector and some rationalisation in the consideration of 
the merits of those courses is inevitable and necessary. I am concerned about some of the 
procedures referred to in the Bill and I shall direct them to the attention of the House in a 
few moments.

Like the honourable member for Kew, I am curious why the Minister for Education has 
introduced the Bill before receiving the recommendations of the review that began last 
year into post-secondary education. I wonder whether the Minister has access to some 
information that members of the House do not have. It would have been sensible for the 
Minister to have waited until the review had run its course before introducing the Bill.

I shall refer to the way courses will be accredited. If post-secondary advanced colleges 
and TAFE college boards recommend a course for accreditation, that will be accepted, and 
I have no argument with that. However, proposed new section 36 (2) states that the 
commission must register the course as accredited in the State Register of Accredited 
Courses, and I relate that to a previous comment about the rights of TAFE colleges and 
advanced colleges of education.

Proposed new section 36 (3) states that:

The Commission must strike off the Register—

(a) any course of study which the Accreditation Board or a post-secondary education institution advises under 
section 35 should be struck off the Register;

I ask the Minister what rights of appeal will be available in that situation. I hope some 
process for negotiation is established.

Mr Cathie—They are courses that are no longer being taught.
Mr LEA—If the courses are no longer being taught, that should have been clearly stated in the Bill.

I note with interest that the Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission must not strike a course of study in a technical and further education institution off the register unless it has consulted with the Technical and Further Education Board. That is an appropriate provision, and I suggest that that form of consultation may overcome several of the problems that will be faced.

I shall now refer to the composition of the Victorian Post-Secondary Education Accreditation Board. The honourable member for Kew quite correctly pointed out that the report of the Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission will go directly to the Minister for Education. I remind the House of a debate that occurred last year on the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board and the fact that the Minister attempted to load that board with his own appointees.

I shall outline to the House the composition of the Victorian Post-Secondary Education Accreditation Board. Proposed section 131 (2) states:

When recommending members of the Accreditation Board the Minister must so far as the Minister is able to do so ensure that the Board represents the range of interests included in post-secondary education and technical and further education and must consult the Industrial Training Commission of Victoria.

Of the twelve people on the board, the chairman and deputy chairman will be nominated by the Governor in Council, and the other ten members of the board will be appointed at the discretion of the Minister. The Bill does not indicate whether they will be representatives of teacher unions, principals of TAFE colleges, directors of colleges of advanced education or student representatives. I wonder why the Minister has not been more specific about who should be a member of the board. I would be comforted to know from what categories people will be nominated to become members of the board.

I shall now turn to the proposed report mechanisms. Proposed section 132 (1) states:

The Accreditation Board must on or before 30 September in each year prepare and submit to the Minister a report of its operations for the year ending on the preceding 30 June.

I would have hoped that the report would be tabled separately in Parliament, and I wonder whether the Minister will report on a regular basis. Reports outlining the workings of the accreditation board should be available to all members of this House and to the public of Victoria.

I shall conclude my remarks by indicating that a significant problem exists in Australia in relating standards and technology to vocational areas. This country is looking to standards of competency that will lift it out of the current economic mire; that power is within the hands of the accreditation board. It can rationalise and accredit courses to elevate the products of universities, colleges of advanced education and TAFE colleges.

In the Australian of March 7 and 8, I read an article by a visiting reporter to Washington who claimed quite correctly that the Japanese are streets ahead of Australians and Americans in terms of economic, vocational, industrial and technical standards. It is no wonder that the Japanese are leading the world in economic output—they have the world at their feet.

The Minister has a wonderful opportunity of building up the standards in the tertiary sector to enable the products of that sector to develop Australia's industry and competitiveness internally and especially overseas. Like my colleague, the honourable member for Kew, I do not oppose the Bill.

Mr CATHIE (Minister for Education)—I thank the honourable members for Kew, Rodney and Sandringham for their support of the Bill. In criticising the measure, the Opposition created its own straw person and spent a great deal of time and had pleasure in demolishing it. I shall deal with the facts.
I do not have any power, nor should I, to interfere in credentialling—that is not the role of the Minister. There are separate boards for technical and further education colleges and colleges of advanced education and they report separately to the Minister.

They do not report to Parliament; there is no change to established practice that has taken place over a long period. If there is a view that there are credentialling matters that are of importance to Parliament, that would be taken up in the annual report of the Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission which has to be tabled in Parliament. I believe that is the proper way to go.

The second error the Opposition made is that it did not recognise that the coordination of credentials, which is the subject with which the Bill deals, is entirely separate from management and resource planning. It is that second issue and the second area that has been specifically referred to in the Anderson review. I shall return to that point in a minute.

There has been no suggestion from the Opposition that we do not need better coordination, so what the Bill is attempting to achieve—a better rationalisation and coordination of post-secondary education—is supported by the Opposition.

The Opposition could have gone further and recognised that this State—and even the Leader of the Opposition would be proud of this fact—is the leader in Australia today in the whole area of cross-accreditation. Victoria is leading the rest of Australia in the positive progress it has made in what, at first sight, is a remarkably complex and technical area.

The honourable member for Kew asks how I relate cross-accreditation—a technical issue, and how we credential and allow for credits as one person proceeds from one area of higher education to another—to the total shape of post-secondary education.

I agree with the honourable member for Kew that that is an important issue. However, I have a responsibility for pulling together three reports. Until those three reports are available to the Government I will not be able to make decisions about the final shape of post-secondary education.

Mr Coleman interjected.

Mr CATHIE—I am happy to answer the honourable member for Syndal. The honourable member for Kew quoted from a “Report to the Minister for Education on the Establishment of a Single Accreditation Body by a Joint Working Party” dated April 1986. If I had not acted on that report by now, the Opposition would have criticised me. I refer to the three reports which must be pulled together before we can determine the full shape and direction of post-secondary education.

The first report is the Anderson report into the Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission to which the honourable member for Kew referred. The second report of Dr Edgar concerns adult education and how that large responsibility should be shaped. It may have general support. It is an important part of post-secondary education and one cannot exclude it, as the Opposition apparently wishes to do.

The third report is the TAFE priority review. The only report the Government has at present is the last one. Obviously it would not only be prudent, but also good commonsense to wait until we have the three reports before making any final determination about the future directions and shape of post-secondary education.

There was support from the Opposition for the principles of cross-accreditation which came out strongly in the report. At page 2 of the report, the joint working party stated that there should be a minimum of barriers. That is the key word; we are trying to reduce barriers and open up opportunities for more young people to achieve skills. I should have hoped the Opposition would have been fully supportive of that direction. At page 2 the report stated:

There should be a minimum of barriers to individuals transferring from one sector or one course to another and the process of transfer should be as simple and comprehensible as possible.
That is all the proposed legislation is dealing with. It is seeking to bring together two completely separate accreditation boards and set up one single accreditation board for colleges of advanced education and TAFE. The report further states:

This embraces notions of cross-crediting, advanced standing and joint accreditation.

The working party came to the conclusion at page 5 of the report that the existence of two separate accreditation boards, no matter how cooperative—and they did cooperate in the past to the best of their ability—makes the development of cross-accreditation difficult. It concluded that a single board would reduce difficulties. That is precisely what the proposed legislation is all about.

This is a key concern of the Government. It goes to the very basis of everything we are attempting to achieve in educational reform in this State. One might say that attempts we are making in this area are opposed by the Opposition, I think often on the grounds and for the sake of opposition alone. Even the honourable member for Kew is thoroughly embarrassed by the Georgiou document.

The task the Government is examining and for which it is developing programs and policies is the opening up of new opportunities for young people to gain additional skills. The key to that is lifting the skills of all Australians, and, therefore, lifting the ability of Australia to compete, especially its manufacturing industries, on world markets. That is the key to our success.

Unlike the Opposition, this Government is prepared to put its money behind that endeavour and, jointly with the Commonwealth Government, we have established the Western Institute. It is neither a separate TAFE college, nor is it a separate college of advanced education; it is an entirely new type of post-secondary education institution.

Mr Coleman—It is a hybrid.

Mr CATHIE—The honourable member may call it a hybrid. No doubt the honourable member for Syndal is totally opposed to the progressive measures the Government is attempting to introduce in education. However, the whole community is fully supportive of what the Government is doing. By the establishment of that institute we want to attract young Australians right through the process of education and enable them to obtain appropriate credits for each stage of that process.

In that way one single institution can pick up a young Australian student and take him through an apprenticeship, where he can obtain credits. Then the student can go on to a certificate course at a TAFE college of some sort or another and obtain appropriate credits. The student can then go on to a diploma or degree course at a college of advanced education and even proceed on to university and undertake a degree or post-graduate degree.

This would all take place within one institution. That is a totally new concept. It took a Labor Government in this State to develop that concept and put it into practical reality. It took my predecessor, the Deputy Premier, to have enough courage to go ahead with the concept and for us to make it a reality today. It is not only a new type of institution where we are achieving this success; we are examining the whole of post-secondary education. For example, for students today who want to undertake diplomas in technology, say in computer sciences, all they do is the first year in the TAFE system, at either Frankston TAFE or Holmesglen TAFE. At the end of the first year, the students can elect to remain in the TAFE system and complete a certificate course or move into the second year of a diploma course at the Chisholm Institute of Technology.

These processes have been outstandingly successful and make the Government the leader in Australia in reshaping post-secondary education.

The Opposition also criticised the fact that the Government did not include the functions in the Bill. The functions are clearly spelt out in the roles and responsibilities at pages 10 and 11 of the report and I do not propose to refer to them now. It is well known that the
Government is concerned about improving higher education facilities in Victoria. I was accused of obfuscating, but as the word means to stupefy or to bewilder, I believe it is an excellent description of the claims by the Opposition in this debate. I reject any view of the Opposition, given its deplorable record, on apprenticeships.

Last year and this year the Government provided for a record number of apprenticeships. It is proud of that success, given the rotten and miserable performance of the previous Liberal Government in this area.

I do not deny that there are difficulties in that the Industrial Training Commission of Victoria is placed in the Department of Labour and that technical and further education is placed in the Ministry of Education. Those difficulties are also reflected at the national level where two committees are reporting to two different Federal Ministers. This division has been repeated at the State level.

I recognise the need to change direction, particularly in the technical and further education field. I recognise that past practices have involved craft unions and single skilling. I recognise further that in this day and age, with high technology, robotics, computerisation and computer-aided design and manufacturing, industries need young men and women who are not single skilled but multiskilled. If that is to be achieved, there must be changes in directions and there must be better coordination between different Government departments and agencies.

I reject the view put forward by the Opposition—I assume it is their view or what is the point in quoting Mr Anwyl—that the binary system has collapsed. I recognise that a whole range of initiatives have been undertaken across Australia that certainly obfuscate the direction of post-secondary education.

The establishment of the Bond university by conservative forces in this country has been supported by a conservative Government. The Northern Territory Government established a university college as an adjunct to or outpost of the Queensland University. The Western Australian Government changed the Western Australian Institute of Technology into a university.

It is clear that significant changes in post-secondary education are occurring that will certainly affect great Victorian institutions such as the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology.

The motion was agreed to.

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

WATER ACTS (AMENDMENT) BILL

The House went into Committee for the further consideration of this Bill.

Discussion was resumed of clause 3.

Mr DELZOPPO (Narracan)—The Committee will recall that progress was reported so that the Opposition could examine the draft conditions that would apply to the transfer of water entitlements. The Minister refused to make those conditions available late this afternoon and I did not intend to agree to clause 3 until the Opposition had some idea of the Minister's intention.

The Opposition has now had an opportunity of examining those conditions and I shall comment briefly on draft condition No. 3, which states:

The commission holds absolute right of approval for veto.

Will the Minister consider any method of appeal against a refusal by the commission to agree to a temporary transfer of water entitlements?
It may be only a minor point, but for the sake of good legislation and regulation a clause should be included in the draft conditions that allows for some sort of appeal. It may be that a person who is refused the transfer will be allowed to appeal directly to the Minister or to somebody chosen by the Minister. That would considerably improve the draft conditions, and I ask the Minister to respond.

Mr STEGGALL (Swan Hill)—The document that has been supplied to the National Party was necessary to understand fully the intentions of the Government for the temporary transfer of water entitlements. One area must be clarified because the Minister was confused in his contribution to the debate. Draft condition No. 10 states:

Transfers between properties not commonly owned will be subject to payment of a $60 application fee and transfers between properties commonly owned will be subject to payment of a fee of $30.

The Minister added those amounts together and confused the Committee. In fact, we are looking at a $60 fee for transferring out of ownership and a $30 fee for a common ownership transfer.

I believe under these draft conditions the advisory boards will be given enough opportunity to make rules to satisfy their local area.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! The time for me to report progress under Sessional Orders has now arrived.

Progress was reported.

The SPEAKER—Order! The time appointed by Sessional Orders for me to interrupt business has now arrived.

On the motion of Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources), the sitting was continued.

The House went into Committee for the further consideration of this Bill.

Discussion was resumed of clause 3.

Mr STEGGALL (Swan Hill)—Prior to the interruption I said that it was a pity that this document was not available to honourable members earlier. I appreciate that the Rural Water Commission has only just completed it as it was in another form last week and it had to be amended.

Concern has been expressed about exactly what is involved in the clause governing by-laws in the Bill. This is an enabling Bill and this document clarifies that.

I understand the Minister wishes each district to sort out its local arrangements. I hope the Minister will comment on that because every district throughout the Goulburn–Murray Irrigation District will not necessarily have the same rules.

The draft conditions will facilitate good discussion and produce, I hope, simple solutions to the problems in the irrigation area. I appreciate that many honourable members have not the slightest idea about the subject the Committee is debating; it is a big subject, and this is a big leap.

I hope the discussions that will take place will lead to the advisory board's understanding of what temporary transferability of water rights means and how it must go about it.

The Rural Water Commission must agree that properties can have water transferred to it and that water can be physically delivered. Of course, there are other matters to be dealt with.

There is a lot of interest in the transferring of water rights and there is far more interest in the draft conditions document that we have just received than in the Bill itself. This is what the transferability program for the irrigation area is about.
I do not know what the Minister's plans are for prescribing other districts. I hope the Rural Water Commission will consider including some of the pumping districts. I appreciate the problem that some of those districts have. A number of small farmers hold water rights that they have not used for twenty years and they had hoped that they would be included in the draft conditions document. The Bill provides for that; I hope the Rural Water Commission, and the Minister, will look closely at some of those pumping districts so that transferability can be achieved.

I ask whether the Minister can inform the Committee whether the Rural Water Commission will use its unallocated water rights in this temporary leasing arrangement.

Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Water Resources)—The honourable member for Narracan raised a question about condition No. 3 of the draft on whether there could be a right of appeal. Basically, the conditions are set out to order the way in which transfers are undertaken during the first year. It is possible to review those but if the process becomes too complicated nothing will be done.

Decisions need to be made quickly and so the arrangements and the capacity of the system governs what transfers will be approved by the commission. It is possible to have a right of appeal but I am not sure that it is necessary during the first year. The Government will consider the matter and, if in the working of the Bill it appears that it is necessary, then that can be built in.

I agree with the honourable member for Swan Hill on the matter of numbers. There are two fees mentioned; one is for $60 and the other is for $30. I do not believe anything else needs to be said on that.

The question of the pumping district will be clarified by the commission in the year in which temporary transfers will be undertaken; the districts in which transferability will be undertaken have been outlined and that question can be followed up if there is a complication which has to be worked through.

With regard to unallocated water, in a dry year it is 4 per cent, and that is fairly close to the margin and will not be included in the transferable water available under this process.

The clause was agreed to, as was clause 4.

Clause 5

Mr DELZOPPO (Narracan)—During the second-reading debate I mentioned the position of the Latrobe Valley Water and Sewerage Board and the inability of the Minister to make a decision on the future of the board.

Clause 5 adds another year to the sunset clause of the Water and Sewerage Authorities (Restructuring) Act and, during the second-reading debate, I mentioned that on 20 November 1985 during the debate on that Bill I asked the Minister what was the future of the Latrobe Valley Water and Sewerage Board and what plans he had in mind for that body.

Unfortunately the debate was guillotined and the Minister did not have a chance to reply to my question. I ask the Minister again; what plans has he for the Latrobe Valley Water and Sewerage Board? I am sure he realises that it alone is different from any other restructured bodies. The Minister has not made a decision about how, or when it should be restructured. There are a lot of doubts in the Latrobe region about this body and it is about time the Minister gave some definitive statement to the committee on his future intentions for the board.

Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Water Resources)—The first aspect is the extension of the sunset clause because the process of rewriting the water law has been continuing for some time and wide consultation is taking place.

The result will be that a new Water Bill will be introduced into Parliament in either the spring sessional period this year or the autumn sessional period next year. By then the
issue will have had thorough consultation and discussion in the public arena. The necessity
to extend the sunset clause is straightforward and no-one objects to that.

I advise the honourable member for Narracan that no decision has been made on the
final outcome of the Latrobe Valley Water and Sewerage Board. It will stay in existence
but certain problems face that board and other authorities in the Latrobe Valley.

Smaller boards in the area have been seeking to operate their own sewerage schemes,
but there are a number of issues of considerable importance including the location of the
outfall sewer and other arrangements. No doubt the honourable member is aware of those
matters. I have asked the department to report to me but the issue has not yet been
resolved.

The clause was agreed to.

The Bill was reported to the House without amendment, and passed through its remaining
stages.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Glen Waverley railway interchange—TAB telephone betting—Water Boss Pty Ltd—
Derailment of V/Line locomotive No. 939—Goulburn Valley foster care program—
Proposed waste disposal site in Kangaroo Ground

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—I move:
That the House do now adjourn.

Mr E. R. SMITH (Glen Waverley)—I raise with the Minister for Transport the daily
chaos at the Glen Waverley railway interchange. I have raised this matter with the Minister
on numerous occasions but the situation is becoming decidedly worse.

In the past week members of the Police Force have been on duty to watch over the buses
taking up passengers in the afternoons when the problem is at its worst. Recently one of
the Ventura Bus Lines supervisors, whose job it is to ensure that children board these
buses in an orderly fashion, was swept aboard a bus in the rush. Complaints are made
regularly about the lack of sufficient buses and about children smoking and drinking
during the long waits for buses.

The Ventura bus drivers are threatening to strike and a trade union official, Mr Paul
Mavroudis, was appalled at the lack of buses for the area.

Parents have advised me that they feel the Government should seriously consider
returning the operation of the bus system to private enterprise and I am inclined to agree
with them. Parents have spoken to the Ventura bus company and realise that the service
would cost more than the current Government system. However, parents have stated that
they are prepared to pay the difference because on many occasions they must now drive
to the station to pick up children who are stranded and thereby suffer inconvenience and
worry about the insecurity of buses as well as having to pay an extra cost in the form of
petrol.

Children at schools in the area are continually warned by the teachers of the problems
at the bus interchange. I do not believe it is the fault of the children that they have to wait
long periods for buses. It is the fault of the Government for not providing sufficient buses.

I have in the past mentioned the matter in more detail. Tonight I merely state that the
bus routes concerned are Nos 753 and 754 to Wheelers Hill and Boronia. The relevant
times concerned are between 3.15 p.m. and 5 p.m. Between 3.30 p.m. and 6.50 p.m. when
the last bus leaves, routes 753 and 754 cater for approximately 1440 people. Any adult
with any sense does not travel during that period.
Although the children are not to blame for this situation, they have to cope not only with large crowds but also with the huge amount of gear that they are obliged to take with them to school.

The surveys conducted by the Ministry of Transport in the past year have been inaccurate because they have not taken into account the children who either walk home or ring their parents to come and collect them at the interchange. Anyone requiring proof of this situation needs only to go to the interchange to see the large queues of children and the long-suffering mothers waiting to pick up their children. The problem is getting worse but is not being tackled by the Government. The Government has indicated that it is prepared to add one more bus to the service. That is not the answer. The answer is to rethink the problem.

As I said, the parents are advocating that private enterprise take over the system and are convinced that private companies could do it better than it is being done at the moment. I stress, the system should be returned to private enterprise.

Will the Government wait until a serious accident occurs or perhaps even a fatality involving a child? Children have to fight each other to get on to crowded buses. It is only a matter of time before someone is seriously hurt. The Government must take urgent action before a tragedy occurs.

Mr J. F. McGrath (Warrnambool)—I raise a matter with the Minister for Sport and Recreation concerning the problem encountered by a constituent of mine with the Totalizator Agency Board system of telephone betting. My constituent placed a bet through his telephone account on a multi-quadrella at a Cranbourne race meeting. After placing the bet he realised that the bet did not reach the sum of money that he planned to invest so he rang the central TAB agency and spoke to a lady supervisor.

The lady supervisor advised him, after listening to the tape, that he had requested the correct numbers but that the clerk had omitted to put No. 6 in the second leg. That was demonstrated by the tape playback. She advised him that should the quadrella be successful he should make an appropriate claim because he had demonstrated the numbers he wished to take.

History now reveals that indeed No. 6 won the second leg of the quadrella and the punter's last two numbers also went on to win. The quadrella went on to pay approximately $1600. The story does not end there because this gentleman actually had six units on the $1600 quadrella. From a winning bet of $9817.80, because of the inefficiency of the system, he received nothing.

It is interesting that the lady supervisor was prepared to acknowledge that an error had been made and she advised my constituent punter that, should the quadrella be successful, he should lodge a claim. He lodged a claim with the board and was told that because he had not picked up the mistake of the clerk immediately the board was not prepared to honour his claim.

It is discriminatory that a tape used in the system is available to protect the clerk but not the punter after it had been clearly recorded that the mistake had been made by the clerk. The letter from the TAB states that the recording revealed that the correct numbers had been given to the clerk; however they were not recorded correctly by the clerk on the constituent's tickets.

I call on the Minister for Sport and Recreation to take up this issue with a view to reimbursing the punter $9817.80. The punter has had a long and distinguished sporting career and he now feels that in another sport he has been dealt a very unfair blow. Justice should be done in this instance. It is difficult for anyone to back a winner but to back four winners and still lose is disgraceful. I urge the Minister to intercede on behalf of the constituent and make representations to the board to the effect that my constituent should be $9817.80 richer.
Mrs SETCHES (Ringwood)—I refer to the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources a business in the electorate of Ringwood, Water Boss Pty Ltd, which sells, services and repairs, as well as providing, detergents and spare parts for, high-pressure water cleaning equipment that is used in more than 350 businesses in Victoria. The managing director of the company, Mr Little, advised me that the potential market for this business in Victoria is $12 million a year and that this return has the potential of increasing.

The machines compress water and release it under very high pressure for cleaning such equipment as concrete and automotive machinery. Mr Little's problems began late last year when an advertisement for his company was wrongly placed in the Yellow Pages under the contractors section rather than under the cleaning equipment section.

In the twelve months prior to November 1986 Mr Little's business received 5000 calls but, since the wrong placement of the company's advertisement, from November 1986 he has received only 87 calls. Yellow Pages has admitted the wrongful placement and has refunded the company the full costs of the advertisement, $6390.

Mr Little is aware that he can take the matter further and claim compensation in the courts. However, he has not been able to overcome the reversal that his business has suffered. Formerly he employed seven people but, as a result of the downturn in business following the wrongful placement of the advertisement, he now employs only four people, including himself and he has advised me that at the end of the week he will also have to retrench a disabled worker.

Mr Little is developing a Victorian-made machine—because all the machines he services are fully imported—that will be suitable for Victorian and Australian conditions and will eventually have export potential. However, Mr Little has received a wind-up order from a creditor to whom he owes $22 000, which comes into effect on 7 May. He has other creditors to whom he owes $29 000. The continued trading of Water Boss Pty Ltd requires an interest-free loan of approximately $50 000 to be repaid at $3000 a month. Mr Little has a very inventive business and has found a niche in the market that has great potential. His circumstances deserve the attention of the Minister and his department to advise Mr Little where he may turn to fulfil his financial requirements and to develop his business further. I request the Minister to urgently investigate the matter.

Mr BROWN (Gippland West)—I refer a matter to the Minister for Transport. On Wednesday 1 April this year locomotive No. 939, which hauled the Overland express from Adelaide to Melbourne, arrived at Spencer Street at 8.15 a.m. The Overland is the second largest carrier of interstate passengers in Australia, the largest being the Southern Aurora. The train travels at speeds of up to 100 kilometres an hour between Adelaide and Melbourne.

When locomotive No. 939 was detached from the Overland to proceed to the South Dynon locomotive depot, it derailed. I shall quote from a confidential document that is in the hands of the Opposition. It is dated Thursday, 2 April 1987 and it states quite clearly that locomotive No. 939 was shunting from No. 1 track when it derailed. The document states clearly that locomotive No. 939 was derailed and taken down to Dynon depot and that again it derailed.

I am informed that inspection shows that the derailing occurred due to a leading wheel having a crack from the bottom of the wheel to the central axle. I am advised that close inspection revealed that the crack was of some age, which it was possible to ascertain because of the amount of oil seepage evident in the crack. I am advised also that further up the wheel there was a fresh crack that enabled the wheel on the opposite side of the axle to move freely and this effectively was the cause of the derailment.

Had the locomotive derailed the night before while hauling the Overland between Bank Box and Bacchus Marsh down the Inglisson bank or across the Melton weir up to 200 lives could have been lost.
The community is aware that only one month ago wheel wear problems became evident on a large number of passenger trains operating on the Melbourne metropolitan network and that more than 30 Comeng trains were required to undergo urgent maintenance; in fact, the majority were withdrawn from service.

The Opposition is aware that at least four derailments have occurred in the past two weeks. The lack of adequate maintenance and inspection services has reached alarming proportions under this Government and because, as is now evident, up to 200 lives are put at risk, it is obviously time urgent remedial action was undertaken and that, as a matter of extreme urgency, adequate maintenance measures were put in place. I mean as of tonight—not even tomorrow, with only half an hour of this day remaining, but forthwith tonight. The Government should pay due regard to the seriousness of this problem.

The problem is obviously of alarming proportions when cracks that should have been evident on visual inspection for some period of time are not found. As lives are obviously being put at risk, the Opposition asks that the matter be attended to by the Minister as a matter of urgency to avert the prospect of another major public transport crisis in Victoria.

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley)—I raise a matter for the attention of the representative in this House of the Minister for Community Services. People in the Goulburn Valley region have expressed concern regarding the operation of the foster care program in that area. The former Minister for Community Welfare Services, the honourable member for Greensborough, would be well aware of the problems that have been faced by people operating this program in the Goulburn Valley area over many years.

Staff shortages have been suffered, and representations have been made over a long period to the former Minister and the current Minister for the provision of staff to allow the program to operate effectively. Community Services Victoria currently provides one principal officer and 1·5 foster care workers. These people have handled a program of 1200 weeks of care over the first nine months of the current fiscal year, a performance that has been equalled in other areas only with five to six workers. Currently 34 children are in care; 31 approved programs are operating, and support is offered in at least eight other cases in the area. The central highlands area has a comparable program that is operated with 7·5 worker positions to handle the workload.

The lady who has been most involved with this program, Mrs Margaret Brown, the Honorary Secretary of the Goulburn Region of the Foster Families Association, has on numerous occasions spoken to me about staff shortages and the difficulties in operating a proper program in the area.

In April last year, in company with my Leader, I introduced a deputation to the Minister who assured us that a review of the program would be undertaken and that additional staff would be provided to assist those working within the program and generally operating on a voluntary basis.

Mrs Brown has provided extensive detail of the problems that are being experienced, not only by the people who are taking on children who are in a desperate plight, but in having enough people within the department to allow them to assess other parents who might be brought into the program to take on children in need.

I shall quote from Mrs Brown’s letter to highlight the difficulties that are being experienced in maintaining the foster care program:

The situation is critical now, and all of the indications are that the demand for substitute care will only increase. The rural crisis in our dairy, wheat and fruit industries shows no sign of abating, which is flowing through to the support industries which predominate in Goulburn Region, and is therefore affecting entire rural communities.

The statewide re-development of care for children is also placing tremendous pressure on rural regions. We are last on the priority list for re-allocation of funds, but are already experiencing difficulty in making placements to central institutions.
I ask the responsible Minister to take immediate steps to have the Minister review the matter and to provide adequate staff to the regional office.

Mr McDonald (Whittlesea)—I raise, for the attention of the Minister representing the Minister for Planning and Environment, a matter concerning the proposed site for a domestic waste disposal tip in Kangaroo Ground.

The Eltham council is negotiating with the Board of Works for an 80-hectare site in Kangaroo Ground to be used as a tip. The proposed site, in a delightful area of the northern part of Melbourne, abounds with flora and native fauna, and a tip there would be a disaster.

The area concerned is in a valley which forms the bed of a tributary of Watsons Creek, which is a tributary of the Yarra River. When campaigning for the seat of Evelyn in 1982, I visited the Yarra River at Yarra Glen and saw the notices proclaiming that swimming in or drinking of the water could be injurious to health. That water was pumped into the Sugarloaf reservoir where there was an extensive purification plant. After the Cain Government was elected in 1982, millions of dollars were spent in bringing a decent sewerage system into the Yarra Valley, and the water quality in that area is now of a much higher standard.

I have visited the proposed site at the invitation of the anti-tip committee. As I said, the location of a tip in that area would be a disaster. Tips bring feral cats and everyone realises the damage that feral cats do to our native fauna. One must also consider that where there are tips there are fires, and if a fire broke out in that area, it could go right through the beautiful country to Warrandyte.

The residents of that area are extremely concerned about the possibility of the tip because it is causing a blight on property values. People cannot sell their land while the threat of the tip is hanging over their heads.

Mrs Toner—There is a beautiful memorial in the area.

Mr McDonald—The honourable member for Greensborough is right. She has already spoken on this particular subject and expressed the concerns of the people in Diamond Valley.

Mr Kennett interjected.

Mr McDonald—I think if I threw the Leader of the Opposition a peanut, he would scratch himself!

An investigation needs to be carried out by the Government to ensure a proper means of disposal is not only provided in the Yarra Valley but also right throughout Victoria. I uphold the views of my constituents on this matter and ask the Minister to ensure that every possible action is taken to maintain the aesthetic beauty of this area and to prevent a domestic disposal tip being built in the area.

Mr McCutcheon (Minister for Water Resources)—The honourable member for Glen Waverley directed a matter to the attention of the Minister for Transport concerning the bus system in the eastern suburbs. I shall ensure that the matter is referred to the Minister.

The honourable member for Gippsland West also raised a matter concerning the inspection of locos on the Overland, the importance of that inspection system and the safety of passengers. I shall ensure that the Minister for Transport deals with that matter.

The honourable member for Ringwood directed to the attention of the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources a matter concerning a business in her electorate for the sale and repair of high pressure cleaning equipment, the placement of an advertisement for that business in the Yellow Pages and the subsequent loss of business to that firm. I shall refer that matter to the Minister.
The honourable member for Whittlesea directed to the attention of the Minister for Planning and Environment in another place a matter concerning the location of a domestic garbage tip. He expressed concern about such a tip being placed in the Kangaroo Ground area and the possibility of it having a deleterious effect on the environment. I shall ensure that the Minister responds to that particular matter.

Mr TREZISE (Minister for Sport and Recreation)—The honourable member for Warrnambool raised the problem of a constituent who was deprived, in his view, of $9817.80 that he believed he had won on successfully selecting a quadrella. The tape of the telephone conversation when the bet was placed shows that the constituent gave the exact numbers for the quadrella.

I point out that the responsibility for placing a bet, not only over a telephone but also at the totalisator window, also rests with the person placing the bet because a call-back of the bet must be given by the person behind the counter and verified by the person placing the bet.

The man's claim is justified because he rang the Totalizator Agency Board before the races were run to notify the board that a mistake had been made in the call-back to him. He was notified of this mistake by the fact that the amount he had to pay did not add up correctly. The constituent did notify the board of the mistake made by the operator.

However, because of the special circumstances surrounding this case, I am happy to accompany the honourable member for Warrnambool to the Totalizator Agency Board to speak with the general manager, Mr Jim Carroll, or alternatively I am prepared to meet Mr Carroll in Melbourne sometime next week to further consider the situation.

Mr SPYKER (Minister for Consumer Affairs)—The honourable member for Murray Valley raised the problem of foster care in the Goulburn Valley. I shall pass on his concern to the Minister for Community Services in another place. I stress that the Minister is doing everything possible within her tight budget to ensure that all the demands on the welfare budget are distributed as effectively as possible.

The honourable member for Murray Valley would be well aware of the tremendous demands placed on Community Services Victoria and of the many community needs. I am sure the Minister will consider the problem raised by the honourable member and will give him an answer as soon as possible.

The motion was agreed to.

The House adjourned at 11.46 p.m.
Thursday, 16 April 1987

The SPEAKER (the Hon. C. T. Edmunds) took the chair at 10.35 a.m. and read the prayer.

ABSENCE OF MINISTER

The SPEAKER—Order! I advise the House that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services will be absent during questions without notice.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

MIDLAND MILK PTY LTD

Mr I. W. SMITH (Polwarth)—I ask the Treasurer, representing the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs in this Chamber, if he can confirm whether Midland Milk Pty Ltd has been ordered to refund approximately $100,000 of farmers' money after being caught cheating by the Victorian Dairy Industry Authority.

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—Honourable members are pleased to see that the honourable member for Polwarth has been awake for three days running in order to put forward these questions.

I also note that Midland Milk Pty Ltd has not been involved in any double dipping. Victoria has the most efficient dairy farmers of all dairy farmers in Australia.

Mr Austin—you do not know what you are talking about.

Mr JOLLY—The Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party says that I do not know what I am talking about. I hope members of the Opposition retract that statement in due course.

There is no doubt that Victorian dairy farmers are the most efficient in Australia. Even the honourable member for Polwarth would agree with that, despite the fact that he went to some grammar school, which the honourable member seems to think has made a man of him. What a lot of rubbish!

Midland Milk Pty Ltd could have entered the interstate milk market without the agreement of the Victorian Dairy Industry Authority, but more importantly, its action is freeing up the industry and is providing greater prospects for Victorian dairy farmers to sell into the New South Wales market.

That is a situation that should be regarded favourably, and certainly the Government wants to see that situation develop in the future.

I shall investigate the matter raised by the honourable member for Polwarth.

SECURITY ON V/LINE

Mr ROSS-EDWARDS (Leader of the National Party)—I refer the Minister for Transport to the proposal that the responsibility for security on trains will be transferred from the Ministry of Transport to the Victoria Police.

Can the Minister inform the House whether the Ministry of Transport will make a financial contribution to the Victoria Police to cover the cost of this transfer of service?

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—The operation of security for the metropolitan system, which seems to attract the most attention, but also the successful country network, is an extremely important issue. The announcement that I made on Tuesday incorporated, as part of that statement, the fact that there would be discussions between my officers,
those of the Ministry for Police and Emergency Services and the Department of Management and Budget, to ensure that there are appropriate adjustments in funding arrangements.

The security is currently paid for by the Metropolitan Transit Authority budget but will in future be paid for through the police budget.

Those discussions will proceed and will be assisted by the work of Mr Keith Thompson, who is acting caretaker/manager of the existing railway investigation department. The Ministry has already arranged with the police for additional resources to be made available to begin that important task and I expect that, within a month, a significant police presence will be seen on the trains and will be built up over future months.

I am pleased with the strong community support for the decision. Governments have been looking at what can be done about transport security for some time. The Government has adopted a solution that is far superior to the one adopted anywhere else; it will work well and those financial arrangements mentioned by the honourable members will be dealt with.

**NEGOTIATIONS ON POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL ISSUES**

Mr FOGARTY (Sunshine)—Will the Minister for Education inform the House of the progress on negotiations between the Ministry of Education and the Teachers Federation of Victoria on matters relating to post-primary school issues?

Mr CATHIE (Minister for Education)—I am delighted to inform the honourable member for Sunshine of the progress of industrial negotiations between the Ministry of Education and the Teachers Federation of Victoria.

I am amazed that, as an employer, I should be accused by the Liberal Party of sitting down with our employees and negotiating industrial agreements for the future. I can only say that the Liberals appear to be a pack of industrial illiterates who completely lack any understanding of industrial relations processes.

Nobody associated with schools, parents or the wider community, would want to go back to the days of industrial chaos and confrontation, which were the hallmarks of the previous Liberal Government and its administration of schools.

It had an appalling record. Indeed, in the last three years of the former Liberal Government, 100 000 working days were lost in our schools, compared with the first three years of the Labor Government when only 16 000 working days were lost. One can imagine the effect that the Liberal record had on programs within the schools and on the progress of individual students.

The latest contribution of the Liberal Party seems to be suggesting that I should go down to the City Square, set up a trestle table and invite the Teachers Federation of Victoria, the Ministry and the whole of the public of Victoria to come down and look at the progress of those negotiations.

That is the naive view of the Liberal Party on industrial relations in this State. It would be impossible for the union and the Ministry to talk frankly and openly with each other under the proposals put forward by the Liberal Party. The facts are that the Teachers Federation of Victoria is the accredited agent for all Government teachers in Victoria and for school principals.

It is true that the Federation of Victorian School Administrators is the accredited agent for deputy principals but, quite clearly, one cannot determine what one will do for the people in the middle until one determines what one will do for the people below them—the teachers—and for the people above them—the school principals. The Teachers Federation of Victoria is the accredited and, in fact, the sole agent in this case.

Mr Lea interjected.
Mr CATHIE—The Teaching Service and Arbitration Conciliation Commission was established by a decision of the Liberal Government and it is that body which has determined that the Teachers Federation of Victoria is the appropriate agent with whom the Minister for Education should undertake negotiations.

Victorian secondary schools—separate high and technical schools—are amalgamating, which means that a new industrial agreement must be arrived at, particularly to cover comprehensive secondary schools and colleges. That agreement needs to be determined this year.

The result will be a fair deal for all. Adequate consultations with parent organisations and school councils will occur as part of that process. The Opposition does not understand industrial relations. I do not understand what has happened to the once-great Liberal Party that caused it, a couple of weeks ago, to release a document that misrepresented and misunderstood what is happening in education. After five years in opposition, the Liberal Party has still not been able to produce one educational policy.

Mr DELZOPPO (Narracan)—I raise a point of order, Mr Speaker. Not only is the Minister for Education wasting valuable question time, but he is also debating the question. Under Standing Order No. 127 I ask you, Mr Speaker, to bring him back to order.

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

Mr CATHIE (Minister for Education)—I shall conclude. The importance of confidentiality in negotiations will be respected by myself and, I hope, by the Liberal Party. I regret that the Liberal Party, in distributing those confidential documents to the whole world yesterday, seemed to be more intent on wrecking the progress of those negotiations and the Government school system in this State than on respecting confidentiality.

NUNAWADING PROVINCE BY-ELECTION

Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—Did the Minister for Property and Services have any discussions with any Government members of Parliament named in the legal opinions associated with the Australian Labor Party production of fraudulent how-to-vote cards in the Nunawading Province by-election?

Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Property and Services)—The case put forward by the Opposition is based entirely on error and innuendo. The Government entirely rejects that case. I have made clear to the House my role in this matter. The basis of the Opposition’s error is that it believes there were eight opinions before the Chief Electoral Officer before he went to the Solicitor-General. If the Opposition consults the statement of the Chief Electoral Officer of 8 May 1986 it will learn the correct facts.

WORK EXPERIENCE FOR VICTORIAN STUDENTS

Mr HANN (Rodney)—Can the Minister for Education advise the House whether it is a fact that Victorian students are not able to participate in work experience programs with Commonwealth Government departments because the Commonwealth Government will not pay the minimum wage appropriate to work experience and that students would therefore not be covered under WorkCare? If that is the case, will the Minister take appropriate action to ensure that students can participate in work experience programs with the Commonwealth, perhaps by negotiating some sort of arrangement concerning WorkCare?

Mr CATHIE (Minister for Education)—It is of regret to the Ministry of Education that Victorian students cannot participate in work experience in Commonwealth Government departments and agencies. I have taken up the matter with the Commonwealth on a number of occasions. I cannot say that I have made much progress. I have decided,
however, that a major review of work experience is needed and that issue, as well as other issues, will be addressed in the review.

**ROYAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL GOOD FRIDAY APPEAL**

Mr **KIRKWOOD** (Preston)—Will the Premier provide details to the House of the Good Friday appeal being conducted by the Royal Children's Hospital and indicate how the appeal can be assisted by the Victorian community?

Mr **KENNETT** (Leader of the Opposition)—I raise a point of order, Mr Speaker. I submit that the question has nothing to do with Government administration. The appeal, which is obviously a worthy cause, has been promoted and communicated to the public through the media over the past two weeks. The question is an absolute abuse of question time.

Mr **CAIN** (Premier)—On the point of order, Mr Speaker, I express some surprise that the Leader of the Opposition would seek to raise a point of order on a matter of this kind. It is well known that this Government and previous Governments have given their support to the Good Friday appeal over a long period. On the past five occasions I have personally appeared to support the appeal and I shall do so again tomorrow.

The question is a matter of Government business because the appeal will take place tomorrow and the honourable member for Preston has indicated that he wants to know what the Government's involvement in the appeal will be. That is a perfectly proper question. I am astonished that the Leader of the Opposition would want to stop people in this State learning about the work of the Royal Children's Hospital.

Mr **FORDHAM** (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—On the point of order, Mr Speaker, I am amazed that the Leader of the Opposition would stoop to such depths. I note with interest the silence from his own backbenchers on the issue, and I can understand that. This is a perfect example of foot-in-mouth disease—the Leader of the Opposition did not think before he opened his big mouth!

(To Mr Kennett)—Ask them why they are shaking their heads, Jeffrey!

Successive Governments have long been supporters of the Good Friday appeal. Through the involvement of the Premier and the use of Government resources, quite clearly the question comes within the appropriate boundaries for asking questions without notice. I hope the Leader of the Opposition will carefully reconsider his position. Bipartisan support has always been given to this worthy appeal and I hope later today the Leader of the Opposition will issue a statement indicating a change of heart on the part of the Liberal Party on this important issue. It is disgraceful!

Mr **RAMSAY** (Balwyn)—On the point of order, Mr Speaker——

Honourable members interjecting.

The **SPEAKER**—Order! I ask the House to come to order as I am unable to hear the honourable member for Balwyn.

Mr **RAMSAY**—On the point of order, Mr Speaker, the universal support of the community for the Good Friday appeal is not in question; the matter in dispute is the misuse of question time. In your ruling, Sir, of 2 October 1984, you stated quite clearly that questions must relate to Government administration and policy and should be directed to the Minister who is responsible for the matter. I suggest to you, Sir, that this question is not one of Government administration or policy and it is not correctly directed to the Premier.

Mr **ROPER** (Minister for Transport)—On the point of order, Mr Speaker, as most members of this House would know, but apparently the Leader of the Opposition does not, the major contributor to the funding of the Royal Children's Hospital is the community.
Many of the programs that come through the appeal are jointly funded by the hospital and the Government.

The Leader of the Opposition should be aware of the fact that, as a result of the work that has been done through the Good Friday appeal, many important projects that otherwise would not have commenced have been able to proceed.

If it were not for that appeal and the successful cooperation of the community, we would have a much worse system than we would otherwise have for the treatment of children in what is a world-class organisation.

This appeal has always had bipartisan support until today both in opposition and government. Honourable members on the Government side of the House have assisted in that appeal. I should have thought that Opposition members would assist also.

In terms of the point of order raised by the Leader of the Opposition, I point out that the Good Friday appeal is a significant contributor to the activities of the Royal Children's Hospital which are set up and administered under an Act of Parliament, and continue to be administered and assisted by the Government.

The SPEAKER—Order! I do not uphold the point of order. The question directed to the Premier was regarding the responsibility for the appeal and the Government's attitude to the appeal on behalf of the community.

I ask the honourable member for Preston to reframe the question with respect to the responsibility of the Government.

Mr KIRKWOOD (Preston)—Would the Premier relate to the House details of the appeal being conducted by the Royal Children's Hospital and the Government's assistance in that appeal?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—Anybody who has had a sick child and taken that child to the Royal Children's Hospital knows the great job that doctors and nurses and all members of the staff who are dedicated to those children do for them.

Over the years the parents of children who have been to the hospital have joined with the hundreds of thousands of other people in helping the hospital out.

This Government and previous Governments have always given their support. The Good Friday appeal on behalf of the hospital has become a Melbourne tradition at Easter. This year's appeal, in which I will be taking part tomorrow, is the 56th annual appeal.

The money that will be raised will go towards research into leukaemia, heart surgery and cystofibrosis. There is no specific target this year, but I am sure the appeal organisers are hoping that they will receive more than last year's $3.15 million.

There has been some anxiety—and I hope the attitude shown by the Leader of the Opposition does not add to that—about the changes in media ownership that could threaten the appeal which, for many years, has been run by what was then the parent body, the Herald and Weekly Times Ltd. This meant that the appeal could be coordinated across Channel HSV7 and radio 3DB.

I am glad to say that the owners of the various units of that media structure have agreed to cooperate this year and the appeal will go ahead. I will be at Channel HSV7 tomorrow night to acknowledge donations to the appeal, and I am sure that the generosity of Victorians will be as always.

I hope all honourable members on both sides of the House, and perhaps even the Leader of the Opposition—despite again having proven what Mr Alan Hunt said about him is true, that to suggest he has the balance and the judgment to be Premier of this State is a nonsense—will join me in asking for support for the appeal.
NUNAWADING PROVINCE BY-ELECTION

Mr DELZOPPO (Narracan)—Did the Minister for Property and Services at any time read a legal opinion recommending prosecution of those in the Australian Labor Party involved in the production and distribution of fraudulent how-to-vote cards or did he just receive a briefing on the recommendations of the legal opinions and, if so, who gave him the briefing?

Mr McCUTCHEON (Minister for Property and Services)—I find great difficulty with the way the Opposition listens to the answers I have given on this matter. We have repeated time and again the process that was gone through. The Government took a clear line on the matter which was handled by the Chief Electoral Officer. It was his decision; he made it in his own time and has reported his decision to the people of Victoria. If they want to see how he made that decision, they should consult the document he produced on 8 May last year.

EXPO '88

Mr HARROWFIELD (Mitcham)—Will the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources advise what action the Government is taking in terms of participation in Expo '88 next year?

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—There certainly has been considerable interest about this issue. I have considerable sympathy for the situation in which Dr Llew Edwards finds himself in endeavouring to ensure that Expo '88 is a success. The Victorian Government, as well as the Victorian Parliament, would hope that Expo '88 proves to be a success because it is an important part of Australia’s bicentennial celebrations.

As I have indicated earlier in the House and publicly, the Victorian Government was concerned at the expense involved in participating in Expo '88. The initial estimates were of the order of $3 million to $4 million for the cost of the Government’s participation in this event next year.

Similar assessments were made in, for example, South Australia, in determining whether the South Australian Government should participate.

The Victorian Government took the step of contacting a number of major companies with headquarters in Victoria to ascertain the extent to which they would be interested in working with the Government in coming up with joint participation in the exposition. Frankly, as I said earlier, there was not a lot of interest. I think this is in part because of what was seen as the excessive cost and there was also some concern about some of the estimates of the numbers of visitors likely to attend Expo '88 next year.

The Queensland authorities under the management of Dr Edwards, reassessed the situation and, only very recently, came up with a new rental arrangement. However, that would have had only a marginal impact on the earlier cost estimates. The Government had been promised the information in February and it arrived only a couple of weeks ago.

The other ingredient offered by the authorities was what was described as voluntary labour to man the State stands—this would apply not just to Victoria, but also to each of the States that had been invited to participate. I do not think it would be reasonable from the point of view of the volunteers, firstly, and, secondly, quite properly, one would need appropriately trained and adequate staff to man the stands if the State were to participate in an exposition of this type.

I understand that none of the States other than Queensland has been formally and finally committed to participation in the event. Reference was made in a newspaper to the fact that Tasmania had signed itself up for the exposition. The latest information I have is that that is not the case at this time.
Queensland is certainly committed to the event, although the relationship between Dr Edwards's organisation and the Queensland Government is not exactly as close as both parties would wish it to be. The Commonwealth Government, to its credit, has been a strong supporter of Expo '88.

Mr Jasper interjected.

Mr FORDHAM—That is an unfair interjection. I repeat, the Victorian Government wishes to assist in any way it can with Expo '88 and Dr Edwards reported that in the newspaper this morning—if the honourable member had seen fit to read it.

The Commonwealth is still to put in writing its offer to the States on how it in turn would wish the States to participate. I understand it will be suggesting that a joint States' pavilion be considered, for which the Commonwealth would subsidise the rental arrangements: but it is estimated, and it is a preliminary estimate, that approximately $2 million to $3 million would be needed from each of the States to make a worthy contribution.

Victoria wishes to participate if it can be seen to be a reasonable means of expenditure of what are scarce Government funds.

All honourable members are aware that this is a period of scarce Government resources and public resources and I look forward to that final submission from the Commonwealth Government. I understand that it will be here within the next couple of days and that it will be a detailed submission. No doubt there will be discussions on whether the Commonwealth believes these arrangements will be satisfactory.

It may be that this is an issue that can be considered at the Premiers Conference next month which all Premiers will be attending. They can discuss the appropriate form of involvement of the rest of Australia in what ought to be an Australian Expo situation with the Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, and the Premier of Queensland.

I support the initiative of the Queensland Government and I support Dr Edwards's efforts.

Mr Jasper—You would not think so.

The SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Murray Valley will cease interjecting.

Mr FORDHAM—I have made repeated statements in public and in Parliament about the attitude of the Victorian Government and that has been acknowledged by the Queensland Government. The honourable member for Murray Valley has made unfair interjections and aspersions about Victoria's attitude. We have taken an interest and we will continue to do so.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Mr RAMSAY (Balwyn)—On a point of order, Mr Speaker, during question time the Leader of the Opposition raised a point of order concerning the admissibility of a question that had been asked by the honourable member for Preston and I seek clarification of your decision, Mr Speaker, not to uphold the point of order, but in doing so you requested the honourable member for Preston to rephrase his question.

Does that suggest that the original question was asked in such a manner as to raise doubts about its admissibility and should honourable members be careful about the manner in which they raise questions to avoid doubts in the future?

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—On the point of order, Mr Speaker, I am surprised that the honourable member for Balwyn, a person whom I hold in high regard, would raise a point of order in that context.
It was clearly a situation where there were a number of speakers between the time that the question was raised and you ruled, Mr Speaker, quite properly for the honourable member for Preston to rephrase the question.

It was obvious from your response that the Royal Children's Hospital is a public authority and the Government has always been a supporter of that appeal also, as have previous Governments, always to their credit, and clearly the original question was in order and, you, Mr speaker, ruled accordingly.

The SPEAKER—Order! I do not intend to prolong debate on the matter of the point of order or the original point of order. I lost track of the question during the uproar in respect of the point of order and used the terminology “rephrase the question” in the sense that I had asked for the question to be put to the House again.

That is the answer and I do not intend to rule on the point of order raised by the honourable member for Balwyn.

PETITIONS

The Clerk—I have received the following petitions for presentation to Parliament:

School buses

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 an urgent review of regulations controlling school bus transport of secondary students be undertaken to remove provisions which force students to attend secondary schools in places other than of their choice.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the regulations controlling school transport be amended to enable students residing in Yackandandah and district who wish to pursue their studies at secondary schools in Wodonga to travel to those schools in Wodonga on school buses funded by the Minister for Education.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Mr Lieberman (202 signatures)

Flinders Street station

TO THE HONOURABLE THE SPEAKER AND THE PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS OF THE VICTORIAN PARLIAMENT AS IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED:

The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of Victoria respectfully sheweth and asks that:

Whereas the Government has decided to convert the St Kilda and Port Melbourne rail lines to run through the city streets instead of to Flinders Street station;

and whereas many passengers wish to change trains at Flinders Street;

and whereas light rail vehicles will travel more slowly through city streets and so lengthen travel times;

and whereas additional rail vehicles will exacerbate traffic congestion for all users in city streets, but most especially where they turn across road traffic in the over-burdened section of Clarendon Street south of Yarra Bank Road;

We call on the Government to cease all further work on this project and to direct their planning to the improvement of the services into Flinders Street station;

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Mr Brown (1599 signatures)

It was ordered that the petitions be laid on the table.
LITTER BILL

Mr WILKES (Minister for Housing) moved for leave to bring in a Bill to make provision with respect to litter, to repeal the Litter Act 1964 and for other purposes.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

Dr COGHILL (Werribee)—I move:

That this House condemns proposals of the Liberal Party for the withdrawal of Commonwealth Government assistance to State and local government.

I hope the Leader of the Opposition is now ready to debate this matter. He had the opportunity of doing so last year and failed completely to answer the case, as he has done on other occasions. The only contribution he made in Parliament was through a point of order concerning which Liberal Party was meant.

The Liberal Party cannot pretend that it is united on this issue and it cannot pretend that it has the support of the community. Certainly, it cannot pretend that there is uniformity throughout its ranks. The Liberal Party does not have the support of the community generally or even of its traditional supporters.

Information available demonstrates that only 25 per cent of the community supports its proposals; the proposals do not have the majority support of the rank and file of Liberal Party membership; they are a long way short of having the support of all Liberal Party members of Parliament in both State and Federal Parliaments.

One needs only to refer to today's newspapers. The Federal member for Goldstein, Mr McPhee, is speaking out against these proposals, as is the Federal member for Kooyong, Mr Peacock, and other leading traditional Liberal members of the Liberal Party have spoken against the proposals. The proposals have the support of only 25 per cent of the community and of only 75 per cent of Liberal Parliamentarians.

That percentage is a substantial majority in the Liberal Party, but there is a gross discrepancy between its views and those of the community.

It is useful to try to identify which Liberals are behind this policy. One can possibly narrow it down by describing them as the members of the new right, a dry, economic, rationalist, coalitionist group in the Federal Liberal Party. Some might say that the issue, which is being promoted by the Liberal Party and is the subject of this motion, is now of little more than academic relevance because the Liberal Party is so divided. However, it is important that Victorians know just where the Victorian Opposition and its Leader stand.

The motion goes to the heart of the sort of State that Victoria should be. Those who support the motion will want Victoria's economic and social development to continue to make this a modern, prosperous and democratic State. Those who do not support it will be betraying the hopes, aspirations and rights of the majority of Victorians. They would deprive them of the right to a decent future.

The plan of the Liberal Party to cut Commonwealth assistance to State and local government ignores the fact that most Victorians get more value from Government spending than they pay taxes during their lives. This is especially significant during the stage of their lives when they have dependent children and in old age. The withdrawal of Commonwealth assistance would have disastrous effects on State and local government especially for those groups in greatest need, those with families and the aged.

Underlying the Liberal Party policy is an obsessive contempt for the public sector, which Australians and Victorians own. The Liberal Party is showing absolute disdain for
the majority of the community. The policy is nothing more than pure ideology and a sell-out to the extremists of the new right. It represents an abandonment of traditional Liberal principles. As the Minister for Education said during question time, the once great Liberal Party has abandoned the traditions established and fostered by Sir Robert Menzies when he founded the Liberal Party.

The Liberal Party is now putting the Andrew Hays, the John Elliotts and the Ian McLachlans of the world ahead of normal wage and salary earners. It is prepared to support John Elliott who discourages people from investing in Australia and who puts his personal and corporate interests ahead of the great mass of Australians. It is prepared to promote someone who is well known in the business community for exploiting the use of tax havens.

The Liberal Party is putting narrow, vested interests and selfish greedy people ahead of normal wage and salary earners, pensioners and others on social security benefits. Why has the Liberal Party promoted this policy and set itself on this crazy path? It boils down to an expression of faith; it tries to rationalise the greed but it all comes back to a faith based on the greed of the individuals promoting it.

They tried to rationalise it and, the more they rationalised it, the more they believed their own propaganda and they ended up falling into some sort of fantasyland; and indeed, the Liberal Party is in the new right's Australian fantasy.

This policy adopted by the Liberal Party signals that it is being taken over by the hoarding creeps and their paranoia of creeping hordes. The Leader of the Opposition is confused about all of this. He does not know where he stands. On the one hand he says he is a friend of Andrew Peacock—

Mr Leigh—Mr Acting Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the House.

A quorum was formed.

Dr COGHILL—Once again, the Liberal Party is not interested in debating the issue, which seems to be central to its Federal policy, but rather it is interested in disrupting every debate on it. Perhaps that is because of the confusion in the mind of the Victorian Leader of the Opposition.

I should like to refer to a recent report in the Keilor Messenger of 14 April, just last Tuesday. Evidently, the Leader of the Opposition had been out to Keilor and made an announcement while speaking at the Keilor branch of the Liberal Party—and that would be a pretty small gathering of people. The honourable member for Greensborough suggests that it constitutes three members.

What the Leader of the Opposition is reported to have said is important because it shows the hypocrisy of the Opposition. He is reported to have said, "That socialism can give you employment". All we have heard about from the Liberal Party in the past is the size of the public sector and the level of taxation in Australia; but now we learn that it is interested in the fact that socialism can give people employment! That highlights the confusion that is present in the mind of the Leader of the Opposition.

I return to the unveiling of this policy proposal of the Liberal Party. It arose with the Federal Liberal Party's council meeting last July. It endorsed proposals to withdraw Commonwealth assistance to State and local government. The Victorian Leader of the Opposition was present in Adelaide at the time of that conference and I assume he was at the conference, although I do not have that from the public record.

One would have thought that, having been in Adelaide at the conference, he would have stood up and defended the interests of the men and women of Victoria whom he will ask to vote for him again at the next election.
However, one finds that both at the conference and on each occasion since, the Leader of the Opposition has squibbed every opportunity to oppose John Howard's policies, even though he says he does not support John Howard.

Indeed, from the famous car telephone call it is clear that the State Leader of the Opposition does not support the Federal Leader of the Opposition, John Howard. Despite the State Leader's opposition to Mr Howard as an individual, he is not prepared to fight the Federal Leader in the interests of Victoria; he is not prepared to defend Victorians against the dangerous and damaging policies that the Federal Liberal Opposition is advocating. He is not even prepared to defend the electoral interests of the Liberal Party in Victoria.

The principles endorsed by the Federal Liberal Party council meeting are being worked on for implementation by party representatives in case the Liberal Party happens to be elected to government at some stage. It is important to note that it is not intended for the specific nature of the policies to be revealed. It is the deliberate intention of the Federal Liberal Party that much will be hidden from the public prior to the next Federal election.

The policies that were endorsed by the Liberal Party Federal council meeting were set out in two documents; the first dealing with business policies. The document is dated 29 July 1986 and I shall quote some of the most revealing sections of it:

The next Liberal/National Party Government will be committed unequivocally to freezing its spending in real terms over its first three year term of office.

The document also states:

Clearly, to achieve this exacting commitment, cost savings and enhanced productivity will be required in virtually all areas of Government activity. Examples include:

- restraint in payments to the States and local government.
- transfer to the States of some functions more appropriately performed by them.

With an introductory paragraph like that, one would have expected to read an extensive and comprehensive list of examples cited in the policies for business. However, only two examples are quoted and neither of them achieve the objectives stated in the preceding paragraph.


At page 3 of the speech, the Federal Leader of the Opposition claimed that the basic malaise facing this country was that Governments, Federal, State and local, have been spending, taxing, borrowing and interfering too much and indicated that that would be reversed by a Liberal Government. He claimed that smaller government would be an essential task of the next Liberal Government.

At page 5 of the speech, the Federal Leader stated:

The coalition is committed to a spending freeze during our first three years in government.

At page 6, he stated:

Preparation of our taxing policy is already well advanced.

In July last year, the Federal Leader of the Opposition indicated that the Liberal Party’s taxation policy was advanced in preparation, and yet in April this year we have still not seen it, apart from what has been leaked in the *Australian Financial Review*.

The Leader of the Federal Opposition went on with a couple of quite significant statements. He said:

There will be less reliance on personal income tax made possible by reduced spending and some broadening of the indirect tax base.
He further went on to speak about the deadening effects on incentive of our current taxation system which would be eliminated by a sharp reduction in the marginal rates.

I refer firstly to the suggestion by the Federal Opposition Leader that there would, in fact, be less reliance on personal income tax made possible by reduced spending and some broadening of the indirect tax base. A subtle, but significant difference has crept in when compared to the earlier passages of the speech I quoted.

The Leader of the Federal Opposition first proposed that there should be a freeze in real terms. He moved on from that to say there should be a reduction in actual spending. The second statement made by the Leader of the Federal Opposition was that the deadening effects on incentive in our current taxation system would be eliminated by a sharp reduction in the marginal rates.

There is a curious, although not surprising, coincidence between that and the interests of the wealthy and greedy who are promoting these policies. As you would be aware, Mr Acting Speaker, John Kenneth Galbraith, said that the wealthy need more money to produce, but the poor need less money to produce, in the view of the conservatives.

What a happy coincidence with the interests of those with the greatest wealth and the greatest greed! They would be in a terrible situation if it were proven that the reverse were the situation and if one gave poor people more resources they could become more productive and if one taxed the resources of the wealthy more heavily they would have some incentive to be even more productive so that they could maintain their level of disposable incomes. What a sad situation for the Liberal Party if there were some results to prove that!

Mr Steggall interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Stirling)—Order! The honourable member for Swan Hill is out of order and out of his place.

Dr COGHILL—Evidently the honourable member for Swan Hill wants to go home. He may as well leave the Chamber because he is not making any useful contribution to the House whatsoever. He has shown a total incapacity to understand, much less to debate these types of issues.

Mr MACLELLAN (Berwick)—On a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, the Standing Orders prohibit imputations being made by honourable members in respect of the character or capacity of other honourable members. In a statement to the House the honourable member for Werribee alluded to the fact that the honourable member for Swan Hill lacks the capacity to understand certain matters. Those implications are not only offensive, but are also contrary to Standing Orders.

The ACTING SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Swan Hill did not take offence.

Mr MACLELLAN—Mr Acting Speaker, in respect of the Standing Orders, it is not necessary for the honourable member for Swan Hill to raise such a point of order; it is open to any honourable member to do so and I have done so.

Mrs TONER (Greensborough)—On the point of order, the honourable member for Swan Hill did not disagree with the reflection which was made on his capacity. He did not find it offensive.

The ACTING SPEAKER—Order! I do not uphold the point of order. The honourable member for Swan Hill, who is out of his place, took no offence at the remark. Therefore, I rule accordingly.

Dr COGHILL (Werribee)—Mr Acting Speaker, the record will show that the situation is as you indicated in your ruling.
Where is the evidence for the ideological assertion by the Leader of the Federal Opposition, which has been supported by other members of the Liberal Party, that somehow or other there is a significant disincentive to people paying the top level of income tax?

In examining that proposal, two points must be considered. The first is that most people work fixed hours and do not have the opportunity or the discretion of working overtime. They are on fixed salaries and are unable to be rewarded for greater effort, no matter whether their level of taxation is increased or decreased. Those people do not have that flexibility.

The second point that must be considered is that if the Liberal Party really believed what it has been claiming, it would have evidence to support its case for all taxpayers, not only the vested interests of the greedy who want to have their tax rate lowered. I am certain that few people in Australia would not want to pay less income tax. The Liberal Party has not produced a shred of evidence to defend its case.

I should have thought that academic literature and professional journals would have been able to back up the claims made so confidently by the Liberal Party. I have carefully examined a good deal of material and have been unable to find any evidence to support the assertion that there is a disincentive for income earners at the top level. There may be a strong reason to assist the poverty stricken caught by poverty traps at the lower end of the income scale, but they are not the people who would benefit from the proposals of the Liberal Party. The Liberal Party has claimed that the beneficiaries will be those people earning high incomes and paying the most tax.

As I was not satisfied with my own research methods to find appropriate data to back up the claims of the Opposition, I went to the “think tank” at Monash University. The Centre of Independent Studies has been loudly vaunted by the Liberal Party and used widely in the development of its proposals. At the invitation of Professor Michael Porter, I attended the university and spoke with him. This was before the tabling in the Senate of the report, in which he was strongly condemned by his academic peers—so I was unaware of that fact.

Professor Porter was clearly committed to the proposal, which is shared by the Liberal Party, that we must provide more incentive by reducing the highest tax rates. At that stage the professor was advocating a tax margin of 30 per cent. I asked him to provide me with some data that would substantiate the basis of his proposals. I wanted some information on the fundamental assumption concerning the reduction of taxation for high income earners which he has been advocating and which he has assisted others in pushing around Australia.

Professor Porter was unable to provide any original research. He has referred to a number of other authors who had published in various journals, mostly in foreign countries. As most of the material is foreign, it is difficult to transfer it to Australian conditions because our culture and values are different. Australians regard the quality of their workplace as being more important than do the Americans, where much of the research work has been done. Americans are less concerned with job satisfaction and more concerned with money in their pockets.

Even if I leave that matter aside, the research cited in Professor Porter’s work and the other material published by the Centre of Independent Studies that he sent to me failed to substantiate any of the claims made by the Liberal Party at the Federal or State level or those claims made by the new right.

The proposals of the Federal Leader of the Opposition are nothing but a sop to those on the highest of high incomes; to those who already have high incomes and who believe they need even more disposable income than the majority of the population.

It is worth referring also to the policies of Professor Lauchlan Chipman, one of the most ardent advocates of income splitting, which again is one of the proposals being voiced by the Liberal Party.
It is hard to discover whether the Liberal Party has an absolute commitment to its introduction at the next election because it has kept its taxation policy hidden.

Honourable members interjecting.

Dr COGHILL—It would seem, on the evidence, that the Liberal Party has not made up its mind on its taxation policy, but certainly there have been some murmurings about it containing income splitting.

Professor Chipman was kind enough to send to my local paper, and other local papers, an article of his that purports to defend income splitting. That article reveals two things: firstly, it shows a profound ignorance of what has been achieved in reform of the social security system and the effects of the taxation system on people with dependants in Victoria, and, secondly, it utterly fails to point out the substantial disadvantages which would flow to many families from income splitting.

The commitment to reduce spending is reiterated by the Federal Leader of the Opposition on page 8 of his speech to which I referred earlier. He states:

Our approach to business stresses the need to substantially reduce and restructure taxes by cutting spending at all levels of government;

There it is again! All that has come from the Federal Leader of the Liberal Party and accepted by the Federal council of the Liberal Party—at which meeting the Victorian Leader of the Opposition was present but evidently silent—is cut, cut, cut in Government services and in Government action.

Since that speech, some examples have arisen that reveal the type of damage that the Liberal Party would inflict on the community if its policies were to be implemented.

Despite the fact that the Victorian Leader of the Opposition—inadvertently, admittedly—is on the public record as not liking the Federal Leader of the Opposition, he has still not been prepared to comment on the policy proposals of the Federal Leader of the Opposition, much less to defend Victoria against the damaging consequences of those proposals.

I have searched the media in an attempt to discover what role the Victorian Leader of the Opposition might have played while in Adelaide for the meeting of the Federal council of the Labor Party. The Parliamentary Library has been of enormous assistance to me in scouring through the reports of that conference in the hope that those reports might contain some mention of what the Victorian Leader of the Opposition did or said that would have been in the interests of Victorians, Victorian families and their dependants.

Mr Kennett interjected.

Dr COGHILL—The Leader of the Opposition is not prepared to defend or debate what it is that the Federal Liberal Party wants to inflict on Victoria. All he tries to do is to divert debate away from the issue. He is not prepared to stick up for Victorians or, more importantly, for those Victorians whose needs are greatest.

Despite the expert assistance of the Parliamentary Library and other sources, I have been unable to turn up any evidence to show that the Victorian Leader of the Opposition defended any Victorian interests or, indeed, spoke at all on that matter while in Adelaide.

The honourable member for Greensborough reminds me that the Leader of the Opposition is reported to have told a joke, which many would regard as grossly offensive, at a function held at the time of the conference but, insofar as his actual role in the conference is concerned, not a shred of evidence has been found to indicate that he once stood up for Victorians or for Victorian families in their greatest need.

By the inaction—and I suspect it was deliberate inaction—the Leader of the Opposition has betrayed not only Victorians but also ultimately his own Parliamentary Liberal Party
because he has not defended them against the dangerous electorate consequences of the policy proposals put forward by his Federal colleagues.

In fact, at every opportunity since, it would appear that the Leader of the Opposition has refused to oppose John Howard’s policies, despite his concern—as I mentioned, inadvertently revealed—about John Howard and his capacity to win a Federal election, whenever it is held.

Again the Leader of the Opposition remains silent. On every occasion that he has had the opportunity, he has remained silent. The opportunity arose on 13 November last year in debate in Parliament. The Leader of the Opposition had the opportunity of responding on behalf of the Opposition to a motion, but, at the end of my contribution, he walked out of the Chamber. He would not even take his place at the table and say where he stood on the matter, much less defend the interests which he claims to represent.

The opportunity arose again recently when the Leader of the Opposition chaired a shadow Cabinet meeting in Werribee on 2 March—if my memory is correct. He had an opportunity of stating whether he would stand up, not just for Victoria but for the people of Werribee, in the face of these damaging and hurtful proposals coming from the Federal Liberal Party.

Again he squibbed. He had the opportunity to tell the people of Werribee that he would defend them and all Victorians against the harmful proposals of the Liberal Party in Canberra that would take away services, funding and all the things that contribute to their quality of life. He squibbed it!

One can only wonder why the Leader of the Opposition who is privately unhappy about John Howard’s leadership, is reluctant to publicly oppose John Howard’s policies and to stand up to them in the interests of all Victorians. It is obvious that those proposals would be extremely damaging to the people of Victoria if they were ever to be put into effect.

The Leader of the Opposition is well known for his friendship with and support for Andrew Peacock. That has been confirmed by the inadvertent revelations of his conversation over a car telephone. There is no reason in the world why the Leader of the Opposition should deny Andrew Peacock his support.

It highlights the point. Why is he not prepared to be a man and stand up for what he believes? Why is he not prepared to state what he stands for and outline his views on these damaging proposals?

Indeed, the Leader of the Opposition is reported in that famous report of Monday, 23 March 1987, as having said he told Mr Howard after the by-election that the Federal Leader did not have his support and would never have it. If he does not support his Federal Leader, Mr Howard, why will the Leader of the Opposition not speak out on policies? Is his opposition to John Howard based on his friendship with Andrew Peacock? Is that what it is all about? Is it based on some sort of personal dislike between the Leader of the Victorian Opposition and the Leader of the Federal Opposition, or is it a more substantive issue of the policy position taken by the Leader of the Federal Opposition and the implications of that for both Victorians and the Victorian Parliamentary Liberal Party?

If in fact it is that substantive issue, one would think that the Leader of the Opposition would have what little courage it would take to say that he is for Victoria and that he does not agree with his Federal Leader’s policies; that he is concerned about standing up for Victorians and seeing that he gets the best possible deal out of Victorian and Federal Governments present and future.

The Federal Liberal Party is clearly intent on developing its present policy line. Indeed, a little while ago a secret plan, as it was described, for the first 100 days of a Federal Government involving the Liberal Party was being prepared by the Liberal Party’s secretariat. A leak appeared in the Australian Financial Review of 23 March on the matter
and indicated that very detailed spending cuts had been planned by the Federal Liberal Party to meet taxation promises which were costed at $5 billion.

It is hard to know which faction of the National Party would be behind this document, but the document appears to come from the Federal Liberal Party secretariat and it raises important questions of whether it had the endorsement of the Federal Opposition coalition or whether it was simply, as the honourable member for Greensborough indicated, a document compiled by the Liberal Party that would be imposed on the National Party regardless of what it thought.

The proposals seem to relate to spending cuts which would add up to $5000 million, with $2000 million taking place in the first week of office of a new Liberal Government—an extraordinary suggestion that these cuts could happen so quickly. The total of $5000 million in expenditure cuts would occur within three months.

It is worth referring in some detail to what was proposed in the policy document or the leaked secret plan for the Federal Liberal Party’s first 100 days, as reported in the *Australian Financial Review* of 23 March 1987. The key areas of spending reduction would be a 20 per cent reduction in bounties to manufacturing industry; the end of the superphosphate bounty; a reduction in Medicare rebates; the end of bulk billing for Medicare accounts; increased charges for pharmaceutical benefits; the abolition of the first home owner scheme; the end of all employment programs; changes to indexation arrangements for pensions and benefits; reduced unemployment benefits; reductions in the supporting parents entitlement; a tightening of the eligibility for widow parent pensions and an increase in the eligibility for aged pensions for females from 60 years to 65 years.

The document goes on to suggest that there should be, and indeed it specifies, heavy pruning in the social welfare, health, trade, industry, education, employment, housing and arts areas. Reduction in expenditures on those areas would have great significance for State and local government because the funding is passed on to those sectors.

The document clearly commits the Opposition to the implementation of a new personal income tax and new company tax measures would be implemented. The document is a resume of how the Federal Liberal Party, presumably with the support of whatever part of the National Party is still in coalition, would effect its transition to government. However, Parliament does not know the reaction of the Victorian Liberal Opposition to this scenario that would affect all Victorians.

For example, a reduction in pension entitlements would throw major new and added responsibilities on to the welfare sector, both Government and voluntary. Departments such as Community Services Victoria and local government would be forced to play a major new role. The abolition of employment programs, would, of course, create greater unemployment. Perhaps this is something the Leader of the Opposition endorses! Let us hear from him. Not only would there be greater unemployment, but it would particularly affect young people who are the major beneficiaries of the employment programs because, as most honourable members know, these programs have given those young people access to skills and to experience which they would not otherwise have been able to obtain. Having had that access to skills and experience, they are then much better able to obtain employment. The experience in Victoria, as it is elsewhere in Australia, is that young people who have been part of these employment programs have done very well and have achieved high levels of success in securing long-term employment.

What does the Opposition say about the Federal Liberal Party’s proposals to impose a new personal income tax? What does the honourable member for Brighton say about his Federal colleagues imposing this new personal tax? Does the Opposition and its spokesperson, the honourable member for Brighton, endorse this proposal and the proposal for new company taxes? Is that the sort of thing that the Opposition can defend for Victorians? What is its position? Nothing has been heard of the Opposition’s position to date.
What do the Liberal Party’s friends and associates in the manufacturing sector say about the proposal for a reduction or, indeed, even the abolition of bounties for the manufacturing industry and the effects that would have on employment and on economic growth in Victoria?

One could similarly ask how the hard-pressed farmers will react to the proposals of the Liberal Party for the abolition of the superphosphate bounty. The cut in Medicare, the end of bulk billing and the increased charges for some pharmaceutical products will affect the access of people, directly and personally, to modern medicine and benefits at their most vulnerable stage, when they are ill. Where does the Opposition stand on that issue? Does the Opposition say it is a good thing that people will be in greater difficulty when they are ill, that they will have greater difficulty in paying for essential medical treatment; that they will have greater difficulty in paying for drugs and pharmaceutical products? Is that the sort of thing that the Opposition is saying is good, or are its members prepared to stand up for Victorians and defend Victorians against the assault being planned by their Federal colleagues, the Leader of the Federal Opposition and his associates?

There has still not been a response from the State Liberal Party as to where it stands on this important Federal issue. The Federal Leader of the Opposition and the Federal Liberal secretariat suggested that there would be an immediate expenditure review followed by a Premiers Conference within two months of a change of Government to discuss major changes in the allocation of finance between the Commonwealth and the States and that the overall payments to the States would be reconsidered. That information is reported in an article of 23 March in the Australian Financial Review.

Given that the Leader of the Opposition and those who sit with him in this place have not found it necessary to speak out against those dangerous plans, one can only assume that they are aware of the secret plan by the Federal Government to slash assistance for Victorian men, women and children and that they are happy to acquiesce and to accept that this is what the Federal Liberal Party would do in government.

The implication of that is that the Leader of the Opposition and the Liberal Opposition are prepared for one of two situations to occur—either that the new responsibilities to be thrust onto the Victorian Government, Victorian people and local communities should be financed by the imposition of new taxes or, alternatively, that essential services should be abandoned at the State and local government levels where they are of considerable benefit to Victorians.

It is high time that the Opposition said where it stands on those issues. In the absence of any public opposition to the proposals from the Victorian Liberal Party, one can draw only one conclusion, and that is that the Victorian Liberal Party agrees with the proposals of the Federal Liberal Party and does not care that they would inevitably and unavoidably hurt the overwhelming majority of Victorians.

That leads one to the inevitable conclusion that the Opposition simply does not care about its Victorian constituency. It is not only that it does not care but also that it is prepared to be party to hidden plans and a hidden agenda to deceive the Victorian public, the voters of this State. It is prepared to be part of a conspiracy to deceive the voters of Australia and Victoria.

Victoria is confronted with an Opposition that is unprincipled, irresponsible, certainly uncaring, certainly hypocritical and deceitful by silence. It is obvious from what the Liberal Party is doing at the Federal level that it is in favour of reducing services to the people of Australia in each State, including, of course, Victoria, and reducing services to the ratepayers in every municipality around the country.

There is no suggestion that the Liberal Party has any ideas about or any understanding of what might be done to improve the productivity, efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector. It is not interested in the better management of the public sector. It is interested only in cutting back the public sector and reducing the services on which so
many Victorian men, women and children depend—in some cases literally for their lives and, in others, for essential services such as education.

At the Federal council meeting only one Liberal spoke out and in doing so showed more courage than the Leader of the Opposition, assuming he was at the conference for the debate. The man who spoke out was Senator Robert Hill from South Australia. He directed attention to the dangerous consequences for his own party ultimately—that was the prime concern he expressed at the Liberal Federal council meeting—and the consequences for Australia and Australians. What was his reward for doing so? It was to receive a total bucketing, rubbishing and absolute trouncing from the Federal Treasurer of the Liberal Party, Mr John Elliott, the man who favours tax havens as a way of avoiding his obligations and those of his corporate bodies to the Australian community.

The one person who was prepared to stand up at the conference in South Australia—at least according to the reports of the meeting— was not the Victorian Leader of the Opposition or any other Victorian but a person who, on his home ground, was trying to defend South Australians against the dangerous propositions being advocated for endorsement at that meeting—Senator Robert Hill. He is one of the group of approximately 25 per cent of the Liberal Party who are not among the new right, the dries, the economic rationalists and the coalitionists who have formulated the dangerous set of policies now sought to be thrust upon the Australian community.

It is worth considering the significance of Commonwealth payments for State and local government in Australia. For example, I refer honourable members to 1986-87 Federal Budget Paper No. 7. Page 12 of that document carries chart 4, “Funds available to the State and local government sector from sources as percentage of total outlays”. The chart indicates that, historically, the levels of payments to the States are already low as a proportion of total outlays, being approximately 42 per cent, but despite the fact that they are already low the Liberal Party wants to reduce them further. It wants to slash those funds although they have already been falling for a number of years.

Those funds are now at a level lower than that which the Whitlam Government inherited from the McMahon Government. The funds increased during the years of the Whitlam Government, as many honourable members are aware, and there were worthwhile investments as a consequence, but since then there has been a general decline in the payments that the Commonwealth Government has made to State Governments.

There is a significant contribution to Victoria from the Commonwealth Government. Page 5 of 1986-87 Victorian Budget Paper No. 4 includes table A.1, “Consolidated Fund, estimates of receipts for the year ending 30 June 1987”. I shall highlight some of the more substantial contributions by the Commonwealth Government to Victoria for the current financial year.

The health grant is estimated to be $408.827 million, which is a massive amount. That allocation is under direct threat as a result of the recent Liberal Party speech by James Porter in which he outlined some aspects of the Federal Liberal Party’s proposals for a cut of $3 billion in Commonwealth expenditure in the health field. The health grant is not the only significant area of State health expenditure based on Commonwealth funding. I refer honourable members to the Medicare grants, which are the last item listed in the table. The amount allocated for this financial year is $269.122 million. If one adds those two figures together one realises the enormous contributions those grants make to the well-being of Victorians.

The Liberal spokesman who mentioned the $3000 million cut in health expenditure by the Commonwealth Government did not make clear how it would affect these areas. Even if it were to have only a marginal effect, it would still have a dramatic effect on individual Victorians who are seeking emergency treatment or other medical assistance in hospitals and other health facilities through the general health grant and Medicare grant.

There are other significant areas, one of which is schools for which there is a grant for recurrent expenditure of $131.3 million. These are the sorts of grants the Opposition wants
to see cut out in Victoria. Does the Opposition want to see the development of schools slowed down; fewer teachers available in schools, fewer facilities and resources for children in classrooms in Victoria, people leaving the school system less skilled, less well equipped for life and to make a constructive and useful contribution to the development of the Australian economy and Australian society? Is that the sort of thing the Liberal Party is after?

Also under the heading of schools comes grants for technical and further education $26.8 million; again, that is a significant contribution and a major part of the Victorian expenditure on technical and further education.

There is a host of smaller allocations to the State, but I will not go through all of them. Another significant grant is that for the Home and Community Care Program of $28.3 million. This program is directed specifically to Victorians who are in greatest need—the elderly, disabled and those who are ill and unable to care for themselves. It is the program that funds the home maintenance services, such as the one that has just started in the City of Werribee that helps elderly people or those who have some physical disability in maintaining their homes by carrying out those essential jobs around the house such as fixing the guttering. They are people who are old, who have arthritis or are confined to wheelchairs. They find it very difficult to cope with those small household jobs which are easy for most of us to do by ourselves. These are the programs that are under direct challenge from the proposals put forward by the Liberal Party at the Federal level.

The payments to the State are outlined in greater detail in table B.1 of Budget Paper No. 4, commencing at page 74 running through to page 77. Again we have the same figures for health, but in matters such as universities, those grants do not go through the State Budget and, therefore, are not mentioned in the State’s Appropriation Bill. Nonetheless, payments that Victoria passes on to the universities on behalf of the Commonwealth Government are estimated this year to be $299.5 million. This is absolutely essential to the future well-being of Victoria. How can we maintain our standards of skill in the community if we do not have universities that are able to produce enough students with high calibre training? Yet here a big Budget item is under direct threat because of the policies espoused by the Federal Opposition with the acquiescence and acceptance of the Victorian Opposition.

One can look at example after example of the harm it would do, and one case concerns road construction and associated transport funding.

Under the heading of a “Specific Purpose Payments—Capital” one finds an estimated grant of $160.4 million for the Australian Land Transport Program to be paid to Victoria this year. A large proportion of that goes into essential roadworks. Municipalities are saying time after time that they cannot maintain their roads on the amount of money being provided and continually ask for more, yet the Leader of the Opposition is prepared to accept the Federal proposals that would lead to a reduction in funding of roadworks. The honourable member for Mornington, the Liberal spokesman on local government, should know something about that.

Mr Leigh—Mr Acting Speaker, I draw your attention to the deplorable state of the House.

A quorum was formed.

Dr COGHILL—Local government after local government is always asking for more money to be made available for roads, and the honourable member for Mornington, the Opposition spokesman for local government, would no doubt know about that because he does get around a little. He cannot have it both ways: if he wants these substantial funds of $160.4 million from the Australian Land Transport Program and $93.5 million from the Australian Bicentennial Road Development Program that would be cut by a future Federal Liberal Government, he had better go around and be honest with local governments and tell them when they ask for more road funds that he is sorry, “The Liberal Party’s
policy is to reduce the amount of money that will be available for roads and other essential works". It is about time the honourable member for Mornington came clean and indicated just where he stands.

To highlight the significance of the expenditure in Victoria, I refer to the Federal health grants totalling $677.949 million, according to this year’s estimate. The total appropriation for health in Appropriation Act No. 1 of 1986 is more than $1.5 billion. The grants made by the Federal Government account for approximately 43 per cent of the expenditure made by the Victorian Government with the authority of Parliament.

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

A quorum was formed.

Dr COGHILL—My attention has just been directed to an article that appears on the front page of today’s Herald which, in fact, confirms the very point I am making. As the honourable member for Mornington ought to know, municipalities are facing difficulties because of their cash flow situation. However, by his silence, the honourable member for Mornington evidently supports the Federal Liberal Party proposal to further cut support to local government from the Federal Government.

Mr Cooper interjected.

Dr COGHILL—That is what the honourable member for Mornington—

The SPEAKER—Order! I advise the honourable member for Mornington that I presume there will be time remaining for him to respond to the remarks of the honourable member for Werribee, and I shall call him accordingly. I will not tolerate him continuing to interject.

Dr COGHILL—It is a pity that the honourable member for Mornington was not as vocal when he visited various municipalities, and did not have the courage to say to them, “I support a cut in the funds that come to you from the Federal Government”. The Liberal Party does not have the courage to do that.

What the honourable member is suggesting by his support for the Federal Liberal Party’s proposal is that rates will increase, not by 10 per cent but probably by 25 per cent—particularly if the Werribee example is any indication—to make up for the shortfall resulting from the cut in Federal funds to municipalities in Victoria.

That is what the honourable member has to face up to. The next time I read a report about the honourable member visiting a municipality I hope he will be on the record as saying, “I do not support any increase in Federal funding flowing through to municipalities. In fact, I am in favour of a reduction. I do not want as much money provided to them so that they can maintain the roads, operate kindergartens, child care and infant welfare centres and all those things. I do not want municipalities to employ people so that they can conduct worthwhile programs, such as the Community Employment Program. I do not want people to be involved in the Community Employment Program so that they can acquire better skills and experience and so that they have a greater opportunity of obtaining jobs”.

That is what I would like to read about the comments of the honourable member for Mornington on the next occasion that he visits a municipality. However, I am sure he will not do that. He will stay silent. He will criticise the Labor Government, which has done a great deal for local government, but he will not have the courage to stand up, reveal his views and defend his ideological commitment to reduce Commonwealth funding to local government in Victoria and reduce support for local communities because of Federal funding cuts.

I pointed out earlier in regard to Commonwealth grants that go towards funding health activities in Victoria, that 43 per cent of the appropriation for Health Department Victoria in the current Budget is attributable to Commonwealth grants. Therefore, if there were to
be a severe cut in that funding—the $3 billion cut in health spending by the Commonwealth as proposed by James Porter when speaking on behalf of the Federal Opposition—there could be a 43 per cent increase in the amount of money that would need to be raised in Victoria to support health services, which many Victorians value and depend on for their lives in some cases, and certainly for their good health.

I refer now to the example of universities. As I mentioned previously, $299 546 000 is being provided for universities in Victoria this year.

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

A quorum was formed.

Dr COGHILL—I was pointing out that the universities in Victoria are entirely dependent on Commonwealth funding. Therefore, if the Federal Liberal Party had its way and cut Commonwealth funding to universities, that shortfall would either have to be picked up by the State through some increase in taxes and charges or, alternatively, we would have to start closing down university departments, and perhaps even entire universities.

The State Opposition should say just where it stands. Does it want to close down the whole faculties of universities? Is that what it is all about? Does it want to reduce the standard of the remaining faculties of universities, or does it want to close down entire universities? The Opposition should indicate just where it stands.

The honourable member for Kew might like to comment; I understand that is her policy area for the Opposition. However, honourable members have heard not a word from her or from anyone else indicating on behalf of the Opposition what it would do if that policy were implemented, or, more importantly, where members of the Opposition stand on the policy proposal, so that they could go out and defend Victorian students who depend on universities for their education. Honourable members opposite ought to remember what is predominantly their own constituency from which university students come, particularly the higher income groups.

Taking all those things into account, one would have expected that the honourable member for Kew or some other spokesperson for the Opposition would have spoken in opposition to the Federal Liberal Party’s proposals and said, “Universities are sacrosanct. You should be increasing the funding for universities, rather than placing them in jeopardy”.

I refer now to schools. A total of $137 408 000 is contributed to Victorian schools this year by the Commonwealth Government. That is a smaller percentage of the Victorian Budget than for some other sectors—only some 7.3 per cent—but, nonetheless, it has a significant effect.

Does the Opposition suggest there should be a 7.3 per cent reduction in the number of teachers provided in Victorian schools? After all, the major recurrent expenditure in schools is taken up by the employment of teachers and other staff. Does the Opposition want larger class sizes, or would it be prepared to increase State taxes and charges so that the shortfall resulting from the withdrawal of Federal funding could be made up?

This year Victoria will gain approximately $48 million from Commonwealth funding of the Community Employment Program. The State and other sponsors of the particular projects kick in additional contributions, but that $48 million was what made the program work and, without that, the Community Employment Program would not exist.

However, the Liberal Opposition wants to abandon all employment programs as it does not care about the training and experience, which is so important for young people who want to obtain secure long-term employment. The Opposition would rather those people rotted out there, perhaps without the dole, in poverty.

These important programs are doing two things. Firstly, they are performing useful functions and, secondly, they are providing valuable experience and skills to the young people who participate.
Finally, I shall refer to housing expenditure. The Minister for Housing pointed out that this year the Victorian Government will receive approximately $140 million for public housing, which will contribute to the total expenditure in the housing portfolio of $291 697 500; 48 per cent of the total expenditure in the housing portfolio is funded from this Federal Government grant of $140 million. It is a couple of weeks since the Federal Opposition spokesman on housing, Mr Julian Beale, announced that he wanted to scrap the Commonwealth–State Housing Agreement.

Mr Ramsay—And replace it with what?

Dr COGHILL—The Opposition simply does not understand the role that the Commonwealth–State Housing Agreement has in providing housing for Victorians in greatest need. The Opposition's idea seems to be that there should be compulsory home ownership and it does not matter whether it is inappropriate in certain circumstances or whether a person cannot afford it, but that everyone should own a house. That is its solution, but its numbers do not add up.

The Federal Government contributes massively to the Victorian Budget and out of the total Victorian expenditure authorised under the Appropriation Bill of $8 947 862 823, there are a series of Commonwealth grants totalling $4527 million. Admittedly, a few of those Commonwealth payments do not appear in the Appropriation Bill because they have been simply passed on by the State Government rather than being expended by the State.

It is interesting to note that the Commonwealth's contribution to Victoria's economy in jobs and services is equivalent to 51 per cent of the Victorian Budget expenditure.

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

A quorum was formed.

Dr COGHILL—It is interesting to have yet another contribution from the honourable member for Malvern. Perhaps the sometime supporter of the Leader of the Opposition, but if we hear correctly, that is not something—

Mr LEIGH (Malvern)—On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the honourable member for Werribee has just attacked me merely because I pointed out the state of the House, and since I was merely directing your attention, Mr Speaker, to the Standing Orders, I ask that the honourable member withdraw his attack.

The SPEAKER—Order! I do not find there is an imputation that offends the character of the honourable member. It is a frivolous point of order and I do not uphold it.

Dr COGHILL (Werribee)—Unfortunately, it is typical of the actions of the honourable member for Malvern, whose support for his own Leader is so much in doubt that the Leader of the Opposition will not be able to count on him for any support when the leadership comes up again.

I shall refer to a couple of items which affect my electorate and which amply illustrate the significance of Commonwealth spending at the State local level. Firstly, I refer to housing.

Werribee, like many communities in Victoria, owes a lot of its development, residential growth and its strength as a community to investments made by the former Housing Commission and by the now Ministry of Housing in houses for low income people and others who are eligible on their basis of need.

The honourable member for Balwyn has interjected that it has been going on for years and then he says that it is not the Commonwealth. I suggest that if he looks at the history of the Commonwealth–State Housing Agreement, he will find that the Housing Commission and the Ministry of Housing have relied for decades on Commonwealth funding for the majority of their activities in producing houses for Victorians in need.
Mr Ramsay interjected.

Dr COG HILL—The honourable member does not understand what the issues are and he is not prepared to debate them on a fair dinkum basis.

The reality is that in communities such as mine, and indeed in communities close to my home, people have gained enormously because of houses provided by the Ministry of Housing and the Housing Commission. Werribee would not be half the town it is if it were not for the enormous investment made there by the Government in public housing; but, more importantly, by the people who have come to live in those houses and who have had their families in those houses. Yet the honourable member for Balwyn and other honourable members opposite would abandon that situation. They are not interested in that.

Secondly I refer to the construction of the Forsyth Road overpass, which is critical to the future development of the road system in the Werribee area. It will run off from the Geelong freeway between Laverton and Hoppers Crossing. Many honourable members will have seen the ramps that have already been constructed on their trips along that freeway. Once they are completed, it will allow freer access into Hoppers Crossing and other parts of Werribee.

It is an important project but, if there are cutbacks in Federal funding, obviously it will be more difficult for any Government to complete the construction on any sort of reasonable timetable.

I shall fight tooth and nail against cutbacks in Commonwealth funding as proposed by the Opposition. I do not believe there should be a slow down in the construction of the overpass because it is important to our community and also for road safety.

The third local example is the employment programs and job training provided in Werribee. The city council has created an excellent bicentennial project for Phelps land to be developed as a bicentennial park. The project has been funded through bicentennial funding available to local government and a major contribution has been made by the Community Employment Program. The effect is twofold. Firstly, the community will have a tremendous new park that otherwise probably would not have been developed had it not been for Community Employment Program funding. The funding will be used to convert what has been an unused area of land, attractive in its own way but not particularly accessible, into a beautiful park area with a sound shell in it. It will become an attractive venue for entertainment and an attractive recreation area for the people of Werribee.

The second advantage is that many people who have been employed on the project are long-term unemployed, the people, whom experience shows, gain most from participation in community employment projects. They learn skills that they can use in other work and they gain experience not just in manual and other skills they may develop but also in working and in being a regular part of the work force. As a result, there is an improvement in their self-esteem and self-confidence. Those advantages will be of enormous benefit to the Werribee community but they are the sorts of projects that would be slashed if the Federal Liberal Party had its way in the proposals that are supported by the Victorian Liberal Party.

I refer to several items in the Appropriation (1986-87, No. 1) Act to highlight the points I am making. Werribee is the site of the Animal Research Institute. Historically, Werribee has had crop research as well as animal research facilities but these days it is mostly animal research. That has made a huge contribution to Werribee's development. The Animal Research Institute, formerly the State Research Farm, has made a major impact on Victoria and Australia and internationally through many of the developments it has.
pioneered in new crops, animal management and practice, feeding programs and high
technology scientific processes.

Werribee also has the Gilbert Chandler Institute of Dairy Technology, a major institute
for research into the development of new food products and better ways of manufacturing
foodstuffs, as well as the innovative design of products for the future that may be attractive.

The arts portfolio is the source of library funding and, as the Minister for the Arts has
pointed out from time to time, the level of library funding in Victoria is very generous by
comparison with other States. The City of Werribee has a splendid library with a sub-
branch at Laverton, which is the other major population centre in the Werribee
municipality. The community would be absolutely outraged if the reduction in Federal
funding flowing to the municipality was such that one or both of the library facilities were
completely closed down or its opening laws and other services wound down.

The Attorney-General's portfolio administers courts. Werribee has an excellent court
that operates extraordinarily well. It is a relatively new building, which is used efficiently.
There are very few complaints in Werribee about the building, the operation of the court
or the judgments made. This is another example of an essential service to the community
that would be in jeopardy if the Federal Liberal Party's proposals were adopted.

A range of essential services is provided through Community Services Victoria, which
has many statutory responsibilities. It is extremely important to the community and, at
times when those services have been short staffed because of transfers of people and delays
in new appointments being made as a result of difficulty in recruitment, there have been
outcries from the community and from other agencies about the importance of restoring
services to their full strength. Other local government services are funded through the
Council. I shall not reiterate those.

Mr Maclellan—This is good—you are up to "L".

Dr COGHILL—I have referred already to education and I shall not elaborate on the
importance of that portfolio. I shall refer to the Werribee District Hospital, under the
administration of the Minister for Health. Some honourable members may not know
which letter of the alphabet that comes under, but I do.

Mr Maclellan—It is "H".

Dr COGHILL—The Werribee District Hospital provides a superb service given its
limited size. A new public hospital is to be constructed at Hoppers Crossing. The proposed
hospital project will be in jeopardy if the Federal Liberal Party were to effect its proposals.
That project is an investment of many millions of dollars for the Werribee community.
This fact does not seem to be of any concern to members of the Liberal Party. They have
no interest in what effect the abolition of Federal funding on major projects throughout
the State will have.

I can enumerate many examples of major projects that are listed in the document to
which I am referring. There are other major portfolios such as planning and environment,
which has made a significant contribution towards the improvement of the western suburbs,
particularly to the development of Werribee.

Mr MACLELLAN (Berwick)—I raise a point of order. The honourable member for
Werribee has indicated that he is referring to a document and I should like the honourable
member to identify the document for your benefit, Mr Speaker, and the benefit of the
House.

Dr COGHILL (Werribee)—I am pleased to identify the document. I am referring to the
Appropriation (1986–87, No. 1) Act Budget Paper No. 3. The western suburbs, and
Werribee in particular, have gained enormously in the area of the protection of the
environment, especially from pollution, as a result of the efforts of and the services
provided to the Werribee community.
I refer next to the Department of Water Resources, which administers the Rural Water Commission and other areas of management. Honourable members may be aware that the Werribee South Irrigation District is in the electorate of Werribee.

Mr HANN (Rodney)—Mr Speaker, I refer you to Standing Order No. 91. I move:

That the honourable member for Werribee be not further heard.

The SPEAKER—Order! I have read Standing Order No. 91 and referred to the honourable member for Werribee's motion, which is expressed in three lines on the Notice Paper and listed under Notices of Motion, General Business. The honourable member has been speaking for 1 hour and 38 minutes.

The House divided on Mr Hann's motion (the Hon. C. T. Edmunds in the chair).

Ayes 22
Noes 45

Majority against the motion 23

AYES
Mr Austin
Mr Brown
Mr Coleman
Mr Cooper
Mr Delzoppo
Mr Gude
Mr Hann
Mr Hayward
Mr Jasper
Mr McGrath
Mr Pescott
Mr Plowman
Mr Ramsay
Mr Reynolds
Mr Ross-Edwards
Mr Smith
Mr Stockdale
Mr Weideman
Mr Whiting
Mr Williams

Tellers:
Mr Dickinson
Mr Steggall

NOES
Mr Andrianopoulos
Mr Cain
Miss Callister
Mr Cathie
Dr Coghill
Mr Crabb
Mr Culpin
Mr Cunningham
Mr Ernst
Mr Fogarty
Mr Fordham
Mr Gavin
Mr Harrowfield
Mrs Hill
Mr Hill
Mrs Hirsh
Mr Hockley
Mr Jolly
Mr Kennedy
Mr Kirkwood
Mr McCutcheon
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:
Mrs Gleeson
Mr WILKES (Minister for Housing)—I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

After considerable public consultation and debate, the Residential Tenancies Act 1980 was put into place by the Hamer Government. Although the Act was a watered down version of earlier drafts, it was a welcomed measure for it established, amongst other things, a mechanism for resolving landlord-tenant disputes in a relatively informal and inexpensive manner, before the Residential Tenancies Tribunal. The Act also introduced for the first time a form of security of tenure for tenants who had suffered previously under the common law. It also provided a speedier remedy for landlords in dealing with the minority of uncooperative tenants.

Again after much public consultation and debate, the Cain Government sought in 1986 to enact a revised, more equitable Residential Tenancies Act written in plain English. Unfortunately the Bill did not enjoy universal support and the Government could not persist with it. However, the Government and other parties to the debate in 1986 recognized that there were deficiencies in the Residential Tenancies Act 1980 and it is determined to see that they are rectified.

The Bill has been introduced with that goal in mind. Legislation giving boarders and lodgers appropriate coverage under the Residential Tenancies Act will also be introduced as soon as practicable. In the meantime, this Bill addresses four main areas of concern:

First, the Bill introduces the concept of just cause eviction. To do this, it abolishes the six-month no-reason notice to vacate, which landlords have been able to utilize under the Act.

Just cause eviction requires a landlord to have a good reason for evicting a tenant. Notwithstanding the abolition of the six-month no-reason notice to vacate, the Act will still give a landlord a full range of fair reasons for eviction, where necessary and justified. For example, non-payment of rent, tenant caused damage to rented premises or a sale of the rented premises.

The Bill does not upset any of the sections allowing eviction for any one of the many legitimate reasons provided for under the Act. This is an historic and equitable step and will make Victoria the first State in the Commonwealth to enact this fundamental principle.

Secondly, the Bill increases the monetary limit on urgent repairs. In very restricted circumstances the Act allows a tenant to effect urgent repairs to rented premises provided the cost does not exceed $200. This monetary limit was set seven years ago; it is out of date and unrealistic. The Bill increases the limit to $500. In addition, the Bill revises the unnecessarily narrow definition of “urgent repairs” so that it will now include work needed to fix a failure or breakdown of any essential service or appliance provided by a landlord.
on rented premises for hot water, cooking, heating or laundering; and any fault or damage that makes rented premises unsafe or insecure.

Thirdly, the Bill strengthens the security deposit provisions of the Act.

The refund of a security deposit, or bond, after tenancy completion is a major cause of dispute between landlords and tenants. The Act requires tightening to prevent the unauthorised and arbitrary appropriation of bonds which, unfortunately, is quite common. More stringent legislative controls will reduce the number of disputes while not threatening to take away a landlord’s proper entitlement, in appropriate circumstances, to bond moneys.

At the moment, the Act requires a landlord wishing to appropriate a bond held by him or her to make an application to the Residential Tenancies Tribunal if it is alleged that there has been tenant-caused damage. This requirement is often ignored. To encourage its observance, the Bill makes it an offence to appropriate a bond without first obtaining the tribunal’s approval. A landlord will also be liable to forfeit the bond if he or she arbitrarily appropriates a bond.

In relation to bonds, the Bill introduces a second measure. The Residential Tenancies Act requires that, where a landlord is not entitled to a bond, a refund must be made to the tenant. Under the Ministry of Housing’s bond and relocation scheme many bonds are paid to landlords or their agents, not by the tenant, but by the Ministry or its agents. In these cases, the tenant should not be entitled to the bond refund on termination of the tenancy. The Bill will remove this anomaly and enable the Ministry to be properly repaid.

Finally, the Bill addresses a number of other anomalies in the Act and increases the powers and widens the jurisdiction of the tribunal. These measures will improve the efficiency of the tribunal to the benefit of both landlords and tenants. The major reforms can be summarised as follows:

1. The Act currently limits the tribunal to dealing with monetary claims up to $1500. The Bill will increase this limit to $3000 bringing the tribunal into line with the Small Claims Tribunal.

2. The Bill will empower landlords under periodic tenancies, for example, week to week or month to month tenancies, to review the rent on a six-monthly basis. This power is essential given the abolition of the six-month no-reason notice to vacate.

3. The Act restricts the amount of rent in advance and the amount of a bond which a tenant is obliged to pay if the weekly rent is less than $100. This monetary limit requires updating. The Bill fixes the limit at $200.

4. The Bill empowers the tribunal to make ex parte, interim orders, to correct minor mistakes in its decisions, to hear claims from parties with a sufficient interest to warrant a hearing, and to extend the life of a warrant of possession issued to a landlord. The Bill will also empower the tribunal to deal with persons who are in contempt of it.

5. The Act makes provision for receipts to be given where rental payments are made by cash or cheque. No provision is made when payment is made by other means such as direct bank account debiting. The Bill fills this gap.

6. The Act makes provision for the disposal of abandoned goods left on rented premises by a former tenant, but no provision is made for goods abandoned by an illegal occupant who has left the premises. The existing provisions of the Act are by the Bill made to apply to the latter category of abandoned goods.

7. The Act restricts the application of a number of offences which it establishes to landlords, for example, failure to refund an application deposit—section 80. Other people are capable of committing these offences and accordingly relevant references in the Act to the word “landlord” are by the Bill amended to include any other person.
The Government acknowledges that the Residential Tenancies Tribunal will have wider powers as a result of the Bill. With those powers comes a responsibility to make fair decisions which can be supported by valid reasons given to the parties to the tribunal proceedings. Not only must these decisions reflect the letter of the law but they should also uphold the spirit of the law as set out in the Act. I am confident that the tribunal will meet this challenge.

These reforms are neither radical nor controversial. They improve the operations of the Act and its fairness. They have the support of the Real Estate Institute of Victoria which has been consulted on the changes. The institute regards the measures as positive and helpful changes to the legislation. I commend the Bill.

On the motion of Mr RAMSAY (Balwyn), the debate was adjourned.

Mr WILKES (Minister for Housing)—I move:

That the debate be adjourned until Tuesday, April 28.

Mr RAMSAY (Balwyn)—On the matter of time, Mr Speaker, a number of the clauses were described by the Minister for Housing as being neither radical nor controversial. That is an expression of opinion rather than fact. I had an indication from the Minister that the Government would not proceed with the Bill until the spring sessional period. I suggest that it would be more appropriate if the debate were adjourned for a longer period than that moved by the Minister.

Mr WILKES (Minister for Housing)—If the honourable member for Balwyn is not ready to debate the Bill on 28 April, I shall certainly grant him an extension of time.

Mr RAMSAY (Balwyn) (By leave)—Further on the question of time, Mr Speaker, the Minister for Housing has now indicated that more time will be allowed if the Opposition requires it. That is in conflict with the position I understood, that is, that the Government would not proceed with the Bill until the spring sessional period. I ask the Minister to give an assurance to the House that he will not proceed with the Bill until the spring sessional period. If he cannot do that, I shall move an amendment to the motion for the adjournment of the debate.

Mr HANN (Rodney)—I move:

That the expression "April 28" be omitted with the view of inserting in place thereof the expression "Tuesday, May 5".

Mr MACLELLAN (Berwick)—The honourable member for Balwyn raised a practical matter for the attention of the Minister for Housing who has not responded to it. It may be that the Minister has some difficulty in doing that, but the House deserves to know whether it is the intention of the Minister that the debate be resumed in this sessional period or the next sessional period.

For those members of the Government who are disturbed or worried about why one would want to know that information, I inform them that in the process of consultation, one either consults in the anticipation that in two weeks one may have to debate a measure in Parliament or in the anticipation that more time is available for consultation with community organisations.

The request made to the Minister is reasonable and I hope some member of the Government will be kind enough to advise the House of the intention of the Government in this matter.

Mrs HIRSH (Wantirna)—There has been extremely wide consultation on this Bill. Only yesterday I was speaking with Mr Les Groves of the Housing Industry Association, and that organisation totally approves of the Bill. Therefore, there is no need for further time.

Mr J. F. McGRATH (Warrnambool)—I direct the attention of the Minister for Housing to the fact that the Easter break is almost upon us. Next Tuesday is a declared public
holiday which means that it will be Wednesday before any meaningful consultation can take place. It is interesting to hear that broad consultation has taken place. That may be right, but it is the democratic right of members of the Opposition to have the opportunity of having the same consultation as that of the Government. I encourage the House to support the motion moved by the honourable member for Rodney.

Mr STOCKDALE (Brighton)—The question of time, in this case, raises more than the normal consideration of time; it raises the fact, as I am informed by the honourable member for Balwyn—if the Minister devoted some attention to the debate it might be of assistance—that he was advised by the Minister that it is the intention of the Government and the Minister to hold the Bill over until the next sessional period of Parliament. The Minister has always had a reputation for being a man of fair dealing. The House is entitled to an answer to the matter raised by the honourable member for Balwyn. I would hate to see, at this stage of his career, the reputation of the Minister for Housing sullied in any way by him remaining mute when such an important matter is raised.

For the Minister to have stated that the intention of the Government was to hold the Bill over until the next sessional period and now to resist adherence to that intention is not the only issue, but also for such a Bill to be dealt with effectively with an adjournment of the debate on the second reading of only one week, in view of the impending Easter break, is nothing short of ludicrous. If the Minister for Housing has the same regard for his reputation as the Opposition has, the House is entitled to some explanation.

Mr RAMSAY (Balwyn)—On the amendment, I understand that the amendment to the motion for the adjournment of the debate is that it be extended until Tuesday fortnight, which is the beginning of the last week of the autumnal sessional period. Is that correct?

Mr Cain—Yes.

Mr RAMSAY—I understand the House may be sitting a further week. The only reason I can assume for the Minister wishing to have the debate resumed before the end of the sessional period is that the Bill may be passed during this sessional period.

In the light of the information the Minister had given to me before the debate commenced that it was not the Government's intention to proceed with the Bill this sessional period, I find it difficult to accept either the motion or the amendment. I should like the Minister to tell the House whether it is his intention that the proposed legislation will proceed this sessional period or whether it is his intention that it should be held over for the spring sessional period.

Mr LEIGH (Malvern)—I regard the Minister for Housing as a fair Minister. In the brief opportunity I have had of examining the proposed legislation since it was introduced by the Minister, it is obvious that it has what I consider to be fairly serious consequences for the housing rental market.

I am well aware that many of my constituents are landlords and I should like to have the opportunity of consulting with them as best I can. Neither the amendment of the National Party nor the promise of the Minister would allow me to do that effectively.

If the Minister is to be fair about this serious piece of proposed legislation, it is ridiculous to deal with it during the last week of the sitting. I should be entitled to the opportunity of fairly consulting with my constituents.

Mrs Hirsh interjected.

Mr LEIGH—Whether the honourable member for Wantirna says that people would agree with the legislation is of no significance. I am not convinced that what has been said is correct and I seek the opportunity of having fair and proper consultation with the community. If the Minister is the honourable man that I believe he is, he will allow the debate on the Bill to be held over until the spring sessional period. Is it out of the control of the Minister? I ask for a commitment.
Mr WILKES (Minister for Housing)—On the amendment, the motion is that the debate be adjourned until Tuesday week. The amendment is that the debate be adjourned until Tuesday fortnight. I am prepared to give a categoric assurance to the Opposition, as I have on a number of occasions, that if it is not ready to debate the Bill on Tuesday week, I shall ask the Leader of the House not to bring the Bill forward.

The House divided on the question that the words proposed by Mr Hann to be omitted stand part of the motion (the Hon. C. T. Edmunds in the chair).

Ayes 45
Noes 33

Majority against the amendment 12

AYES
Mr Andrianopoulos
Mr Cain
Miss Callister
Mr Cathie
Dr Coghil
Mr Crabb
Mr Culpin
Mr Cunningham
Mr Ernst
Mr Fogarty
Mr Fordham
Mr Gavin
Mrs Gleeson
Mrs Hill
Mr Hill
Mrs Hirsch
Mr Jolly
Mr Kennedy
Mr Kirkwood
Mr McCutcheon
Mr McDonald
Mr Mathews
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 Wilkes

Tellers:
Mr Harrowfield
Mrs Wilson

Mr Walsh

PAIR

Mr Evans
(Gippsland East)
PUBLIC SERVICE (AMENDMENT) BILL

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the Bill is to amend the disciplinary provisions in Part V of the Act. At present a chief administrator or officer may avoid disciplinary proceedings by retiring or...
resigning, thereby preserving entitlement to superannuation, including the Government contribution to a pension.

The Government believes public servants who are alleged to have committed serious offences under the Act should be fully accountable for their actions.

The Bill, therefore, provides that a chief administrator or officer may be deemed to be dismissed for superannuation purposes if the person retires early or resigns after formal disciplinary proceedings have commenced against the person.

If proceedings have commenced and a chief administrator or officer wishes to retire early or resign, the person may request in writing any charge in relation to the alleged offence be determined, in which case the retirement or resignation does not take effect until the proceedings are finally determined, including any appeals or the action against the person discontinued or rescinded.

Clause 2 provides that a chief administrator or officer between the ages of 60 and 65 years cannot be called upon to retire by the Public Service Board acting on the recommendation of the Minister or chief administrator as the case may be while disciplinary proceedings are being taken against the person.

The Bill removes a serious anomaly in the existing disciplinary provisions of the Act without reducing the rights of public servants to a fair hearing in relation to any alleged offences under the Act.

I commend the Bill to the House.

On the motion of Mr RAMSAY (Balwyn), the debate was adjourned.

It was ordered that the debate be adjourned until Thursday, April 30.

FORESTS (DUNSTAN AGREEMENT) BILL

Mr CATHIE (Minister for Education)—I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the Bill is to ratify a commercial agreement between the Treasurer, the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, the Forests Commission and A. Dunstan Timber Sales Pty Ltd to supply softwood sawlogs from north-east softwood plantations. The Bill was foreshadowed during the debate on the Forests (Bowater-Scott Agreement) Bill 1986 and is in a similar form.

The Bill is consistent with Government practices of entering into long-term agreements with companies wishing to process log intakes of 100,000 cubic metres or more per annum. It is consistent with the timber industry strategy, and is another example of industry and Government cooperation in line with the Government's economic strategy for Victoria.

Long-term commercial contracts between Government and industry lay the foundations for continued economic growth and prosperity. It is important that they should be brought to Parliament for ratification, both to indicate the degree of commitment which the Government is prepared to give to such arrangements and also to allow the public of Victoria the opportunity of knowing the terms and conditions of the contract which the Government is entering into on its behalf.

The agreement will allow the company to take advantage of economies of scale in the softwood sawmilling industry, while at the same time provide for confidence in the stability and security of supply of raw material. The expansion of raw material supply will maintain current employment as the sawmilling operations are changed over from hardwood to softwood.

I now move on to specific points covered in the agreement.
The timber rights so granted are for a period of 40 years. They cover the supply of softwood sawlogs. A plan of utilisation is required to be drawn up each year, which will clearly lay down the locations from where timber of the various grades will be made available.

The main bulk of the supply is to come from the Ovens Valley plantations, around Beechworth, Myrtleford and Bright. Most of the remainder will come from plantations in the Koetong area, to the east of Tallangatta.

The agreement provides for an increasing volume of softwood to be supplied over the next 40 years. The volume for the period 1986–87 to 1989–90 shall be 20,000 cubic metres per annum. The volumes for the subsequent five-year periods are 40,000 to 75,000 cubic metres with a steady volume of 100,000 cubic metres for the years 2000–01 to 2025–26. These volumes have been carefully calculated, and represent the volume of timber available from the expansion in softwood plantation areas which commenced in the north-east of Victoria in the early 1960s. The volumes in the agreement allow not only for the sawmill of A. Dunstan Timber Sales Pty Ltd but also for the other major softwood sawmill at Myrtleford, Bowater-Scott. That company had a long-term agreement ratified by Parliament in 1986.

In order to supply these volumes, the department will need to continue with the planned planting program. It is also planned to increase inputs of fertiliser to ensure a higher growth rate on existing stands.

A further refinement has been the introduction of an optional category of log which is less than 20 centimetres centre diameter under bark. This category of sawlog is not currently taken, but trials carried out in the area have shown that this timber can be used for non-structural purposes. The company will not be required to take this category of log, but it will be available to boost throughput. This is an example of the value adding concept being successfully introduced into Victorian forests.

In this agreement, there is a requirement for the company to guarantee a minimum cash flow level to the Government of 90 per cent of the royalty for the volume planned to be made available each year, whether the wood is actually taken or not. Any payment made with respect to logs not actually taken is available as a credit if an excess above the normal planned volume is taken during any of the next five years.

Royalties are payable on the timber at standard royalty rates, but, in addition to royalty, a licence fee is payable with respect to the acquisition by the company of the guaranteed access to the public resource of softwood plantations. It is an annual fee, payable in advance, and is set at $1.20 a cubic metre, indexed annually.

At this level, in the first year, the licence fee payment will be $40,000 in addition to royalties of about $1.25 million.

In the latter years of the agreement the licence fee will rise in 1986 dollars to about $120,000 annually and royalty payments to about $6 million.

The final area of substance in the agreement is in the “force majeure” area. Any commercial arrangement of such a length requires previously agreed mechanisms to handle unforeseen circumstances.

There are provisions which allow the department to be released from its obligations in the event of major disaster such as fire, and there are provisions which allow the company to be released from all or part of its obligations in the event of overpowering circumstances. Such circumstances may include events beyond the control of the company which render the carrying on of the industry commercially impracticable. There are several situations in the agreement where agreement between the department and the company is required, and, failing agreement, arbitration is to be entered into according to the Commercial Arbitration Act 1984.
There has been some concern expressed by the Australian Conservation Foundation about the effect of this agreement and the Bowater-Scott agreement on native forest. I reiterate the commitment by the Government that no further public native forest will be cleared to meet the agreed supply to Bowater-Scott, nor in relation to this agreement.

The major benefits of this negotiated agreement include a guaranteed market for sawlogs, provision of a secure resource base for the development and operation of the industry and thus stable employment opportunities. The agreement will assist in maintaining jobs as the company will be able to make further investment increments secure in the knowledge of its available long-term softwood resource.

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, April 28.

VICTORIA STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE BILL

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

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The purposes of the Bill are to reconstitute the Victoria State Emergency Service and to provide for the effective performance of its emergency management functions and responsibilities.

Honourable members will recall that in the context of debate on the Emergency Management Bill 1986 the Government recognised the important role which a revitalised and strengthened Victoria State Emergency Service would play within the new emergency management arrangements, and undertook to address the needs of the service.

The Bill reflects the outcome of a complete review of the service's existing legislation, the Victoria State Emergency Service Act 1981, in the light of the requirements of the new emergency management arrangements. In the course of that review a detailed proposal for amendments to that Act was made available for public comment, and the Government is grateful to the many organisations, agencies and individuals who offered helpful comment.

The service has been the subject of almost continuous review since 1983. However, with the establishment of the new State emergency management arrangements and the more recent review of the organisation and roles of the service within the context of those arrangements, the Government believes the lengthy period of uncertainty within and about the service can be brought to an end and a positive process of revitalisation and strengthening of the service can be put in hand.

The service has two broad roles, one related to operations and the other to emergency management.

The operational role of the service is primarily undertaken by the local volunteer units, which have a range of tasks in such areas as flood and windstorm relief, road accident rescue, bush and riverine/maritime search and rescue, and emergency relief support. In the performance of these tasks, the 146 units within the State operate within the provisions of the State Disaster Response Plan—DISPLAN.

The emergency management role of the service is primarily the responsibility of the permanent staff who, in addition to providing administrative and training support to the service's volunteer units, provide direct assistance to the Victoria Police in planning and preparedness activities under DISPLAN, provide support to the police and to other combat agencies in the response phase, and provide assistance to municipalities in the discharge of the municipalities' responsibilities under Part 4 of the Emergency Management Act 1987.
Two points need to be made about the relationship between the service and local government authorities.

Partly as a result of the origins of the Victoria State Emergency Service in the old civil defence organisation, but principally in recognition of the need for strong local government and community support for the service, the relationship between local volunteer units and local government has always been close. Local government has been a major source of funding for local volunteer units, and State Government grants to such units have to date been tied to matching municipality funding.

Clearly, it is in the mutual interests of both parties that this relationship remain close, and that encouragement be given to municipalities and to the communities served by such units to maintain their level of support for the service. Under the new arrangements, however, volunteer Victoria State Emergency Service units, while raised from within the community and operating mainly within municipal boundaries, must be available under the DISPLAN coordination arrangements for deployment as elements of a State organisation.

The second point relates to the emergency management role of local government and to the support available to local government to undertake that role.

Honourable members will recall that, in the context of the new comprehensive and integrated emergency management arrangements incorporated in the Emergency Management Act 1986, the role of local government across the whole spectrum of emergency management activity, from prevention through response to recovery, was formally recognised and defined for the first time.

The Government has recognised the need to produce new guidance for municipalities to enable them to perform this role, and an active program is planned in this respect over the coming winter months. The DISPLAN arrangements, of course, address only the needs of the response phase, and the permanent staff of the Victoria State Emergency Service are seen as providing essential and ongoing assistance to municipalities in developing their plans and mechanisms to cope with the full spectrum of their responsibilities.

Currently, the service has a total of 58 permanent staff to meet the needs of 146 local volunteer units, 210 municipalities, 25 country DISPLAN regions and 11 metropolitan DISPLAN regions. Given the expanded and more closely defined role proposed to be given to the permanent staff of the service, particularly in more direct support to municipalities and the police, the present level of resourcing needs to be reviewed.

The Government is therefore addressing, within the current budgetary process, the resourcing needs of both the volunteer and permanent elements of the Victoria State Emergency Service.

Accordingly, the present Bill is seen by the Government as only an essential first step in the necessary revitalisation and strengthening of the Victoria State Emergency Service. The Bill provides a framework within which the service can be reconstructed to perform the proper roles defined for it within this State's new emergency management arrangements.

I commend the Bill to the House.

On the motion of Mr CROZIER (Portland), the debate was adjourned.

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

That the debate be adjourned until Thursday, April 30.

Mr CROZIER (Portland)—A Bill of such importance as this and with such wide ramifications deserves an interval during which interested parties can have a reasonable chance of studying the Bill and its ramifications. I suggest to the Minister that the interval should be of at least four weeks.
Mr MATHEWS (Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—It would be disappointing to the units of the Victoria State Emergency Service if it were not possible for the House to pass the Bill prior to the mid-year recess. However, if it eventuates that the Opposition needs further time over and above the two weeks that I have proposed, I shall be happy to accommodate that situation.

Mr CROZIER (Portland) (By leave)—In the event that the many respondents whom the Opposition and the National Party would wish to consult make responses that render more time necessary, and if, in our view, those views are substantiated, I trust that the Minister will therefore delay the Bill further, even though that could well mean that it must lie over until the spring sessional period, unless it is the Government's intention to extend the current sittings.

Mr McNAMARA (Benalla)—I support the comments of the honourable member for Portland. I would regard a fortnight as the bare minimum. With the Easter break intervening, I regard three weeks as a more appropriate minimum and would be happier to have a five-week adjournment of the debate.

The motion was agreed to, and the debate was adjourned until Thursday, April 30.

PSYCHOLOGISTS REGISTRATION BILL

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

That this Bill be now read a second time.

This Bill revises and modernises the law as it applies to the profession of psychology.

I do not propose to take up the time of the House by recounting the history of the legislation. It is more than adequately documented in the report of the Social Development Committee on the earlier Psychologists Bill 1984.

Suffice to say that the Bill has its origins in the proposals of a working party to review the Psychological Practices Act 1965, set up nearly ten years ago by the then Minister of Health.

The previous Bill, which incorporated amendments suggested by the working party, raised concerns in some sections of the community that it could be used to suppress other therapies such as yoga, meditation, relaxation training and even emergency telephone services.

This was never the intention. However, after examination of the Bill, the Social Development Committee concluded that the legislation was too broad and had the potential to affect a wide range of people involved in generally accepted practices in the field.

The Bill before the House takes up the substance of the recommendations put forward by the committee.

Its principal purpose, as suggested by the committee, is the registration and regulation of psychologists.

On this basis, the Bill provides for the registration of psychologists and probationary psychologists, and for the determination of registration by academic qualifications and training only, and not by methods of practice.

The Bill, therefore, does not seek to define "psychological practice", which will become a matter to be determined in a code of conduct for registered psychologists, nor does it make it an offence for anyone in the community to practise psychology. Honourable members may recall that these were major concerns raised in conjunction with the earlier Bill.

Registration under the Act will carry with it several rights, particularly the right to use a "psychological" title. Concomitant with registration is the assurance that any person
registered by the board has met the required standard of training and experience to undertake the responsibilities and to carry out the functions of a psychologist in Victoria.

The Psychologists Registration Board of Victoria established by the legislation, follows the model suggested by the Social Development Committee with one notable change.

The Australian Psychological Society and the Victorian Psychological Council have both put to the Government that, in addition to the professional and public representation on the board, there is also a need for a member with legal training and experience, particularly in relation to the conduct of disciplinary proceedings.

The Government has accepted this view and provision has been made in the Bill for the additional appointment of a barrister and solicitor to the proposed board.

After discussions with the society, the Government has also agreed to the appointment of three, rather than two, members from society nominations after having regard to its current representation on the Victorian Psychological Council.

I take this opportunity to mention that, normally, it could be expected that the psychologist to be appointed to the board on the nomination of the Minister would be a member of the Australian Psychological Society and that the Government would look towards the appointment of a psychologist as president of the board.

The Bill will give effect to the recommendation of the Social Development Committee that the annual report of the board should be presented to Parliament.

However, it should be pointed out that the Bill adopts a traditional reporting provision which requires the report, and audited statement of accounts, to be tabled through the Minister.

One matter raised by the Australian Psychological Society not addressed by the Social Development Committee is the question of accessibility to specialist psychological tests.

The only other feature of the Bill to which I would invite the attention of the House is its provisions regarding the use of hypnosis.

Hypnotherapy is, of course, used by various health practitioners as a therapeutic procedure and the Government has already made clear that it has no place in an Act dealing with the registration of a particular health group.

Accordingly, the controls over hypnosis in the legislation will be sunsetted after two years as recommended by the Social Development Committee.

Health Department Victoria will monitor the use of hypnosis prior to the sunset provision having effect with the view to determining the need, if any, for regulation in the future.

The new Bill is a straightforward registration Act for psychologists and reflects the benefits of the extensive consultation and the public input which has occurred during the lengthy development of the legislation.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr WEIDEMAN (Frankston South)—I move:
That the debate be now adjourned.

Mr FORDHAM (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources)—I suggest that the debate be adjourned until Tuesday fortnight.

Mr WEIDEMAN (Frankston South)—I accept the two-week adjournment, but the National Party spokesman is not present and I ask the Minister to speak with the National Party representative and ensure that the proposed period of adjournment is acceptable.

The motion for the adjournment of the debate was agreed to, and it was ordered that the debate be adjourned until Thursday, April 30.

BORROWING AND INVESTMENT POWERS BILL

The debate (adjourned from April 8) was resumed on the motion of Mr Jolly (Treasurer):

That this Bill be now read a second time;

and on Mr Stockdale's amendment:

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 provisions contained in the Bill have been referred to the Economic and Budget Review Committee for inquiry, consideration and report and the Committee has reported in particular upon the desirability and appropriateness of the borrowing limits proposed in clause 12 and Schedule 3".

Mr HAYWARD (Prahran)—For a number of reasons, I support the amendment moved by the honourable member for Brighton that the Bill be referred to the Economic and Budget Review Committee. First, as the Deputy Chairman of the Economic and Budget Review Committee, I believe the committee is the appropriate body to consider this question at this particular time, and further, that the committee is now well equipped to do so.

The Economic and Budget Review Committee has recently strengthened its research and analytical staff and would be able to conduct a worthwhile examination of this question and the specific matters contained in the Bill.

It is an appropriate time to examine borrowing limits. To a large degree, Victorians are presently living in a fool's paradise, a paradise postponed. On the one hand various statistical evidence is showing improvement in the exchange rate of the Australian dollar and things of that nature, yet, on the other hand, other statistics relating to consumer confidence and attitudes are not good.

I am sure honourable members would be aware of the recent survey conducted by the Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research of Melbourne University, which indicated that consumer confidence was declining and was at a near all-time low.

Two reasons put forward by respondents to the survey were inflation and interest rates. Inflation is a special concern to Australians at present, particularly Victorians, because Victoria is leading the inflation rate in Australia. In the last calendar year, the Melbourne inflation rate was 10.2 per cent, the highest of any capital city in Australia.

Honourable members will also be aware that Victorians are concerned about interest rates. Small business people and new home owners are particularly concerned about high interest rates.

It is an extraordinary contradiction. On the one hand, there is statistical information, yet, on the other hand, when one talks to people face to face, one hears a completely different story. People are concerned about the future and the level of business activity in the months and years ahead. The consumer confidence survey results are consistent with the work the Opposition has been doing, going out and talking to small business people who are worried about their business outlook and their levels of income and profit.
As I have said on another occasion, it has been common for small businesses to say that, as proprietors, they are taking approximately $1000 a month out of their businesses to feed, clothe and house their families. That level of income is inadequate. Many small business people are saying that for the first time in their lives they are now operating on overdrafts and paying interest rates of 19 or 20 per cent.

In the past few days short-term interest rates have decreased but long-term interest rates are still high. The reduction in short-term rates will probably be of short duration.

People's concern is reflected in their perceptions of Governments and political parties. The result of the recent Morgan Gallup poll was significant in revealing support of 48 per cent for the Federal coalition and only 43 per cent for the Federal Government. Given the problems the coalition has been experiencing, that result illustrates the lack of confidence people have in the Federal Government.

This makes the issue of borrowing levels pertinent because the borrowings of the State Government and State Government instrumentalities are a significant influence on the level of interest rates and inflation. Victoria is the highest borrowing Government of any State in Australia. The State debt is at least in the order of $20 billion and could possibly be nearly double that amount. That is a cause of concern for the Victorian economy and the Victorian community.

There is an extraordinary degree of uncertainty about the level of debt in Victoria. The Economic and Budget Review Committee could address that issue in a meaningful way. The debt has grown rapidly in the past five years, by nearly 70 per cent. That debt must also be serviced and the servicing charges have been spiralling upwards and are currently of the order of $2 billion per annum. The overall level of indebtedness and borrowing is contributing to the deficit of the nation generally, which, in turn, is a contributing factor to the level of interest rates.

The matter must also be addressed because the level of borrowing is significant in terms of inflation. The Victorian Government has sought to harvest all of the available reserves of the statutory authorities and, on top of that, has adopted a policy of extracting large amounts of taxation and other revenue from those statutory authorities.

For example, the State Electricity Commission, as outlined by the chief general manager of the commission in a letter to the Age of 13 September, which was previously quoted in this House, has had to pay hundreds of millions of dollars in dividend payments and taxes to this Government, which, in turn, has meant that the commission must borrow to help cover those charges. The commission must borrow at high interest rates and this is reflected in higher charges to the consumer.

Because the Government's own level of spending is so high it has extracted large amounts of money in so-called dividend payments and other taxes and charges from its instrumentalities such as the State Electricity Commission. When those instrumentalities cannot meet those expenditures through their normal income, they must borrow the money. This factor has increased the indebtedness of the commission and its debt servicing requirements and to overcome those problems the commission must maintain electricity charges at high levels.

If the Government wants to reduce inflation and encourage new industries and firms to come to Victoria it should not be patting itself on the back and saying how clever it is that it has kept charges at a certain level and will restrain price increases to within 6 per cent. It should be reducing electricity charges in real terms.

Mr Jolly—We have.

Mr HAYWARD—You have not. Charges must be reduced below the 6 per cent increase limit to attract industry to Victoria by offering relatively inexpensive electricity. However, that cannot happen until the SEC is able to reduce its indebtedness and debt servicing charges and therefore its charges to consumers. It is a critical situation in Victoria and it is timely
that the overall level of debt should be seriously examined, together with the appropriateness of the borrowing limits proposed in the Bill. That examination could be effectively carried out by the Economic and Budget Review Committee.

I understand the Government intends to withdraw clause 12, which was mentioned in the reasoned amendment moved by the honourable member for Brighton. If that is the case it is important to obtain an undertaking from the Treasurer that the appropriateness and desirability of the borrowing limits proposed in the Bill be referred to the Economic and Budget Review Committee. A further undertaking that the matter will be referred expeditiously to the committee is also required. It is not a matter that should be left at the end of the queue behind a number of other references that the Government may make to the committee.

In summary, I support the reasoned amendment moved by the honourable member for Brighton. The issue of borrowing limits is critical for Victoria. I believe the Economic and Budget Review Committee could make a worthwhile contribution in this area and provide proper understanding of the level of debt in Victoria.

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—I intend to respond briefly on this matter. There has been considerable discussion between myself, the honourable member for Brighton and the Leader of the National Party, in particular, about the details of the Bill. During the Committee stage I shall be moving amendments that have been accepted on a cooperative basis.

I make three points in reply: the first relates to the financial position of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria and honourable members should be aware that when looking at the current value of the assets of the SEC compared with its liabilities as at 30 June 1986, there is an excess of assets over liabilities of $3500 million. That clearly illustrates that the commission is not in any way insolvent, and I reject any accusations along those lines.

I point out that the $3500 million represents an increase of almost 17 per cent on the previous year ended 30 June 1985. The SEC is currently earning a real rate of return on investment in the order of 4 per cent, and that is a positive profit position.

I turn to the matter concerning the Economic and Budget Review Committee. The honourable member for Brighton moved a reasoned amendment which I shall oppose because it requires the withdrawal of the Bill. I give the undertaking that I shall expeditiously refer the matter to the Economic and Budget Review Committee for inquiry, consideration and report, and ask the committee to report in particular on the desirability and appropriateness of future borrowing limits. That is in line with the terms of the amendment that has been moved by the honourable member for Brighton, but it realises that specific borrowing limits will be set in the Bill by way of amendment that I will move later in respect of the year 1987-88, enabling the Economic and Budget Review Committee to consider future borrowing limits as expeditiously as possible. I shall certainly be referring that matter to the committee as soon as practicable.

The amendment was negatived.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time and committed.

Clauses 1 and 2 were agreed to.

Clause 3

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—I move:

1. Clause 3, line 15 omit “3, 4 or 5.” and insert “or 3.”.
2. Clause 3, page 2, line 19, omit “(a)”.

The amendment was negatived.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time and committed.

Clauses 1 and 2 were agreed to.

Clause 3

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—I move:

1. Clause 3, line 15 omit “3, 4 or 5.” and insert “or 3.”.
2. Clause 3, page 2, line 19, omit “(a)”.

The amendment was negatived.

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The amendment was negatived.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time and committed.

Clauses 1 and 2 were agreed to.

Clause 3
3. Clause 3, page 2, line 23, omit "or".

4. Clause 3, page 2, lines 24 to 26, omit paragraph (b).

5. Clause 3, page 2, lines 29 to 35, omit the definition of "Joint venture".

These amendments omit the definition of "financial arrangement" in Part 1 of the Bill. It is a matter which has been agreed to by the Liberal Party and the National Party.

The amendments were agreed to.

Mr STOCKDALE (Brighton)—I move:

1. Clause 3, page 3, after line 5, insert—

"(3) The Treasurer shall cause a copy of each approval given under this Act to be laid before each House of the Parliament within 14 sitting days of that House after the approval is given.

(4) If each House of the Parliament, within 14 sitting days of that House after a copy of an approval given under this Act is laid before that House, passes a resolution disallowing that approval, the approval is revoked.".

This amendment is of less relevance than when it was originally proposed in view of some of the amendments proposed by the Treasurer, but it is the Liberal Party's view that, in view of the number of other provisions to the Bill which provide sweeping powers in the Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Treasurer, an accountability mechanism to the Parliament is appropriate.

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—The Government considers that there are a number of difficulties with this particular reporting mechanism, and for that reason I do not agree with the amendment.

The amendment was negatived, and the clause, as amended, was agreed to, as were clauses 4 to 11.

Clause 12

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—l invite the Committee to vote against the clause. It is to do with the borrowing limits, and I have explained the Government's position in the response to the second-reading speech.

The clause was negatived.

Clause 13 was agreed to.

Clause 14

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—l move:

8. Clause 14, line 35, omit "15" and insert "14".

The amendment was agreed to, and the clause, as amended, was adopted, as were clauses 15 to 19.

Clause 20

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—l move:

9. Clause 20, line 31, omit "or conducive".

The amendment was agreed to, and the clause, as amended, was adopted, as were clauses 21 and 22.

Clause 23

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—l move:

10. Clause 23, line 12, omit "4" and insert "3".

The amendment was agreed to, and the clause, as amended, was adopted.
Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—I invite the Committee to vote against clauses 24, 25 and 26, which all relate to joint ventures and the assignment and enforcement of guarantees.

The clause was negatived, as were clauses 25 and 26.

Clause 27

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—I move:

14. Clause 27, line 16, omit “6” and insert “4”.

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

Clause 28

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—Mr Chairman, could I suggest that I move my amendments Nos 15 to 23 together, that is, the amendments as set out before the Committee?

The CHAIRMAN (Mr Fogarty)—Order! I am not sure whether that is possible.

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—I move:

15. Clause 28, line 19, omit “7” and insert “5”.

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

Clause 29

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—I move:

16. Clause 29, line 22, omit “8” and insert “6”.

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

Clause 30

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—I move:

17. Clause 30, line 25, omit “27” and insert “23”.

18. Clause 30, page 10, line 1, omit “28” and insert “24”.

The amendments were agreed to, and the clause, as amended, was adopted, as was the remaining clause.

Schedule 1

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—I move:

19. Schedule 1, page 11, in the heading, omit “21 and 22” and insert “20 and 21”.

Mr STOCKDALE (Brighton)—I should like briefly to comment on these schedules, in that the substantive effect of the amendments to be proposed to the schedules is in substitution of what were originally clause 12 and Schedule 3, which specified ceilings on borrowings for the Gas and Fuel Corporation, the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works and the State Electricity Commission of Victoria.

The effect of the amendment that has been and will be proposed will be to reduce the original proposed ceilings to the following: the Gas and Fuel Corporation, $650 million; the Board of Works, $2750 million; and the State Electricity Commission, $8000 million.

In agreeing to these amendments, the Liberal Party does so on the basis of advice received from the Treasurer that the borrowing ceilings now proposed in the amendments will be all that is required in terms of accommodation by the Gas and Fuel Corporation, the Board of Works and the State Electricity Commission during the next twelve months.

The Opposition specifically agrees to that on the basis that it is contemplated by all parties, as I understand it, that an investigation by the Economic and Budget Review Committee will be completed during that time and that the Government and the opposition
Mr HANN (Rodney)—I wish to record the appreciation of the National Party that the Treasurer has agreed to propose these amendments to place these limits on the borrowings of those authorities. The National Party has held the firm view that the Parliament ought to be the final arbiter in this instance on the borrowing limits. This will enable the Economic and Budget Review Committee to review the matter, and will virtually place a hold on the situation for twelve months. We are prepared to consider it at that stage. I indicate that the National Party is happy to support the amendments.

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—I thank honourable members for their cooperation. It has certainly been constructive. As I indicated, I shall refer the matter of borrowing limits to the Economic and Budget Review Committee. As the honourable member for Brighton indicated, we will all have the advantage of the report of that committee before the borrowing limits are reviewed in 1988–89.

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

Schedule 2

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—I move:

20. Schedule 2, page 11, in the heading, omit “21 and 22” and insert “20 and 21”.

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

Schedule 3

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—I invite the Committee to vote against the schedule.

The schedule was negatived.

Schedule 4

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—I move:

22. Schedule 4, in the heading, omit “23” and insert “22”.

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

Schedule 5

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—I invite the Committee to vote against the schedule.

The schedule was negatived.

Schedule 6

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—I move:

24. Schedule 6, page 12, in the item relating to section 17 of the Gas and Fuel Corporation Act 1958, after subsection (1) insert—

“(2) The Corporation must not at any time obtain financial accommodation if, at that time, its liability in respect of financial accommodation obtained under this Act or the Borrowing and Investment Powers Act 1987 or any other Act or in respect of monies borrowed under any other Act exceeds or, if the financial accommodation were obtained, would exceed $650 000 000.”.

25. Schedule 6, page 12, in the item relating to section 17 of the Gas and Fuel Corporation Act 1958, omit “(2)” and insert “(3)”.

The amendment was agreed to, and the schedule, as amended, was adopted.
26. Schedule 6, page 14, in the item relating to section 187 of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Act 1958, after sub-section (1) insert—

"(2) The Board must not at any time obtain financial accommodation if, at that time, its liability in respect of financial accommodation obtained under the Borrowing and Investment Powers Act 1987 or moneys borrowed before the commencement of section 23 of that Act under section 188 of this Act exceeds or would, if the financial accommodation were obtained exceed $2 750 000 000.".

27. Schedule 6, page 14, in the item relating to section 187 of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Act 1958, omit "(2)" and insert "(3)".

28. Schedule 6, page 15, in the item relating to section 199A of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Act 1958, omit "section 26" and insert "section 23".

29. Schedule 6, page 16, in the item relating to section 220 of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Act 1958, omit "section 26" and insert "section 23".

30. Schedule 6, page 17, in the item relating to section 319 (2) of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Act 1958, omit "section 26" and insert "section 23".

31. Schedule 6, page 17, in the item relating to section 88 of the State Electricity Commission Act 1958, after sub-section (1) insert—

"(2) The Commission must not at any time obtain financial accommodation if, at that time, its liability in respect of financial accommodation obtained under the Borrowing and Investment Powers Act 1987 or moneys borrowed before the commencement of section 23 of that Act under section 89 of this Act exceeds or, if the financial accommodation were obtained, would exceed $8 000 000 000.".

32. Schedule 6, page 18, in the item relating to section 88 of the State Electricity Commission Act 1958, omit "(2)" and insert "(3)".

33. Schedule 6, page 18, in the item relating to section 89 (3) of the State Electricity Commission Act 1958, omit "section 26" and insert "section 23".

34. Schedule 6, page 19, in the item relating to section 93 (1) (b) of the State Electricity Commission Act 1958, omit "section 26" and insert "section 23".

35. Schedule 6, page 19, in the item relating to section 94 (1) of the State Electricity Commission Act 1958, omit "section 26" and insert "section 23".

36. Schedule 6, page 19, in the item relating to section 95A (2) of the State Electricity Commission Act 1958, omit "section 26" and insert "section 23".

37. Schedule 6, page 19, in the item relating to section 14 (2) of the State Employees Retirement Benefits Act 1979, omit "section 26" and insert "section 23".

38. Schedule 6, page 20, in the item relating to section 27 (3) of the Victorian Economic Development Corporation Act 1981, omit "section 26" and insert "section 23".

39. Schedule 6, page 21, in the item relating to section 28 (3) of the Victorian Public Authorities Finance Act 1984, omit "section 26" and insert "section 23".

40. Schedule 6, page 22, in the item relating to section 36 (6) of the Victorian Public Authorities Finance Act 1984, omit "section 26" and insert "section 23".

The amendments were agreed to, and the schedule, as amended, was adopted.

Schedule 7

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—I move:

41. Schedule 7, page 23, before the Item relating to section 10 of the Construction Industry Long Service Leave Act 1983 insert—

"For section 8A substitute—

Delegation.

"8A. The Board may, by instrument of delegation under its common seal, delegate—

(a) to a member or an officer of the Board, any power of the Board under this Act, other than this power of delegation; or

(b) to a member or an officer of the Board or to any other person approved by the Treasurer for the purposes of this section, any power of the Board under the Borrowing and Investment Powers Act 1987.".".

43. Schedule 7, page 23, omit the Item relating to section 15 (1) of the Construction Industry Long Service Leave Act 1983 and insert—

For section 15 substitute—

Power to manage land.

“15. (1) The Board may expend moneys standing to the credit of the Fund—

(a) in repairing, maintaining or altering any building on land owned by the Board; and

(b) in paying any outgoings incurred in connection with the management of land owned by the Board or buildings on such land, including salaries and other expenses in relation to persons employed under section 16.

(2) The Board may—

(a) grant leases (including subleases) of; and

(b) grant any easement in favour of any person over—

land owned by the Board for such consideration and on such terms and conditions as it determines.

(3) The Board may use any land owned by it and any building on such land in connection with the exercise and performance of its powers, duties and functions under this Act.”.

44. Schedule 7, pages 23 and 24, omit the item relating to section 5A of the Hospitals Superannuation Act 1965.


46. Schedule 7, page 27, omit the item relating to section 6BB of the Superannuation Act 1958.


The amendments were agreed to, and the schedule, as amended, was adopted, as was Schedule 8.

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

NATIONAL PARKS (AMENDMENT) BILL

The message from the Council relating to the amendments in this Bill was taken into consideration.

Council amendments:
1. Clause 2, line 9, omit “and (2)” and insert “(2) and (3) and 7”.

2. Clause 2, after line 12 insert—

“(3) Sections 5 (3) and 7 come into operation on the day on which section 4 (9) comes into operation.”

3. Clause 5, after line 10 insert—

“(3) In section 258 (7) of the Principal Act, after “park” (where first occurring) insert “except Barmah Park”.

4. Insert the following New Clause to follow clause 6:

“A. After section 32D of the Principal Act insert—

Grazing in Barmah Park.

“32E. (1) The Minister may grant a licence to graze cattle in the Barmah Park to any person or persons whom the Barmah Forest Grazing Advisory Committee recommends as a fit or proper person or persons to be granted a licence.

(2) A grazing licence under sub-section (1)—

(a) is granted for a period of one year commencing on 1 May in any year and may be renewed; and

(b) is subject to any fees and conditions determined by the Minister in consultation with the Barmah Forest Grazing Advisory Committee; and
(c) allows the holder of the licence to graze cattle in any part of the Barmah Park except a reference area and Ulupna Island.’’

Barmah Forest Grazing Advisory Committee.

“32F. (1) There is established a committee to be known as the Barmah Forest Grazing Advisory Committee.

(2) The Advisory Committee consists of eight members appointed by the Minister of whom—

(a) one is to be appointed by the Minister as the convenor; and

(b) three are to be persons nominated by the Barmah Forest Cattlemens Association; and

(c) one is to be a person nominated by the Yielima Forest Graziers Association; and

(d) three are to be officers of the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands.

(3) Sub-sections (3), (4), (6), (7), (8) and (9) of section 14 apply to the Advisory Committee.

(4) The Advisory Committee may advise the Minister on any matters relating to grazing that it considers appropriate.’’

Bee-keeping and hunting.

“32G. Notwithstanding the declaration of the land in Part 26B of Schedule Three as a park the hunting of feral animals is permitted subject to section 37.”.

5. Schedule, Part a, item (k), page 6 omit all words and expressions after “harvested”.

Mr CATHIE (Minister for Education)—I move:

That the amendments be agreed to.

In many ways I welcome the Council’s agreement to the Bill because it means that there will be six additional State parks. Equally, I welcome the firm support that that indicates for State parks, which are primarily for conservation benefit and not simply for commercial exploitation. The Government accepts the amendments because of the importance of the Bill to the whole of Victoria.

Mr PLOWMAN (Evelyn)—The Opposition thanks the Government for accepting the amendments from another place. These have been well argued both here and in another place, and so I shall not canvass those matters again as my remarks must be devoted specifically to those amendments. I am pleased that the Government is prepared to accept them and indicate that the Opposition supports them.

Mr W. D. McGRATH (Lowan)—The National Party is pleased that the conditions relating to the Barmah Forest near Echuca have been accommodated as it has a strong policy that the logging and grazing rights should be retained in this park.

It is fair to say that we have now moved to large parks in Victoria in the national estate park area. Indeed, to have rights for grazing and some logging is a proper use of public land.

The Minister for Education, the Minister at the table, did mention that the declaration of park areas as State parks would restrict their exploitation, but I believe with proper management, which has taken place over many years, this has already occurred.

The National Party is disappointed that the amendment which applied to the Barmah Forest was not followed through as it had hoped to include the Mount Arapiles and Black Ranges areas. That is unfortunate because we believe the facilities provided in these amendments could also have been provided in those areas to give people in the western part of the State the same privileges in relation to logging and grazing that those in the north of the State will have in the Barmah Forest through these amendments.

The National Party supports these amendments but it had hoped that the Bill would have been amended further. Unfortunately that was not the case as the National Party amendments in the other place were not supported by the other two parties.

The motion was agreed to.
ADJOURNMENT

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

That the House, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday, April 28.

The motion was agreed to.

COMMUNITY SERVICES BILL

The debate (adjourned from March 26) on the motion of Mr Fordham (Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

Mr COLEMAN (Syndal)—The Community Services Bill is the first of the legislative process to come through the House arising out of the Carney report, which was commissioned by the former Minister for Community Welfare Services, the honourable member for Greensborough.

The Bill has taken some time to move from the drafting process in 1982 to its introduction this year. During that time there have been a number of administrative changes which have not required legislative support and which have been implemented from the report of the department. Already some benefits have flowed to the community as a result of that action.

The committee under Dr Terry Carney brought down a report which included model legislation and apparently the Government declined to proceed with this and one can only consider that it did not agree with some part of that model legislation.

Perhaps the Government will explain at some time in the future why that model legislation was not acceptable.

The Bill is a shortened version of a Bill which was introduced in the spring sessional period in 1986. The parts of the previous Bill that have not been included following the proroguing of Parliament will be introduced in a measure containing changes to the administration of the Children's Court particularly. We now have a shortened Bill, which sets the guidelines for further changes in the department's administration.

In the first instance, the Bill changes the department's name from Department of Community Welfare Services to Community Services Victoria and it also contains a number of consequential amendments that hinge on that change.

It also lays down a set of guidelines, which are wide and I shall come back to those in a short time. The Bill also establishes a new definition for "welfare services", which is a recognition of the need for the Government to approve and have some control over non-Government organisations and it creates, in a legislative sense, the child-care agreement. It also abolishes the Child Development Family Council.

The name of the department has changed on several occasions since it was established in the early 1970s. It began as the Social Welfare Department; it became the Department of Community Welfare Services; it is now Community Services Victoria. It does not matter what name it has so long as the services it provides meet the needs of the community it is trying to serve. Irrespective of its name there are problems in the department that require urgent attention. One has only to visit the department or try to contact staff one has been in contact with previously to realise that the staff are changing rapidly. There is a state of upheaval, doubtless in part due to the tremendous workload thrust on the staff in these harsh economic times and in part due, obviously, to the administrative changes that have been occurring. Many staff do not know what tasks they should be performing.

The department was one of the first to be regionalised. It underwent a fairly large regionalisation program with the establishment of eighteen regions throughout the State. There are vacancies at each regional office and important positions cannot be filled because the trained staff who would fill those positions are not available in country locations.
The Minister should be congratulated for attempting to put into place educational opportunities to give people living in country regions access to advanced education and to upgrading their qualifications so that these positions can be filled from within local districts. Any improvements in that regard will improve the availability of skilled people in country areas.

Child protection services appear to be in disarray and need urgent attention. I am sure the Minister is well aware of the problems because she has consciously tried to tackle them since the department undertook full control of child protection services. This area needs further improvement. Non-Government agencies are also conscious of the problems confronting the department. One would hope that the head of power provided in the measure will enable the Minister to rectify these problems quickly.

The Bill provides a statement of principles and objectives as a guide for the department and I note that the words used are similar to those used in the Community Welfare Services Act. Groups of people are labelled in a way which the former Act did not do. Specific reference is made to people who are deemed to be vulnerable because of age, disability or other circumstances. This is a significant move away from the old definition of functions where no groups of people were identified as being in particularly greater or lesser need of services from the department. This move indicates that the Government is prepared to compartmentalise people and treat their problems in somewhat different ways—be they aged, disabled or in necessitous circumstances.

Proposed new section 5 (c) directs the department in the control of young people who have committed offences. There is an assumption that all young people who are subject to an order or determination of a court have committed offences but many young people to whom a court order of some sort applies have not committed offences; in some circumstances offences have been committed against them and they are under care and protection orders. The Government should reconsider proposed paragraph (c) to ensure that young people who are the subject of court orders are not automatically assumed to have committed offences.

The Bill establishes welfare services and the definition states that a welfare service is a service approved by the director-general under proposed section 34A, which sets out the powers of the director-general to approve or revoke any service. Several welfare bodies in the non-Government sector provide a wide range of services and, if the introduction of the welfare service provision means the Government will provide additional powers and funding to that non-Government sector to carry out those roles, the Opposition will fully support the initiative. Non-Government agencies can provide in a much less intimidating environment the delivery of welfare services better than a Government service can and, therefore, the Opposition fully supports the provisions and powers being given to the director-general to approve their establishment, as a consequence of which they will be funded.

I refer to child-care agreements, which add yet another level to the services provided to young people through the protective powers invested in the Government. At present the only way in which a young person can be assisted is to be made a ward of the State or to be subject to a custody order or a care and protection order. The establishment of a child-care agreement will provide an added facility and service to young people. A person is eligible for access to the child-care agreement if he or she is under seventeen years of age. A child-care agreement can be obtained on the request of a child, a parent, a guardian or a custodian. The agreement and progress will be reviewed every six months in an endeavour to place the child back into a family situation. The six-monthly review provides proper scrutiny of progress being made.

As a result of this provision, there is a prospect of many more children who come into protective care at an early age being able to go back into family situations. The Government has pursued its program of deinstitutionalisation, which has meant that numbers of people who previously were in institutions are having their circumstances reviewed with a view to placing them in better facilities than those provided in institutions. Anything to help
the re-establishment of young people in family situations must be supported and the Opposition will support this clause.

The Bill abolishes the Child Development and Family Services Council. Obviously that council does not provide the Government with the advice that it requires.

The Opposition will be supporting the Bill and hopes the provisions are passed as they are drafted.

Mr STEGGALL (Swan Hill)—The Bill is a reduced version of the Community Services Bill 1986, which was introduced in Parliament last year but lapsed when Parliament was prorogued at the end of the year. Major sections of the original Bill have been transferred to the Childrens and Young Persons Bill, which is based on the major reforms recommended by the Carney report. The rest of the original Bill is that which is before the House today. Therefore, the Carney report will be dealt with when the Children and Young Persons Bill is introduced.

This Bill is only a small measure that makes some basic changes to the principles guiding Community Services Victoria. Most people would agree with the intentions of those guidelines. The interesting aspect is how they will be implemented because Bills such as this apply not only to the metropolitan area but also to country Victoria. How the principles will be established in regional centres will depend on individual cases in the areas.

Officers of Community Services Victoria operate in Swan Hill, which is a subregion of the Mildura region. Those officers are trying to deliver the services in the best possible way and to the best of their skills. It is extremely difficult when one considers the pressure and stress that exists at present throughout the Mallee.

I have had discussions with departmental officers in the Mallee and have found that they are not the only service providers in the region. Although they work generally in the area trying to help the community overcome its present problems, they are not the front-line service providers. Help is also provided through community groups and organisations which have been developed and which have been fairly successful counselling members of the community.

At present, service providers are trying to help people in the Mallee overcome their financial difficulties. More and more I am finding that the counselling being provided by the Mallee Crisis Committee and other community groups does not always provide the final decision.

People are encouraged to use the services that are made available and to gain a greater understanding of their own predicaments. They are encouraged to discuss their financial problems with their accountants, bank managers and representatives of the Rural Finance Commission to try to make suitable arrangements. The arrangements vary from a total relocation out of the community to refinancing.

The services provided by Community Services Victoria are useful and helpful so long as no-one falls into the trap of believing that Government-funded agencies will have the final answer and will be able to solve all the problems. Much of the success in the Mallee has been brought about by cooperation between State, Federal and local organisations. During the past eighteen months, this cooperation has been particularly evident in the work of Community Services Victoria. The guidelines for the department are good and do not vary greatly from the original Bill.

The Bill enables the Director-General of Community Services Victoria to approve an organisation as a welfare service, as well as the power to approve or revoke the approval of an organisation as a welfare service. That is similar to the present procedure but it is simpler.

The child care agreements are commonsense agreements. They provide for the children who voluntarily seek help. They deal with children who are under the age of seventeen years, or, in relation to the parents, guardians or custodians who are seeking assistance
with their children. The children are not necessarily children who have been before the

court. Families under stress, for example, will be able to take advantage of the child-care

agreements, which are similar to foster care arrangements but they involve any type of

agreement between the department and the family seeking to be part of the agreement.

The time factor in these agreements is important. The agreements must be reviewed
every six months and must last no longer than twelve months. Nowadays society has tried
to avoid institutionalisation, which has been accepted during the past decades.

It is a different type of situation from that of a child coming out of a court environment.

The National Party supports the Bill and looks forward with some interest to what is
around the corner in the Bill covering children and young persons. I hope the theme that
has been promoted in this small Bill will be continued in that larger Bill to cover the
children's services area, and the National Party looks forward to seeing just how the
Government intends to pick up the Carney report and put it in place through Community
Services Victoria.

Mr E. R. SMITH (Glen Waverley)—I do not oppose the Bill but a number of community
concerns about it need to be mentioned. These comments were expressed to me by an
organisation that is vitally affected by the Bill. It is an organisation within the Glen
Waverley electorate called People against Child Exploitation or PACE. I should like to
bring a few of their contrary views to the attention of the House.

First of all clause 5 talks about the volunteers and about Community Services Victoria
assisting in protecting the community from harm and exploitation. PACE says that the
department is merely mouthing platitudes about assistance but is doing nothing about
accepting responsibility.

The area of child exploitation is only now coming to light in the community.
Organisations like PACE feel strongly that they are not receiving the moral support of the
Government. The people who work for PACE are volunteers, and last week I brought up
this subject during the grievance debate and said that these people were requesting a paltry
sum of money just to help them with running expenses. The House received a reaction
from the Parliamentary apologist in residence for socialist ideology—the honourable
member for Werribee—who thought I was taking up the cause for these people to be paid!
That is not what I intended. I began a campaign in the electorate; we do not want the
Government's money if——

Dr Coghill—You said eleven more police personnel!

Mr E. R. SMITH—I did not say that. When it became known that I would be speaking
on this debate, I received a telephone tip from a former employee of a Gay publication,
who is obviously trying to seek some revenge. He told me that $24 000 has been syphoned
from the AIDS council—from Health Department Victoria—to finance Outrage, which is
a Gay publication.

I suggest the Minister follow that up because I have the material to support that figure.
The Government can hand over $24 000 for a Gay publication but it cannot pay $1000
for the telephone bills and office running expenses of this needy and worthwhile
organisation.

But that is all right; the Government does not have to do it. I will run a campaign and
raise the money in no time. I could easily go around Parliament House and raise the
money. There are plenty of good Labor, Liberal and National Party people who would be
prepared to give; but we got the reaction expected that we were trying to obtain money to
put people in jobs. That is the mentality of Government members!

The Bill regularises parts that needed regularising but it does not attempt to give moral
assistance to voluntary organisations like PACE. It is high on platitudes. Clause 6 (g)
states:

Voluntary participation and the involvement of self-help groups and consumers should be encouraged in the
planning, development and carrying out of community services.
These are the ten people in PACE, including the doctor and the solicitor. They are good people willing to give their time in trying to provide a service for people in trauma.

The recipients of the help provided by PACE are usually mothers whose children have been sexually abused by their fathers or by live-in de facto partners and they are desperately in need of help.

These people are inclined to bottle up this type of information because they are frightened of the consequences, little knowing that they are doing nothing wrong and that if they seek help, someone may be able to sort out their problems.

What normally happens is that they try to protect the abuser when, in fact, if they were to contact someone like PACE who would give them the sympathetic hearing that they want, they would be put on to the right Government agency—and no-one is criticising them—or the police. It is possible, then, that the Community Policing Squad would be able to give these people the support they desperately need and perhaps even prosecute the offender.

At present, many people feel that they are not receiving moral support and that they need a voluntary organisation like this. With the declining resources of the Government—and all Governments are having the same problem—these voluntary organisations are becoming more and more necessary; and, let us not be too cynical: the Government is receiving a lot of help on the cheap. These workers do not want to be paid; they are prepared to work for nothing, but with the increasing social problems in the community, and with fewer resources available, the Government should consider seeking seriously the help of voluntary groups.

Clause 5 of the Bill contains many platitudes.

Clause 6 (h) (ii) states:

To promote choice and maximise the participation of people in decisions which affect their lives.

I should like the Minister to explain how Community Services Victoria proposes to maximise the participation of persons in decisions affecting their lives.

The organisation said that if one takes the hypothetical example of a child victim of sexual abuse—where the victim is reluctant to report on abuse, fearing disbelief, the repercussions, the embarrassment, the stigma and losing control of the situation—does the department propose to encourage the victim to report on the matter confidentially—anonymously, if necessary—where assurances can be given to the victim that there will not be any police involvement unless the victim agrees to offer any assistance he or she initially requires?

The area is something that the department is tackling but it can tackle it only if it chooses to accept the assistance of voluntary groups in the community who are there to help and not to be ridiculed by people like the honourable member for Werribee, who said last week that they were merely seeking paid employment.

They want moral assistance, and, where necessary, paltry financial assistance, not like the $25,000 that has been syphoned to the Gay publication Outrage from Health Department Victoria's allocation to the AIDS council which is an absolute outrage; but more will be heard about that in the next few days.

I emphasise the role the People Against Child Exploitation organisation plays in assisting people involved with cases of sexually abused children. The organisation provides a 24-hour telephone service, and I repeat that the number is 232 9343. The organisation provides a service between the hours of 5 p.m. and 9 a.m. when the paid officers of Government agencies are not available.

With declining Government resources, only organisations such as PACE can bridge the gap between what is needed and what is available.
Mr SPYKER (Minister for Consumer Affairs)—I thank the honourable members for Syndal, Swan Hill and Glen Waverley for their contributions. The Bill deals with a sensitive area, and I am disappointed that the honourable member for Glen Waverley referred to side issues, such as the funding of community and self-help groups.

When the Labor Party came to office, community organisations and self-help groups under the portfolio for which I was responsible received no funding at all. The Government now makes available $1.5 million to such organisations to help them assist the community in a range of areas, including the problem of poverty.

Members of the Government have made it clear that members of the Opposition cannot come into this place and demand that the Government reduce expenditure by 30 per cent and then pretend it will not have an impact on Government departments. It is impossible to say, "We belong to the new right and Andrew Hay is our hero; we are going to slash expenditure by 30 per cent" and then say, "There should be more funding for community organisations."

Community Services Victoria carries out its responsibilities in a sensitive manner. A big shift away from institutional care has occurred and community involvement has increased. Expertise is available in the community, and the Government is looking towards the community and the Government working together to try to create a better society.

An important aspect of the Bill is the protection of children, especially those in temporary care. A variety of reasons, such as family breakdown, illness in the family or unemployment, can cause unnecessary tension in a family. The Bill allows Community Services Victoria to step in and be of some assistance in the short term. In the past when a child has been made a ward of the State, it has been difficult for the child to return to the family unit. The Bill provides flexibility to deal with a specific problem in a family unit. Children are our investment in the future of this nation and flexible programs should be established to deal with various problems.

It is difficult to legislate on matters of human relations. Community Services Victoria has attempted to consider different aspects of community problems and how they should be dealt with in a sensitive way. The Bill is another step forward in helping Community Services Victoria deal with problems in a humane manner.

The motion was agreed to.

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

**ADJOURNMENT**

Squatters in South Melbourne—Parcel services in north-eastern Victoria—Derailment of V/Line locomotive—Turana Education Centre—Third-party insurance premiums—Rosebud TAFE—People Against Child Exploitation

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

That the House do now adjourn.

Mr LEIGH (Malvern)—In the absence of the Minister for Education who is the representative in this House of the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, I direct a matter to the attention of the Minister for Consumer Affairs. The matter relates to a former orphanage in South Melbourne, and I previously raised this matter on 19 March. At that time, I mentioned that squatters were on Crown land and were misbehaving. They were illegal occupants and were causing trouble to the local residents.

After I supplied information to the Minister for Education, he said that the Government would negotiate with the squatters to determine whether they could remain on the property. The next day an ambulance was called to the property on two occasions. The first occasion was supposedly a false alarm and, on the second occasion, ambulance officers attended a
young girl in the premises. Members of the Police Force were refused entry, and the girl was subsequently diagnosed as suffering from a heroin overdose. That is significant.

Last night police raided the premises with a warrant to search for firearms and stolen goods because they believed the squatters were stealing from local shopkeepers. Nothing was found, but one girl was charged with assault and another was charged with hindering the police in the performance of their duties. One police officer to whom I spoke informed me that one of his colleagues had been bitten, and that is obviously why one girl was charged with assault.

In the *Emerald Hill, Sandridge and St Kilda Times* of 2 April, an Australian Labor Party South Melbourne councillor, Cr Thwaites stated:

If squatters moved into private property, councils would then evict them.

It does not appear to worry him that the squatters are living in a vacant Government building.

I am concerned that an elected official could support the squatters remaining in Government buildings when he would object if they were in his own home. It is a pity that he does not live in the area because he may then be a little more concerned about removing the squatters.

Once again, I ask the Government to remove the squatters from Crown land as they are a hindrance to the local community.

The Minister for Public Works is the local member of Parliament and he is not prepared to do anything. The local branch of the Australian Labor Party—and especially the councillors—are quite happy to negotiate with these law-breakers so that they can continue in the premises. Because a person suffered an overdose of heroin on the premises, we know that there must have been heroin there.

The police had warrants to search the premises and, indeed, the Fitzroy Legal Service today issued a complaint to Deputy Commissioner Frame against the police, saying that the police had damaged the building. Anyone who had seen the building would have realised it was in an appalling mess before that. It was obvious the police had not caused damage and that this complaint was just a furphy on the part of the Fitzroy Legal Service to get the people involved out of the problem.

I ask the Minister, on behalf of Victorians, to remove these people from public property. They have broken the law. If the Minister is not prepared to do that it means he is prepared to support people who break the law. It is a sad day for Victoria when a Government would support such a concept.

Mr JASPER (Murray Valley)—I direct to the attention of the Minister for Transport the need of the people in the settlements of Goorambat, Devenish and St James for a parcel service.

The Minister would be aware that a passenger service exists for residents of these areas from Benalla, through Goorambat, Devenish, St James and Tungamah to Yarrawonga. Up until ten years ago a motor rail service provided the passenger service for those communities. That service was replaced by a bus passenger service which has operated effectively and provided a twice daily service on week days and once a day on weekends. The bus passenger service is supported by the residents of the local communities. Overall it has been extremely successful and perhaps provides a better service than that provided by the former motor rail service in that it provides more flexibility in picking up and dropping off passengers between Benalla and Yarrawonga and the connecting main line.

In conjunction with the bus passenger service, there used to be a parcel delivery service to the townships of Goorambat, Devenish, St James, Tungamah and Yarrawonga.
The problem is that approximately two years ago because of the seeming lack of patronage for the parcel delivery service it was terminated. The only parcel service is provided by a V/Line contractor by way of a road service once a week.

In recent times I have received representations from a number of people living in those settlements who need a parcel delivery service. Today I received representations from a business house in Devenish which wanted the parcel service reinstated immediately.

I have had discussions with V/Line staff and there appears to be an increasing need for the reinstatement of a parcel delivery service in conjunction with the passenger service. I ask the Minister to institute an investigation, in cooperation with V/Line staff, to ascertain whether the parcel service can be reinstated in conjunction with the passenger service.

The residents in the settlements to which I referred are most interested in obtaining this essential service, which will be put to good use and should be provided for them.

Mr Harrowfield (Mitcham)—I direct to the attention of the Minister for Transport the derailment of a locomotive owned by Australian National Railways. The derailment occurred at the V/Line Spencer Street terminal earlier this month. The matter was raised during the debate on the motion for the adjournment of the sitting last night. The locomotive was one of two vehicles involved in hauling the Overland from Adelaide to Melbourne on 1 April this year.

A number of allegations have been made about the damage incurred by the locomotive which was derailed on its way back to the South Dynon V/Line railyards on that date. Some defects were discovered in the Australian National Railways locomotive that caused the derailment and serious allegations were made about the matter.

All honourable members would be concerned to ensure that vehicles of this kind are safe and that the safety of passengers travelling on these major passenger trains is maintained.

I seek from the Minister details of the inquiries he has made about the incident, the damage done to the locomotive involved in this incident and the action he has taken to seek a response from the Australian National Railways about the derailment in the South Dynon railyards.

This major issue brings into focus the very important work that has been carried out by the Government in upgrading V/Line rolling stock. One of the major achievements of the Cain Government, the Minister for Transport and his predecessor was to bring the system into the twentieth century and ensure that the Victorian railway system had a high quality standard of rolling stock.

As a passing remark, it is rather regrettable that as recently as this week the so-called wastewatch committee of the Opposition attacked the Government for purchasing new rolling stock and said that it should have retained the two-class locomotives that had been in service since the 1950s.

Mr Leigh (Malvern)—On a point of order, I believe the honourable member for Mitcham can raise only one matter on the debate on the motion for the adjournment of the sitting. The honourable member was speaking about locomotive derailment and now he appears to be moving on to another issue. I ask you to rule accordingly, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker—Order! Honourable members may raise only one matter during the debate on the motion for the adjournment of the sitting. I was not aware that the honourable member was raising a second issue. If he does so, he is out of order.

Mr Harrowfield (Mitcham)—As I said, I mentioned the matter in passing in discussing the Government's handling of locomotives and other rolling stock.

The Speaker—Order! I do not uphold the point of order.
Mr HARROWFIELD—The honourable member for Malvern might run out of steam one of these days!

Will the Minister for Transport inform the House of the investigations he has made into the incident and assure the House that he has sought from the Australian National Railways an explanation of the incident which involved a locomotive which was attached to the *Overland*.

Mr COLEMAN (Syndal)—I raise with the Minister for Education a matter concerning the Turana Education Centre and its motor vehicle and cycle training scheme.

In 1977 the centre was able to attract an Australian School Commission grant to conduct a traffic safety program at Turana Youth Training Centre, which continued until 1982 when the funding was terminated. Approaches were made to the then Minister for Community Welfare Services, now the honourable member for Greensborough, in an effort to have the funding continued. A letter was sent to the Minister requesting an amount between $3000 and $4000, which was supported by Dr Gordon Trinca, the National Chairman of the Road Trauma Committee and a spokesman for the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. Dr Trinca said:

The cost of maintaining the program estimated $3000–$4000 per annum is a small sum when one considers the benefits provided for these youngsters who are but a by-product of our society.

Figures produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics for 1978–79 for youth trainees sentenced by children's or adult courts for crimes relating to thefts of motor vehicles and associated offences were 476 from the Children's Court and 334 from adult courts. In 1982–83 those figures had risen to 538 from the Children's Court and 348 from adult courts.

The purpose of the scheme is to provide these young people—the overwhelming majority having had motor vehicle or cycle offences as the reasons for their being in Turana—with some basic skills in driving and an understanding of current road law. It also attempted to assist their understanding of the influence of alcohol and drugs while they are in charge of motor vehicles.

The traffic safety program attempts to develop defensive driving and riding skills: a meaningful knowledge and understanding of current Victorian road law and road code; a competence in emergency first-aid procedures; and an understanding that motor cycling can be both a time and money saving mode of daily transport and an appropriate leisure time activity.

The Turana Education Centre has written to successive Ministers requesting funding, including the Minister for Community Services.

I raise this with the Minister for Education because the Turana Education Centre is unique in that it does not have a supportive parent group. Every other education centre in Victoria has a supportive parent group but because of its nature Turana does not have such a group. There is a strong group of interested people from the community who are involved with the young people in Turana, but it is important that the Government also recognises the value of the program.

The program should be funded so that it is accessible to young people during their stay in Turana so that when they are released they will have improved driving skills and a better understanding of the road law. I ask the Minister to examine this matter and to assist in providing funding for it.

Miss CALLISTER (Morwell)—The matter I raise is for the attention of the Treasurer. When the Government came to office it was evident that radical changes would have to be made to the third-party insurance system operating in Victoria. After extensive work was carried out in examining the system that prevailed, the Government proposed radical changes last year.
Those proposals were significantly modified following debate in the community and, in particular, because of the actions of the opposition parties. Under proposals put forward by the Cain Government the average country motorist would have his premium reduced from $161.20 to $151.10. However, that did not occur because the proposed legislation was significantly changed when it was before Parliament.

Mr Jasper—And you agreed with it!

Miss CALLISTER—The changes were arrived at by agreement after the Government received the clear message that it would not have its Bill passed by the other place. The Government and the opposition parties came to a mutual agreement and the Bill was enacted.

Therefore, it is surprising to read comments in newspapers where members of the Opposition have highlighted inadequacies in the third-party insurance scheme. It is strange that premium increases that are largely attributable to the actions of the opposition parties are now causing concern among Liberal members.

An article in the La Trobe Valley Express of 31 March 1987 refers to the honourable member for Narracan highlighting the changes in premiums affecting taxi drivers. He is reported as having said:

Taxi drivers and owners were very unhappy with the rise, especially as they had only been allowed a 6.3 per cent rise in last December's fare increase.

The SPEAKER—Order! In her 3 minutes the honourable member has yet to clarify what action she requires the Treasurer to take. If she is suggesting that existing legislation should be amended, she is out of order.

Miss CALLISTER—Mr Speaker, I do not suggest any amendment to the law. I am asking the Treasurer to provide information about how the premiums were established. The honourable member for Narracan is reported as having said:

I and other members of the Liberal Party warned early this month that huge increases in registration and third party premiums would result from the Government's policies.

As I have already stated, the Government's proposals were significantly modified in light of the action taken by the opposition parties. I seek the Treasurer's comment on the statements that have been made by the Liberal member for Narracan in particular, and by other members of the opposition parties, in which they have criticised the premiums that have been imposed.

Dr WELLS (Dromana)—I refer the Minister for Education to the Rosebud TAFE institution. For seven years a timber cottage at Rosebud has been used as the beginnings or the nucleus of a TAFE college. It has not been expanded since then, and the matter is now one of urgency.

I have spoken previously in this House of the needs of the southern Mornington Peninsula in relation to economic, employment and social terms. The southern Mornington Peninsula has now replaced the western suburbs as the area of Melbourne with real economic and social needs.

I listened to the Premier state in this House earlier this week that the achievements of the Government have been considerable in the western suburbs of Melbourne. I acknowledge that that is so.

An article in the Herald this week contained a report from economic officers in the western region who indicated that in the next four years some $481 million would be spent in the western suburbs through Commonwealth, State and local government programs. This was expected to create some 20,000 jobs in the area. I applaud that, too.

The Minister for Education said in the House last night that it was his fervent wish that every young Victorian had adequate vocational training. Honourable members know of
the Youth Guarantee Scheme. That scheme is non-existent in the electorate of Dromana. It has had no identifiable effect.

All Governments must plan for the future but, finally, each one has to translate plans into reality. Unfortunately, as the old sage said: politics is about money and in the end one has to back one's words with money.

I make no apology for raising this matter. This is not the sixteen hundredth claim for extra spending; this is a request for something that has already been asked for.

Last year I went from the Frankston TAFE college—where I had learned there were no places available for students from the southern Mornington Peninsula—to the Regional Director of Education, then to one of the directors of the TAFE Board and finally to the Minister for Education, to ascertain whether the Rosebud TAFE unit could be placed on the agenda and given priority for development into something meaningful and realistic.

A year has gone by and so far as I can detect, nothing of substance has occurred. It is time that at least some decent planning was done because it takes time to effect these processes. In the meantime, another year of students from Dromana have missed out on TAFE facilities. Dromana is an area where the unemployment level is at least twice the national average.

I know, from speaking on my youth program on Radio Port Phillip on Monday night with young unemployed people, that even a small amount of vocational training and a bit of help with personal motivation enables them to go and obtain jobs somewhere other than on the peninsula.

I have also spoken with the senior person in charge of SPLASH—Southern Peninsula Learning and Self Help—a CYSS program, who stated that he tries to give young people some training and then tells them to go to the city and look for a job because there is nothing for them on the peninsula. He said that those young people do get jobs in the city.

It is far cheaper to give some motivation to these young people than to keep them rotting away on the dole for ever.

I have done all I can to present a reasonable request to the Minister for Education. I ask him to let me know what is happening and what are the priorities for the development of an effective TAFE college in Rosebud. Honourable members have experienced what can be done in the western and other suburbs in Melbourne since the Government came to office. Maybe this can also be done for the southern Mornington Peninsula.

Mr E. R. SMITH (Glen Waverley)—I raise a matter with the Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources, as the representative of the Attorney-General, relating to a letter forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions from PACE—People Against Child Exploitation. I ask that the Attorney-General take action against the leniency shown in a recent court case so that that decision can be reviewed and perhaps righted. I shall not name the defendant in the case because the action may be on appeal.

FACE protests against the leniency handed down in a case heard in the Heidelberg Magistrates Court last month and considers that a fine should not be considered a sentence; that psychiatric treatment is inadequate because it need be only one 30-minute consultation with a psychiatrist and that community service work is inappropriate for sexual offenders. The most realistic community service a magistrate could order is to sentence such an offender to a gaol term.

PACE considers it is most important that child sexual abusers are removed from the community.

Mr MICALLEF (Springvale)—On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I am listening with interest to the honourable member for Glen Waverley but I am having difficulty understanding how the Government can act without knowing—
Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Springvale appears to be wasting the time of the House. There is no point of order.

Mr MICALLEF—I have a point of order—it is a further point of order, Mr Speaker. I am having difficulty in understanding how the Government can act on this situation without knowing the personal details.

The SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Springvale is out of order. There is no point of order. The time has expired for raising matters on the adjournment.

Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—The honourable member for Malvern raised the matter of squatters in the South Melbourne area. I shall direct that matter to the attention of the relevant Minister.

The honourable member for Murray Valley raised with me the provision of a parcel service for the settlements—I suppose that is the appropriate word—of Goorambat, Devenish and St James. I shall take up that matter with the State Transport Authority, although I should point out to the honourable member that one of the reasons why those services are not as widespread as they once were is related to the greater economic charter within which the Government is attempting to fit V/Line by providing services which do not cost the taxpayer. I shall raise that matter with the STA and I note the honourable member's comments about the passenger bus service.

The honourable member for Syndal raised the question of a driver education program at Turana and praised the people who have been on the Turana school council over the years. That program was set in place when I was a member of that school council. I shall take up the matter with the Minister for Education to see what can be done.

The honourable member for Dromana asked about the Rosebud TAFE college. I shall bring that matter to the attention of the Minister for Education.

The honourable member for Glen Waverley raised a matter that he said concerned the Director of Public Prosecutions. I shall direct that matter to the attention of the Attorney-General. However, I suggest that the honourable member should make full details available to the Attorney-General so that the matter can be adequately examined.

The honourable member for Mitcham raised the issue of a derailment of one of the locomotives that hauled the Overland on 1 April. Some people in the community may have gained the distinct impression from reading newspapers and listening to the media over the past 24 hours that V/Line was grossly deficient in the maintenance of its locomotives.

People could have gained the impression that, as the result of alleged inactivity by V/Line, people's lives are at risk. Shadow Ministers and Opposition members have significant responsibilities in checking out public statements before making them. If the honourable member for Gippsland West had bothered to check out the situation about this locomotive he would not have alarmed people in the way he has done. Although no one suggests there was no problem with the locomotive, it would have been helpful if the honourable member for Gippsland West had checked out his facts and found out the circumstances of the derailment and the subsequent action by V/Line.

However, as happens so often, the honourable member for Gippsland West fires out the material—as he did with the railway investigation officers—and finds out later that he has alarmed people for no good reason.

V/Line management immediately took the appropriate action following that derailment. There was an examination of the reasons for it and of the defective wheel. Immediately—and I stress, immediately—Australian National Railways was notified that a defective wheel had been detected. V/Line sought the advice of Australian National Railways and
asked for immediate attention not only to this locomotive, which by this time was at Dynon, but also to the whole fleet.

It is important that people understand that the locomotive is an important Australian National Railways locomotive, the basic servicing of which is carried out by ANR in Adelaide. The management of V/Line immediately notified ANR of the problem and sought assurances that no other No. 930 locomotives that had that defect would be coming to Victoria. V/Line received that assurance and was thanked for its prompt action by Australian National Railways, which withdrew for examination its other 930 class locomotives.

Basic servicing of those locomotives is done by the originating State—in this instance, South Australia—but, as a V/Line locomotive is in Sydney, it is expected that it will be properly examined there before leaving Sydney. When this derailment occurred there was no reason to believe there was a problem until the problem presented. Victoria has taken the appropriate steps to ensure that proper action is taken. Listening to the honourable member for Gippsland West one is led to believe locomotives should be examined at each station on the route from Adelaide but, as everyone knows, the maintenance and servicing of locomotives basically is done in the two major cities at each end of the Overland journey.

The V/Line telexes resulted in full inspections being carried out of all No. 930 locomotives. V/Line expects to be notified of any other problem or defect detected as a result of the inspections and that the wheel failure will be overcome within the fleet.

In respect of Victorian services a very careful check of locomotives will be carried out to avoid and prevent danger to people. I suggest that, if the honourable member for Gippsland West wishes to examine the processes that have been gone through to protect the community, V/Line will be happy to have what occurs in locomotive repair and maintenance demonstrated to him because it was very clear yesterday that he knew very little about it.

Mr JOLLY (Treasurer)—The honourable member for Morwell has drawn my attention to a press statement made by the honourable member for Narracan on the Transport Accident Commission levy and also asked for an explanation of the change in the levy applied to taxis. There is no doubt that the honourable member for Narracan's public statement on the matter was mischievous and misleading and, as honourable members interjected, particularly the honourable member for Murray Valley, in the end there was agreement by all parties on the Transport Accident Commission levies that would apply.

It is very important to explain the basis of the levies applicable to taxis and vehicles driven by rural motorists.

Firstly, it was recognised that the relative rates between private cars and taxis had not changed since the 1940s and that as taxis are on the road for longer hours and cover greater distances than private vehicles, there would be an increased claim experience by taxis. Consequently there was a revision of the relativities to reflect the greater number of third-party insurance claims by taxi drivers.

Secondly, I confirm the statement made by the honourable member for Morwell that, if it were not for the changes to the Government's original proposal, rural motorists would have had a fall in Transport Accident Commission levies from 1 July 1986 to January 1987. However, because of the need to include common law components in the levies as a result of initiatives taken by the Liberal Party and National Party and agreed to by all parties in this House, there was an increase.

The amendments to the Government's original proposals also resulted in an increase in the levy on taxis from $506.90 to $625, adding about $120 to the taxi levy.

The relativities between taxis and private cars and the differential in the rate reflects the claims experience, and that is desirable. The only way to reduce the levy charged to taxi
drivers is to increase the amount paid by private car owners. The Government is totally opposed to that and rejects it.

I repeat that the honourable member for Narracan's statement on this matter is grossly misleading. If it had not been for the amendments to the Government's proposals each taxi driver would be paying $120 less.

The motion was agreed to.

*The House adjourned at 5.8 p.m. until Tuesday, April 28.*
The following answers to questions on notice were circulated—

**COMPULSORY ACQUISITIONS BY RCA, SEC AND MMBW**

(Question No. 34)

Mr **PLOWMAN** (Evelyn) asked the Minister for Transport:

In respect of question No. 336 asked by the honourable member for Brunswick on 23 September 1981 concerning the closure of the Doon Bridge at Launching Place, what steps has he now taken as Minister for Transport to ensure adequate funding to the Upper Yarra Shire to enable the reopening of the Doon Bridge and proper maintenance for the other bridges in that shire?

**Mr ROPER** (Minister for Transport)—The answer is:

1. Doon Road is an unclassified road and is, as such, the responsibility of the shire of Upper Yarra.

2. The Doon Road Bridge was closed by the shire in 1981.

3. No application has been made by the shire of Upper Yarra to the Road Construction Authority for financial assistance to replace the Doon Road Bridge since its closure in 1981. If the council included such an application within its application for unclassified road funds, the Road Construction Authority would be prepared to consider the funding of such works as part of the shire’s allocation for work on unclassified roads in future years.

4. The Road Construction Authority assists municipalities in the financing of projects on unclassified roads as far as possible within the constraints imposed by the limited level of funds available for such purposes, having regard to the priority given to such projects by the municipality concerned and the needs and priorities of roads throughout the State.

The Government’s commitment to such a policy was clearly demonstrated in 1984–85 when an amount of $1010 000 in special impact funds was allocated to the Shire of Upper Yarra to assist in the construction of roads to facilitate the movement of timber in the aftermath of the Ash Wednesday fires.

In 1986–87 the ordinary allocation of the Shire of Upper Yarra was $748 065 as against $410 000 allocated during the final year of the previous Government.

**FACILITIES AT OPTIONAL DRESS BEACHES**

(Question No. 53)

Mr **DICKINSON** (South Barwon) asked the Minister for Education, for the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands:

1. How much money has been spent since 1984 by the department for refurbishing damaged sand dunes at Point Impossible?

2. What is the total amount of money, allocated by the department, for the provision of facilities at Point Addis, Point Impossible, Southside, Campbell’s Cove and Sunnyside North Beach, since these beaches were declared dress-optional by the Government?

**Mr CATHIE** (Minister for Education)—The answer is:

1. Since 1984, the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands has spent $2000 on dune protection works at Point Impossible, and intends to spend another $7000 this financial year. This program has been part of an ongoing maintenance program for Point Impossible, which has also involved another $25 000 for access, car parking and road maintenance. The formalisation of access and parking contributes to the protection of the dune system, and was planned prior to the declaration of Point Impossible as an optional dress beach to manage increasing recreational pressures. It has become more important as a result of the increased optional dress usage.

2. The total amount of money allocated by the department for the provision of facilities at optional dress beaches since they were declared is as follows:
**FUNDING OF ORGANISATIONS BY MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

(Question No. 70)

Mr DICKINSON (South Barwon) asked the Minister for Education:

In respect of each department, agency and authority within his administration, what was the level of funding given to the following groups in each of the financial years 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86: (a) Radio 3CR; (b) Congress for International Cooperation and Disarmament; (c) Pacific People's Support Group; (d) Latin-America Information Centre; (e) Latrobe Valley Art Resource Collective; (f) Italian Communist Organisation FILEF; (g) Victorian Association of Peace Studies; (h) Pax Christi Organisation; (i) Gay Publication Collective; (j) Collective Line Graphics; (k) Friends of the Earth; and (l) Young Women's Housing Collective?

Mr CATHIE (Minister for Education)—The answer is:

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<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>1984-85</th>
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<tr>
<td>Radio 3CR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Congress for International Cooperation and Disarmament</td>
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<td>Pacific People's Support Group</td>
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<td>Latin-America Information Centre</td>
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<td>Latrobe Valley Art Resource Collective</td>
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<td>Italian Communist Organisation FILEF</td>
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<td>Victorian Association of Peace Studies</td>
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<td>Pax Christi Organisation</td>
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<td>Friends of the Earth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young Women's Housing Collective</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
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Details of funding during 1983-84 were not itemised in a manner to enable the requested information to be readily identified.

**ROADS IN CITY OF DONCASTER AND TEMPLESTOWE**

(Question No. 103)

Mr PERRIN (Bulleen) asked the Minister for Transport:

Which roads in the City of Doncaster and Templestowe were classified as—(a) State highways; (b) main roads; (c) tourist roads; and (d) unclassified roads, as at 31 December 1986?
Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)—The answer is:

The information sought by the honourable member is shown on the maps of Victoria and southern central Victoria prepared and sold to the public by the Road Construction Authority. They are available from the authority's head office at Kew and its regional offices.

Both maps show municipal and RCA regional boundaries, all RCA declared and some unclassified roads, national and metropolitan routes, rivers and waterways and national parks.

The map of Victoria, which comprises four sheets showing the whole of the State on a scale of 1:500000, costs $12.

The map of southern central Victoria, which also comprises four sheets, shows the metropolitan area and the Mornington and Bellarine peninsulas and adjacent areas on a scale of 1:150000. The cost is $8.
Tuesday, 28 April 1987

The SPEAKER (the Hon. C. T. Edmunds) took the chair at 2.4 p.m. and read the prayer.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

EMPLOYMENT IN TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Mr TANNER (Caulfield)—Will the Premier inform the House what action the Government will take to prevent networking from reducing employment in the television industry in Victoria by approximately 2000 jobs?

The SPEAKER—Order! I have some difficulty in relating the Question to the responsibilities of the Treasurer. I call the honourable member to rephrase his question.

Mr KENNETT (Leader of the Opposition)—On a point of order, the Premier has consistently referred in this House to employment figures and to the effect of Government initiatives on employment in this State. I submit that the Question posed by the honourable member for Caulfield is quite in line with other Questions asked over a long period on employment opportunities and just as relevant as any question that was asked about fundraising appeals for hospitals, good works and those sorts of things.

The SPEAKER—Order! I uphold the point of order. I was perhaps hasty in calling the honourable member for Caulfield to rephrase his question. I now call the Premier.

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I have made clear the Government's views on its responsibilities in respect of what has been occurring in the television industry for some considerable time. It is not only as of today that takeovers have been occurring but in the past 5, 6 or 7 months or thereabouts.

The Government has given every encouragement to the parts of the television industry—in particular, I refer to the work that has been done by Film Victoria—that have enabled Victorian organisations like Crawford Productions Pty Ltd to lead the way in local television production. Through the second half of the 1950s and the early 1960s, when the television industry was on the verge of taking programming out of the can from England and North America, Crawford Productions Pty Ltd was prepared to establish an industry in this State. People might not have thought that all the programs produced were necessarily the best. Nevertheless, that company did the job and the Government will continue to give every consideration to organisations that are developing a local industry and providing opportunities for local talent.

I made the Government's view clear at the time when the takeovers occurred and an acceleration of networking took place. Some say that Channel HSV7 in Melbourne has become a branch office of Channel 7 in Sydney. My expectation is that further changes in ownership will occur in the next few months to enable compliance with proposed legislation.

Mr Williams—Is that a threat?

Mr CAIN—It is a recognition that, if compliance with the measure now before Federal Parliament is to occur, it may well be necessary for some television interests to divest themselves of some of their current holdings.

The honourable member raised the question of job figures. I point out that it should not be forgotten by honourable members that this State continues to have the lowest unemployment rate of any State in Australia; and I am referring not simply to the area mentioned by the honourable member for Caulfield.
For too long I have listened to the nonsense of the honourable member for Hawthorn, who interjects. He is one of a party that supported a Government that took this State to its knees. Now he has the cheek to open his mouth in criticism of the spectacular performance on jobs that has been achieved by the current Government: for 46 consecutive months, Victoria has had the lowest unemployment rate in this country—7.2 per cent. I remind the House that the national average is 9.6 per cent. Members of the National Party know that the percentage up in paradise is 11 per cent.

I do not wish to say much about the National Party today because I am not sure whether the Victorian members are with the "Sinkers" mob or the "Joh" mob! I do not know who runs the Victorian National Party.

For almost four years this State has led the way in employment growth. I respect the concern expressed by the honourable member for Caulfield about the industry and add that the Government will be doing all it can to reinforce the industries that are related to television, and the media industry generally, to ensure Victoria is able to continue to perform as it has done.

I did not receive much support from members of the Opposition when I expressed concern about the loss of World of Sport and other peculiarly characteristic Victorian programs that have been put off the air in Victoria. Will the Opposition support me if I say I hope another television channel will seek to reflect this State and city as Channel HSV7 did for many years? I stress that the Government has no power in this area. I believe Channel 10 would like to become such a station; if it does, the Government will support it in every way it can. I hope the Opposition will do likewise but it is known that its vision in these matters is hopeless. The Opposition does not have any vision on anything at any time!

If support is given to a characteristically Melbourne-Victorian television channel, the Government will become involved because it would like those special characteristics reflected. Historically and sociologically Melbourne has always been different and what Melburnians require from television and radio is different from what those in Sydney require and may it always be thus because our city and State reflect much better values than does New South Wales.

The Government will certainly do all it can to encourage a characteristically Melbourne-Victorian television station in the State's media network.

**RELOCATION OF OBSOLETE RAIL TRUCKS**

**Mr HANN (Rodney)**—Can the Minister for Transport explain why hundreds of obsolete rail trucks in various country locations are currently being road freighted to Simsmetal Ltd in Melbourne at an estimated cost of $140 a truck? If this is a fact, can the Minister also explain the total cost of the operation and why the rail trucks have not been transported to Melbourne using a locomotive?

**Mr ROPER (Minister for Transport)**—I thank the honourable member for his question because it allows me to direct to the attention of Parliament the significant changes that are occurring because of modernisation of the wagon fleet. The requirement for the fleet used to be more than 20,000 wagons.

**Mr Hann**—Answer the question!

**Mr ROPER**—I am, and I shall be delighted to give the honourable member for Rodney some useful information. Because of the modernisation program, the requirement now is just over 5000 wagons and almost all the old wagons are obsolete.

Like many honourable members, over the years the honourable member for Rodney would have seen the build-up of the old wagons not only in country Victoria but also in some Melbourne sidings. Now V/Line has advertised a large number of the wagons for
sale as scrap. Some have been scrapped using the capacities of the railway workshops and others through private industry.

As I understand it, Simsmetal Ltd is one private organisation that will use the wagons for scrap. It bid for the wagons and it will carry out the work. Many of the wagons would have had to be repaired if they had been transported by rail.

If the Government had continued with that exercise, the cost to the State would have been enormous and the benefit to taxpayers would have been negligible. Victoria now has a modern fleet of trains and is disposing of its old antiquated fleet, which was useful only for scrap.

VICTORIA'S ECONOMIC STRATEGY

Mr SHEEHAN (Ballarat South)—Can the Premier outline to the House the steps taken by the Government to monitor the State's economic strategy—all Victorians know of the lack of economic knowledge among members of the Opposition—and, in particular, the arrangements being made to develop stage two of the State's economic strategy?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—It is more than three years since the Government launched its successful economic strategy document, Victoria. The Next Step. The objective of the strategy was and has effectively been to generate economic competitive growth by increasing, in the long run, growth in both income and employment.

Mr CAIN—I am not being bitter. I am reminding honourable members opposite what it was like when the Liberal Party was in government. Unemployment, during the previous Government, was higher than it should have been under the circumstances. Employment growth was sluggish; non-farm gross domestic product was significantly lower than it ought to have been. Victoria was falling down the drain and honourable members opposite know it. Private business investment had stagnated. The previous Liberal Government had made Victoria a laughing-stock. Its own supporters, the traditional business community that supports the Liberal Party, would not invest a dollar in Victoria.

Members of the Opposition know what Sir Robert Law-Smith said about the then Liberal Government and what he did as a result, and it took some time to turn the State around.

The supporters and traditional backers of the Liberal Party were ashamed and embarrassed by the performance of the Liberal Party in government and are just as ashamed and embarrassed by its performance in opposition. Those traditional supporters believe the Liberal Party to be a rabble and they have good reason to think that.

Mr CAIN—The Liberal Party does not have an answer for anything and cannot even ask the right questions during question time. The traditional supporters of the Liberal Party believe, as does the rest of Victoria, that the Liberal Party stands for nothing and has no policies. What is its taxation policy? I have yet to hear it! The Liberal Party will not tell the people of Victoria what its policy is.

The SPEAKER—Order! I ask the Premier to cease debating the matter and to come back to the question.

Mr CAIN—I was telling the House that the next stage of the Government’s economic strategy will be to continue to ensure that there is a favourable economic environment for all business and to facilitate further economic growth in Victoria.
That is in sharp contrast to what occurred when the Liberal Party was in government. The Labor Government will help the private sector to identify new markets and opportunities and it wants the private sector to know where Victoria is going.

I hear so much rubbish about the cost of advertising Government policies and strategies and I want to say this: is the Opposition saying that ignorance about what is available in the State is the best condition for the business community to be in? Does it say that people ought not to know what business opportunities are available or that the State has had the highest economic growth, more investment, more jobs and lower unemployment than any other State for 46 months?

Is it saying that it is all an accident? The strategy that will be updated tomorrow by the Government indicates that it is not an accident; it has occurred because the Government knows where it is going, the business community knows where we are going and it can make its decisions accordingly.

When the Opposition was in office, nobody knew where it was going; the Opposition could not make a decision about anything; in fact, its members were frightened to make a decision about anything.

If business is to feel the confidence necessary to invest in our future, it must have some appreciation of what the Government stands for, where it proposes to go and what it proposes to do. That is the reason why the Government communicates its policies and plans for the future.

If the Opposition and, in particular, the Leader of the Opposition is saying that that is a bad thing, let him say it as loudly and as clearly as he wishes. Planning and indications of intention and direction are what is needed and the Government makes no apology for striving towards those aims. It is not the Government's intention to do any more than to tell the business community where the economic development of this State is taking us and what opportunities are there for investment.

It is to the shame of those opposite that they have no policies and no vision. All they have is a carping response to the great initiatives taken by this State and to the way the Government is leading growth in this country.

LIFTS AND CRANES INSPECTOR

Mr Gude (Hawthorn)—I ask the Minister for Labour: why has a special deal been made between a Mr Ian Lee, a former organiser for the Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen's Association of Australia, and Mr Phillip Bentley, the Minister's permanent head, under which Mr Lee was appointed to be, as it has turned out, Victoria's only lifts and cranes inspector, despite his lack of qualifications and without the job being properly advertised?

Why was he provided with a car for his private use and paid at a rate higher—

The Speaker—Order! The honourable member is now asking a series of questions. If he wishes to ask more than one question, he will receive the call again; but the honourable member has asked his question.

Mr Crabb (Minister for Labour)—Everyone within the Department of Labour is appointed according to Public Service Board regulations and according to the proper procedures. Certainly in this case proper procedures were applied. It is disappointing to find that the honourable member for Hawthorn continues to pursue matters that he well knows are under police investigation.

On a number of occasions, the honourable member has used the forms of this House to say things that he would not be game to say outside the House in regard to employees of the Department of Labour. In due course, when the police investigations are completed, he will come to regret the fact that he has raised these matters.
FUNDING OF FIRE SERVICES IN VICTORIA

Mr McNAMARA (Benalla)—I ask the Minister for Police and Emergency Services: what stage has been reached in the long delayed plans to reorganise the funding of fire services in this State?

Mr MATHEWS (Minister for Police and Emergency Services)—I am delighted that the honourable member for Benalla has found his voice again. We have not heard from him at question time since his ill judged intervention in the preselection for the Central Highlands Province.

The Government has completed an extensive process of consultation with a variety of interest groups into future funding arrangements for fire and emergency services. I understand that some of the constituents of the honourable member are among those who have been consulted. The first fruits of that consultation process will be contained in proposed legislation to be debated in the House later this week.

QANTAS AIRWAYS

Mr ERNST (Bellarine)—Will the Premier provide details of steps being taken by the Government to encourage Qantas Airways more adequately to service Melbourne airfreight and passenger requirements?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—Honourable members may be aware that Qantas Airways is currently seeking Commonwealth approval to increase cargo rates to Japan by 20 per cent, effective from 1 May next. The increase comes on top of other recent increases, which together will amount to a 40 per cent total increase since October 1986. It has also been suggested that there may be another increase of 10 per cent in October.

The Government was alarmed—and advised the Federal Government accordingly—that any increase of that magnitude would surely impact upon the export of a number of fresh products that are flown to Japan by Victorian industries that are growing dramatically. The Commonwealth and Victorian Governments have successfully pursued policies to promote exports, particularly in those areas. They are vital to the country and I believe Qantas Airways is putting itself at risk if it goes on the way it is going. The increases proposed by Qantas are cynical actions by a corporation that has little regard for the economy of the nation it claims it serves.

It is recognised on all sides of the House, and was evident in the response I received last week, that Qantas Airways is having difficulty in lifting its sights beyond Sydney and Mascot Airport. The Government believes three measures should be taken to ensure better services to all Australians from Qantas Airways.

As I said last week, the Government believes domestic airlines ought to be licensed to operate on major trunk routes between Australia, Japan and the United States of America. It is only in this way that Qantas will be subjected to the reasonable level of competition that it should face from other Australian carriers. In return, I believe Qantas Airways should, in certain circumstances, be able to carry international passengers and freight over domestic routes.

The monopoly Qantas Airways has on cargo must be ended so that its predatory pricing policies are subjected to the disciplines that a market can provide. Australia has the capacity to export a range of fresh products, such as vegetables, flowers and fruit, but it ought not to be subjected to the type of pricing policy that makes the export market that much less competitive. Many growers and exporters are doing remarkably well with rapidly growing businesses but they are entitled to protection from that sort of behaviour. Until such time as Qantas Airways faces that competition in the airfreight business, the Commonwealth Government ought to insist that future price increases be significantly limited.
Mr Perrin—You sound like Andrew Hay!

Mr CAIN—I take up the interjection about Andrew Hay. All I want to say about Andrew Hay is that the Opposition is listening to him too much. I know he is dominating the Liberal Party.

I am concerned to protect certain sections of industry that are being threatened and placed in a position where they cannot compete effectively because of the actions of Qantas Airways. I am crook on what Qantas has done to Melbourne and Victoria over many years; I hope the Opposition will join me in that view.

Andrew Hay is another question altogether. He has become the philosophical guru of the Liberal Party. The Leader of the Opposition winces when I mention his name and some Opposition members are smiling; others do not know what to do. Former shadow Ministers on the back bench are not sure which way to go and whether or not Andrew Hay means a ticket into the shadow Cabinet.

The situation calls for discipline in regard to cost increases. I hope the Government's representations will not fall on deaf ears and that this country will be assured of being able to continue to support rapidly growing export industries so that they are able to produce and export their products at competitive rates.

MIDLAND MILK PTY LTD

Mr RICHARDSON (Forest Hill)—I refer the Premier to his statement to the House that he disqualified himself from participation in Cabinet discussions on the special deal made by the Government with Midland Milk Pty Ltd because of his family connection with that company and I ask: as the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs has not denied that the company has recycled out-of-date milk, underpaid sales tax on flavoured milk, underpaid the Victorian Dairy Industry Authority——

The SPEAKER—Order! I ask the honourable member for Forest Hill to get to the question.

Mr RICHARDSON—As the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs has also not denied that Midland Milk Pty Ltd has been forced to make additional payments and is about to be prosecuted by the Environment Protection Authority for environmental violations, will the Premier now terminate the Government's special deal with this shonkie company since he, as head of the Government, can no longer pretend not to be involved because of his family’s connection with the company?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I have nothing to add to what I have already said about this issue.

VICTORIAN CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION

Dr VAUGHAN (Clayton)—Will the Minister for Education inform the House what progress has been made in developing the Victorian certificate of education and, specifically, will he provide details of the options paper?

Mr CATHIE (Minister for Education)—I thank the honourable member for Clayton for his question as I am well aware of his deep interest in some complex educational issues currently confronting the Victorian community. Following the adoption by the Government of the Blackburn report, which examined post-compulsory years of secondary education, the Government established the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board and gave it the prime responsibility of introducing the Victorian certificate of education into Victorian schools for 1989 and 1990.

As part of that process, the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board has prepared an options paper and is now proceeding to have numerous discussions with all regions around Victoria with parents, teachers and wider community groups.
The options paper deals with some complex and interrelated issues that cover not only questions of curriculum and the need to get both breadth and depth into the curriculum but also it covers the question of assessment and proposes a judicious mix between school-based assessment and external assessment.

The options paper deals with issues of certification and the form that should take and it also deals with the major issue of tertiary entrance and selection. In doing so, the paper presents a series of moderate and practical proposals for discussion by the Victorian community.

As I stated earlier, the options paper deals with breadth, what should be the satisfactory completion requirements within the new Victorian certificate of education, the need for any arrangements to meet special needs that may arise from time to time, the reporting formats to be adopted, cross-accrating arrangements primarily but not exclusively for the technical and further education sector and, of course, the implications for school organisations.

Extensive consultations will proceed until June, and I have been greatly heartened by the enormous amount of hard work being put into the process not only by members of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board but also by the members of the different fields of study committees. I have been equally heartened by the generally positive response that has been coming through as a result of this debate.

Honourable members should note that the Government is involved in perhaps the most significant curriculum reform that has ever been undertaken in this State. It certainly promises a new and vigorous educational program for students in Years 11 and 12.

It will provide a greater range of options for students at that level and assist the Government to achieve its aims of a far greater retention and participation rate through to the end of secondary education.

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION**

Mr PERRIN (Bulleen)—I refer the Premier to the freedom of information request I made in June of last year about dealings with Midland Milk Pty Ltd. That request for information has been ignored. Will the Premier make sure that the files are now made available and, if not, why not?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—The operations of the Freedom of Information Act are the province and responsibility of designated officers in various agencies, authorities and departments that are so designated. If the honourable member has any complaint about a request not being met or furnished, he has his rights under the Freedom of Information Act to go to whomever he wishes.

Mr Kennett—You can direct.

Mr CAIN—The comment of the Leader of the Opposition points up his attitude to the responsibilities of Government when he says, “You can direct”. I suggest that he read the Act. He should read a few more Acts to become aware of the obligations of officers and the duties and responsibilities of Ministers. I use the word “responsible” as an adjective with a capital “A”, which the Leader of the Opposition may not appreciate.

If the honourable member for Bulleen has any concerns, I suggest that he express them to the relevant department, and if he is not satisfied he has rights under the Act.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

Mr B. J. EVANS (Gippsland East)—Has the Premier issued instructions that representatives of Channel HSV7 shall not be circulated with press releases which are issued simultaneously with replies to questions without notice asked by Government members?
Mr CAIN (Premier)—I presume the honourable member for Gippsland East is referring to some press report today. That appears to be a matter of industrial relations between members of the union, and I have no comment to make on those matters.

RECREATION FOR DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

Mr REMINGTON (Melbourne)—Can the Minister for Sport and Recreation advise what action his department has taken in its program for disadvantaged groups to meet the recreational needs of residents of the inner city high density housing areas?

Mr TREZISE (Minister for Sport and Recreation)—The opportunities for sport and recreation for the vast majority of residents of inner high density units are somewhat less than those available for residents of suburban and country areas. It is a matter determined by space and facilities, and our department has formed a consultation committee with the appropriate officer of the Ministry of Housing and the area managers for each of the inner high-rise estates to work out a system of identifying the needs of the various residents in those areas regarding their age and their interests, and the facilities for sport and recreation that are available to them.

For instance, $5000 has been allocated to the North Richmond estate to allow non-English-speaking women to go on recreational outings. The Government intends to extend that program to the other five high-rise inner areas in the near future.

For the ratepayer and the taxpayer, it is far more appropriate to spend finance in providing sport and recreation facilities for young and older people than to allocate it in another way, such as the cost of vandalism and health care for people who do not get the appropriate exercise and recreation in the first place.

The older people are at home in the estates, mainly indoors, for the majority of the day, watching television, and there is a lack of opportunity for recreation.

Those people are too often under exercising and overeating and this type of lifestyle leads to problems with the heart and blood pressure as well as mental and physical problems. Alternatively, so far as younger people are concerned, it is better to spend ratepayers' and taxpayers' funds on providing recreational sports so that their energies are not directed towards vandalising telephone boxes and performing other costly acts of vandalism.

It is far better for youngsters to spend their spare time and weekends on various sporting courts and stadiums than in hotels. We intend in the near future to examine all inner high density housing areas and take the maximum possible appropriate action.

MILK PRICES

Mr PESCOTT (Bennettswood)—I refer the Minister for Consumer Affairs to his evasion of a question on milk prices I put to him last month and ask: now that he has had time to direct himself to the subject, has he taken any action to ensure that Victorian consumers do not continue to pay more for Victorian milk than New South Wales consumers now pay for Victorian milk?

Mr SPYKER (Minister for Consumer Affairs)—I am amazed at a member of the Liberal Party having the cheek to ask that type of question because members of the Liberal Party opposed the Government's price legislation on grocery items. The honourable member should be aware that not only basic necessities, such as milk, but also other basic items were represented in the basket and the Government is trying to protect Victorian families by keeping prices as low as possible.

Over the past five years the Government has had a proud record in keeping prices, taxes and charges to an absolute minimum. The honourable member ought to be supporting the Government in that respect.
WOMEN IN SMALL BUSINESS

Mrs HIRSH (Wantirna)—Will the Premier outline to the House what steps the Government is taking to improve the opportunities for women to operate their own small businesses?

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I regret the note of humour opposite, because the Government has been concerned for some time now through the Victorian Women's Advisory Council to examine a number of matters that benefit women in this State.

I think I can say—and I am sure the honourable member for Kew will agree—that the results of those examinations have been very helpful to the Government and productive for women generally. I refer, as an example, to the report on women in the home. I commend it as reading for honourable members opposite and especially for members of the National Party. I am sure the honourable member for Kew will agree with me that that report arose from work I asked the council to undertake. Now I am asking the council to examine the opportunities that can be offered to assist women in small business.

Perhaps the response the question received from the opposite side indicates the type of difficulties that women experience. The Government wants to do all it can to remove those, as it were—I use the word advisedly—built-in prejudices and almost endemic barriers that seem to exist across certain sections of this community to the notion of women being anything other than “domestic do-alls” and preparing cups of tea and coffee and breakfasts for the male members of the community.

This Government has changed all that. It has also changed the face of the public sector in so far as the occupation of significant positions by women is concerned. The Government believes it should be doing what it can for women who choose not to be employees in either the private or Government sector. The private sector can be shown only by example, and women should be encouraged and assisted to take part in the business community—in respect of both small and large business organisations. The Government will certainly do that.

I hope the reference to the committee to examine ways in which women in small business can be assisted will be as fruitful as the committee’s previous work, and the Government looks forward with interest to receiving its report.

TRADE WITH OVERSEAS COUNTRIES

Mr I. W. SMITH (Polwarth)—Will the Premier convey to the Prime Minister the support of his Government for the live sheep and other trade to Iran and ask him to indicate to the media the sensitivities of some of the countries with which we trade?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—Mr Speaker, I did not hear the question.

The SPEAKER—Order! I ask the honourable member to repeat the question. I also ask members on the Government benches to cease interjecting.

Mr I. W. SMITH (Polwarth)—Will the Premier convey to the Prime Minister the support of his Government for the live sheep and other trade to Iran and ask that the Federal Government indicate to the media the sensitivities of some of the countries with which we trade?

Mr CAIN (Premier)—I am not aware of what the honourable member for Polwarth is on about and what the premise—

Honourable members interjecting.
Mr CAIN—Honourable members opposite should stop and listen for a minute. They are very noisy today. The level of noise from honourable members opposite seems to be in direct proportion with the emptiness of their heads. It is astonishing. They have nothing constructive to offer—they just make noise. That is all that seems to come from the other side of the House.

The honourable member for Polwarth is probably aware of the actions taken by this Government to ensure that there is order and peace in regard to the export of live sheep from Portland. I believe that industry and that trade are working well. My understanding is that the trade of live sheep and, in fact, all primary produce that is exported, is strongly supported by our Federal colleagues, and nothing I have heard to date would suggest otherwise.

LLOYD REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr W. D. McGrath (Lowan)—I ask the Treasurer what the financial cost to the Government of its actions to implement the recommendations of the Lloyd report is.

Mr Jolly (Treasurer)—In regard to the financial commitments in the agricultural area and also the recommendations of the Lloyd committee, they will be dealt with in the 1987-88 Budget. We will certainly make some statements about agriculture in respect of the economic strategy tomorrow, which will certainly provide further facilitation to the exporting of agricultural products from Victoria.

MURDOCH COURT EXHIBITION

Mr Norris (Dandenong)—Can the Minister for the Arts give details to the House of the tremendous success of the new Keith and Elizabeth Murdoch Court exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria and also of the expanded activities of the gallery shop?

The Speaker—Order! The honourable member has asked two questions. I call on the Minister for the Arts to answer the first question.

Mr Matthews (Minister for the Arts)—I am delighted to be able to tell the House that in the first five weeks following the opening of Murdoch Court on 21 February, 33,000 Victorians visited the quite historic exhibition that is currently on show there. I believe that very high level of attendance at Murdoch Court over the first five weeks of its being available to the public in Victoria is indicative both of the very high level of appreciation in the community of the rich variety of arts opportunities that Victoria has come to be able to offer over the past five years and also of the Government’s success in bringing to fruition a number of major arts facilities which were left incomplete when our predecessors left office five years ago.

Over that five years we have witnessed a remarkable sequence of openings of major arts facilities taking place not only in Melbourne but also in regional and country Victoria. The opening of the Melbourne Concert Hall was followed by the opening of the Arts Centre complex, comprising the Studio theatre, the Playhouse and the State Theatre.

A major performing arts centre was opened at Warrnambool; a second at Warragul; and a third at Wonthaggi. More arts facilities are currently under construction at various places in regional and country Victoria.

The Government’s record in the performing arts field has been paralleled by its record in the visual arts with the opening of Murdoch Court, which rounds off the development of the National Gallery of Victoria, which dates back as far as 1968; the creation of the Centre for Contemporary Art in the Royal Botanic Gardens; the opening of the Gertrude Street spaces, which provide studio space for young artists in the Fitzroy and Collingwood area; and the total renovation and restoration of the North Melbourne meat market as a craft centre that equals and probably excels in quality any in the world.
I believe Victorians are richly appreciative of the Government's record in opening new arts facilities. The Government proposes to persist with that course of development and I believe it will remain one of the Government's outstanding monuments.

PETITIONS

The Clerk—I have received the following petitions for presentation to Parliament:

Butterfly habitat

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 the Eltham Copper Butterfly is in danger of extinction through the destruction of its habitat which is zoned for a residential subdivision in the Shire of Eltham.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the Government will take action to preserve the butterfly's habitat to allow a proper examination of its life cycle and to establish the most appropriate means of conservation of the species, Paralucia prodiscus lucida Crosby.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Mrs Toner (272 signatures)

Pedestrian crossing

TO THE HONOURABLE THE SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED:

We, as concerned residents of Irymple, seek a subsidy from the Road Traffic Authority so that the Shire of Mildura can employ a supervisor for the dangerous pedestrian crossing on the highway outside the Irymple Primary School.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

By Mr Whiting (732 signatures)

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

LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL COMMITTEE

Human rights

Mr HILL (Warrandyte) presented a report from the Legal and Constitutional Committee relating to the desirability or otherwise of legislation defining and protecting human rights, together with appendices, extracts from the proceedings of the committee, a minority report and minutes of evidence.

It was ordered that they be laid on the table, and that the report, appendices, extracts from the proceedings and the minority report be printed.

PAPERS

The following papers, pursuant to the directions of several Acts of Parliament, were laid on the table by the Clerk:

Police Regulation Act 1958—
Determination Nos 470, 471 of the Police Service Board.
Determination No. 4 of the Police Service Board for Police Recruits.

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:
Dentists Act 1972—No. 77.
Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981—No. 82.
Firearms Act 1958—No. 78.
Post-Secondary Education Act 1978—No. 76.
The following proclamations fixing operative dates for various Acts were laid upon the table by the Clerk, pursuant to an Order of the House dated 24 February 1987:

- **Guardianship and Administration Board Act 1986**—Part 1, sections 5 and 6, all remaining sections of Part 3, sections 75 to 82 inclusive, Schedule 1 and Schedule 3—1 April 1987—*(Gazette No. G12, 25 March 1987)*; Section 58—1 April 1987—*(Gazette No. G13, 1 April 1987).*
- **Local Government Acts (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 1986**—sections 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 37 and 38—13 April 1987; sections 3, 4, 9 and 14—1 May 1987; 36 and 40—1 October 1987—*(Gazette No. G13, 1 April 1987).*
- **Lotteries Gaming and Betting Act 1966**—sections 5 (6), 5 (7) and 8—1 April 1987—*(Gazette No. G12, 25 March 1987).*
- **Road Safety Act 1986**—sections 60 and 61 and item 9 of schedule 3—1 April 1987—*(Gazette No. G13, 1 April 1987).*
- **State Concessions Act 1986**—sections 1 to 6 and items 3, 7, 8 and 11 of the schedule—30 March 1987—*(Gazette No. G12, 25 March 1987).*

**HEALTH SERVICES (CONCILIATION AND REVIEW) 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.

**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:

- Litter Bill
- Land Protection Bill
- Victoria State Emergency Service Bill
- Psychologists Registration Bill

**LIQUOR CONTROL BILL**

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

That I have leave to bring in a Bill relating to the sale, disposal and consumption of liquor and for other purposes.

**Mr HAYWARD** (Prahran)—I indicate that if the Government wishes to take the Bill to the second-reading stage today the Opposition will give leave for that to occur.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL**

**Mr SIMMONDS** (Minister for Local Government) moved for leave to bring in a Bill to reform the law relating to local government in Victoria.

The motion was agreed to.
The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

**CONSTITUTION (LOCAL GOVERNMENT) BILL**

Mr SIMMONDS (Minister for Local Government) moved for leave to bring in a Bill to amend the Constitution Act 1975 with respect to local government in Victoria.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

**LITTER BILL**

Mr WILKES (Minister for Housing)—I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

Honourable members will recall that, following widespread community and industry interest about the broad subject of waste generation, resource management and the environment generally, the Natural Resources and Environment Committee was directed by the Governor in Council on 26 October 1982 to “investigate, make recommendations and report to Parliament ... in relation to beverage and drink container deposit legislation”.

The committee published its report, called “Beverage Container Deposit Legislation”, in September 1984. The report was accepted by the Government and on 19 November 1985, the then Minister for Planning and Environment, now the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs, established the Recycling and Litter Advisory Committee—known as RALAC—to advise on how the report’s recommendations might be implemented. At about the same time a recycling unit was established in the Environment Protection Authority to administer the implementation of the Natural Resources and Environment Committee’s recommendations and give policy and other support to RALAC. One of the terms of reference on which RALAC was to proceed was “ways in which the Litter Act 1964 should be amended and enforced”.

To facilitate the review of the Litter Act, RALAC established a litter subcommittee, which met regularly throughout 1986. The subcommittee consisted of representatives from the Keep Australia Beautiful Council, the Environment Protection Authority, the Local Government Department, the Victoria Police, industry and the union movement.

The subcommittee took all available advice on current litter problems and especially the inadequacy of the present legislation to cope with these problems. The review included an examination of the work done previously by the interdepartmental committee on litter. The subcommittee found that the Litter Act 1964 was deficient in a number of key areas. The deficiencies were as follows:

1. the definition of litter was too narrow and open to legal challenge by an offender;

2. the places where littering could or could not occur were ill defined and the legislation did not cover the whole environment;

3. the misuse of bins provided by municipal councils and places for the deposit of litter, which is a serious problem, was not addressed;

4. the Act did attempt to address the serious or aggravated offences of littering but its scope in this area was too narrow;

5. the Act did not give the courts adequate powers in relation to sentencing offenders; and

6. there were too few anti-litter officers authorised under the authorising provision of the Act and the process of authorising an officer was far too complicated.
After RALAC endorsed the subcommittee recommendations, the Environment Protection Authority’s recycling unit prepared a discussion paper which was circulated to all municipal councils, all Ministries, the Victoria Police, the Keep Australia Beautiful Council, the Municipal Officers Association and the taxi industry. Following receipt of comments on the discussion paper, a draft Litter Bill was prepared jointly by the Environment Protection Authority and the Local Government Department.

On 28 January 1987, the Minister for Planning and Environment issued a press statement inviting public comment on the draft Litter Bill and the Environment Protection Authority issued copies to all municipalities, Government departments and the Victoria Police Force, all members of Parliament and all relevant community groups. The response from that consultative process was most encouraging and many valuable suggestions were received. The Government is particularly pleased with the very strong support for this proposed legislation by municipalities which, after all, are the bodies which most often bear the brunt of litter prevention, collection and clean up.

On this point, it is worth noting that the estimated cost of litter control in Victorian municipalities, as reported by the Natural Resources and Environment Committee, was in the order of $24 million in 1981–82. The costs have no doubt increased since that time and the Government believes it is time to act decisively against those who litter our environment.

The Government recognises the importance of public education programs and the provision of an adequate number of litter receptacles but believes a complete litter control strategy cannot be implemented without some punitive measures against those who fail to respond to reason and moral persuasion.

The Bill makes it an offence to deposit litter in or on any land or on to any waters or into, on to, inside, or from any vehicle unless the person depositing the litter has express consent of the person who or body which controls the land, water or vehicle. The Bill gives definitions of “litter” and “deposit”.

The Bill sets out the places or receptacles where litter may be lawfully deposited, provided the litter is of a size, shape, nature or volume that it is appropriate for it to be deposited in such places or receptacles. In addition, advertising and other material that is delivered to the home must be placed in letter boxes and not elsewhere.

The Bill provides that where a court is satisfied that an offender deposited litter intentionally and that it was made of glass, metal, earthenware or crockery, or that it was dangerous to persons, animals, land, water or vehicles, or that it was deposited in, on, from, or toward any vehicle, the court may impose the additional penalties of twenty penalty points or imprisonment for one month or both.

The Bill provides that both the owner and the driver of a vehicle commit an offence if litter is deposited from it on a highway. The owner of the vehicle will not be liable if he or she identifies the person driving the vehicle at the relevant time or if the vehicle was stolen.

The Bill sets out the court’s powers when it convicts a litterer. In addition to or instead of a penalty, the court may order a litterer to clean up his own litter or other litter or pay compensation for its removal. It allows authorised officers to issue litter infringement notices to persons they find littering or committing any of the offences set out in the schedule to the Bill.

The Bill states that any person who sees another committing an offence may report the offence to the relevant municipal council or the Environment Protection Authority and those bodies may take proceedings against the offender.

As I have indicated, the Bill represents a full and comprehensive overhaul of the anti-litter legislation in Victoria. Its terms are clear and unambiguous and should be easy to
use by the authorities, assisting in their continuing efforts to achieve a clean environment for Victorians and those who visit this fine State.

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 Saturday, August 1.

CONSERVATION, FORESTS AND LANDS BILL

The debate (adjourned from February 26) on the motion of Mr Cathie (Minister for Education) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

Mr PLOWMAN (Evelyn)—The Bill creates a new corporate body called the Director-General of Conservation, Forests and Lands and abolishes various bodies, the functions of which the measure transfers to the body corporate. The Bill provides for administration and enforcement of the Acts administered by the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands and for other matters concerning land management. It also makes consequential amendments to various Acts and has other purposes, which are outlined in the preliminary to the Bill.

The Bill gives legislative effect to the amalgamation of the various arms of the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands or the former arms of the now amalgamated department, those individual arms being, formerly, the Fisheries and Wildlife Division, and the Crown Lands Department, the Forests Commission and the areas of conservation, which included the Soil Conservation Authority, the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Destruction Board and the National Parks Service.

The Bill also provides for codes of practice relating to various Acts for which the Minister has responsibility over both Crown and private land. The Bill enables volunteer conservation workers to be covered by the Accident Compensation Act. It provides for voluntary land management cooperative agreements between the director-general and private land-holders and provides for rate relief in certain circumstances under this provision.

It requires public authorities to abide by codes of practice established in most circumstances. It abolishes the Soil Conservation Authority and the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Destruction Board, it repeals the Wire Netting Act 1958 and it also defines the Minister and the Minister's powers and the powers of the director-general in relation to compulsory acquisition of land. It allows the Minister to establish personal advisory committees. These are the major points in the Bill.

I should say, firstly, that the department is an extremely important service department to the Victorian community in relation to both public and private land. It also has responsibility for management and licensing of commercial fishing, and for recreational fishing. Prior to amalgamation of the department, the constituent arms or the separate departments or the Ministries, as they were then, were staffed by skilled, dedicated and loyal employees who clearly understood their responsibilities, whose morale was high and who delivered quality service to the people of Victoria.

It is regrettable that Victorians are no longer enjoying that same quality of service from and efficiency of the department. This is not to reflect adversely on the officers of the department who are still endeavouring to provide those services that they know are needed in Victoria. It is no reflection on their loyalty.

The responsibility for the breakdown in services rests squarely with the Cain ALP Government and the ideological socialist fog that the Government has imposed on the department during the process of amalgamation.

The Government said, when determining to amalgamate these departments—and I might say, the Opposition sees some logic in this step—there would be no cost to the
people of Victoria because the amalgamation was simply a matter of putting together the various arms of government that had responsibility for public land management.

However, the amalgamation has cost Victorians dearly, not only through the poor provision of services that has resulted from the chaos created during amalgamation but also in the incredible amount of time wasted in committees trying to make this thing work.

The Bill is something of a fait accompli as it legitimises the amalgamation of the department that has already taken place and, as such, the Opposition will not be opposing it. Therefore, the Bill will be predominantly a Committee Bill which has 118 clauses. A number of matters of substance in the Bill concern the Opposition and those points will be addressed during the second-reading stage and a number of amendments will be introduced during the Committee stage.

The socialist attitude presumes that officers within the department are totally portable and that every officer should be able to handle global responsibilities within the department. Officers are expected to undertake exceptionally schizophrenic responsibilities.

In the real world, that philosophy simply denies human nature where individuals wish to follow their chosen path for which they have an aptitude and wish to have a clear-cut career path to follow. As I mentioned earlier, the Opposition can see some logic in the combining of the various arms of government which have responsibility for the management of public land. Regrettably, however, having taken the first fundamental decision to amalgamate those arms of government, the Government has allowed logic to disappear and ideology to take over.

The Government has made a number of fundamental mistakes in this exercise, the first being to build the structure of the new department from the top down rather than the reverse. I put it to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that if you or I were to establish a business individually or together, we would establish who our client group would be, what services we could provide to the client group, and the most important consideration would be what structure we would need to build up to service that client group.

In this instance, the Government took the decision to amalgamate the former Ministries and appointed a director-general who said, "OK, I am here, the Minister is there; now how many staff do I need and let's work from the top down". That has been to the disadvantage of the people delivering services in the field.

The second fundamental mistake the Government made was to appoint as Director-General of Conservation, Forests and Lands an English social planner of dubious distinction to carry out the amalgamation plans. Considerable debate has taken place in this Chamber, notably from the honourable member for Gippsland East, on the suitability of Professor Tony Eddison to fill the position of director-general. That appointment has had a considerable influence on the present confusion within the department and the problems it currently faces.

The third fundamental mistake was the confusion brought about by the intentional sideways shifting of individuals within the new structure to break down the old loyalties and traditions that existed in the former Ministries. This simply produced bitterness and confusion and had a marked effect on morale and on the delivery of services to the people of Victoria.

The sacking of Ron Grose epitomises what I am saying. The approach the Government appears to have followed is outlined in a paper by John Paterson delivered on 6 June 1983 titled, "The Bureaucratic Reform by Cultural Revolution". I commend to honourable members the reading of that report which is available from the Parliamentary Library. When reading the report one can easily come to the view that the Government has used it as a blueprint in its suggested techniques of amalgamation and in the breaking down of old loyalties and the structure that applied in the former Ministries.
The Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands in the other place continues to deny the claims by the Opposition that problems exist or that there is a deep malaise within her department. I reiterate the claims the Opposition has made over a period; morale in the department has never been lower. Expensive machinery has been lying idle for months due to lack of resources that would allow the machinery to be used for the purpose for which it was purchased.

Forest roads are being neglected. Fire tracks are overgrown and eroded. Payments of accounts have been excessively slow and sometimes illegally paid out of wages accounts as other funds have not been available. Group certificates have been incorrectly put together and issued outside the statutory period required by the taxation commissioner.

Outdoor staff have been paid to stay within a district office one day a week to play cards or to read books or simply to keep out of sight because there are insufficient funds to allow them to carry out the tasks for which they were employed.

Government policy and priorities have resulted in the department's resources shrinking in real terms. In another place, the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands continues to deny this. Shortly I shall quote from a document that will indicate to the House that this is the exact situation within the department, from the highest level.

Mr Cathie interjected.

Mr PLOWMAN—There has been a continuing locking up of renewable timber resources in parks with consequent loss of employment and financial input to Victoria's economy and the national balance of trade. There has been a serious threat to the $20 million export abalone industry due to a lack of resources to police poaching along the Victorian coastline. Trained fisheries officers have been transferred to planting pine trees. Departmental vehicles have remained unregistered, resulting in huge accident claims against the department that have yet to be settled.

There has been a loss of skilled and trained officers from the department due to their frustration with Government mismanagement and under-resourcing. This is a most serious matter because once those skilled and trained personnel are lost to the department, they will never come back and Victoria will be the loser.

Many examples portray the chaotic administration in the department. When the Minister continues to deny claims made by the Opposition about these problems, I should like to ask her: to whom is she speaking in the department? I find when speaking to officers—especially officers in the field—that what the Opposition has been saying is absolutely true and they give example after example of their frustration and disappointment at the direction in which the Government is taking the department.

Mr Cathie—Who are these people?

Mr PLOWMAN—I commend the Minister to a recent episode of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation series *The 7.30 Report* where wives of numerous officers of the department made it clear what they thought of the direction in which the department is going. They said that their husbands were gagged and could not say what they wanted to say in public. Some officers have done so and I shall quote the remarks of one officer shortly. *The 7.30 Report*, which is not noted for its bias towards the Liberal Party—if anything, it is quite the opposite—completely vindicated Opposition accusations of chaotic administration, under-resourcing, frustration among officers and rock-bottom morale in the department.

Public statements have been made, as I said, by officers of the department. I refer to a report that appeared in the *Age* on 13 February 1987 concerning Mr Roger Bilney, a wildlife officer. His comments verified this position. Mr Bilney realised that by making a public statement about the department for which he worked to the *Age* reporter, Mr Leith Young, his job would be in jeopardy. He made the statement only because of his extreme concern about the department for which he was once proud to work. The *Age* article states:
Understaffing, low morale and lack of resources in the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands are threatening Victoria's natural resources, according to widespread criticism from within and outside the department.

A Fisheries and Wildlife officer, Mr Roger Bilney, said this week that the division had inspectors, resources and equipment run down to the point where the State's wild fauna was being destroyed.

The $20 million abalone fishery, one of the last in the world, was on the point of collapse, Mr Bilney said. Illegal trade in protected native birds and reptiles was one of the largest in Australia, with Victoria recognised as the "laundering" State.

Ranger services and public amenities in national parks, seen as having a lesser priority than forestry operations, were not being maintained. Deer hunting expeditions in fauna reserves, such as Snake Island, went ahead unchecked.

In forestry, track maintenance was so far behind schedule that firefighting crews could be risking their lives. One of the department's 16 regions had 12 forestry tracks it considered too dangerous to use. Another may not be able to replant areas logged this season.

In several regions, expensive plant and machinery lay idle because there were no staff trained to use it. Last year, a boat meant to be used to patrol against poaching in one of Victoria's biggest fisheries spent seven months on its trailer at Geelong because there was no money to employ trained staff.

This quotation from an officer of the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands is an indictment of the Cain Labor Government and corroborates the claims the Opposition has been making for many months and the requests to the Minister to get her house in order.

The Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands continues to say that all is rosy in the CFL garden. However, a letter from the acting director-general, Mr Gerry Griffin, to the Secretary of the Shire of Warragul corroborates what the Opposition has been saying—which the Minister continues to deny—that the Cain Government is continuing to reduce resources in this department.

The letter, dated 2 April 1987, states:

As you are no doubt aware, resources available to this department are shrinking in real terms and astute management is essential to achieve our overall weed management objectives.

I agree that astute management is important at any time, especially when faced with shrinking resources or otherwise. However, the acting director-general's statement clearly demonstrates that although the Cain Government, through its media PR machine, has been preaching to Victorians about what a great job it is doing in conservation, the letter from the acting director-general exposes the shameless duplicity and dishonesty of the Government.

The Government is simply not putting its money where its public relations mouth is, in conservation. The facts and figures introduced by the Opposition and the National Party support what I am saying. It is time the Government and the Minister came clean and accepted that the department has some real problems and that Government priorities are deliberately reducing its resources.

The Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands is an extremely important service department to Victorians. The Government must face up to its responsibilities and make this departmental restructure and amalgamation work.

Mr Cathie—Do you want to increase taxes?

Mr PLOWMAN—I certainly do not want to increase taxes. I want the Government either to accept honestly that it is reducing resources within the department—or the Minister should no longer say, "No, we are more than resourcing the department properly"—or the Government should put its money where its mouth is and properly carry out its responsibilities. The ball is in the Government's court. The Government should either say that the department's resources are being decreased and bring about this astute management that the acting director-general talks about or put money into the department to make it perform as it should. This Bill is about making the department function properly.
The alternative will be the loss of skilled and formerly dedicated officers from the department. This resource, once lost, will be gone for ever and a consequent decline of services from the various arms of the department will result.

If the Minister does not accept these criticisms and act accordingly, Victorians will be the ultimate losers and the Cain Government will justly deserve the odium that this neglect brings.

However, to give credit where it is due, I thank the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands for listening to and taking heed of the Opposition in a number of areas about which the Opposition has severe misgivings. These areas of concern were notably related to codes of practice needing Parliamentary scrutiny, ensuring that the compulsory acquisition powers of the Minister and the director-general do not extend beyond the Bill and the Acts listed in Schedule 1; the ability—under clause 100—to allow variation of the Acts, for which the Minister has responsibility, to be varied by Governor in Council proclamation rather than by amending Bills passed by Parliament, and the proposed delegation of authority, currently vested in the Minister, to any person rather than to somebody who is legitimately employed by the Government under the Public Service Act.

The Opposition has prepared amendments to encompass these and other concerns. However, I understand that the Minister will be introducing amendments to address these matters. That is an example of good Parliament, in that the Government has listened to and considered the concerns of the Opposition and the Minister has accepted the rationale of the arguments put forward by the Opposition and has agreed to introduce amendments accordingly. That process makes for better laws in this State.

I acknowledge the positive role played by Mr Alan Kearns and Mr Geoff Guyatt of the Australian Institute of Valuers (Inc.) who have offered practical suggestions about the Bill. Likewise, I acknowledge the work of Mr Laurie Tooker, one of the Minister's departmental officers, who briefed the Opposition on this Bill and related the concerns of the Opposition to the Minister and persuaded her that those concerns were worthy of consideration. I trust that the amendments will be introduced as has been suggested.

Another area, and one about which the Opposition sought advice from the Clerks of the Parliament, related to a proposal that, where entry work is carried out by the department, especially for spraying noxious weeds or destroying feral animal habitat for absentee owners, property owners who are happy to have the department carry out this work for them, or recalcitrant landowners who simply do not carry out the work, and the department must enter their properties for that purpose, payment for that work should be made to a revolving fund and not directly to the Department of Management and Budget. The continuing work of spraying noxious weeds and pest extermination could be funded from such a revolving fund and not be a continuing drain on scarce departmental resources.

The present system, especially in the light of decreasing departmental resources, is a disincentive to the carrying out of this entry work. The proposed alternative would be an incentive to have this work carried out and would provide encouragement to officers in the field to continue to carry out this work.

The Opposition was advised by the Clerks of the Parliament that it would not be permitted to propose such an amendment to the Bill. Therefore, I request the Government to give consideration to the incorporation of this suggestion in the Land Protection Bill that is to be introduced into Parliament in the future.

Among other things, the Bill repeals the Wire Netting Act 1958. Concern about that was expressed to the Opposition by the President of the Mountain District Cattlemens Association of Victoria, on behalf of landowners with land abutting Crown land in the more rugged areas of Victoria. The concern was that the repeal of that Act would mean that the assistance given to farmers in the past, either through group schemes, local government or direct aid to farmers, might disappear.
Mr Commins, the president of that association, also wrote to the Minister asking that consideration be given to this concern. I have been assured by Mr Commins that he has received a reply from the Minister and is satisfied that the Minister will include this matter in the Land Protection Bill to be considered in the coming spring sessional period of Parliament. That Bill will introduce a means by which such a scheme can continue.

It is important that a scheme continue to assist farmers in rugged areas who have real problems with wild dogs and feral animals and who have received some value from this scheme in the past, although that Act has not been used for some time. Therefore, the alternative proposed by the Minister satisfies the need as expressed by the President of the Mountain District Cattlemens Association of Victoria.

I refer also to the problem being faced by land-holders where the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands has purchased private land for the commercial planting of pine trees. Under current legislation, a Government department, such as the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands, has no responsibility for the construction of party fencing as exists between private land-holders.

The Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands should give careful consideration to accepting responsibility for meeting half of the cost of party fencing in the case of a commercial enterprise. It is accepted that private land-holders accept half of the cost of such party fencing and the department should agree to meet that same cost.

Finally, I address my remarks to a situation that is currently undermining the meeting of objectives in the amalgamation of the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands. One objective in proposing the amalgamation was to allow conflicting views within the department on public land management to be argued in-house and eventually synthesised into a balanced and publicly stated view on such issues.

An example of these conflicting views is the eternal argument about the utilisation-conservation question and the preservation or utilisation of resources which may either be used for commercial timber harvesting or locked up in national parks.

It is logical to conclude—and part of the reason for the amalgamated department was to conclude—that the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands would ultimately come out with a reasonably balanced position on these conflicting interests. The department has this capacity but is being frustrated by the Ministry for Planning and Environment through the agency of the Land Conservation Council and its land management proposals.

Instead of looking for the balanced and sensible view that the amalgamated department is now proposing, the Land Conservation Council has been taking a high profile, an extreme conservationist stand, with little or no regard to the economic impact or the employment ramifications of its statements and recommendations.

To date, the Government has shown little willingness to accept the department's balanced viewpoint but tends to follow to the letter the council's recommendations. The recent Barmah Forest recommendations are a case in point. More serious still are the council's recommendations concerning east Gippsland, which go far beyond the more balanced recommendations of the amalgamated department in the Orbost region.

Unless the Government and the Minister give much more weight to the recommendations of the amalgamated department, the laudable objective of amalgamation will be totally lost. The Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands will be abrogating that responsibility to the Land Conservation Council and to the Minister for Planning and Environment, to the detriment of the expertise that the amalgamated department will be able to provide in presenting balanced recommendations concerning those areas.

As I mentioned, the Opposition will not oppose the Bill but will introduce amendments in the Committee stage to address its concerns. In the meantime I praise and commend the officers of the department who are in the field—the regional managers who have to make the scheme work. For their sake and that of the department, and for the ultimate
benefit of Victorians, I hope the Bill will be the genesis of a successful, amalgamated department and that we can again look forward to the dedicated work by officers of the department that we have enjoyed in the past.

Mr B. J. EVANS (Gippsland East)—I have never assessed the portion of my electorate that is public land and therefore comes under the management of the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands; but I suggest that, as an absolute minimum, 60 per cent of the total area of the electorate of Gippsland East is public land; so it is not possible for me to go about my electorate duties without coming into contact with both the administration and management of public land and with people who are directly associated with the department.

Because of the knowledge that I acquire naturally as a result of my position as the representative of the large electorate of Gippsland East, I endorse most sincerely the comments of the honourable member for Evelyn on the state of the department. All of the evidence that I have received points to the fact that the department is a total shambles. I have never before struck such low morale in a Government department, and I believe that level of morale is directly related to the issues raised by the honourable member for Evelyn, issues that I have raised in this House over many years; that is, that in the amalgamation of the separate departments that were involved in the management of public land, the idea was good but the execution was wrong. It was a disaster to endeavour to amalgamate the department right through to the grassroots level, having virtually a horizontal integration rather than a vertical integration, with the various land management sections retaining their separate identities.

Perhaps a minor issue, but one that had devastating consequences for people in a very proud and worthwhile occupation, that of forestry, was that the officers who went under the name of foresters have had that title removed and are now lumped in as scientific officers with people engaged in all aspects of land management. They have lost their identity with the skills that relate specifically to forest management. On the surface that may not appear important, but it was important to those officers who were proud of their title as foresters, divisional foresters and the like.

The amalgamation has had its effect also in other divisions; but probably the worst result has been that, as the honourable member for Evelyn indicated, people whose training and life’s work has been in a certain field found themselves in an area that was completely foreign to their training. For example, a soil conservation officer found himself to be a fisheries promotion officer—quite a different area of activity from that to which he had devoted a considerable portion of his life.

Too many of these officers whose skills were utilised in the forests or on the public land in day-to-day management areas are now located behind desks, and the forestry activities are being supervised by people without the appropriate qualifications. In many cases, the people undertaking those activities are apprehensive about the responsibilities they may be confronted with in an emergency such as a major forest fire. People who were initially engaged in the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Destruction Board, and whose job was the spraying of blackberries, ragwort and various other noxious weeds, the fumigation of rabbits and the like, now find that they could be called upon to take charge of operations in a major forest fire; and they are very worried about that. Over the past summer we were extremely fortunate not to have major forest fires.

I hear a tremendous amount of criticism almost weekly about the methods of operation of the department. It seems that money is thrown away in some directions and that not enough is available for essentials in other directions. In the past few days those of us in Gippsland—and I presume this applies to others in different parts of the State—have been pleased to note that our skies have been fairly heavily filled with smoke from burning off operations in forest areas. Apparently a successful protective burning operation has been undertaken this autumn.
However, one problem has arisen. Traditionally, mountain cattlemen and the like did the job for the Government completely free of charge, but in more recent years officers have been travelling through the forest by Land Rover, carrying out burning operations in the appropriate places.

I have been told that a considerable amount of this work is being done through the use of a helicopter. The cost of hiring helicopters is significant and yet the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands allows its officers to take helicopter flights at the drop of a hat.

The Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands travelled to a mountain cattlemen's meeting by helicopter but the department does not pay local traders for their services. That is difficult to justify.

I understand that officers of the department recently travelled to Omeo by helicopter to conduct an investigation. The Government should examine the way that department spends its money. It is not good enough to say that the funds available to the department are barely keeping up with the inflation rate, the fact remains that the funds available for work on the ground have been reduced and there is strong evidence to suggest that much of it is dissipated in the wrong sort of activity.

Many officers, who formerly worked in the forest areas, but who are now largely desk bound, have found that much of their time is taken up with assisting inquiries being conducted by the Land Conservation Council. When the council conducts an inquiry into a particular region, a considerable amount of time and effort is spent by national park rangers, fishery officers, and people in the field in showing people around the region. It means that their daily work is neglected while assisting officers of the council in their investigations.

How effective will the office of the Director-General of Conservation, Forests and Lands be in its management of public lands when some of the most vital decisions will be made by the Land Conservation Council, which is under the control of the Ministry for Planning and Environment? The Land Conservation Council will make recommendations regarding the status of areas of public land which will affect the management of that land. That is inconsistent with the arguments put forward by the Government and the whole purpose of the amalgamation of the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands. Authority has been given to a body outside that department to make recommendations which will affect the management of various lands throughout Victoria.

The Government should be examining the grazing of cattle in alpine areas, and the utilization of forest resources, such as sawmilling, woodchipping and so on, in the context of their use as land management tools. The argument surrounding woodchipping operations and alpine grazing has been confused too much with the practice itself rather than illustrating how that practice fits in with a logical management system so that, in the long term, Victorians will have forests that future generations will enjoy—probably better forests than those passed on to us.

The present generation is now suffering from the legacy of mismanagement in years gone by and in using that term I am not criticising our forebears, because the pioneers who opened up the country generally were of European extraction and applied European standards to the management of public land in this country. In many cases the early pioneers planted English trees, imported English grasses, vegetation and animals, some of which, quite unexpectedly, got out of control in this strange environment. The pioneers tried to utilise land that should not have been developed for agriculture, but in many cases that was not the fault of the settlers, because those settlers took up land that was allocated to them by the Government of the day. It was the then Government and civil servants who made the decision of what size and type of enterprise would be entered into in the various parts of the State.

Some of us are still able to recall what took place in the soldier settlement era after the second world war when the Government body decided what land would be purchased for
soldier settlement development, what sort of agriculture would be carried out in those areas and the farmers themselves took up the opportunity offered to them on that land, usually with no say in the size of the property allocated to them or whether it would be adequate for the future. Changing circumstances have changed the viability of those operations and difficulties have arisen for many people engaged in agriculture, not because of their own decisions, but because of decisions made by public servants and Governments. That is the history of agriculture up to the present time.

Under the proposed legislation, the Director-General of Conservation, Forests and Lands will have considerable powers in the general management of public lands. The director-general is to be the successor in law to the Forests Commission of Victoria, the Soil Conservation Authority, the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Destruction Board and the Fisheries and Wildlife Division. The farming community has been dealing with those bodies for many years and will have to get used to a new body, perhaps with a new approach to land management.

The views of the farming community should be taken into account, as should those of local people. I received a letter dated 12 April 1987 which provides examples of the difficulties arising in parts of the State as a result of the management practices followed by the Government and, indeed, that were pursued by the previous Liberal Government. This letter stated:

Further to our call by phone of 20.3.87 concerning the charges laid in relation to the growing and processing of drugs, the abuse of Crown lands, and the availability of social security payments in these cases.

Evidence of a very ugly and belligerent aspect of dole abuse is mounting in our micro cosmos of Bonang. It appears that dole recipients can produce between $50 000 to $250 000 worth of drugs close to and at home, surrounded by Crown lands. When caught with what now appears to be part of the operation, the charges only concerned the aspect of the illegal drugs. What is increasingly hard to understand, in our society presently exposed to such perils as never before, is that the aspects of dole and taxation fraud, quarantine, abuse of Crown lands and child care appear to be ignored. The persons apprehended with 70 plants, worth some $35 000—potentially $140 000—on a patch so easily hidden in a rainforest gully, were not bound over by the court not to enter upon Crown lands. The courts will, and rightly so, in the case of conservationists protesting for the protection of the environment, withhold liberty until the required undertakings have been given.

Yet let out on bail, evidence points to the defendants issuing threats to surrounding farmers, whose stock, sheds and winter hay are vulnerable, and a multitude of cannabis patches have been continued to be tended quite blatantly and unafearedly whilst Bendoc station was vacant. Sufficiently bold to backtrack an Orbost police vehicle investigating damage to a shed in a paddock! The police vehicle cruised along some “sensitive” Crown land gulleys it appeared. Cannabis, a smuggled cultivar, capable of carrying disastrous plant diseases, should concern quarantine.

Children in the home where drugs are being processed ought to be thoroughly tested to check on the risks they have been exposed to. In the last few years two deaths of children locally, of families evidently thus involved, come to mind.

It does appear to us therefore, that to do reasonable justice in these cases a combination and an enhancing of the law enforcement agencies of the child care, lands, quarantine, narcotics (customs), social security and taxation departments should occur. Since in the growing of cannabis the law is broken in so many ways.

The Parliaments should “bite the bullet” on this issue and make clear to the judiciary of the duty to firmly punish and seriously deter those who have no regard for the damage done to the economy, the health and the sanity of our society.

That letter was written to me by a couple who were immigrants to this country some years ago and who are residents in an isolated part of the State. They are concerned about the activities, which everybody in east Gippsland seems to know about. It is evident from the letter that although the writers cannot produce concrete evidence of the activities, the dogs in east Gippsland are virtually barking the fact in that there are marijuana plantations right throughout forest areas. A senior police officer has told me that he thinks the day will come when marijuana use will be legalised because the police cannot possibly keep track of all the marijuana grown throughout the forest areas of east Gippsland and on Crown land.

Mr Cathie—Where?
Mr B. J. EVANS—I assure the Minister that I have no personal knowledge of the location. I am simply informing the House that the dogs are barking the fact throughout east Gippsland and that a senior police officer has said that it is not possible to apprehend offenders because the police cannot afford the manpower to sit and keep watch on those patches of marijuana that they know about. In most cases they have to pull up the stuff and destroy it. Only the other day I was told on excellent authority by the owner of a sawmill in east Gippsland that $4 million worth of marijuana plants have been burned in his furnace in the past eight or nine months. It is no good the Minister challenging me to tell him exactly where the plantations are; he would not know if I described the places anyway. I am simply saying that the Government is falling into the trap of creating larger and larger national parks which exclude people from living and farming in the areas and provide more refuges and protection for people who want to engage in marijuana growing in forest areas.

There is not a shadow of doubt in my mind that this is taking place. The Minister is to be condemned if he tries to laugh off the matter. I suggest that he take steps to inquire from his own department and the Ministry for Police and Emergency Services what evidence they have of marijuana growing on public land in east Gippsland. I do not have the resources or the facilities to chase around and identify precise areas where this is taking place. I simply point out to the Minister that there is extremely strong evidence that it is taking place.

There is the evidence of the letter I have quoted, the evidence of the police officer I mentioned and the evidence of the sawmill owner who gave me the information only last weekend. If that is not sufficient to convince the Minister that an investigation ought to be carried out and inquiries made into what is going on among the groups of so-called alternative lifestyle people living in many areas of east Gippsland, I do not know what will convince him. If he ignores what I am telling him, it is on his shoulders. I have carried out my responsibility of passing on the information provided to me.

It is the Government that has the resources to ascertain whether what I am saying is true. I do not have the resources to prove it. I am prepared, in confidence, to give the names of the two people involved. They have been in touch with me on a number of occasions. I could also give the name of the police officer who expressed that point of view and I could provide the name of the sawmill owner who conveyed the information to me. I shall do so if the Minister is serious about investigating the matter.

Mr A. T. EVANS—It is a waste of your time; he will not do anything about it.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kirkwood)—Order! The honourable member should not take any notice of unruly interjections.

Mr B. J. EVANS—I rest my case on that aspect. I suggest that it is high time the Government found the answer to the question of whether much of the pressure from the lunatic fringe of the conservation movement on extended national parks is not for the express purpose of having larger and more secure areas in which those operations can take place.

During the contribution to the debate of the honourable member for Evelyn the Minister for Education made an interjection in relation to whether the opposition parties wanted more funds to be spent on the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands. I can only echo once again what I have said time and again, that the Government has only to authorise utilisation of wasted residue from sawmill operations in east Gippsland to get an extra $6 million in revenue from royalties. That is all it has to do.

The Government does not have to authorise the felling of one additional tree. There is timber already on the ground. All the Minister has to do is to give permission for that timber to be utilised. He is surely aware of the serious state of the balance of payments in this country. He could provide $4 million a year in extra revenue for the Commonwealth as a result of the export of that timber, that is, if he is interested in jobs and the major
plank of the Government's timber industry strategy, which is referred to as the value-added utilisation system—to put it in ordinary English terms I suppose that simply means that we should process the material so far as we possibly can. I agree 100 per cent with that proposition.

I should like to see the establishment, firstly, of a pulp mill and, ultimately, a paper mill to process the material that is currently costing the Government money to try to burn, which will be the curse of future generations in efforts to manage forests because those logs will remain, in many cases, for 100 years of more so that the people of two or three generations to come will curse us for what we have been doing in the past twenty years. I am interested to see the honourable member for Evelyn nodding because the former Liberal Government would not allow it. I pressured his Government, back in 1975, to allow this process to be developed but it missed the bus. If it had allowed the process to start, a pulp mill would possibly now be operating in east Gippsland and we would be well down the track towards the establishment of a paper mill.

If one is talking about jobs and saving money on imports, and so on, one is asking the Government to take action, but there is to be yet another environment impact statement. An environment impact study of the woodchipping industry in east Gippsland was carried out by the previous Government, and that study found that there were no deleterious effects on our forests. Indeed, it indicated that woodchipping was a means of allowing forests to regenerate for the future.

A similar study was carried out on the prospect of woodchipping in the Otway Ranges. The consultant who carried out that study came up with precisely the same opinion. We are now told that before we can go on with the value-added utilisation schemes there is to be another environment impact study. This is where the Government is wasting its money. It can find plenty of money to employ academics. The Government is supposed to be one that cares for the working man, but it does not give a continental for the blue-collar workers, it gives the money to the white-collar workers who have never raised a blister to earn a living.

The money the Government is giving to these people by creating these jobs is eating up the revenue; it is not giving the money to the exempt workers who are supposed to be clearing the tracks in the forests, planting the trees and generally carrying out the work in the bush; it is all being siphoned into the towns and cities. The Government is bleeding rural areas dry of the financial resources needed to maintain the standard of living this country has enjoyed, because that is where the standard of living comes from—the rural areas, not the cities. They were the areas that created the wealth of this country.

There have been a number of comments on the proposed legislation from various interested parties, and by and large the National Party supports the contentions made by the honourable member for Evelyn, but some important changes need to be made. The one that concerns me most is the introduction to Part 5—Codes of Practice. This provision will open the door for a Minister of the Crown to tell everyone, whether they are public land managers or private landowners, how they shall manage their land, and if it sends them broke, that is too bad so far as the Government is concerned. The National Party cannot tolerate that state of affairs. It is with reluctance that the National Party supports the proposition that the code of practice would be allowed by a vote of either House of Parliament.

Mr Cathie—Both, not one or the other.

Mr B. J. EVANS—There is not a great distinction between what the Minister is saying and "disallowed by a vote of both Houses of Parliament". Nevertheless, no Minister
should have the right to introduce codes of practices that can be put into effect without the approval of both Houses of Parliament in the same way as any other law is approved by both Houses of Parliament.

The amendment to be moved by the National Party will require both Houses of Parliament to agree to a proposed code of practice before it has the force of law. That is the major contention, but there are a number of other minor amendments the National Party will be putting forward in the Committee stage.

Although the National Party agrees with the proposed legislation, I am not at all confident that it will undo the damage that has been done in the department over the years. It will not do anything to improve the low morale of the officers. A complete change of attitude at the top is needed before progress can be made in that direction.

It is pointless for the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands and her Ministerial representative in this House to deny the allegations that morale in the department is low. It is pointless also to deny that the department is in a shambles, because everybody down the ladder will tell you so.

A couple of weeks ago I was stopped in Bourke Street by a senior officer who took the opportunity of telling me how concerned he was about the situation and how demoralised officers in the department were. I have met this person a number of times and, for obvious reasons, I will not mention his name. I hope the proposed legislation will not create more problems for the people charged with the responsibility of managing public land and the vital resources that it contains.

The Bill is so wide that one could talk at length, as the honourable member for Evelyn mentioned, on matters such as the abalone industry that is faced with a doubling of licence fees from $5000 to $10 000. They indicate that they would not mind that increase, but it is costing them $3000 a year to pay people to police the abalone beds in eastern Victoria because the Government is not carrying out its responsibilities for policing the area. How can one expect people to be satisfied with a Government department that is forcing that sort of situation on the community? Every area of the department is in a mess, and if the Bill does anything to correct that situation it will be worth while, but I am not confident that that will be the case.

Mr A. T. EVANS (Ballarat North)—I compliment the honourable members for Evelyn and Gippsland East on the very capable way they have summed up the tragic situation that now exists in Victoria with regard to the separate departments covering conservation, forests and lands that existed for many years before the present Government amalgamated them, and I agree with their comments. The amalgamation of the departments of conservation, forests and lands was not necessary for improving land management. Conservation is always on the increase and the public demands it within reason, but people still have to live in the area and there must be balanced management. That could have been carried out in a much more rational manner if the former departments had been retained.

The former forestry department has been destroyed. That department was managed by highly trained and dedicated officers and their field staff and administration. I have had a close association with those officers as most of them spent three years undertaking a course at the Victorian School of Forestry, Creswick, where they were ingrained in the finest principles—good citizenship, love of forests and associated environments. One of the noted forest administrators of this school was a gentleman who was the principal of the school for probably 35 years, the late Cr E. J. Semmens.

Those who were involved with these foresters—the timber millers, the building industry and the farmers—all found that the former forestry department was doing an excellent job. It was well-managed and economically an asset to the State. The former department encouraged the growth of natural forests and the expansion of softwood plantations.
This Bill will do little to achieve the purposes that were carried out very well by the three former departments. However, it will do much to achieve the purposes of what this socialist Government and its minders want to achieve, that is, the gradual erosion of the rights of the owners of freehold property.

As the honourable member for Gippsland East pointed out, the Bill proposes that a code of practices be established. If the Bill is accepted as it stands, it will give the Minister an open cheque to tell the owner what he should do with his own property. That is typical of the sort of proposed legislation being introduced in this place in recent days: the Minister says that most things under this legislation will be carried out by regulation. Too much of this sort of legislation has already been allowed to proceed through this House, to the detriment of many citizens of this State.

I agree that the first of many amendments to this Bill will have the effect of putting some check on the open slather that the Bill currently allows the Minister.

Of course, the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands has her own ideas. She has made it very clear that she does not believe people should own land—that it all belongs to the State. The Minister has been encouraged in that view by the number of advisers she has around her. One of the first things that this Government did when it came to office was to clear out all the fine officers who were employed in the former three departments and bring in its own people, either for political reasons or perhaps because they were members of greenie groups.

This Bill will further accelerate the policies and aims of the Minister and her advisers. This is particularly obvious when one examines the reference in the Bill to relevant Acts.

Clause 32 states:

(2) Code of Practice may relate to but is not limited to any of the following matters:

(a) Conservation practices for land management including specifying management practices for avoiding or minimising soil deterioration, erosion and salination;

That is commendable, but those matters were already being handled capably by the organisations that this Bill will now destroy.

The provision also states that a code of practice may relate to but is not limited to:

(c) Procedures for tree-growing to improve the amenity and productivity of private land and help prevent soil erosion;

The Minister wants an open cheque to control what sorts of crops people will be allowed to plant, whether they be trees or certain other crops, when they can plant them and to what extent they can use their own water to irrigate.

The Bill also spells out very clearly that:

(4) A Code of Practice—

(a) may relate to any land whether or not alienated by the Crown.

Another provision in the Bill that is of much concern—and it spreads not only through this measure but also through to relevant Acts—enables these socialistic powers to be applied to other pieces of legislation, namely: the Crown Land (Reserves) Act, Fisheries Act, Forests Act, Land Act, Land Conservation (Vehicle Control) Act, National Parks Act, Reference Areas Act, Soil Conservation and Land Utilisation Act, Vermin and Noxious Weeds Act, Wild Flowers and Native Plants Protection Act and the Wildlife Act.

The Bill also allows compulsory acquisition of private land. This is part of an overall policy; the Government will have powers of acquisition in this measure plus the wider powers that it wants under the codes of practice.

I now refer the House to the Farm Dams in Catchments Study carried out for the Department of Water Resources which produced a discussion paper entitled, "Management Options for Farm Dams, November 1986". This was released by Dr John Paterson,
Director-General of Water Resources, at a meeting at Ballarat relating to what is known as the Lal Lal catchment area.

That gentleman made it clear at this meeting, as in the document, that he will be able to declare water management areas in any part of the State. "Any" part of the State can mean "all" parts of the State. Therefore, in that way the Government will make sure it has the same power to control totally the use of water, crops and the land in all declared areas. However, not being satisfied with that, the Government has other plans.

The Government now has plans to appoint land managers in regard to a manager's own land. In other words, the farmer will be appointed under Government directions to management of his own land. The Bill goes on to state that he will conserve soil, protect water resources and so on—and such a provision will be found in any other relevant Act.

That will be found in proposed legislation which has not yet been debated by the House. It is included in the Land Protection Bill. The Government is developing a network spreading right across all freehold land in Victoria to achieve control in accordance with the socialistic policy that still exists in the Australian Labor Party's policy.

All the necessary conservation, water, forests and lands needs can be met without this drastic socialistic measure. The Government has been using conservation to camouflage the enactment of its socialistic policy to cover all private land in this State. Finally, I make the point that anybody who buys rural land in Victoria while the Cain Government remains in office should have his head examined.

Mrs RAY (Box Hill)—The brunt of the Opposition's attack on this Bill seems to be directed to charges of under-resourcing in the department, a running-down of the skills of staff in the department and a running-down of ranger services and public amenities in national parks.

I should like to make the comment that was made by the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands in the other House during debate on the urgency motion in that Chamber; that is, that certainly 700 of the personnel in that department will have disappeared under the restructure and reorganisation but, nevertheless, this will allow a flexibility to enter into operations of the department and into skilling of the officers of the department.

A total of $180,000 has been spent this year on staff retraining programs relating to fire operations, boat handling, chainsaw operations and four-wheel drive enforcement operations, so that each officer is able to be swung into a particular operation at the appropriate time.

For example, the opening of the duck season this year was one of the most successful on record and that was due to the ability of the department to bring in dozens of extra staff for a short time. This flexibility enables staff to have a broad range of skills and a wider job experience. The Bill will enable the Government to achieve this and it will enable its policies to be further accelerated.

I remind the House of some significant policy areas that have been undertaken in recent times, particularly that of the rain forest strategy in which the Government will spend $1.5 million over three years to protect rain forests and to enable much greater visitor access to these areas of great beauty.

The conservation strategy that has been developed with community consultation since the discussion draft of 1983 will soon be released. This mirrors the national conservation strategy.

The wetlands policy has enabled long-term protection of unique areas in the State. Public comment on this area has led to the development of a final strategy which will be released later this year.
The flora and fauna guarantee is now at a stage where legislation is being prepared and this will ensure the survival of a full range of the State's flora and fauna in parks areas.

There is no doubt that Government policy has expanded a significant system of parks and reserves. The actual area under national park classification in 1982 was 985,000 hectares and, by June 1986, four years later, the hectares under national park classification had increased to 1.336 million.

The Government has established the Grampians National Park; it has declared eight new State and regional parks and five marine and coastal parks.

After many years of ineffective attempts by the previous Government, the Point Nepean national park will be established as a result of negotiations by this Government.

The Bill will enable the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, and the Government, to proceed with a clear mandate in this area to rationalise the activities of her department and to proceed, after a period of temporary dislocation, to effect implementation of the Government's policies.

Mr COLEMAN (Syndal)—I am grateful to the honourable member for Box Hill for the information she has provided; it adds some stimulus to the debate.

The honourable member used the term "temporary dislocation" in referring to what has happened within the department. Anybody who has had any contact with the department can only be drawn to that conclusion but, for many people, it represents a terminal dislocation rather than a temporary one and is solely due to the policies of the Government and the way in which they are being implemented.

The loss of 700 people from the department is a clear indication of the problem. Rather than pursuing a policy of conservation, the Government has pursued a policy of terminating the employment of experienced staff and replacing them with people of its own political affiliation.

In replacing staff in such a way, the experience that has existed in various departments has now been dissipated. A person who has served all his life in the east Gippsland region may find himself in the Wimmera area and the experience that that person gained in the east Gippsland region will be of no use in his new area.

Equally, a person who has worked in the Mallee area and then is moved to the north central area will find that his or her areas of skill are completely compromised. That is the most easily identified problem.

The proposed legislation brings together three former departments and the Government is attempting to bring together three competing interests under one administration and also to dispense with the services of 700 people to achieve its objective. There is no doubt that the former departments of forests and lands were reliant upon the productivity or the administration of land for their impetus; however, the former department of conservation had a completely different character.

The former departments of forests and lands were the income-generating departments. Their interests were served by the way in which they could apply the land. However, the department of conservation was a spending department and this is where the difficulty was created. The spenders in the conservation area of the administration have taken charge of the issue and there is considerable conflict in the operation of those people in the conservation department; they are endeavouring to force their will on those people in the income-generating departments of forests and lands. That is where the problem started.

I am grateful that the honourable member for Box Hill has come into the House and said that in this process—

Mr B. J. Evans interjected.

Mr COLEMAN—The honourable member for Box Hill has left the Chamber.
The honourable member for Box Hill said that in the process the department has dispensed with a total of no fewer than 700 staff. It is difficult to ascertain how one could maintain any sort of program with a reduction of that number of staff. They were all experienced staff and they have been shed by the Government to bring these departments together.

The codes of practice provided for in the Bill are another means of circumventing Parliament. The honourable member for Gippsland East is well aware of this. A considerable number of attempts have been made to curb the regulation-making powers of the departments and, on a regular basis, we see the disallowance of those regulations.

The codes of practice provide another means for the department to circumvent Parliament and to implement its wishes without reference to any governing body. The codes of practice provided for in the Bill are wide in their ramifications.

Clause 32 refers to the contents of codes of practice and states that a code of practice must relate to but is not limited to certain matters, which are listed. These four separate areas of land management deal with conservation practices, eradication and control measures for pests and plants, procedures for tree growing to improve the amenity and productivity of private land and various forest practices. The clause details what a code of practice may do. It may include standards, prescriptions, guidelines, procedures or other specifications developed, approved or adopted by the department, the director-general or the Minister and it states that it will be of generally limited application.

However, the wide ranging nature of the codes of practice and the obviously reduced staffing level of the department raise the question of how the codes of practice will be policed. One can guess that in some areas policing will be meticulous. Certainly it is not difficult to hazard that different standards will apply between one region and another. For instance, one region may be policed by a particularly vigilant officer who would want to stick to the letter of the law and who, as a result, would invite heavy visitation to the area by departmental officers; in another area where the land in question is public land under the department's control, with the shortage of funds within the department, it is not difficult to believe the same visitation as will occur with private land will not occur.

Considerable areas of the State are experiencing rapid expansion of both pests and pest plants but the Bill removes from the Act any reference to fencing. In many areas of the State, if it were not for the secure fencing provided and maintained by the adjoining landowner, the rabbit infestation of Crown lands would be a much bigger problem for private land-holders. It is well known that the department is desperately short of money. This has been demonstrated by the department's inability to pay its accounts regularly. It is obvious that the department is having difficulty in maintaining expenditure even on a minimal scale and with the continual expansion of proclaimed areas the task of pest eradication and control will become more difficult.

Private land-holders who ensure that this work is carried out on a continual basis will experience difficulties. In Victoria land has always been sacrosanct and any move away from that attitude in due course will result in further contraction of private land ownership. The Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands has often expressed the philosophical viewpoint that the State should have overall and fundamental control of all land.

The codes of practice that are established should be required to be brought back to Parliament for approval. As the honourable member for Evelyn explained, there is precedent for this requirement and that precedent has worked reasonably well. Codes of practice applying under the Protection of Animals Act are brought back to Parliament for allowance or disallowance. To my recollection, none has been disallowed. However, Parliament has had the opportunity of scrutinising what has been proposed by the department. This Bill does not provide any definite statement on what is to be included in a code of practice.

One can assume but not be certain that the four items provided in clause 32 (2) will be adequate but it is clear that these four provisions are all-embracing. They refer only to
land matters and not, for instance, to fishing matters, which would affect a marine park. What will be included in codes of practice, how they will be applied and, more importantly, who will apply them is uncertain and it is essential that the proposed codes come back before Parliament for all honourable members to understand them and to approve them. I believe the Minister has indicated that this practice will occur and, if so, it should occur in both Houses of Parliament.

I refer to land management cooperative agreements. Land management cooperatives have operated in several areas of the State. They are an attempt to draw land-holders together for the benefit of a particular area. They have been reasonably well received. However, it should be understood that land-holders must be given a choice because a cooperative can function effectively only if everyone in the cooperative is aware of his responsibilities and obligations and if all members of the cooperative are members of their own volition rather than having been coerced in some way or another into a land management program. It is the only way to achieve genuine cooperation.

It should be recognised that not everyone will understand what is intended in a land management cooperative agreement; more importantly, not everyone will want to be committed financially to land management cooperative schemes. An assurance should be given that assistance will be provided if a person is not able to enter into some of the financial arrangements envisaged under the cooperative agreements. If that is a reason for one land-holder not being able to participate, some financial consideration ought to be available to enable him to become part of the land management cooperative. I shall elaborate on my remarks in the Committee stage of the Bill.

Dr WELLS (Dromana)—The Conservation, Forests and Lands Bill is extremely important. I shall not reiterate the remarks of my colleagues but I add my support to their comments. It is vitally important for honourable members to address the issues affecting Victorian land management to provide a better understanding of the views of all Victorians on these issues.

As others have said, the Bill is enormously important. I shall refer to two general aspects of the measure, both of which have been referred to by previous speakers. The first is the confusion currently existing in the Ministry under the rearrangement that has been taking place for some years.

One must really ask for an analytical viewpoint on whether it was necessary to undertake all of the changes to achieve a better result than was being achieved previously. The result before was very good. One also has to place in perspective the proposal for the Ministry by examining what has been happening in other Ministries.

A similar process has been undertaken in other Ministries such as education, health and agriculture. The interesting aspect that followed on from the attempts at reorganisation of all those departments was a similar degree of confusion and mismanagement. In all areas the staff are having greatly increased difficulties because of the rearrangement practices. The results therefore are in the final delivery of services that have been reduced. Their efforts are being used up in committees, counter committees, reports and further reports.

Although one may well say that those observations do not relate to some of the proposals in the Bill, in fact they do, because they reflect what is almost certain to be the continuing result of proposals in this and related Acts of Parliament. Abundant evidence exists of lowered morale in this Ministry. Evidence clearly shows that the wishes of the Minister and her staff are not being matched by money and that very competent experienced officers are sitting in their offices, unable, for example, to travel five days a week because insufficient funds are available to meet transportation costs. There is no question of the reduced effectiveness of control of such factors as weeds and vermin on public lands across the State.

This was not the case before and it is not because the department has had reduced moneys provided, it is because of the confusion created by the Government continuing to
change too much too quickly without a sound technical base to carry out what has been proposed. There is no doubt that even with the best will in the world, experienced officers are being moved from one area of the State to another and from one area of activity to another and they are being charged with responsibilities for overseeing the combined activities of the four units now included in one unit.

After talking with such officers I have found that this is creating difficulties in the functions of the department. I was extremely surprised to hear the honourable member for Box Hill and the Minister in another place acknowledge that a reduction of 700 staff in the combined department has been or is planned as a result of the rearrangements. I ask the Minister to outline how many of the appointments will be clerical and how many will be technical appointees.

It is hard to imagine that at this time one could envisage—let alone tolerate—a reduction in technical staff of any significant number, certainly not 700. That proposal mirrors a similar policy of the Government that is being applied to the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs where there has been an increase in clerical staff at the head office and a reduction in the most highly trained technical members of the department. It does not seem to me to be accidental that that should be the case in the two largest areas controlling rural Victoria. That proposed reduction will alarm all Victorians who have knowledge of the running of the State and who are concerned about its future.

I ask the Minister to detail specifically the reduction of 700 staff in this great and fundamentally important area of Victoria's economic and social life. The general area of agriculture is still of major importance in Victoria and absolutely major importance in any export from Victoria to other countries. With a reasonable knowledge of technical matters in rural affairs, I am extremely anxious to know whether the reductions have occurred, or in which areas they are anticipated to occur.

One must counsel the Government against its established practice of continually increasing the clerical side of its Ministries and of reducing their technical side. It should increase its funds to rural areas as well as the allocation of staff in matters relating to the towns as opposed to the practice of the preservation of our land and the reduction of saleable goods from the land.

We need to provide carefully, sensitively and well for people in rural towns but surely that is already provided for under other Ministries and programs. It is unacceptable to dilute the already meagre funds available for matters associated with lands and production in Victoria. Repeatedly the Opposition has made that comment to the Government as the Government has continued to expand by 50 per cent the area of national parkland in Victoria.

The actual dollars, after allowing for inflation, have not been increased and although some of the funds that were already provided were being used on Crown land before the land was designated as national parkland, the very movement to a national park status acknowledges the requirement of extra funds to provide additional services, if for no other reason than to cater for increased access to those areas for Victorians and others.

I now turn to the second area of major concern to me and to the people whom I represent in this place and from whom I have had the strongest possible representations. I attended a conference sponsored by the Government that was held at Lorne in 1985. At that conference these matters were discussed and grave concern was expressed by persons actually involved in ownership, use and application of land in Victoria about the proposals being brought forward.

At that time we had only comments by way of illustration of what might prevail when the Government's thinking became law enshrined in an Act of Parliament. I am disappointed to observe that we have no more than that even now that the Bill is before Parliament. In earlier times I often spoke in the strongest possible terms against a second-rate legislative practice, which has been used by previous Victorian Governments but
which this Government is making into an art form, of introducing into Parliament Bills with regulations attached to them that have not been presented to Parliament during the normal course of events.

I have said before that members of Parliament should examine what happens in other democratic Parliaments throughout the world to understand that legislative practice should be of a high standard.

More time is taken not just to say that a Bill is on the way but to prepare it, to put it out to the public, to receive it back and to review it, and then to introduce it to Parliament. Not enough of those procedures happen in this country and it is a bit like the blind leading the blind; so often in these matters, we do not know what the regulations will say.

I again speak in the strongest possible terms against that sort of practice. Certainly, the regulations must come back to Parliament eventually for specific detailed examination and a vote of the Parliament where and when necessary.

I do not wish to be caught up in the sense of rattling the can and railing against socialism and so on at every possible or invented opportunity but I do have to observe that the privileges and responsibilities of owning freehold land are one of the basic bulwarks of democracy, one of the basic protections and expressions of freedom. One of the great differences between us and any of the totalitarian States in the world can be seen in the responsibilities and privileges attaching to the ownership of freehold land.

It is interesting that, recently, the Government did not propose to give our Aboriginal Victorians full freehold ownership of land, and here we see a similar expression. This Bill, without wishing to be emotional or biased, could well be the first step along the road to eroding the principles of ownership of freehold land. It is not good enough for a Government, by economic subterfuge, to take control of the land owned by private citizens. Some quite inequitable proposals exist in the Bill and it is not good enough for the Government to be able to enshrine through legislation and place on registration of title the Government's economic control over that freehold land because of agreements that have been drawn up often under the guise of protecting conservation values.

The Government must be prepared to face the charge that that sort of mechanism can be used to achieve much more control of the State's land. I, for one, express my opposition to that sort of procedure.

I do not believe there would be a person in this House more concerned about conservation values and all that go with them than I am. I recognise that we are dealing in values that are timeless and that we have to set in place, now, standards that will pass on to future generations. After one's personal health, the only real wealth that individuals have is the continuity and protection of the natural order of the world. I always give my support, where I can, to those sorts of things but, having been to the conference in Lorne and having seen the provisions in the Bill, I certainly do not accept it at this point.

On page 14 of the Bill, clause 32 (2) states:

A code of practice may relate to but is not limited to any of the following matters:

There follows a great list of things that make it possible for the Ministry, under its director-general, to do almost anything. Certainly in certain places in the Bill, there is the opportunity for the land-holder to agree to what is being done and if one were confident that the land-holder would be fully informed of what was proposed and that there would be no pressures upon the person to reach such an agreement, one would feel more reassured. However, the subclause covers a wide-ranging area. Clause 32 (2) (a), (b) and (c) states:

(a) Conservation practices for land management including specifying management practices for avoiding or minimising soil deterioration, erosion and salination;

(b) Eradication and control procedures for pest plants and pest animals;

(c) Procedures for tree-growing to improve the amenity and productivity of private land and help prevent soil erosion;
Clause 32 (3) (a) states:

(3) A Code of Practice may—

(a) include any standards, prescriptions, guidelines, procedures or other specifications developed approved or adopted by the Department, Director-General or Minister; and

(b) be of general or limited application; and

(c) contain different provisions according to differences in time, place or circumstances.

These provisions do not appear to coincide with what the Minister said in his second-reading speech as reported at page 59 of *Hansard*. His speech stated, in part:

The primary objective of the new department is to manage the State’s public land and its natural resources in an integrated and balanced way.

If what we are talking about now in the Bill really applied to public land, I would find that acceptable but it does not because it says, in several clauses, that agreements reached may be endorsed by being included on the certificate of title of the property and, therefore to be binding on future owners of that land, on successors of the people in the contract, any charges made against the land by the Ministry will remain in perpetuity until paid.

Those sorts of conditions do not apply to agreements between private individuals. Although I recognise the need and the right of the Government to recoup what is rightfully due to come to it on behalf of taxpayers and citizens, nevertheless that sequence of provisions becomes a binding code of practice to enable the Ministry and the Government to have its way.

I am clearly opposed to provisions that remove the rights and privileges of individuals who have freehold land tenure. They should be entitled to use that land while, of course, not turning it into something that is a danger to the State and not doing anything illegal.

The Government of the day should attempt to see that the land is not destroyed by anti-conservation measures. We know more now than we knew 50 years ago. I realise the Minister will rise and say that I have said exactly what he wanted me to say but I am leading to this point: the Bill is potentially excessive and until one sees the regulations, one is voting for something unknown. I agree with other honourable members, who wish to analyse these provisions, that it is an intellectually obnoxious process into which we are entering.

I do not wish to vote in support of the Bill at this time because I do not really know what it is about. However, I presume that, with the practice of Parliament being such as it is, we will eventually pass the Bill. It will be passed and the regulations will eventually be written but there is no question that the Bill deserves either to be thrown out in the future or to be radically overhauled by a future Government unless the Government brings the regulations back to both Houses of Parliament for examination.

The three points I make are that the regulations must be reviewed; the Government should upgrade its legislative practice by not placing Parliament in this position again, and the more important the Bill, the more necessary it is for the regulations to be seen by honourable members before a Bill is passed; and the Government should stop rushing around in circles making changes, counterchanges and implementing schemes and should simply be quiet for a while and administer what it has, using the instruments and the fine staff it has to achieve the result that was being achieved in the past or to improve on that result.

It is interesting that when Sir Robert Menzies retired, someone asked him during an interview what he considered to be his major achievement. He did not speak in philosophical terms about politics or other issues; he simply said, “I like to think that we built a fairly efficient administration”.

My experience of watching this Government in action is that it could have achieved a great deal more if it had not rushed around in circles trying to make too great and too many philosophical changes. In the end, efficient administration depends less on
superstructures and more on the careful management and encouragement of individuals performing their jobs and providing material support to enable them to do that job.

It will be one of the several great failings of the Government that it has not achieved efficient administration. I suspect one reason is because it has the wrong goals; another reason is the lack of prudent use of financial funds available to support goals and the fact that a fair amount of the philosophy of the Government runs counter to the wishes of the people and the proof of what works, as shown by previous Administrations.

In those senses I am disappointed by the Bill, and I hope the Government will bring back the regulations to Parliament. I specifically repeat my invitation to the Minister for Education to inform honourable members about the 700 staff who will be lost to the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands under the arrangements proposed in the Bill.

Mr CATHIE (Minister for Education)—The Bill has the support of all parties. One point on which I agree with Opposition speakers is that the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands is an important service department, and the Bill improves the quality of the delivery of that service. The Government is structuring a new department to deliver improved on-the-ground services at the local level. In achieving that, some staff changes have been made, but I reject many of the statements made by members of the Opposition about the processes involved in the placement of staff within the restructured department. The Government did not ignore the qualifications, service, experience or preference of individual employees.

Mr B. J. Evans—Of course you did!

Mr CATHIE—The placement processes followed by the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands to bring former Ministries together were quite clear, and they were accepted by those working within the department.

Mr B. J. Evans—You can't believe that!

Mr CATHIE—The honourable member for Gippsland East does not want to hear what occurred because it does not fit in with the criticisms he has been making. All staff were asked to detail their skills and to indicate their preferences for the jobs available within the restructured department. More than 95 per cent of the staff were placed according to their first or second preferences. That is not a bad result.

Of the first group of 1600 people placed in the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands, there were fewer than eight grievances as a result of the restructuring, and those grievances were heard by a grievance committee. The second group of approximately 800 operational staff are currently being placed in the same way.

Allegations have been made about staff being transferred from one part of the State to another. Not one compulsory transfer of an officer has taken place since the department was established. In the majority of cases, officers have been transferred because opportunities were available for immediate employment, promotion or better long-term career paths. That is true across-the-board in the Public Service.

As honourable members would expect, most of the mobility has been among young members of staff; single people or those who are married with young families. Obviously, staff with older families have commitments to their communities, their children are placed in particular schools and they make their choices accordingly.

I reject the view put forward by the Opposition that a number of fundamental mistakes have been made in the restructure of the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands, just as I reject the attacks that continue to be made on the former director-general.

The Opposition has claimed that not enough work is being done in the important area of fire protection. The figures available to me do not support that. I do not intend to go into the details of the figures, but they certainly suggest that the total length and area of