PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Wednesday, 6 May 2009

(Extract from book 6)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

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Privileges Committee — Ms Darveniza, Mr D. Davis, Mr Drum, Mr Jennings, Ms Mikakos, Ms Pennicuik and Mr Rich-Phillips.

Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration — Mr Barber, Ms Broad, Mr Guy, Mr Hall, Mr Kavanagh, Mr Rich-Phillips and Mr Viney.

Standing Orders Committee — The President, Mr Dalla-Riva, Mr D. Davis, Mr Hall, Mr Lenders, Ms Pennicuik and Mr Viney.

Joint committees

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Dr S. O'Kane

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FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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Hall, Mr Peter Ronald	Eastern Victoria	Nats	Smith, Hon. Robert Frederick	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Hartland, Ms Colleen Mildred	Western Metropolitan	Greens	Somyurek, Mr Adem	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Huppert, Ms Jennifer Sue[1]	Southern Metropolitan	ALP	Tee, Mr Brian Lennox	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Theophanous, Hon. Theo Charles	Northern Metropolitan	ALP
Kavanagh, Mr Peter Damian	Western Victoria	DLP	Thornley, Mr Evan William[2]	Southern Metropolitan	ALP
Koch, Mr David Frank	Western Victoria	LP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
Kronberg, Mrs Janice Susan	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Viney, Mr Matthew Shaw	Eastern Victoria	ALP
			Vogels, Mr John Adrian	Western Victoria	LP

[1] Appointed 3 February 2009

[2] Resigned 9 January 2009

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Wednesday, 6 May 2009

The PRESIDENT (Hon. R. F. Smith) took the chair at 9.33 a.m. and read the prayer.

ROYAL ASSENT

Message read advising royal assent to:

6 April

Melbourne University Amendment Act

7 April

Associations Incorporation Amendment Act
Bus Safety Act
Equal Opportunity Amendment (Governance) Act
Melbourne Cricket Ground Act.

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Police: Ashburton station

To the honourable the President and members of the Legislative Council assembled in Parliament:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council the Victorian government's massive cutback in services at the Ashburton police station.

We oppose the massive reduction in service at the Ashburton police station, the removal of police from the local area and call on the Victorian state government to reverse their decision and restore all officers to the Ashburton police station.

By Mr D. DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (595 signatures).

Laid on table.

Gaming: poker machines

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council the objection of the members and management of clubs and the communities they serve to proposed legislative changes controlling the entitlements to gaming machines, which will be detrimental to the community, shifting gaming machines from not-for-profit sporting, RSL and social community clubs, to corporate entities.

The petitioners contend that the proposed legislative changes are likely to lead to a greater concentration of ownership of gaming machines, rather than a more competitive environment to the detriment of the industry and the community, undermining efforts to reduce problem gambling and forcing job losses and a reduction in activities, facilities and community support programs funded by the club sector.

The petitioners therefore request that the legislation be amended to include:

1. minimum 75 per cent entitlements for clubs that currently have machines, with the remaining 25 per cent subject to the proposed auction process;

2. a limit on the concentration of ownership of club entitlements of 420 entitlements and four venues;

3. a tax system based on venue revenue, not revenue per machine;

4. provisions that protect club access in each local government area to ensure that hotels do not take up all available entitlements in any area; and

5. bidding for club entitlements to be restricted to genuine local community clubs.

By Mr ATKINSON (Eastern Metropolitan) (16 694 signatures).

Laid on table.

Churchill Park Golf Club: future

To the members of the Legislative Council:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council a significant threat to the future of the Churchill Park Golf Club, Endeavour Hills, the only public golf course in the north of the city of Casey and calls on the Victorian Parliament to note that:

1. Churchill Park Golf Club provides a sport and recreation activity for the south-eastern community with all profits being returned into development of the club for the benefit of members and the community.

2. Parks Victoria and the minister for the environment are now forcing an unsustainable rent increase from $55.00 to $66 000 (GST inclusive), indexed and reviewed every three years to be paid by Churchill Park Golf Course, a non-profit club, or face eviction as part of the state government program to extracting maximum rental from occupants of Crown Land leases such as Churchill Park Golf Club for state government coffers.

3. Unsustainable high lease charges imposed by Parks Victoria and the state government combined with the economic downturn facing Victoria, will threaten the immediate viability of Churchill Park Golf Course.

4. Failure to sign an exorbitant rental lease may result in the state government and Parks Victoria evicting Churchill golf club from their home of 39 years, with the course either being offered to a third party or being deemed surplus to government requirements and sold off for housing development.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council of Victoria calls on the Victorian Minister for Environment and Climate Change, responsible for Parks Victoria, and one of three Labor MLCs representing the electorate of Narre Warren North to work with the Churchill Park board to find a quick and speedy resolution which will protect the future and viability of the golf course.

By Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) (477 signatures).

Laid on table.

Ordered to be considered next day on motion of Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan).

BUDGET PAPERS 2009–10

Mr JENNINGS (Minister for Environment and Climate Change) — By leave, and on behalf of my colleague the Treasurer and Leader of the Government, I move:

That there be laid before this house a copy of the following 2009–10 budget papers:

(a) Treasurer's speech (budget paper 1);

(b) strategy and outlook (budget paper 2);

(c) service delivery (budget paper 3);

(d) statement of finances (incorporating quarterly financial report 3) (budget paper 4); and

(e) budget overview.

Motion agreed to.

Laid on table.

Ordered to be considered next day on motion of Mr JENNINGS (Minister for Environment and Climate Change).

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

Report 2008

Mr PAKULA (Minister for Industry and Trade), by leave, presented report for 2008.

Laid on table.

MELBOURNE COLLEGE OF DIVINITY

Report 2008

Mr PAKULA (Minister for Industry and Trade), by leave, presented report for 2008.

Laid on table.

LAW REFORM COMMITTEE

Alternative dispute resolution and restorative justice

Mr SCHEFFER (Eastern Victoria) presented report, including appendices, extracts from proceedings and minority report, together with transcripts of evidence.

Laid on table.

Ordered that report be printed.

Mr SCHEFFER (Eastern Victoria) — I move:

That the Council take note of the report.

Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) and restorative justice are increasingly used in Victoria and form part of a wider movement towards non-adversarial justice, which seeks to explore innovative and alternative means to deal with civil disputes and criminal offending outside the courtroom.

The Law Reform Committee was asked to look at the reach and use of ADR and restorative justice in Victoria and to consider ways to improve access to justice and outcomes in civil and criminal cases. The committee examined whether ADR and restorative justice could reduce the need for contact with the courts, especially for disadvantaged groups and individuals. The committee also considered whether a form of government regulation of ADR providers is appropriate and feasible.

In the civil jurisdiction ADR processes such as mediation, conciliation and arbitration have emerged in response to concerns that the adversarial system may not always provide a speedy or cost-effective means of resolving a dispute and may not adequately address the human dimension of a conflict. Since the 1970s ADR has evolved and expanded into a large, highly diverse field. Today there is a proliferation of private and public agencies currently offering a range of ADR services in Victoria.

While there is potential for ADR to deliver a justice system that is fair, effective and accessible to all Victorians, including those from disadvantaged groups, the committee's final report identifies a number of challenges. There is a need to ensure that appropriate cases are channelled to ADR processes and programs and that Victorians are able to find the ADR service that is most appropriate for them. There is also a need to ensure that ADR services are of high quality and that the outcomes of ADR are fair and just. The committee heard evidence that ADR has the potential to improve access to justice for Victorians by providing a wide range of services that may be cheaper and simpler to access than courts and tribunals.

The committee has recommended a series of strategies, including better coordination amongst ADR providers, reducing the barriers to people seeking to access ADR services, increasing dispute resolution skills in the general community and ensuring quality and consistency of ADR services in Victoria through voluntary accreditation. The committee also recommended that the government work with the commonwealth and the other states to consider whether national accreditation models should be introduced for providers offering other types of ADR, such as conciliation and arbitration.

Restorative justice programs have operated in Victoria's juvenile justice system since the 1990s. However, restorative justice programs remain at the periphery of the Victorian criminal justice system. At present there are only two programs operating in the criminal justice system — the youth justice group conferencing program in the Children's Court and the pilot young adult restorative justice group conferencing at the Neighbourhood Justice Centre. Both these programs use the group conference model that involves a meeting of the offender, victim and community members to discuss the offence and to determine an appropriate response. This process complements rather than replaces traditional criminal justice responses.

The committee's research and consultation found that restorative justice programs offer benefits for offenders, victims and the broader community. Evidence suggests that restorative justice programs can divert offenders away from the criminal justice system, reduce rates of reoffending and address the underlying causes of offending. For victims, restorative justice can be empowering, increasing satisfaction with and confidence in the justice system and leading to apology and reparation. While recognising the potential benefits of restorative justice, the committee has suggested a more careful and staged approach in this area.

The committee's recommendations in relation to restorative justice aim to enhance the operation of current programs and to make restorative justice more widely available in Victoria in appropriate cases. While the committee found that service providers were currently providing high levels of restorative justice services, it has recommended accreditation and increased training of service providers to ensure service quality and consistency.

The committee also found that there is the potential to use restorative justice more widely in Victoria, although the expansion needs to be undertaken cautiously and be subject to ongoing evaluation. The committee has, therefore, recommended a staged expansion of restorative justice programs to suitable adult offenders; a pilot program using restorative justice for some more serious offences, excluding family violence and sexual offences; and a trial restorative justice program for suitable offenders after they have been sentenced by a court.

The committee received evidence that participation in a restorative justice process may be even more confronting for offenders than traditional criminal justice responses. Participants in the inquiry overwhelmingly agreed that restorative justice is not a soft option. The committee's report emphasises that it is important the community be appropriately informed about restorative justice and recommends measures to increase community awareness and understanding of restorative justice, in particular its underlying philosophy and potential outcomes.

While the extension of restorative justice programs is not without controversy, the committee believes that these approaches have the potential to significantly complement existing criminal justice approaches and improve outcomes in the criminal justice system. The approach outlined in the committee's report will ensure that any risks are minimised as offenders' participation will be dependent on a comprehensive suitability assessment, and skilled professionals will implement programs and be subject to continuing monitoring and evaluation.

The committee's report also notes significant evidence gaps in relation to both alternative dispute resolution and restorative justice, and urges the government and the justice system to build a better evidence base for future program and policy development. We need to know more about what works in the areas of ADR and restorative justice; and what does not work; and why.

This inquiry has been a significant undertaking, extending over 18 months. In the course of this inquiry

the committee sought the views of a wide range of people with an interest in ADR and restorative justice, and I would like to thank all of those who contributed: judges, magistrates, tribunal members, lawyers, service providers, community groups, professional organisations, government agencies and other members of the community.

In particular I would like to thank everyone who attended the committee's Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities forum and the Indigenous Australian Communities forum. These forums were arranged in conjunction with the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service. I thank them for their valuable assistance.

In conclusion I thank the members of the committee: the deputy chair and shadow Attorney-General in the Assembly, Robert Clark; members of the Assembly Colin Brooks, Luke Donnellan and Martin Foley; and members of the Council Jan Kronberg and Edward O'Donohue for their considered contributions and insight.

For their professional skill, dedication and unfailing attention to detail I would also like to thank committee staff: executive officer, Kerryn Riseley; researchers, Susan Brent and Deanna Foong; and office manager, Helen Ross-Soden. Kate Buchanan, who left before the inquiry was completed, should also be acknowledged for her initial research that helped set us on the right track. I commend the report to the house and look forward to the government's response.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I am also pleased to make a brief contribution on the tabling of this report of the Law Reform Committee's inquiry into alternative dispute resolution and restorative justice. At the outset I would like to echo the comments made by the committee's chair and acknowledge the work of the staff of the committee: Ms Kerryn Riseley, Ms Deanna Foong, Ms Kate Buchanan, Ms Susan Brent, Ms Helen Ross-Soden and Mr Ben Symon.

The committee staff at all times conducted themselves in a very professional fashion and delivered to the committee succinct, precise and accurate research. I think all committee members would agree that the committee has been very lucky to have the work of the staff. I also acknowledge in particular the committee's chair, Johann Scheffer; and the deputy chair, the shadow Attorney-General in the Assembly, Robert Clark, for their efforts in putting this report together.

Alternative dispute resolution is a measure that has been in the justice system for a significant period of time, but alternative dispute resolution has not had the macro approach that perhaps it should have had. It is now a critical part of the civil and criminal systems. In my opinion, the report outlines very well some of the steps that could be taken to make greater use of this measure whilst operating within the parameters of the legal system we enjoy in Victoria. Having parties come together to negotiate and mediate an acceptable resolution to both parties is, in most circumstances, clearly more beneficial than the adversarial nature of a court or tribunal hearing. This report details some ways in which alternative dispute resolution can be enhanced and used by more parties in our system, and I encourage the government to look seriously at the recommendations that have been made in that regard.

However, I cannot endorse the conclusions reached by the majority of the committee members with regard to restorative justice. In my opinion, and in the opinion of the minority that has submitted a minority report, the conclusions reached by the majority of the committee go too far with regard to restorative justice. This must be seen in the context of the fact that there is a great deal of concern in the community — and people may have an opinion about whether this is justified or not — about sentencing and about criminals not receiving adequate terms for crimes they have committed. In that context I think this report on restorative justice gets it wrong.

The committee makes a number of recommendations about extending restorative justice in our criminal justice system. But by doing so it pre-empts a number of trials that the government has commissioned. In fact in its recommendations the committee cites these trials, and its recommendations are subject to the findings of these trials. However, until that data can be analysed, it is pre-empting work that the Attorney-General has commissioned; it is pre-empting conclusions that have not yet been made. I make the point that Victoria Police also held a similar position. In the course of the inquiry, members of Victoria Police were asked if they would support an expansion of restorative justice. Their answer was that it is difficult to support this initiative, which is the rollout of further restorative justice programs, without data. To me, that is the fundamental issue.

In the Victorian jurisdiction there is very little data that the committee can rely upon in making the recommendations it has. To me, it has been pre-emptive in doing so. It has not allowed the pilot programs commissioned by the Attorney-General to run their course and the data collected to be properly analysed before making further recommendations.

As I said at the outset about restorative justice, this must be seen in the context of the fact that there is a great deal of concern in the community about criminals not receiving the sentences they should and that are appropriate for the crimes they have committed. These sentences do not deliver the deterrents they should. I am concerned that the potential for the expansion of restorative justice may further undermine the community's confidence in the criminal justice system when it is not supported by adequate data from the Victorian jurisdiction.

I make the point, too, that the interests of victims must be paramount. Whilst in a theoretical sense the interests of victims may well be advanced by the potential for the adoption and expansion of restorative justice, with a lot of these issues the devil is in the detail. What concerns me is that victims may be coerced into participating in a restorative justice program, whether subtly or otherwise, and this may in effect compromise a victim's capacity to feel that justice has been served.

I endorse the recommendations and findings of the committee report in relation to alternative dispute resolution, but as submitted in the minority report, the majority of the committee has gone too far with its recommendations with regard to restorative justice. We should wait until the data is in and can be properly analysed before pre-empting the conclusions to be reached.

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise to make a contribution on the motion that the Council take note of the Law Reform Committee's report on its inquiry into alternative dispute resolution and restorative justice. I go on record as saying I am a very strong advocate for the sentiments contained in the minority report and am a signatory to that, and I speak in my capacity as one of the contributors to the minority report.

I have to commend the fine work and diligent approach of the chair of the committee, Johan Scheffer, and in general the professionalism and good company he provided, especially when he, the executive officer Kerryn Risely, and I were on an investigative tour of alternative dispute resolution and restorative justice in New Zealand. I also want to commend the splendid and erudite input of our deputy chair, who remains an enormous plank of credibility on the Law Reform Committee. I cannot have enough praise for his contributions on an ongoing basis.

I especially want to make mention of the fine work of the staff of this committee. The work of Kerryn Riseley, Deanna Foong, Kate Buchanan, Susan Brent, Helen Ross-Soden and latterly Ben Symon has been splendid indeed, with great attention to detail, thoroughness, enthusiasm and dedication that I imagine would be hard to top. I want to congratulate all of them on their fine work and their support for our efforts towards the smooth operation of this process.

In general, the members who provided the minority report support the tenets of the bulk of the report focusing on a series of recommendations on alternative dispute resolution. We all recognise the importance of finding a means of expediting matters through the criminal justice system and the legal system in general, and helping to reduce costs and make the whole process less intimidating for participants in the process.

There were many laudable elements in the raft of recommendations contained in that report. Where those recommendations focus on heightening awareness amongst the professions and the community of the opportunities for and the benefits of alternative dispute resolution, and also ongoing professional development — and, hopefully, ongoing commitment to this process — I commend many elements of that.

Focusing on the recommendations and what all this is about, I want to go on the record as saying that as I trawled through the recommendations and looked at the draft report I was very concerned that much energy had been put into the process of educating people within the criminal justice system and the community and providing support for these processes. The emphasis was always on providing a mechanism to make it easier for the offender. I was stunned that I had to get to recommendation 49 about something looking for improvements in the criminal justice system before the word 'victim' was used. I remain stunned and concerned by that emphasis.

We in the minority hold the view that it is both unsound now and dangerous to extend the use of the restorative justice processes to encompass adult offenders. We consider that restorative justice has merit because it is part of a process. I have had lengthy discussions with police in this country and in New Zealand on the importance of diversionary programs for young offenders. Everyone wants to keep young offenders out of custodial environments where they will learn to become more entrenched and develop a criminal mindset at a time when their brains are not fully developed and fully discerning about the sorts of company they are keeping and the risks they are actually taking. It is really important that restorative justice and the strategic intent of the diversionary program to keep young offenders out of the custodial sentence process is maintained.

It is a bridge too far to have it extended beyond people in the 18-to-25-year age group and contemplate taking it into the age group of people over 25 years. It is based on very lightweight, almost ephemeral research. It is pre-emptive in that it takes on information based on a fledgling pilot program that is by no means complete and has a considerable time to run. I understand that, through the course of this inquiry which has been going on for such a long time, the people who are part of the inquiry process have lived and breathed this for a long time and it has really almost become part of their psyche. People might have been swept away and not have stood back and looked in the most objective light possible, in the cold light of day, with a really harsh analysis of the material that has come forward.

It is just too much of a leap of faith to say that the principles that have been used relatively effectively in diversionary programs can extend to young offenders, those under 18 years of age, meeting and hearing directly from their victims, looking their victims in the eye and hopefully becoming chastened in their attitude, empathetic with the suffering of their victim and not becoming recidivists and repeat offenders. If we were to march along and accept the spectrum recommended by the majority, I predict a backlash from the community, including people presiding over organisations such as those against lenient sentences and for victims of crime and so on. They will be aghast at the recommendations of the majority because they will see this as a further diminution of proper justice being meted out to offenders. It is a very dangerous trend.

It seems to me that the proponents of the majority report have tunnel vision and have been swept away by feelings of their own goodness and their own positive intent on this. One needs to be very harsh in the analysis of the material available.

I think it is a dangerous precedent. I believe the majority will have to brace themselves for a considerable degree of negative public reaction to this. I am just hoping there will be a sunset clause or a review process introduced to this so we do not go too far along this course. It is a bridge too far, and I have very strong feelings about that. Victoria already has the lowest rate of incarceration compared with the national rate. Already we have a very low incarceration rate of the people who actually show up at the Children's Court: it is 1.25 per cent compared to a national average of just over 5 per cent, so we are on a slippery slope.

These are the heartfelt comments of somebody who has spent a lot of time immersed in this subject, and I recommend not only the reading of the report and its recommendations, which we support, but also an in-depth examination of the minority report.

Motion agreed to.

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

Legislation Reform (Repeals No. 4) Bill

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) presented report, including appendices.

Laid on table.

Ordered to be printed.

Ordered that Council take note of report on motion of Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan).

Alert Digest No. 5

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) presented *Alert Digest* No. 5 of 2009, including appendices.

Laid on table.

Ordered to be printed.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Budget estimates 2008–09

The Clerk, pursuant to Parliamentary Committees Act, presented government response.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Auditor-General —

Report on Management of School Funds, May 2009.

Report on Results of Audits for Entities with other than 30 June 2008 Balance Dates, May 2009.

Report on The Channel Deepening Project, May 2009.

Report on The New Royal Children's Hospital — a public private partnership, May 2009.

Auditor-General's Office — Annual Plan, 2009–10.

Australian Crime Commission — Report, 2007–08.

Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE — Report, 2008 (two papers).

Box Hill Institute of TAFE — Report, 2008.

Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE — Report, 2008.

Chisholm Institute of TAFE — Report, 2008.

Deakin University — Report, 2008.

Driver Education Centre of Australia Ltd — Report, 2008.

East Gippsland Institute of TAFE — Report, 2008.

Gordon Institute of TAFE — Report, 2008.

Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE — Report, 2008 (two papers).

Holmesglen Institute of TAFE — Report, 2008.

Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 — Notices pursuant to section 32(3) in relation to Statutory Rule Nos. 32, 36 and 37.

Kangan Batman Institute of TAFE — Report, 2008.

La Trobe University — Report, 2008.

Major Events (Aerial Advertising) Act 2007 — Minister's Order of 31 March 2009 in relation to the 2008/09 Sheffield Shield Final.

Monash University — Report, 2008.

Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE — Report, 2008.

Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 —

Government Response to the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee's Report on Local Economic Development in Outer Suburban Melbourne.

Government Response to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's 82nd Report on the Review of the findings and recommendations of the Auditor-General's reports tabled July 2006–February 2007.

Planning and Environment Act 1987 — Notices of Approval of the following amendments to planning schemes:

Banyule Planning Scheme — Amendment C85.

Bass Coast Planning Scheme — Amendment C91.

Bayside Planning Scheme — Amendment C83.

Boroondara Planning Scheme — Amendment C109.

Cardinia Planning Scheme — Amendment C129.

Casey Planning Scheme — Amendment C121.

Darebin Planning Scheme — Amendment C117.

East Gippsland Planning Scheme — Amendment C69.

Glen Eira Planning Scheme — Amendment C65.

Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme — Amendments C74 and C83.

Greater Geelong Planning Scheme — Amendment C156.

Hume Planning Scheme — Amendment C112.

Kingston Planning Scheme — Amendment C127.

Manningham Planning Scheme — Amendment C81.

Maribyrnong Planning Scheme — Amendments C74 and C78.

Maroondah Planning Scheme — Amendment C100.

Melbourne Planning Scheme — Amendment C144.

Moonee Valley Planning Scheme — Amendment C83.

Moorabool Planning Scheme — Amendment C41.

Moreland Planning Scheme — Amendments C82 and C110.

Mornington Peninsula Planning Scheme — Amendment C123.

Northern Grampians Planning Scheme — Amendment C14.

Port Phillip Planning Scheme — Amendment C68.

Stonnington Planning Scheme — Amendments C90, C95, C100 and C102.

Surf Coast Planning Scheme — Amendment C43 (Part 1).

Swan Hill Planning Scheme — Amendment C31.

Wangaratta Planning Scheme — Amendment C31.

Wellington Planning Scheme — Amendment C52.

Whitehorse Planning Scheme — Amendment C136.

Whittlesea Planning Scheme — Amendments C97 and C108.

Wodonga Planning Scheme — Amendments C54 and C64.

Yarra Planning Scheme — Amendments C121 and C123.

Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme — Amendment C83.

Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology — Report, 2008.

South West Institute of TAFE — Report, 2008.

Statutory Rules under the following Acts of Parliament:

Corrections Act 1986 — No. 40.

Electricity Safety Act 1998 — Nos. 32, 36 and 37.

Freedom of Information Act 1982 — No. 33.

Magistrates' Court Act 1989 — Nos. 34, 35 and 39.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — Nos. 31 and 38.

Valuation of Land Act 1960 — No. 41.

Swinburne University of Technology — Report, 2008.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 —

Minister's infringements offence consultation certificate under section 6A(3) in respect of Statutory Rule No. 36.

Ministers' exception certificate under section 8(4) in respect of Statutory Rule No. 34.

Ministers' exemption certificates under section 9(6) in respect of Statutory Rules Nos. 29 and 41.

Sunraysia Institute of TAFE — Report, 2008.

University of Ballarat — Report, 2008 (two papers).

University of Melbourne — Report, 2008.

William Angliss Institute of TAFE — Report, 2008.

Wodonga Institute of TAFE — Report, 2008.

Victoria University — Report, 2008 (two papers).

A proclamation of the Governor in Council fixing an operative date in respect of the following act:

Fundraising Appeals and Consumer Acts Amendment Act 2009 — Sections 6(2), 7, 8, 10 and 11 — 4 May 2009 *(Gazette No. G17, 21 April 2009)*.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

General business

Mr D. DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — By leave, I move:

That precedence be given to the following general business on this day:

(1) notice of motion 38, standing in my name, relating to the production of certain documents relating to the carbon pollution reduction scheme;

(2) notice of motion 36, standing in my name, relating to the production of certain documents relating to the company Better Place;

(3) order of the day 8, for the second reading of the Environment Protection Amendment (Beverage Container Deposit and Recovery Scheme) Bill 2009;

(4) the notice of motion given this day by myself, relating to the failure of the government to provide Victorians with appropriate infrastructure and other services; and

(5) order of the day 7, for the resumption of debate on the motion acknowledging the tragic impact and role and responsibilities of the state government and royal commission in the aftermath of the Victorian bushfires.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Geelong: port usage

Mr KOCH (Western Victoria) — Relocating Victoria's vehicle import and export movements from the control of the Port of Melbourne Corporation to an expanded Geelong port facility would create between 1000 and 1500 new jobs in the state's largest provincial city. Further expansion and utilisation of existing port facilities in Geelong and the new industrial development on Heales Road will also create many flow-on opportunities for the region's economy, especially in relation to automotive manufacturing and associated industries and jobs.

To sustain efficiency in shipping movements, consideration by the channels authority to widen and deepen existing channels would be necessary. This would be paramount for greater ship management and safety. Storing motor vehicles is space intensive. Total container trade through the port of Melbourne, which currently handles vehicle movements, is expected to quadruple from 1.9 million containers per year to 8 million containers by 2035. This growth will require a substantial investment in space and infrastructure, adding to traffic congestion through Melbourne's already overstressed heavy vehicle corridor.

A strategy that relocates vehicle movements to the port of Geelong is a win-win situation for all involved. Reallocating the movement of motor vehicle import and export to Geelong would ease the economic hardship faced by many workers in Geelong, reduce congestion on Melbourne's heavy vehicle route, and allow valuable space within the port of Melbourne to be better utilised for Victoria's import and export movements.

Michael Mitchell

Mr P. DAVIS (Eastern Victoria) — I had the privilege of being at Tidal River last Sunday, 3 May, and was at the finish line for a most remarkable feat achieved by Michael Mitchell, who walked the 6022 kilometres from Cape York to Wilson's Promontory in just under a year — in fact, 363 days — to raise awareness of cancer and to fundraise for its treatment.

Michael Mitchell is an average sort of bloke who just decided that he would give his time to organising this walk, and in fact he walked almost six days a week for nearly a year through some of the most rugged country in Australia — certainly through all the eastern highlands.

I had the opportunity of meeting him by chance on the Australian Alps walking track around Easter time and was immediately impressed by his story. He had received some media coverage and that was the objective: to raise the awareness of cancer. His is a remarkable achievement and should be acknowledged by all Australians as something that is a personal endeavour and of great significance. I understand he is the first person ever to achieve that remarkable feat.

International Workers Memorial Day

Mr SCHEFFER (Eastern Victoria) — It was a great pleasure to join the commemoration ceremony for International Workers Memorial Day at the annual wreath-laying ceremony in Morwell on 29 April.

International Workers Memorial Day commemorates and honours the men, women and children who have become ill, have been injured or died as a result of their employment. I congratulate the Gippsland asbestos related diseases support group and the Gippsland Trades and Labour Council for organising the event.

Wreaths and flower tributes were laid for husbands and family members who had died of asbestos-related diseases or as a result of other workplace tragedies. I think there was hardly a person present who had not experienced the grief and loss of someone in the family or a close friend or neighbour whose life was cut short while at work.

We have heard the statistics many times. Worldwide, one worker dies every 15 seconds — that is, 6000 every day. In Victoria there have been 227 deaths since 2001; as at March this year, the number stands at 11. Organisation and campaigning drive changes in the law that oblige employers to ensure worker health and safety.

The members of both the Gippsland Trades and Labour Council and the Gippsland asbestos-related support group have been critically important in raising community awareness and organising workers to ensure that pressure is kept up. The people of Gippsland owe both these organisations a great debt.

Veterans: support

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I always find it very moving when I attend Anzac Day functions. It is a time to reflect and to pay respect to those men and women who sacrificed so much in times of war. This year I spent time talking with a number of veterans who experienced the horror of war decades ago. It is difficult to comprehend what they endured. In 2009 you would assume that non-acknowledgement of and the lack of services to deal with the trauma associated with military action would be a thing of the past. Alas, the culture of some organisations has not caught up with contemporary society.

A young woman I know has contacted me expressing frustration about the neglect of her brother by the army. This is a family I have known over the past year who lived in fear for the whole time he served in Baghdad. Whilst he returned physically unharmed, he has suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. Because he left the army and returned to the reserves there was no apparent goodwill or duty of care extended to him. He had to agitate for a single session with a psychologist. He was told that as he is now in the reserves he is not eligible for any further assistance.

I find this appalling. We owe it to everyone, regardless of whether they remain in the institution they served, to support them in dealing with the challenges they face when they return to civilian life.

Ballarat: soccer stadium

Mr VOGELS (Western Victoria) — I recently met with Tony Beggs, president of the Ballarat and District Soccer Association, and Andrew Burgess of the Ballarat Red Devils team regarding the construction of a new soccer stadium, including two synthetic pitches, at Morshead Park in Ballarat. The Ballarat and District Soccer Association completed a feasibility study for the new stadium in December 2008. Some western Melbourne teams play home games at Ballarat, and the introduction of the South West Wimmera team has seen soccer become a 48-week-per-year sport in Ballarat. Ballarat has become a home for soccer across southern and western Victoria, with more than 1500 players travelling to Ballarat over recent years.

This provides a significant economic boost to the city and could, if properly harnessed, give Ballarat a huge economic lift, similar to what the Central Coast Mariners football team does for Gosford and the Geelong Cats team in the Australian Football League does. I am not an advertising guru, but my suggestion would be to give a soccer team a name distinctive to the area, such as ‘Ballarat Gold’. The City of Ballarat commissioned a feasibility study to look at the benefits for Ballarat of the development of the soccer precinct, and to no-one’s surprise all the boxes — that is, the construction, the economic benefit, community strengthening, the environmental benefit and sports overview — were ticked in its favour.

A new soccer stadium in Ballarat, financed through existing funding streams and underspent Regional

Infrastructure Development Fund money, would promote a healthy lifestyle, attract more teams and games to the area and create much-needed jobs in Ballarat.

Rail: Traralgon station

Mr HALL (Eastern Victoria) — It has been brought to my attention that the car park at the Traralgon railway station is the only car park attached to a manned station in V/Line's eastern region that does not have closed-circuit television (CCTV). Closed-circuit television is of significant assistance in curbing vandalism and theft in car parks. Traralgon is not immune to the occurrence of such activities, and there is no doubt that CCTV would be helpful in deterring those illegal activities and assist in identifying the perpetrators. Given that many V/Locity and Sprinter train services start and terminate at the Traralgon railway station, it is a key station on the Bairnsdale line. Consequently it is used by a great number of people within the Gippsland region.

I therefore call on the government to address this matter and provide funding so that closed-circuit television can be installed in the Traralgon railway station car park.

Anzac Day: Ivanhoe

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak about a pre-Anzac Day service attended on 19 April at the Ivanhoe RSL. I was proud to march to the memorial alongside members of the RSL and my parliamentary colleagues Mr Matthew Guy from this house and Mr Craig Langdon, the member for Ivanhoe in the other place. To commemorate Anzac Day, we laid a wreath and paid tribute to the men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice. We shall always honour the memory of these brave soldiers. Lest we forget.

Reservoir Views Primary School: opening

Mr ELASMAR — On another matter, I attended the opening of Reservoir Views Primary School by the Minister for Education, Bronwyn Pike. Also attending this historic occasion were my parliamentary colleagues Jenny Mikakos and Robin Scott, the member for Preston in the other place. The new school accommodates students from Burbank Primary and Keon Park primary schools — a good beginning to a great initiative.

Whittlesea: broadband access

Mr ELASMAR — On a further matter, I am pleased to report that Whittlesea council has already begun to install fibre-optic cabling in order to deliver a range of broadband-enabled services in all new homes, shops and business premises in the Whittlesea area. Property developers are working with telecommunications carriers to connect fibre-optic cabling. I congratulate the council on its initiative.

Caulfield hospital: Helmsmen Kiosk Auxiliary

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — I have had occasion recently to visit the Caulfield hospital on a fairly regular basis, and I would like to put on record my praise for a group of people who are working industriously to support the hospital, and have done so for a significant time. They are the members of the volunteers at the hospital, called the Helmsmen Kiosk Auxiliary. The kiosk was founded on 18 February 1979 to raise donations for essential equipment for the hospital. It is interesting to note that when the kiosk was first established in 1979 its members raised $740 and in 2008 they raised $52 665. The total funds raised to date are $817 421. This is an extraordinary amount of money raised by a dedicated group of volunteers.

I particularly want to put on record my praise and recognition of Ada Short, who is integral to the success of this kiosk. She has done a phenomenal job over several years in keeping up the enthusiasm of its members and in promoting the reputation of the organisation. She has been instrumental in getting such a huge total of donations. Ada and her team need to be commended. In this day and age what they have done is commendable. Well done.

International No Diet Day

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — Today is International No Diet Day. It was established in 1992 by British feminist, Mary Evans Young, who recovered from anorexia to become an anti-diet campaigner. International No Diet Day is observed on 6 May every year. It seeks to raise awareness of the dangers in dieting, to assert everyone's right to health and self-esteem, and to be a celebration of body acceptance and the diversity of body shapes.

In Australia we spend over $1 million a day on dieting to achieve weight loss. Very few people experience long-term results, but the industry continues to grow.

The rates of obesity in society continue to grow. According to the Eating Disorders Foundation of Victoria, dieting is the no. 1 risk factor in developing an eating disorder. Today, 6 May, I would like to wish all Victorians — and, judging by their reactions in the chamber this morning, also all my colleagues here in

the upper house — a very happy International No Diet Day.

Manufacturing: electricity supply

Mr DALLA-RIVA (Eastern Metropolitan) — I am very pleased as the shadow industry minister to have visited the premises of some major Victorian employers and manufacturers. On 23 April I visited a significant manufacturer in my electorate of Eastern Metropolitan Region.

The company in question has factories all over the world. This particular plant is highly competitive, having benefited from a very large investment in state-of-the-art technology. But it soon became evident that despite all that investment in state-of-the-art technology, the plant's future in Victoria was in serious jeopardy not because of anything it had or had not done but because of the laziness and incompetence of the Brumby Labor government. After no more than 5 minutes on the factory floor there was a blackout that lasted over 20 minutes. The cause of the blackout was a state power grid that has suffered from chronic underinvestment by Labor.

This is not an isolated incident. The cost of each blackout to this organisation runs into the millions of dollars. Sensitive electronic equipment designed for First World conditions is routinely damaged, machinery designed for First World conditions has to be disassembled and cleaned. I observed that the product is wasted and must be thrown out, and most importantly, the production time lost means that customer orders cannot be met.

It took the plant over 4 hours to recover from this 20-minute blackout, and it took it 4 hours to get its machinery cleaned and again working efficiently. One of the plant managers I spoke to said that he had worked all over the world — in Europe, New Zealand and Asia — and he described Victoria's electricity network as 'Third World'.

Crime: Eastern Metropolitan Region

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — The Victorian government is delivering a state which is a great place to live, work and raise a family. This has particularly been evident in Whitehorse and Maroondah, where we have seen a significant reduction in the overall crime rate.

In Whitehorse the crime rate has fallen by 6.9 per cent in the 12 months to March 2009, with property damage down 6.7 per cent and drug-related offences down some 5.6 per cent. These are very much facts and show a 12.8 per cent reduction in assaults in Whitehorse. Particularly pleasing in Maroondah is the reduction in drug-related offences, which fell some 29 per cent in the 12 months to March. Overall, the rate of crime fell by 4.6 per cent in Maroondah.

Victoria has indeed become a safer place in the last decade, with the overall crime rate falling by some 23 per cent since 2000. I welcome these figures, and I congratulate the Victorian government for allocating resources. I thank the police and the former police commissioner in particular for her efforts in helping to make the eastern suburbs a safer place to live, work and raise a family.

Vera May Canny

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) — Last Tuesday the light dimmed in Melbourne's east. A lady of grace, fortitude, faith and a golden heart left this life. For those of us who loved her and knew her, the passing of Vera May Canny is a great loss.

Vera, a mother of 4, grandmother of 11, great-grandmother of 6 and foster mother for many others was always a woman ahead of her time. Long before the principles of multiculturalism were enshrined in this country, Vera Canny was warmly welcoming wave after wave of immigrants. Many Europeans were arriving in Canberra, where Vera lived at the time, to work on the Snowy Mountains scheme.

Vera was instrumental in the development of the Good Neighbour Council there. This meant organising social events over the early years for many migrants. In order to be more fully engaged with this new community, Vera also became fluent in Italian and joined the Dante Alighieri Society. The benefits to the fledgling communities of her efforts in engaging individuals in this way during the 50s and 60s cannot be overstated. Vera was to become renowned for her performances at social events, singing in Italian and playing the piano. Later Vera worked tirelessly in support of the Royal Women's Hospital through her high-profile role in the sponsorship of the Miss Teenage Victoria Quest.

A talented artist and former president of the Donvale Bowls Club, Vera will be remembered for her generosity of spirit. Vera, ever our inspiration and the exemplar, has left us but will be cherished forever.

Paul Turner

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — I take this opportunity to speak on the passing of Paul Turner, an active and energetic community member in Geelong,

an Australian Labor Party member and a wonderful friend to the many who knew him.

Paul was a regular contributor to the *Geelong Advertiser* 'letters to the editor' column, demonstrating his vigour and energy to put forward what he believed was right for his community.

It was fitting to see a contribution made by a reader and a friend of Paul's who wrote a letter to the newspaper's editor in his memory. I would like to share a few lines with the house:

> Paul cared deeply and passionately about those things in life that really matter, family, community, environment, heritage, animal welfare and social justice.
>
> He made us laugh and think, and challenged us to examine our collective conscience on a variety of important issues.
>
> His letters were insightful, passionate and always entertaining, his rapier wit legendary and so very appreciated by his legion of fans in the Geelong community.
>
> We cheered as he championed the causes of the underdog and gave his support to others who did the same.
>
> Paul's community-minded spirit and compassionate heart will be treasured in our memories forever.
>
> We will miss him very much. He has left a very big space on the page for someone else to fill!

I, too, would like to extend my condolences to Paul's family. He will be sadly missed, and the Geelong community is the poorer without him. Vale, Paul Turner.

Environment: emission trading scheme

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I rise this morning to rejoice at the wonderful news from Canberra this week that the planet is in fact not doomed after all.

Everyone will remember that before the last federal election, the current Prime Minister told us what a dreadful thing the Liberals were doing, endangering the very future of the planet by not bringing in an emission trading scheme (ETS) at some stage. The then opposition spokesman, now the environment minister, told us that we could not wait for even one more day without an ETS.

It seems, Acting President, that things may have changed. It seems that we here on this earth are safer than we were led to believe. Maybe it could be that the people of Australia were conned by the Labor Party before the last election; there is certainly no doubt that the Greens were conned before the last federal election. The point to be made in all this is that if we do not need an ETS, if we do not need an ETS next year, and if we do not need it until 2011, there is a fair chance that we do not need an ETS at all. It is about time the Prime Minister, who knows what he is talking about in this regard, got up and put this global warming nonsense to bed once and for all.

Rail: Epping–South Morang line

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — On 1 May I was pleased to attend with the Premier, the Minister for Public Transport, Lynne Kosky, the member for Mill Park in the other place, Lily D'Ambrosio, and the member for Yan Yean in the other place, Danielle Green, the announcement of the South Morang rail extension project. On behalf of my constituents, the residents of Melbourne's growing northern suburbs, I want to congratulate and thank the Premier for this important announcement.

As part of its focus on growth, investment and creating jobs, the Brumby government has committed $562.3 million towards improving and expanding Melbourne's metropolitan rail network along the Epping line to South Morang. This government's focus on transport infrastructure was outlined in the $38 billion Victorian transport plan that was released last December, the first tranche of which was delivered in the state budget yesterday.

Earlier this year the Premier and Minister for Public Transport opened the new duplicated rail bridge over Merri Creek. The completion of this project has allowed more trains to pass through Clifton Hill, improving services for the 60 000 commuters who travel every day along the Epping and Hurstbridge lines. The completion of this work has made possible the extension of the Epping line.

Up to 460 new jobs will be created during construction of the duplication of a single track between Keon Park and Epping and 3.5 kilometres of new double track from Epping to South Morang. The new South Morang station will have parking for 500 cars, a bike cage, be integrated with local bus routes, and include a taxi rank. It will not create any new level crossings. Tendering for the project will start this year and construction early next year.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (**Mr Elasmar**) — Order! The member's time has expired.

CARBON POLLUTION REDUCTION SCHEME: PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Mr D. DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I move:

> That, in accordance with sessional order 21, there be tabled in the Council by 4.00 p.m. on 2 June 2009 a copy of all documents, studies, evaluations and briefing papers produced by the Victorian government or its agents concerning the impact of the commonwealth government's proposed carbon pollution reduction scheme on the Victorian economy held by the Department of Treasury and Finance, including studies of the economic impact and the impact on Victoria's climate change policies and/or on voluntary emission reduction activities.

This is a tidy-up motion that follows the documents motion passed in this chamber last sitting week seeking Victorian government documents held by various departments. This adds to the list the Department of Treasury and Finance, which is very likely to have undertaken modelling of a number of aspects of the proposed CPRS (carbon pollution reduction scheme) and its impact on Victoria. I hasten to add that this is a moving feast, given the national changes that were announced by the Prime Minister, Mr Rudd, earlier this week, but nonetheless these documents — —

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — Do you support them?

Mr D. DAVIS — I have to say to Mr Theophanous — and I know he is aware of some of these matters from his time as industry minister — that we would like to see the Victorian government's approach to and modelling of these matters in relation to the effectiveness of the CPRS in Victoria and the impact it may have on certain industries and certain regions. I have no doubt that some of this information is held by the Department of Treasury and Finance, and it is those documents that this motion seeks. Mr Theophanous was a cabinet minister and was privy to a number of these decisions.

What I want to point out here is that there was, as far as we can tell, no serious modelling of the potential impacts of the scheme on Victorian regions. There was no serious modelling by the state government of the impact of the commonwealth government's CPRS on regions like Geelong and its hinterland. I will take this region as a case study for the sort of examinations we think the state government should have done but to my knowledge has not. We want to see the nature and quality of those examinations it has done of the impact of the CPRS in the Geelong region, given that there is an emission trading scheme proposed, which was indeed supported by both parties at the last federal election. It is a matter of how compensation is arranged, how adjustment assistance is arranged and how effective the scheme is.

The current scheme, as it has been outlined by Kevin Rudd, even including the details I have seen since his announcement, leaves me with some concerns about its effectiveness in supporting voluntary reduction activities by consumers, by community groups and by businesses. Those sorts of voluntary reduction activities should be encouraged, and the scheme as it was outlined certainly does not appear to do that. It seems to create perverse incentives that may well mitigate against sensible voluntary actions by communities and individuals. At the same time the CPRS would have significant regional effects on those areas that rely heavily on industries that are energy intensive. Victoria is massively reliant on brown coal, which has no doubt historically provided a huge advantage for Victorian manufacturing and supported jobs. Adjustment, therefore, will be challenging and painful, and there needs to be proper adjustment assistance in place and proper compensation provided to regions.

Let me look at the case study I have singled out: Geelong and the region around it. It has a number of energy-intensive industries that will be impacted upon by the scheme. It has a significant manufacturing sector. Key firms like Ford are based there; there is cement production, there is refining and there is aluminium production. A number of key industries are clustered in one of our major cities, the second city of Victoria in the sense of being not only our second-biggest city but also a key industrial and economic hub for Victoria. What has not been modelled by either the federal or state government is the potential impact on jobs and the economy in the Geelong region. In speaking to business groups, the council and other groups in the area, it is very clear that such modelling is not available.

In New South Wales the state government commissioned Frontier Economics to undertake modelling of regional and other effects on the New South Wales economy. That report has not been released, but it has been extensively canvassed through leaks to a number of senior national journalists, and it is clear that there will be a number of very significant regional effects in New South Wales.

In Victoria the state government has been resistant to undertaking the sort of detailed analysis that is required to assess potential regional effects. This motion seeks that in part. If there has been detailed analysis done, it should be made public. The community should be able to examine the likely effects of the scheme on their town or city; they should be able to examine the effect

on the industries in which they are employed. These are very important impacts, and that was certainly the unanimous view in meetings I have had in Geelong over the recent period with the member for Western Victoria Region Mr Koch and major groups like the Committee for Geelong, G21, the Greater Geelong City Council, the Chamber of Commerce and others. I compliment the Chamber of Commerce on the submission it made to the exposure draft on the CPRS federally; this contrasts with the failure of the state government to actually look at these issues in a systematic way.

The state government's submission to the white paper process was woefully inadequate. It was a flimsy 16 pages. It did not properly canvass the impact of the scheme on voluntary emission activities. It did not properly provide a solution. It flagged — and I give it credit on this point — the perverse incentives that would be created by the CPRS on public transport. Petrol and diesel are protected, but public transport is not protected. Electricity costs will be going up, therefore public transport charges will be going up significantly — by 16 or perhaps 20 per cent. What is that going to do to people's access to public transport if there is no attempt to backfill it with federal government assistance of some kind?

These are the sorts of analyses that should be out in the open. The figure work, the discussion bases, the modelling and the analysis should be in the public arena. This government has conspicuously failed to put those matters in the public arena for Victoria's benefit — for the benefit of Victorian regions and of those who want to take voluntary action to ensure that they assist with the climate change challenge.

This is a sensible motion. It calls for the documents from the Department of Treasury and Finance: the studies and the economic impact analyses. It is my strong understanding that Victoria has not done a modelling equivalent to that of Frontier Economics for New South Wales, and that is a major omission. The state government is negligent in not doing that work. If it is done, if the Department of Treasury and Finance has done it, I ask the government to release it as per this motion so that the community can look at it, understand it and so we can debate the assumptions and decisions behind it.

We cannot do this in a vacuum. The Victorian aspect on this analysis is inadequate, and the state government needs to bring these documents forward and put it on a sounder public footing. I urge support for the motion.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS (Northern Metropolitan) — It is a pleasure to speak on a motion such as this from the strategic position of the backbench. One of the advantages of having been around for quite a long time in this house is that I have a long history of knowing where people have come from and where they put their arguments.

This motion of Mr David Davis needs to be contextualised. Firstly, what he is suggesting in his motion is that somehow the government is not being open and accountable. Let me firstly say that having been around for so many years, having been a member of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee and many other parliamentary committees, I can say that this government is the most open and accountable in the history of Victoria and certainly in the 20 years that I have been in this house.

If you think back to the level of accountability under the Kennett government during the time of the Liberal Party holding sway in this house and in government, you remember there were consistent attacks day after day on the Auditor-General and on the mechanisms of accountability then in place. There was absolutely no opportunity to come into this house and try to get documents. The then opposition's attempts were totally rejected. I can remember one time when the house had 34 members of the Liberal and National parties on the one side and 10 members of the Labor Party on the other side; any attempt to try to get any documents was swiftly dealt with by those 34 members by being shoved onto the backburner.

Now this house, this government and Victoria has the most accountable systems and the most amount of material available to the opposition than has ever been the case in the state's history. What we have also found, however, is that the opposition cannot make anything from these documents because they are not prepared to do the work and the analyses required to build a policy framework.

That leads me to the second part of what I consider to be a fallacious and unfortunate motion moved by Mr David Davis. He calls it a tidy-up motion; I do not know what he is trying to tidy up. If it is about accountability, I say that he and his side of Parliament have no credibility in relation to accountability and making information available. If it is about policy structure in relation to emissions trading, and if it is about who has done more and shown more leadership on climate change, I put on the record again that no government has done more in relation to climate change in the history of this state than the current Labor government.

Ms Hartland interjected.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — The Greens political party can be — —

Ms Pennicuik — In disbelief!

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — You can be in disbelief, Ms Hartland, but there is a difference between what your policies are and what I can say about the things the government has done, which I am personally proud to have been a part of. For example, there is the Victorian renewable energy target scheme, which I along with my colleagues initiated and developed until it began in 2007: it alone will save 27 million tonnes of greenhouse gases over its life. I can stand here and say that I, among others, am responsible for saving 27 million tonnes of greenhouse gases. I do not see that the Greens political party is able to get up and say it has saved 1 tonne of greenhouse gases. There is a slight difference in policy in actually being in a position to put policies in place that will reduce greenhouse gases.

Mr D. Davis interjected.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — You have to have a sense of history, Mr Davis.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (**Mr Elasmar**) — Order! Mr Davis!

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — Mr Davis, you have to listen, and you have to have a sense of history. If you go back, you will see that when the Labor government was elected the Bracks government had a priority to develop policy in this area. As the Minister for Energy and Resources I was responsible for developing these policies. Not only did we establish the renewable energy policy and program, which the opposition opposed at every single step — —

Mr D. Davis interjected.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — Mr Davis opposed it; he did not want a renewable energy program. It got up despite the opposition, and it is there reducing emissions from what they would otherwise be. That is the reality of that scheme.

The second part of this was that we showed the leadership in emissions trading as well. Mr Davis might not remember, but Victoria was the first state to develop an emission trading scheme (ETS). For people who might be listening to this debate, a CPRS (carbon pollution reduction scheme) is the same as an ETS; they are interchangeable. The work on the emission trading scheme or on the subject of this motion, the carbon pollution reduction scheme, was commenced — although Mr Davis said we have not done enough work in this area — under a Labor government in Victoria, when we galvanised the support of the other states.

At that time there was a Liberal national government which was not interested in emissions trading. We pulled together all of the Labor states and developed our own emission trading scheme. We got that scheme endorsed by all Labor states around the country. It was the pressure of developing that emission trading scheme back in those days that forced the Howard federal government to have a look at whether it was going to have an emission trading scheme of any sort. It arose from the constant pressure coming out of Victoria.

I remind members that I was there at the time, and the vast majority of the work was not done in New South Wales or Queensland or anywhere else: it was done right here in Victoria. Dedicated public servants were working on this day and night to get a comprehensive scheme that could be put up at a national level. The pressure of that forced the Howard government to come out and say, 'Maybe we will have an emission trading scheme as well'. In the lead-up to the last election it said it would put up some sort of an emission trading scheme and that it was onboard in some way or another just as an election ploy.

Then it fell to the current national government — the Labor national government — to actually develop a scheme. But let me tell you that the national government had a good head start — because it could pick up all the work that had been done in Victoria by the Victorian government to develop that national scheme. So when the national government developed its scheme, it was off the back of the scheme already agreed to at that time by the states and territories. Victoria led the way in climate change in so many ways and it has helped to bring us to the position where we are.

This motion is about what Mr Davis likes to do — and it is called scaremongering. He wants to try to get little bits of information if he can, and take it out of context and into the public arena and put out the idea that somehow the Victorian government is not going to look after country Victoria or specific industries and so forth. He has formed an unholy alliance with the Greens political party in this endeavour because the Greens political party has a completely different agenda. Its members want to see whether the cuts are deep enough and whether industry is going to suffer enough. The Greens want more and deeper cuts than are being proposed by the national emission trading scheme.

Mr Davis wants to be able to identify any of those cuts so that he can go out and say publicly, 'You are going to hurt this local business', 'You are going to hurt that business' or 'You are going to shut down this particular business'. I have news for Mr Davis: we are not. The scheme is responsible. It is a scheme that will deliver savings in two ways. One is that Victoria and Australia will move in the direction of making reductions, irrespective of what happens around the world. Australia is putting on the table that if we are able to get the rest of the world to also come on board in relation to significant cuts it is prepared to go down as low as a 25 per cent cut by 2020, which is an absolutely massive cut. It cannot be done by Australia in isolation, and that is what the federal government has put up.

In conclusion, I want to make just a few other points. We have done things that support the solar energy industry, with the $33 million solar hot water rebate and the various other programs, such as renewable energy, whether it be wind or solar. We were prepared to go out and take on people who did not want wind farms in this state, including Mr Davis and his political party, and fight the battle to get them built in order to get renewable energy. That was despite the fact that there will always be people who would prefer not to have them in their backyard. This is about the state interest and the national interest, if not the world interest, in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In the past, we have never had any support from the opposition in relation to the construction of those wind farms.

There is a national, a state, a local and a personal responsibility when it comes to climate change. That is why we are keen to try to educate people so that they will reduce their energy consumption. The black balloons campaign, which was another of the campaigns that commenced when I was Minister for Energy Industries and Resources, employed a whole imagery in telling people that if they reduce — —

Ms Pennicuik interjected.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — It is about everybody having some responsibility. Surely Ms Pennicuik would agree with that at least. Every person has a choice. You have a choice whether you use public transport or ride your bike or use a motor car. Everyone has a choice in that regard and it is responsible for the government to try to reduce energy consumption. I would have thought everyone would support that. An education program around the black balloons campaign was a very good way of showing people how they could do their little bit as well. It is just one of a number of strategies. Renewable energy is another of the strategies we also have to work on — and there is technology. One of the problems is that it is this multifaceted approach which I do not think the Greens can grasp. Let me give an example of why the Greens cannot grasp it — and I do not want to make this a Greens versus the Labor Party kind of thing. Geosequestration is something which we should pursue because it is one of the armoury of measures that may allow us to significantly tackle the problem of climate change. I know that you do not like us doing that because you would prefer we just shut down the brown coal powered stations altogether.

Ms Hartland interjected.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — That is the difference between us.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (**Mr Elasmar**) — Order! Ms Hartland should direct her comments through the Chair.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — We are responsible enough to know we have to pursue technological solutions in relation to existing brown coal powered stations or any other of the technologies that are in place, just as much as we have to pursue renewable energy and reductions in the average energy consumption of individuals, families, businesses and so on. It has to be a multifaceted approach. That is the position of the Labor party.

The position of the Liberal Party is that it wants to try to find little bits of information so that its members can go around and tell people in country Victoria, 'If those nasty people in the Labor party bring in an emission trading scheme, this is what it is going to cost you' or 'This is what is going to happen to you', and misrepresent the actual situation in relation to this.

The other element that I want to finish on is that there is a huge number of jobs in green policy, particularly in industry. Victoria has badged itself over many years as a green state, and we need to preserve and enhance that reputation. The consequences would be an enormous number of new jobs arising out of a policy around emissions trading in this state. We should be debating in this house the real issues of policy surrounding the emission trading scheme rather than having a debate on the basis of an opposition request, which is a scattergun approach to try to get more and more information so it can go around scaring people in country Victoria.

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — I am happy to support Mr David Davis's motion this morning, which in essence is an add-on to his motion of

the last sitting week regarding the production of documents held by the state government about the so-called carbon pollution reduction scheme. The Greens support this motion because climate change, which is facing the planet and the citizens of Victoria, including our young people who are going to grow up in a climate-changed world, is a matter of great public importance. The information that the government may be using to base its carbon reduction policies on should be available to the public and out there for public discourse rather than being secret documents held by the Department of Treasury and Finance or any other department.

I would like to make some comments with regard to Mr Theophanous's amazing speech. The first of those is that the very small measures the state government has put in place regarding renewable energy, energy efficiency and solar rebates are completely inadequate for the task we are facing. Whatever Mr Theophanous wants to say about those measures, the fact is that Australia's and Victoria's greenhouse gas emissions are increasing, including those of all Victorian state government departments. The government has not even got those in order yet. Greenhouse gas production and energy use are increasing across all state government departments. Rather than assisting the community by putting in place incentives and measures to lead us towards energy efficiency, to reduce energy demand and therefore to reduce greenhouse gases, the government is not even getting there in its own departments.

There is nothing in the state budget that is going to help us reduce carbon pollution one iota. The budget is basically silent in terms of environmental measures. It is a non-environmental budget. It is as if we do not have a climate crisis facing us — it does not even get a mention in the state budget. That is how serious the state government is. On top of that, the state government has introduced into the lower house a completely inadequate solar feed-in tariff scheme, and that bill will be coming into the upper house soon. It is under fire from anybody in the community who knows anything about creating incentives for the installation of solar panels for the uptake of renewable energy and less reliance on coal-fired power stations. I will leave it to my colleague Mr Barber to address that bill when it comes in, but that is just an example.

The federal government has completely caved in and dropped the ball on its so-called carbon pollution reduction scheme. As bad as it was with its 5 per cent target, the new carbon pollution reduction scheme that has been announced by the government is not going to come into play for another year. It is going to give away even more free permits to the big polluters. Coal-fired power stations and big-polluting industries are going to get up to 95-per-cent-free permits. It is going to reduce the price of carbon from $40 to $10 per tonne, and the only target that is still on the table, despite what Mr Theophanous might say, is the 5 per cent target. Everybody knows this is not going to cut it. It is not good enough, and it is a move backwards by federal Labor in terms of taking climate change seriously. Australian scientist David Karoly, from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, is an adviser to the state government and is forever trying to alert Victorians and Australians to the climate emergency that is facing them. He has said many times that he does not know how he can more strongly express the seriousness of the problem that is facing us. James Hansen, an eminent NASA scientist, says we have the emergency now.

The state government persists in allowing logging in water catchments and old-growth forests. Members will know that I, along with many others in the community, have been raising the issue of the continuation of lobbying in relation to Brown Mountain in East Gippsland. We know from the Mackie report released by the Australian National University last year that old-growth forests are carbon stores. Quite apart from other very strong reasons we should not be logging old-growth forests — because they are part of our national heritage and part of the water catchment of the Snowy River — we should be using them as our carbon storages and in that way reducing carbon. We should not be chopping them down and woodchipping them so that carbon is released to the environment in a very short time.

Mr Theophanous mentioned geosequestration. Anybody who knows anything about geosequestration would know that it is not going to come online any time before 15 to 20 years have passed. It is completely unproven technology, and in that time we could move towards renewables and proper energy efficiency so we would not even need carbon geosequestration. Putting all your eggs in that basket is completely wrong. My colleague Ms Hartland is about to introduce a bill for an environment protection levy and a container deposit levy, which we predict would save as much as 350 000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year.

In conclusion I have to say that neither the opposition nor the ALP has any vision regarding the need to take the opportunity to ensure a green and sustainable economy in the 21st century. If we do not do this, our children and their children are going to be living in a very precarious world.

Mr SCHEFFER (Eastern Victoria) — Mr Davis's motion requires the government to provide the house with all the documents that have been produced by the Victorian government relating to the commonwealth's carbon pollution reduction scheme and the impacts the introduction of that scheme will have on the Victorian economy. His motion, similar to previous motions of this kind, asks for all documents, studies, evaluations and briefing papers, without, in my view, any allowance being made for the fact that some of these documents may be designated cabinet in confidence.

There are well-established processes whereby members of Parliament and members of the public can obtain government information, the principal one being freedom of information provisions. At the beginning of his contribution Mr Theophanous made the very strong case that from his long experience in the Parliament and the executive of this government and previous Labor governments, this government is second to none in making information widely available to MPs and the general public so that they are well equipped to participate in public policy debates and to launch cogent criticisms of government policy.

I do not think the government has a case to answer when it comes to the availability of information and frankness with the public and the Parliament. Mr David Davis and the opposition know there is a well-established principle that material informing a cabinet decision is regarded as cabinet in confidence, and material of that kind is secret. I have addressed the house on this matter previously. The motion is similar to previous motions, and therefore we need to state on the public record in similar ways what is at the heart of the problem.

The reasons for standing by this principle of cabinet in confidence will be restated by this side of the house every time the opposition makes a call for documents in a way that Mr Davis has today. The function of cabinet is to deliberate on complex and serious issues of the day, such as the environment, the carbon pollution reduction scheme and our own environment schemes. People say that some issues are too important for the cabinet to keep them secret. They say that when a matter such as emissions trading is of major significance, the public is best protected by publishing all relevant documents and that the deliberations of cabinet should be completely and totally transparent.

I believe the opposite is the case. I believe the public interest is best protected by preserving the principle of cabinet in confidence at the very time when the issue is most important. Cabinet confidentiality is most important when the issues are most important and where they are most critical to the public interest; that is exactly the time when members of cabinet need the space to examine complex and difficult policies thoroughly and in confidence.

I repeat the point I made in previous contributions in similar debates: the cabinet process of deliberation in confidence is to find a common collective decision that all its members can subscribe to. That is the essence of collaborative and collective responsibility. It is through the cabinet process that individual ministers are, as I say, remade into a government that is collectively accountable.

I ask members to think about the consequences of allowing any and every document to be published at the demand of the Parliament. Would it really be in the public interest? How can a minister who disagrees with a decision during cabinet deliberations effectively defend a subsequent collective decision of the government once his or her viewpoint is widely known? A minister would have no credibility, and he or she would be weakened — and the government would be weakened — because the difference of opinion, evident in cabinet deliberations, would spill over into the public arena and undermine the integrity of the government. In my view it would make it impossible to govern coherently.

Some people think that when those on this side of the house defend the principle of cabinet in confidence, we are simply providing the government with a cover to avoid public scrutiny, particularly on tough issues. The truth is that cabinet collective responsibility goes directly to accountability and to make accountability more robust, not less. The government's position as a whole and as a collective can be tested on its consistency and on its integrity. Individual ministers are compelled to argue a coherent government case. That case can never come through while individual ministers are being pressed to run separate arguments.

The public release of cabinet documents would make it very difficult for a minister to be completely frank within the confines of a cabinet meeting, because he or she could never be sure that they might have to publicly defend that position they took in that process.

All of this is not to say that the Parliament and the public do not have the right to expect governments to explain their policies, to explain their strategies, to publish appropriate documents and material, and to enable informed debate and scrutiny of government actions. As I said earlier, Mr Theophanous very thoroughly canvassed the record of the government in that area.

It has been said by members in this place that what we want when we request documents that are not on the record is not what ministers said about this or that, but we are after ensuring that the public have the right to know what the cabinet had before it and what documents the government was actually looking at in order to make that decision. That does not advance the argument, because the documents the government commissions or calls for are really inseparable from the cabinet's deliberation and should be afforded in-confidence status as the minutes and record of discussion to the extent they are kept.

It seems to me to be unreasonable to expect the government to make public any and every document without regard to its integrity, quality or whether the position that it announced was accepted or rejected. Governments should have the right to deliberate and to consider whatever documents they see fit without the threat of having to publicly defend the reasons for calling for or rejecting certain advice or assessments contained in the documents.

As members of Parliament we do the same thing ourselves. We see all sorts of material, some of which may have no standing or integrity, and we reject them. I do not want all the material that comes before me to necessarily be on the public record and to be accorded a status that the documents do not deserve. I think the government has a responsibility to decide which documents are in the public interest; it holds that power itself and should not be challenged in this way and undermined.

I think the government has been transparent about its support of the commonwealth carbon pollution reduction scheme. When the scheme was published in the white paper the Victorian government stepped up straight away and supported the commonwealth's initiative for many of the reasons Mr Theophanous outlined; we urged the commonwealth to keep working with Victoria, as it had been, on the design of the scheme. We indicated that we wanted to make sure the scheme was innovative, effective and socially fair on industry, business and people with low resources, and that it would be energy efficient. As a state we believe the Climate Change Action Fund should be used to provide funding for energy efficiency and that the commonwealth should build on proven Victorian efficiencies.

We urged the commonwealth to look at flexible approaches to the operation of the scheme. We indicated that there should be what I think was described as more dynamic real-time assessment of the science and the price impacts of emissions reduction rather than 'set and forget' five-year emissions trajectories or industry assistance arrangements. There is a whole range of ways that the state indicated that it would work hand in hand with the commonwealth to progress the situation. The point is that the government has made its position very clear on this commonwealth scheme. We believe there are sufficient documents available for members of the chamber and the public to mount cogent critiques.

I return briefly to Mr Theophanous's central point that, while the information and the documents are out there, the opposition has failed and has been incapable of making a case out of the material it has before it. I urge all members to have a quick glance at the Liberal Party website. All there is on that site is a statement of values, and while those values may in a lot of ways be commendable and I do not want to argue the toss on some of them, there is nothing else. It is all very well and good, as Mr Theophanous said, for Mr Davis to require the government to provide a whole range of documents in all their detail, but at the end of the day what will happen with those documents? We know what will happen: the nitpicking that Mr Theophanous spoke about will take place and it will not add to the sum total of policy debate and the improvement of the environment in this state.

I reject Mr Davis's motion. I believe that if the government complied with the request in total in the way that Mr Davis has requested, it would have the effect of undermining cabinet confidentiality in an important policy area.

Debate interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

The ACTING PRESIDENT (**Mr Finn**) — Order! Before calling Mr Koch I would like to acknowledge that in the gallery today we have with us a former member, a former minister of the Crown and a former President of the Legislative Council, the Honourable Rod Mackenzie. Welcome.

CARBON POLLUTION REDUCTION SCHEME: PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Debate resumed.

Mr KOCH (Western Victoria) — There is little doubt that regional Victoria, no different from the metropolitan area, is certainly affected in relation to an emission trading scheme (ETS) and a carbon pollution reduction scheme (CPRS). They are very serious issues

from the point of view of people in regional Victoria. As I say, we are no different from people in the metropolitan area — and so we rely very heavily on power produced by brown coal.

I think it would be fair to say that Geelong is recognised as regional Victoria's manufacturing hub. It certainly would not escape in relation to both an ETS and a CPRS. Although the government has offered little encouragement or support to manufacturing jobs in Geelong, the city's manufacturing sector is a very important part of its viability. There is little doubt that to this day the government could have been more supportive on many of the issues the sector faces. We certainly hope, although we did not see it yesterday in the budget, that they will be a little bit more forthcoming, especially in relation to the impact that carbon pollution reduction and emission trading schemes will have on those businesses. I have to say that in recent times they have done a lot to increase their efficiency in relation to the use of power. I speak of industries who employ a lot of people, such as Alcoa, Blue Circle, Southern Cement, Ford, the Shell company and Incitec Pivot — and let us not forget further west the dairy industry, which is also a huge user of power. It is important that we recognise the situation confronted by these businesses, not only in their own activities but also in the employment of so many people through Geelong and the Western Victoria Region.

I think the Rudd government, in having done another backflip in the last 48 hours on the importance of an ETS and a CPRS, in some way recognises the difficulty for and capacity of Australian business to meet the time frame for the emissions reduction that was earlier suggested, mid-2010, which is only another 12 months away. Slight relief has been offered for a further 12 months by this opportunity, but the percentage reduction in emissions has gone from 15 to 25 per cent to be achieved by the year 2020.

It is important to note that for quite some time now the whole situation in relation to information and modelling being made available has been somewhat of a moving feast. No-one can nail it to the ground. No-one specifically knows the situation as it will affect particular industries right across the board, and particularly in western Victoria. There is little doubt that heavy industry and manufacturing industry have had a heavy reliance on what we could only say was the most affordable power source in Australian history and that is from brown coal mined here in Victoria. We have a high availability of that resource and to think that for the foreseeable future Victoria will not be drawing on that resource is something all of us recognise and appreciate the significance of.

As my colleague Mr David Davis said, opposition members have met with representatives of many bodies in Geelong, being the Committee for Geelong, G21, the city council and also the Chamber of Commerce, in relation to a carbon pollution reduction scheme and the ETS. I congratulate Laurie Miller, the executive officer of the Chamber of Commerce in Geelong, on the exposure draft paper that the chamber has produced and presented to the federal government. In saying that, I also look forward in the very near future to meeting with people from individual businesses and discussing their concerns about this exposure draft paper.

This is a very important motion about documents. The community does want more information. We have Mr Theophanous on one side saying that the government is open and accountable. We have Mr Scheffer on the other side saying that we cannot make too much information available because a commercial-in-confidence process may be eroded. Business wants confidence and yet such things are not discussed. I assure both those members that the Victorian public wants some certainty and some idea of where the government is going on these two particular schemes. People want more information and any modelling that is available should be produced to make members of the Victorian community, especially those in the industrial area and particularly in manufacturing, more aware of the situation that is confronting us.

I do not think there is any doubt that the motion put forward by Mr David Davis this morning is a sensible motion. I would like to see far more of this information, any analysis that has taken place and any modelling that has been put forward. If I have the opportunity, I think that business and the public also should be afforded the same opportunity.

There is a huge number of jobs at risk. We are told repeatedly that the government will be doing everything it can to shore up jobs. Unfortunately, and I regret to say it, yesterday's budget certainly does not give me any confidence that that will be the case in Geelong and the region. The government has moved very slowly in many ways in relation to maintaining and supporting industry with jobs, and again, as we saw in the budget yesterday, very little support is going into Geelong — some $100 million over the next four years, when this government will have collected in excess of $100 billion in revenue. It is a very poor percentage of revenue going into what I see as a critical area of Victoria — our largest provincial city, our biggest manufacturing city outside the metropolitan area — and

yet we cannot get this further information that will be so important to those industries in Geelong and will have such a big impact on not only those industries but also those who are employed in those specific areas.

I think the house should certainly support this motion; the sooner we are able to gain further information and modelling in relation to this matter, the better.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I am happy to contribute to this motion very briefly and say that the Brumby Labor government has been always very consistent regarding the carbon pollution reduction scheme.

We have also looked at the carbon pollution reduction scheme as an economic opportunity for Victoria to create new jobs in low-emission industries and technologies. Only a couple of weeks ago I attended a new environmental plumbing school which was opened by the Premier. It has been developed and part-funded by the state government to teach people who work in the plumbing trades skills and more environmentally friendly practices in green roles.

While the Brumby Labor government has been consistent, we cannot say the same for Liberal Party members. It gets confusing when Mr David Davis moves a motion of this kind. Admittedly he has repeatedly shown interest in climate change, but he at times has suggested the Brumby Labor government is not doing enough in this area, which throws confusion our way when another Liberal MP, Mr Finn, only this morning was echoing a sentiment he has expressed previously — that is, that climate change is a farce, that it is not real and has been invented by what he calls tofu-eating, latte-sipping, left wing — I cannot remember the rest of his phrase; he does it better than me.

At one end Mr Finn says climate change has been invented by tofu-eating, left-wing ratbags, while at the other end Mr David Davis is saying this government is not doing enough to address climate change; and we are not sure of their leader, Mr Baillieu in the Assembly, who sits somewhere in the middle. Mr Baillieu does not seem to want to go near climate change. Our suspicions would be that he probably sits somewhere near Mr Finn as a climate change sceptic — —

Mrs Coote — Sceptic or septic?

Mr LEANE — As a climate change sceptic, he is closely allied to Mr Finn. That leaves Mr David Davis one out on his concerns that this government does not do enough. If the opposition is going to move motions like this one, it would be great if it had a consistent position on climate change. However, there is no possibility of that when we have two members in this house so far apart. It would be an impossible position for their leader to be moving a motion concerned with paperwork on climate change and a carbon pollution reduction scheme, yet on the same day to have one of his colleagues saying that climate change is a farce.

Again the house has before it a motion calling for paperwork. We have been consistent on motions on such requests, where it can be delivered and where it will be delivered. There has never been an issue with that.

Mr D. DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I will briefly sum up the debate. This is a very straightforward motion. It seeks key documents from the Department of Treasury and Finance relating to the impact on Victoria of the federal carbon pollution reduction scheme. I note that there have been changes in the shape of the scheme, but in no way does that invalidate the need to put in the community domain as many as possible of the analyses that have been undertaken by the state government.

It appears to me there is a gap in the analysis: there is no equivalent of the New South Wales frontier group work that has been undertaken in Victoria. If there is, I look forward to seeing it.

This is a very simple motion; it seeks to put these documents into public debate and discussion, and it seeks to do that in a very modest and reasonable way. I ask for support for the motion.

Motion agreed to.

ELECTRIC CARS: PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Mr D. DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I move:

That, in accordance with sessional order 21, there be tabled in the Council by 4.00 p.m. on 2 June 2009 a copy of —

(1) all documents, including memorandums, reports, briefing documents, correspondence, meeting notes or reports concerning the company Better Place, including all proposals and analyses of proposals put by that company to the state government, its ministers or other officers, including the former Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Premier on the National Reform Agenda and Innovation, Mr Evan Thornley, by the Better Place company or its agents; and

(2) all studies, evaluations, briefing papers and other documents concerning electric cars that are held by the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development, the Department of Premier and Cabinet,

> the office of the Premier, the office of the Minister for Industry and Trade and the office of the Minister for Innovation.

This is a very reasonable motion for two reasons. Firstly, the issue of low-emission vehicles is important in and of itself. Seeking documents showing the government's proposals, analyses and examinations of the feasibility of low-emission vehicles — electric vehicles, in this case — is important in the public interest.

The second point is that the involvement of Mr Evan Thornley, now the chief executive officer of the Better Place company, a firm that is seeking to introduce electric cars into Victoria and Australia, is important, because Mr Thornley as we know was a parliamentary secretary and a member of this chamber. He resigned in sudden and surprising circumstances just hours before he was to be elevated to the ministry last year.

A number of us in this chamber are members for Southern Metropolitan Region, and that was a concern in the sense of how Mr Thornley treated the 400 000 electors in that region. He was elected for a four-year term, but for his own purposes he absconded and served only a two-year term.

But that is not what this motion is about. It is about the propriety and integrity of government. It is very clear from the FOI documents that the opposition has obtained that Mr Thornley was aware of government discussions with the Better Place firm in his role as parliamentary secretary for national reform and innovation. He had a key role in the government, one that enabled him to meet with and discuss aspects of proposals, and those issues should in my view be in the public domain.

In 1999 former premier Steve Bracks promised there would be a code of conduct to deal with these matters. The Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, has introduced a code of ministerial conduct that would have outlawed what Mr Thornley has done in this particular case.
Mr Thornley held a senior position, one of trust and responsibility in the government. One might argue that parliamentary secretaries are not part of the government, but I do not accept that for the purposes of this argument, and the Prime Minister certainly did not accept it at a federal level. I accept that parliamentary secretaries are treated a little differently at federal level than at state level, but the key point is that Mr Thornley had access to information, briefings and discussions, and a number of these points need to be put in the public domain.

This motion seeks documents not just on electric cars, which is in a sense the policy aspect, but also on Mr Thornley's relationship and involvement with the policy process on electric cars and specifically with the Better Place company. Therefore there are two key aspects to this. Some may agree with voting on part of it and others on the other part, but in my view these documents should be in the public domain. I cannot see that there is a reasonable or solid argument for not allowing those documents to be in the public space.

I want to quote from a project briefing by the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development (DIIRD), which I obtained under freedom of information, dated 4 September 2008. It reveals that Evan Thornley was briefed on the launch of Israeli electric car company Better Place in Australia while he was parliamentary secretary. I will quote from the briefing note from DIIRD:

> … there have been discussions with parliamentary secretary Evan Thornley and the federal Minister for Climate Change, Minister Wong, regarding a launch(s) in Australia ...

That contradicts what Mr Thornley said on 21 January on the ABC radio program *AM*, which was:

> I had no involvement with any discussions that Better Place had with the Victorian government … I wasn't involved in any of those things.

It also casts doubt on claims by the Premier that:

> … as far as he was aware, the former MP had not had any dealings with the company in his role as parliamentary secretary.

So the claims by Mr Thornley that he had not been involved in negotiations are refuted by the DIIRD briefing that deals with that matter.

There are other documents — some of which have been denied to the opposition under FOI, some of which we still await — but this motion will enable the chamber to take a view on this matter. I think Mr Thornley has possibly behaved in a way in which there is commercial advantage to him and has taken up a position with significant remuneration. I in no way oppose the work of Better Place and in no way deny the importance of low-emission technologies for vehicles — I think these are important industries — but the importance of these issues in relation to climate change and other matters calls for a higher rather than lower standard of probity. For those reasons I ask for the house's support for the motion.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — As far as Mr David Davis's motion calling for papers and documents is concerned, the government has been

consistent in dealing with these endless Wednesday morning opposition motions. If there is paperwork that is not part of commercial-in-confidence agreements or that is not held under cabinet privilege, the paperwork will be made available to members of the chamber. Mr Viney has spoken endlessly about that position on these motions, and I do not see the point in echoing what he has said week after week after week.

As far as touching on the part of Mr Davis's motion which refers to the company Better Place and then goes on to look for evaluation and briefing papers and copies of documents concerning electric cars, I have to say that it is pretty inconsistent with what the company Better Place hopes to introduce to this state, if it is successful in doing this, in that Better Place is actually involved in setting up charging stations for electric cars. It does not produce electric cars at all; rather, Better Place installs charging equipment in car parts and in homes so that if you own an electric car you can charge it up conveniently. Given that 14 per cent of the carbon we produce is from our combustible-engine cars, this cannot be a bad thing. In the future there may be other ways of introducing more efficient electric cars that might not need the equipment that Better Place wants to supply, and if that was the case, that would be a good thing as well — but this is what Better Place actually does. It cannot be a bad thing if Better Place has some success in this. It cannot be a bad thing for the environment, and it is probably a good thing for something that is close to my heart — that is, it will mean a lot of work for electricians, who will be needed to set up these charging places. So a lot of what Better Place wishes to supply cannot be a bad thing.

Mr Davis's motion then moves into the area of Evan Thornley actually going to work for the company. Mr Thornley saw that this company and its endeavours cannot be a bad thing. Therefore the problem that the opposition has with Mr Thornley moving on to something he thinks could be beneficial is that opposition members cannot reconcile in their minds an MLC who, after being here for only two years, decides he should move on. Opposition members would only consider doing that after maybe 16 or 20 years of sitting here. They grab onto their seats, and you can see fingernail marks on the woodwork where they have been grabbing on for 20 years. It just does not compute to them that someone might come into this place and decide, after only two years, that there might be something better for him or her or that there might be something more beneficial to the rest of the community than sitting here. It is impossible for them to understand that, and because they cannot reconcile a member of Parliament doing that after two years they come to the conclusion that there must be a conspiracy. How can someone come in for only two years when you are supposed to be clinging on for at least 16 to 20? It does not make sense to the opposition; therefore it is a conspiracy.

Some of the things Mr Davis said in his opening remarks on the motion were wrong. Mr Davis said Mr Thornley left Parliament days after being elevated to the ministry.

Mr D. Davis — Within days of being elevated.

Mr LEANE — Mr Thornley was never elevated to the ministry. There is a process in the government whereby members of the caucus elect ministers. That process did not happen. When it did happen, Mr Pakula was elevated to that position. He has proved to be a fantastic minister.

The other part that falls down in the opposition's suggestion of a so-called conspiracy about paperwork is that when Evan Thornley was in government, he was setting himself up for a highly paid job — it was all about Evan Thornley getting a highly paid job.

Mr Somyurek — How much is he worth?

Mr LEANE — That is a good question, Mr Somyurek. Anyone who knew Mr Thornley could tell you that he was never scratching for a dollar. He is a self-made, wealthy man in his own right. That is where the conspiracy theory also fails.

There is no conspiracy. The Liberal Party needs to understand that, to relax and to get over it. Mr Thornley was a fine member of this chamber. He has been replaced by Ms Huppert, another fine member of this chamber. We have moved on; government members in this chamber have moved on. Members of the opposition also need to move on. They are always looking for conspiracies and asking for paperwork to prove a conspiracy, but unfortunately once again they have fallen flat. As far as paperwork is concerned, when the government can deliver information that is not subject to commercial-in-confidence or cabinet privilege, it is happy to do so.

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — My colleague David Davis has put on the record very succinctly the issues surrounding these documents and the reasons why this motion is on the table. That is important, because transparency is something we in this chamber insist upon. It is important and imperative for Victorians that this matter is followed through, so I welcome this motion. However, I hope that anyone reading this debate will look at the quite extraordinary contribution the house has just heard from Mr Leane on

what a fabulous choice it was for Mr Thornley to go into the electric vehicle industry.

I would like to quote from a web page called carpoint.com.au. The quote is taken from a section headed 'CN Confidential ...' and is dated 2 February 2009, the time when these announcements were being made. I do not pretend to be an expert on hybrid batteries, but I do know that neither is the Minister for Innovation because he was completely and utterly caught out on what the government was going to do about recycling these batteries. Mr Jennings had absolutely no idea about what was going to happen with the batteries, so we know the government is very ill prepared. It is interesting to note that the industry Mr Thornley has gone into does not seem to believe that Better Place is going to be a better place at all.

The web page says:

> While Renault Nissan boss Carlos Ghosn seems to be onside, the electric vehicle evangelists at Better Place have few fans in the established automotive world … within the senior ranks of the wider Mercedes Benz and Toyota organisations.
>
> Though the company has made major announcements down under and even a 'defection' of cashed-up ex-pollie Evan Thornley to head its local diocese, serious projects are readying themselves to hit the roads both here and closer to the … head office without involving the organisation.
>
> …
>
> In the USA, both Toyota and Mercedes-Benz will roll out larger scale electric vehicle/hybrid cars that do not involve Better Place.

The article goes on to say that according to a senior executive at Toyota, a Mr Truckenbrodt:

> … no manufacturer seriously considers Better Place's system as a viable technology option for electric vehicles. He states that the quick recharges the company is floating are also problematic.

The article goes on further to report that Mercedes vice-president of passenger car engines and Powertrain, Dr Leopold Mikulic, says he does not believe the business model is effective at all. He is reported as commenting that it is not the first time the world has looked into electric vehicles. He is further reported as saying:

> The concept of having electric terminals where you change batteries —

was dismissed —

> 50 years ago. Some of the electric vehicles 100 years ago were —

a concept like this.

> We are concentrating on improving battery technology —

so therefore it is not required.

This is very important in trying to ascertain what is going to transpire in the use of better technology. I do not know that Better Place is even looking at those industries.

The article goes on to report:

> Toyota's fuel cell and electric vehicle main man, Bill Reinert, agrees in principle —

but is —

> concerned about the ability to change out a battery pack.

He goes on to say how complicated the Better Place technology is.

I am concerned, and I would be very keen to look at the transparency of the documentation and the decision making that went into the process for Mr Thornley; but I think Mr Thornley might want to come back here given these impending problems!

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — I am pleased to rise and make a few comments on the motion by Mr David Davis that the house is now debating. As other members said earlier, the motion deals with the provision of documents relating to the company Better Place. In responding to Mr Davis's motion I would like to say that the government's position on these matters has been consistent throughout these regular Wednesday discussions.

The government will consider requests for documents, but it is always mindful of its obligations on matters that are cabinet in confidence or commercial in confidence. It is absolutely imperative that when deliberating, cabinet members are able to have free and frank discussions. In electing members to this place the Victorian public entrusts cabinet members — all of us — with an enormous responsibility. Members of Parliament who are selected to serve as cabinet members have a considerably greater responsibility.

Those discussions must occur in as open a manner as possible. However, there are always sensitive, commercial-in-confidence arrangements from time to time where it is not appropriate to have all available information in the public arena, and from time to time there needs to be a veil around those arrangements. The day after the delivery of the state budget is as good an occasion as any to think about that.

The government has a good and strong record on being open and transparent, on reforming freedom of

information laws and on providing greater access through a means of different measures to ensure that the government in Victoria is accountable and that our democracy is robust.

This is the day after the budget. This is an interesting choice of topic for discussion. Enormous challenges are presented to Victoria by the global economic downturn, and I look forward to the house discussing those issues perhaps later in the week.

As all members know, prior to entering this place Evan Thornley had a very successful career, as the media reports, as an internet entrepreneur. Evan, as all members would know, is not shy of embracing a new idea, and in his work with the Brotherhood of St Laurence and with organisations like Per Capita that has been my experience of him. Evan is a creative and energetic advocate for a number of causes.

With respect to his departure from this place, perhaps members opposite do not miss him so much, but he always made very thoughtful contributions to our debates and I, for one, certainly enjoyed my time working with him. That he has gone to — as members opposite have interjected — another place, a Better Place, is obviously a matter now well known. The government is entirely satisfied that the documents which have been released under the FOI laws of this state, and applications have been made by opposition members for those documents, corroborate the public comments made by Mr Thornley following his announcement of his intention to resign from the Parliament as they relate to his contact and involvement with Project Better Place.

As members have earlier been involved in a discussion around the carbon pollution reduction scheme, we are all mindful of the need to be open to ideas about how to reduce our energy consumption and to move to more sustainable ways of living. I for one hope that the work Evan has gone to may play another part in changing the way that we consume energy in Victoria.

As is always the case, the government will consider the request. We have been entirely consistent throughout these debates. Matters that are cabinet in confidence and commercial in confidence are obviously not appropriate for release, but everything else will be made available, and many documents have been made available through the FOI process. Mr Davis has moved another Wednesday motion about documents. I look forward to us using the time of the house to discuss the budget instead.

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Budget: debt

Mr D. DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Treasurer. When will the $31 billion in debt Victoria will have by 2013 be paid off?

Mr LENDERS (Treasurer) — I thank Mr David Davis for his question and I look forward to a number of questions on the state budget — a budget which has been introduced in a time of global recession, when Victoria has the opportunity to act to position the state to go forward, or the contrary.

This is a budget that is about jobs — securing 35 000 jobs that otherwise would not exist. This is a budget that deals with securing our AAA rating, it is a budget that is in partnership with the commonwealth, it is a budget that is family friendly and looks after core services going forward and it is a budget that prepares this state for the future. That is what this budget is about.

Mr David Davis then asked the question about borrowings and the paying off of borrowings. I say to him that yesterday, as I sat down in the Legislative Assembly, Standard and Poor's reaffirmed Victoria's AAA credit rating.

Mr Guy interjected.

Mr LENDERS — Mr Guy is very excitable; clearly he has had some red cordial today. What I would suggest to Mr Guy — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I have counted 15 interjections from Mr Guy already. I just say to everyone in the house — I know this is an exciting time, with the budget, and it is going to be a little heated et cetera, and I will make allowance for that. But I caution people. There are limits to how many times and how often they can interject.

Mr LENDERS — Thank you, President. I make the gratuitous observation that the Legislative Assembly was far more respectful yesterday.

Mr David Davis asked when the borrowings would be paid off. It is a legitimate question to be asked in the Parliament. What I would suggest to Mr David Davis is this: firstly, he actually read through the budget papers until he actually gets to the chart showing state debt and he actually sees how the figures go up as borrowings rise and then they actually drop at the end of the

forward estimates period as a percentage of the state economy.

Mr Vogels — You don't believe that.

Mr LENDERS — I take up Mr Vogels's interjection, 'You don't believe that'. I say this to Mr Vogels: when this government was elected in 1999, state debt was 3 per cent of the economy inherited from the Kennett junta. Despite quadrupling our infrastructure expenditure, today's state debt is less as a percentage of the economy than it was under Jeff Kennett.

If we are talking about managing balance sheets and about managing debt, in the good years this Labor government has reduced debt in Victoria. But in the chill winds of a global financial crisis, in the chill winds of global recession, we are not going to sit on our tail ends and do nothing, have an opinion on everything — like Mr Wells in the other house, the shadow Treasurer, and Mr Baillieu, the Leader of the Opposition, do — and no solution for jobs.

What this government has done and what this budget will do is prudently borrow to secure 35 000 jobs in Victoria that otherwise would not be there. This is a prudent budget. If Mr David Davis has any doubts about this being managed, I suggest he perhaps should read the Standard and Poor's report, which gives this government a AAA credit rating again.

Supplementary question

Mr D. DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I thank the Treasurer for his answer. I say to the Treasurer: on present indications this debt will take this and the next generation to pay off, even if we start now. Will the Treasurer commit to releasing a debt repayment plan for the huge increase in debt, to show the Victorian public what it will have to pay off in the many years to come?

Mr LENDERS (Treasurer) — Clearly Mr David Davis has not read through all the budget papers yet. Perhaps Mr Rich-Phillips could help him, because I am sure he will have read through them. If he just looks at the graph I referred to, he will see that the plan he refers to for reducing borrowings actually commences in the year 2012–13. If he looks at the budget papers correctly, he will see there is a cash surplus, which means reduction of debt in that particular year. If he looks closely, he will see the curve of where it goes.

I would say to Mr David Davis that if he wants any assurance on this, he should look at the article in the *Herald Sun* today — it was not a particularly complimentary article — about the budget, which showed a baby. If that baby was me in 1958, other than being a fair bit uglier than the baby in the *Herald Sun*, it would have been a baby with a debt figure with another zero at the end of it, because when I was born in 1958 Henry Bolte had a debt level in this state equal to 58 per cent of the economy. What we are looking at now are prudent borrowings of less than that by a magnitude.

If we are looking at prudent borrowings, we are looking at rates below those of the US, below those of the European Union, below those of the eurozone and below those of most other Australian jurisdictions. If Mr David Davis has anxiety about this government acting to save jobs, then I suggest that as well as coming into this house with a question he could perhaps go through every single government program, every single school, every single hospital, every single transport program, every single initiative and every single job created and put a tick on the ones he will support and a red line through the ones he will cut out, because it is not good enough to have an opinion on everything; we need policies. If opposition members actually think it is not a good thing to create 35 000 jobs in Victoria, then I suggest they propose which of those 35 000 Victorians they not offer a job to.

Budget: employment

Ms HUPPERT (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Treasurer, John Lenders. Can the Treasurer inform the house how the Brumby Labor government's state budget will create and protect Victorian jobs amid the global financial crisis?

Mr LENDERS (Treasurer) — I thank Ms Huppert for her question and her interest in growing jobs in the state of Victoria at a time of global recession. Ms Huppert asked how we would go about securing jobs in this environment. We are doing it in a number of areas. Firstly, if we look at infrastructure expenditure in this state, when this Labor government was elected in 1999 the state of Victoria spent $1 billion a year on infrastructure — $1 billion a year towards hospitals, schools, roads, railways and all the other things that are required. What happens now is that as we came into this budget the state of Victoria had quadrupled its expenditure on income, while operating on a surplus and paying off the debt inherited from the Kennett government.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr LENDERS — The opposition laughs — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr LENDERS — A truly Pavlovian response. But let us look at the facts.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr LENDERS — Opposition members may laugh; sometimes deluded people laugh at themselves. But let us look at the facts. When this government was elected in September-October 1999 state debt was at 3 per cent of the economy. At every single budget since we have been elected we have seen state debt as a percentage of the economy go down. Opposition members might be in denial that a Labor government can have a AAA credit rating and actually manage an economy with less debt than the Kennett government had, but it is true. They can go out there and see. Let us get the facts straight first: state debt under the Brumby and Bracks governments has without exception been lower than it was under the Kennett government that we inherited debt from.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr LENDERS — Mrs Peulich might laugh. I am happy to repeat it. There is a very bad education adage from the old days that said 'repetition is the best form of learning', so perhaps I will repeat it. When the Kennett government left office, state debt was 3 per cent of GSP — fact! In every single budget since the Labor government was elected to office, state debt as a percentage of GSP has come down — fact! So let us put into place the perspective on borrowings.

In response to Ms Huppert's question, this government is now asking, 'What can we do in times of global recession to secure jobs in Victoria?'. We are borrowing modestly to bring forward projects that were not done. If we talk of projects not done, what are we funding in this budget that is capital? We are funding roads.

Mr Guy interjected.

Mr LENDERS — This is a classic. Mr Guy says: 'South Morang'. Well of course we are funding South Morang. We are funding a $600 million-plus project in South Morang. Let me describe South Morang. It is a project from Keon Park to Epping where we double the railway track. What are we doing? Firstly, we are fixing up neglect from the past, neglect from the Bolte and Hamer eras, by duplicating the track. Secondly, we are extending the track from Epping to South Morang, like we promised. Not only are we extending the track but we are extending it without level crossings, which is something dear to Mr Koch's heart and dear to everybody's heart. We are, firstly, fixing the areas of neglect and, secondly, planning for the future. This is infrastructure that not only delivers services to the people of South Morang and not only employs people in the meantime but also fixes the problem.

Ms Huppert asked what we are doing and where we are going forward to create jobs. We have the biggest infrastructure program in the history of this state, with not just the Brumby Labor government but also the Rudd Labor government adding to the stimulus. Together, between state and federal governments, we have almost $7 billion. In addition to that we have Rudd federal Labor government money going to housing associations and Rudd Labor government money going to non-government schools in the hundreds of millions. That gets us up to $8 billion in stimulus.

In addition to that, the work of our water authorities and ports is boosting it to more than $11 billion in infrastructure expenditure. Every cent of it needed in Victoria is being spent early to create jobs at a time of global recession. That is a budget; that is a plan. It is responsible. It has got the AAA tick on it from Standard and Poor's, it has got the tick on it from the 35 000 Victorians who will be employed under it and it has got the tick on it from every Victorian who will use those resources.

What I say to Ms Huppert in response to her question is: this is prudent, it is sensible and every Victorian will get a benefit from it. I am sure what Ms Huppert and I would both like to know is: if this is not prudent, which projects is the opposition going to cut?

Budget: first home owner grant

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — My question is to the Treasurer, John Lenders. Can the Treasurer inform the house of how the Brumby Labor government's state budget is delivering for Victoria's first home owners and for constructions jobs, making Victoria a great place to live, work and raise a family?

Mr LENDERS (Treasurer) — I thank Mr Eideh for his question. It was a great opportunity for the Premier to announce in his electorate today the revised first home buyers grant in Victoria. What is in the budget papers and what we are rolling forward is $125 million to extend the first home buyers scheme for another year. What we are doing with that is adjusting the scheme so it is skewed towards the construction of new homes.

I am very hopeful of support for this legislation across the house once it has been presented to the Parliament. At the moment the structure is that a first home buyer

buying a newly constructed home gets $12 000, while a new home buyer buying a newly constructed home in regional Victoria gets $15 000. After the passage of the legislation a new home buyer in regional Victoria will not get $15 000, they will get $22 500 towards the construction of their first home. Rather than getting $12 000, a new home buyer in Melbourne will get $18 000 towards the cost of building a new home.

We have retargeted this process towards the construction of new homes for two very important reasons. We support home ownership; that is a fundamental principle of this government. Sixty-nine per cent of Victorians own their own home or are buying it — the highest percentage of any state in Australia. We want that to continue. By this boost we will do several things: we will make it easier for first home buyers; by skewing it towards construction we will create jobs; and by creating more housing stock we will take the pressure off renters, who are finding rental prices going up in Victoria. This creates jobs, it gives greater incentives for first home buyers and it improves the housing stock.

But let us look at where this is. I refer particularly to the fact that there are 32 000 Victorians who took advantage of this last year. When I brought down the budget last year members of the opposition were scathing about what they said would be just 1000 people in regional Victoria who would take up this first home buyers bonus. I can say to this house and to the opposition: for an opposition that said it did not even believe we would get 1000 — —

Ms Lovell interjected.

Mr LENDERS — The opposition did not believe we would get 1000, Ms Lovell. What we have seen in the last two months in regional Victoria is 230 people per month taking up this first home buyers boost. What this will do is create even more jobs in regional Victoria.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr LENDERS — I take up Mrs Peulich's comment: 'What are you going to do when they lose their jobs?'. If Mrs Peulich wants to strut down to the Housing Industry Association and ask it what it thinks of this, it will say that today's decision alone will create 4000 jobs in Victoria, many of them in regional Victoria.

The opposition has an opinion on everything but a policy on nothing. If you listened to the opposition's opinions, you would be wallowing in the past and you would see 35 000 jobs from this budget not happen. There would be 35 000 Victorians without jobs who otherwise would have them. Taking up Mrs Peulich's interjection about jobs coming from this decision, I point out that another 4000 jobs will be created by this change in government policy — and that is the claim of not just myself as Treasurer but also the Housing Industry Association.

We are in a time of global economic crisis. We have chilling winds from overseas, a downturn. Across the world unemployment queues are rising. This government will not sit on its hands. We will act to create jobs in Victoria.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr LENDERS — I will respond one more time to Mrs Peulich, who said we have done nothing for 10 years. If she wants a bit of factual information, we halved the unemployment rate of the Kennett government. We have quadrupled infrastructure expenditure, kept the AAA rating and restored services to Victoria. It is a bit like asking what the Romans have ever done for us. She has obviously been watching too much Monty Python.

I will conclude on this point: Mr Eideh asked me the question of how this would help first home buyers and how it would make Victoria a better place to live, work and raise a family — —

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr LENDERS — I can say to Mrs Peulich that perhaps she should go to Bendigo and talk to the Bendigo businesses I talked to two weeks ago. Bendigo's population has climbed beyond 100 000 under this government. The main issue people raised with me at a business round table in Bendigo recently was lack of skills. This government is investing in skills, it is investing in infrastructure and it is investing across the board. People in Bendigo have the new regional rail service going backwards and forwards, and they now have the Calder Highway connected backwards and forwards with new services. And they have this, President: the announcement yesterday of funding for the first stage of a new hospital. This government delivers infrastructure, delivers services and delivers to people across Victoria, and that is before we even start on the schools in Bendigo.

I will sit down, but I would say to those opposite: in times of economic recession the government needs to act to avoid the world recession harming Victoria even further. This budget is about action to secure jobs. It is not just a budget; it is a jobs package.

Mallacoota: boat ramp

Mr HALL (Eastern Victoria) — My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Planning, Justin Madden. I ask the minister if he will provide the house with an update on the work of the planning panel he appointed to consider various options for safe boat launching facilities at Bastion Point, Mallacoota.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Planning) — I welcome Mr Hall's interest in this matter, because the proposal for significant works for a marina at Bastion Point to potentially be developed is not without a fair degree of complexity — no doubt Mr Hall would appreciate that — and a significant degree of division within the local Mallacoota community. A decision is impending, and no doubt a significant proportion of the community will be relying on that, whichever way it goes in relation to this matter. This is a very profound decision in relation to Mallacoota, and it is one not taken lightly. I recognise that the question directed to me by Mr Hall is a very important one.

I am currently considering the matters recommended to me by the panel. I have a panel report, and I look forward to making decisions in the not-too-distant future. I also suggest to Mr Hall that these matters do not just relate to development or building matters, they also relate to a whole lot of other matters, whether they be environmental issues, marine safety issues or what should, could or could not take place on the site. Those matters are currently being considered. I am receiving advice and updates on those matters, and I look forward to making some recommendations in relation to these matters very soon.

Some months ago I visited the site at Mallacoota to inform myself about the complexities of the site firsthand. I am confident that in arriving at a decision on this matter we will do justice to the needs of the community, the needs of industry in the area and the needs of those locals who are conscious of the impact of any proposal going into the future.

Supplementary question

Mr HALL (Eastern Victoria) — Given that the panel hearings for this particular project took place in September last year — some eight months ago — will the minister be more specific, rather than using the terms 'not-too-distant future' or 'very soon', and give the people of Mallacoota an accurate time line as to when he is going to make a decision on this matter?

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Planning) — I welcome Mr Hall's interest in a timely resolution of this matter, and I am eager to make decisions in a timely way. It is complex, and where you have significant and complex decisions to make, they sometimes take a little bit longer than we would all like. I am the first to admit to Mr Hall that I would like to make a decision sooner rather than later and at the earliest possible time, but can I also highlight to Mr Hall that, on matters of this nature, the advice I receive is often not directly from my department. It relies on a number of other government agencies that are external to my department. I look forward to receiving advice from the likes of Marine Safety Victoria or other organisations that must provide me with advice in relation to this matter.

This also is a matter that has gone on for many years because the community, the council and various other groups are divided on these matters. I look forward to making a decision at the earliest possible time with advice from not only my department but also other relevant agencies so that Mr Hall can feel confident the decision was made in a considered and cautious way in relation to all the matters that need to be considered.

Budget: government borrowings

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Treasurer. In more than 930 pages of budget papers there is only one reference to reducing borrowings — a statement that the government will do that in the medium term. Given that both public sector and budget sector borrowings will continue to rise in dollar terms for at least four years to 2012–13, what does the government regard as the medium term?

Mr LENDERS (Treasurer) — I think Mr Rich-Phillips has answered his own question. He asked the question about what we regard as the medium term. He then referred to the chart in the budget papers which talks about borrowings as a percentage of GSP (gross state product) actually declining in the fourth year. Clearly in the budget papers we are forecasting that we will increase borrowings to deal with the urgent and immediate needs of the global financial crisis and use them to secure 35 000 jobs. Mr Rich-Phillips is listening, but perhaps those interjecting should chant about which schools they are going to close, which hospitals they are going to close, which roads they are not going to build, which trains they are not going to buy, which regional airports they are not going to build — and I am looking at Mr Koch — before they actually start to chant.

But I say to Mr Rich-Phillips that if he looks at the graph in the papers — and he has the budget papers

open — he will see that debt as a percentage of GSP and borrowings as a percentage of GSP come down in the year 2012–13. Our plan to reduce borrowings kicks in during this particular cycle of government. This budget is based on a forecast of very meagre growth going forward, so if the kick in the world that is happening now comes in any earlier — as I am sure Mr Rich-Phillips knows, building approvals for Victoria were stronger yesterday than they had been and stronger than the rest of the country and retail sales in Victoria today are stronger than they have been and stronger than the rest of the country — the budget economic forecast is sound. Mr Rich-Phillips will know from the graph he referred to that we see borrowings as a percentage of GSP coming down by the fourth year of this cycle.

Supplementary question

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — The Treasurer is being a bit cute in constantly referring to borrowings as a share of GSP, because it is the borrowing dollar figure that needs to be repaid. I refer the Treasurer to his own budget paper 2, page 66, which shows that borrowings for the non-financial public sector for 2009 are $19.2 billion; for 2010, $26.7 billion; for 2011, $33.2 billion; for 2012, $37.8 billion; and for 2013, $39.2 billion. I ask the Treasurer: when will borrowings peak in dollar terms, and when will he reduce them in dollar terms?

Mr LENDERS (Treasurer) — Mr Rich-Phillips likes playing with the budget papers. He refers to general government sector borrowings and then he refers to non-financial public sector borrowings. Next he will be talking about public non-financial corporations and public financial corporations. He will weave his way through the budget papers to pick his tale of gloom.

Hon. M. P. Pakula interjected.

Mr LENDERS — And to show off to Kim Wells, the member for Scoresby in the Assembly; that is right, Mr Pakula. But he should also weave his way through the budget papers and say which schools in South Eastern Metropolitan Region he wants to cross off, which hospitals in South Eastern Metropolitan Region he wishes to cross off, which roads in South Eastern Metropolitan Region he wishes not to fund and which rail projects in South Eastern Metropolitan Region he wishes not to fund, as well as a range of other things, if he is going to try to equate the two.

Using the figure for non-financial public sector borrowings that he quoted from budget paper 2 alone, he knows that includes the figures for water authorities which have corporate plans to actually pay those borrowings off. Each water authority, like any other commercial enterprise, borrows for the service for the future, delivers the water to the people and deals with it over time. He knows the Port of Melbourne Corporation operates in the same way, and he knows that this is the case. Mr Rich-Phillips perhaps should also go to budget paper 4 and start looking through the historical figures in the appendix to budget paper 4 which actually show what has happened in Victoria over the period of time.

Budget paper 4 does not go back far enough for that, but I can help Mr Rich-Phillips. If he goes back to 1958, when Sir Henry Bolte was Premier and Treasurer of Victoria, he will find that those borrowing figures in real terms today from general government are a tenfold increase and from the non-financial public sector are a fivefold increase.

If he actually bothers to go over to the Office of Management and Budget in the US and sees their budget paper and finds the figure — and it would take Mr Rich-Phillips a couple more days, but I think it is not unreasonable to find it there — he would find that their figures are almost 10 times as much as they are here. If he goes to the European Union, he will find the same. This is a budget designed — —

Mrs Peulich — It's a Labor budget.

Mr LENDERS — Yes, it is a Labor budget, and proudly a Labor budget — a Labor budget that delivers services, delivers infrastructure and has for the last nine years had lower debt as a percentage of the economy than Jeff Kennett left us. It is a budget that secures jobs — 35 000 jobs!

Mr Guy — You just can't manage money.

Mr LENDERS — If Mr Guy thinks 35 000 jobs, of which one-eighth will be in his northern metropolitan electorate, are not worth fighting for, then Mr Guy should say which of those 35 000 people he wishes to see unemployed.

Mr Guy — You!

Mr LENDERS — I do not live in Mr Guy's electorate; I live in my own. That is the stark choice: you can do nothing, you can sit on your hands, you can comment on everything and watch unemployment rise or you can take action and bring forward infrastructure this state desperately needs and create jobs in the process. That is the stark choice. This government is on the side of AAA and jobs, and we have done it.

Planning: government initiatives

Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Planning, Justin Madden. Can the minister update the house on any recent announcements in planning that demonstrate how the Brumby Labor government is taking action to protect jobs and the Victorian economy?

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Planning) — I know Mr Somyurek is a great advocate for jobs and economic activity, so of course I appreciate his interest in these matters. Members of this chamber would be aware that earlier in the year the Premier announced that we would identify key projects that need to be dealt with very quickly, in order to fast-track them, create jobs and help deliver economic certainty to the Victorian economy in light of the global financial crisis. Last Friday I was pleased to be with my colleague the member for Prahran in the Assembly when announcing the second round of significant developments to be fast-tracked, which will create 4939 jobs — no mean feat.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — I will repeat that, because the opposition may not have been tuned in. I know how keen the Treasurer is to hear these figures, so I am happy to repeat them. Fast-tracking these projects will create 4939 jobs and will deliver a boost of the order of $862 million to the Victorian economy. These five key projects include housing, retail and office development, improved airport facilities, recreation and sporting facilities, and considerable open space, all of which will be delivered in a timely way.

This announcement includes a number of projects, and I would like to give some details. It includes appointing an advisory committee to examine the potential redevelopment of the Chirnside Park golf course, which will allow for approximately 450 new homes and the potential construction of a new course close by on a disused quarry site. They are two complex projects that need to be paralleled and dealt with expeditiously.

I have also become the authority for the rezoning of the former Kodak site in Coburg and for deciding the development plan for this project. I have called in from the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal a project at 568 St Kilda Road comprising 152 residential apartments, over 100 serviced apartments and a restaurant. I have also called in from VCAT a development of 214 apartments at 69–77 River Street, South Yarra.

At Avalon Airport I have streamlined the regulatory framework to support the continued efficient operation of the airport, which is an important part of Victoria's regional transport infrastructure. I know Mr Koch on the other side is keen to see things happen at the airport, and I am pleased to announce it. I would comment also that this announcement was warmly welcomed by the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, which I think I almost appreciated. I make the comment that it is interesting that we have this contrast in the positions of the opposition in relation to the calling in of some of these projects. Earlier in the year the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Baillieu, thought it was not a good idea at all, but Mr Guy thought it was a great idea. Then when we announced these recently, not only did Mr Guy think it was a great idea but he said we should have done it sooner.

Mr Guy — You should have!

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — I welcome Mr Guy's support on these matters, but I am not clear on the opposition's position on call-ins when you get a significant difference between the likes of Mr Koch, Mr Guy and Mr Baillieu. I have looked for some clarity from the opposition in relation to these matters. Are they for ministerial intervention, are they against ministerial intervention or do they want to do what Mr Maclellan did and basically wake up every morning and say, 'Hey, I want to call something in today; what will it be'? I seek some clarity from opposition members on not only policy in relation to planning but also policy in relation to ministerial intervention. I welcome whatever they might say, because I will be listening intently when legislation comes before this Parliament in relation to the opportunity to fast-track development in the future on all fronts. I know there is a significant difference of views across the opposition in relation to these matters, so I will welcome the debate to get some clarity around these matters.

The reason for these very significant call-ins is that these are projects of some complexity and of significant scale, but most importantly this is a way of securing and bringing forward jobs for Victoria at a time when leadership is very important. Where we can do that, we have done that.

I compliment the Treasurer on his superb budget, announced yesterday, and on the fact that he is so keen to secure jobs for Victoria. He is doing that with funds and I am doing that with the regulatory controls I have, because every job in Victoria is important, particularly in the light of the global economic downturn. But we are well placed. We are better placed than most jurisdictions around the world, because we have the

foundations to make sure that not only can we survive the economic downturn but when we get to the end of it we will be the first to come out of the blocks, as the Treasurer has said, to make sure we have projects and investment rolling forward and certainty in jobs for the entire community.

Ordered that answer be considered next day on motion of Mr ATKINSON (Eastern Metropolitan).

Planning: growth areas infrastructure contribution

Mr GUY (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Planning. Given the government' s claim that it is doing everything possible to create jobs in Victoria, as per the minister's last answer, on what grounds does the minister justify the full and up-front nature of the government's new growth areas infrastructure charge, a charge that business says will kill construction jobs at a time when Victoria needs them most?

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Planning) — I welcome Mr Guy's interest in this area and the fact that he was able to find the question in time.

Mr Jennings — It was a belated interest.

Mr Guy interjected.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — I am glad he was prompted by the Leader of the Opposition. In a sense the paperwork was fast-tracked by the Leader of the Opposition.

We are very conscious of any regulatory burden on business or industry, particularly at this time in the economic cycle, but I also want to make the point that the opposition has been very strong in making sure that we have significant land supply into the future. I recognise that that has been a key focus of the opposition on many occasions, saying we have to have the land supply. There is no doubt that, whilst we are committed to development in and around activity centres and concentrating and focusing development in those locations in existing suburbs where we can without undermining the amenity of local communities, we also need to bear in mind that we need to provide housing on the suburban fringe going into the future. It is not either/or, as some people would like to see it; it is about providing housing options on all fronts for all sorts of people.

Mr Guy — We're talking about a tax.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — I take up Mr Guy's interjection. Mr Guy is very conscious of the growth areas infrastructure contribution, which is a very important component of how we develop on the urban fringe into the future. I suspect when Mr Guy and I grew up on the urban fringe, when some of us grew up in the suburbs, that they were great places to grow up but they were wanting in infrastructure. As I was growing up in Airport West we thought 'infrastructure' related to the rich kids who had braces on their teeth, nothing else. Needless to say, I still have an overbite!

It is very important that we provide that infrastructure into the future. I know that if we do not provide that infrastructure into the future, the first group to criticise us for not providing the infrastructure would be the opposition. It is about getting development on the urban fringe right and in a way that is measured and considered, and measured and considered by providing the right infrastructure — particularly transport infrastructure.

The Treasurer, Mr Lenders, has announced not only the railway line extension to South Morang but all the other bits of infrastructure that need to go with it — the railway stations, the bridges and the overpasses. I put to Mr Guy that we will provide opportunity to open up land on the urban fringe through the investigation of some of these potential growth areas, but where is the infrastructure going to come from? Sure, the vast majority of it will come from government, but there will be a significant uplift in the value of that land when we shift the urban growth boundaries. What was farming land will suddenly become development land for housing. The uplift of that land on many occasions is sometimes tenfold. There is significant benefit to the land-holder whose land is suddenly defined within the urban growth boundary.

There will be a contribution for the infrastructure, because there is no doubt that some people are advantaged by the change in the urban growth boundary. We have to provide the transport infrastructure that we all would like to see, but in getting the balance right we are asking developers to make a contribution, specifically those who have land outside the urban growth boundary whose land value has increased through the change to the urban growth boundary.

I say to the opposition that you cannot be all things to all people or have an opinion on everything; you have to have solutions. My point today in answering the question from Mr Guy is to ask what is the opposition's solution? Is it an infrastructure charge or no infrastructure charge? The infrastructure charge will

contribute somewhere of the order of 15 per cent of the total value of the infrastructure that needs to be delivered to those suburbs. Sure, we will ask those who get a significant uplift in the value of their land to make a contribution, because that is only fair and reasonable when you consider that we need to put transport infrastructure and services into these locations.

We have an answer. We will introduce legislation that will come before this Parliament. I look forward to hearing from the opposition parties — if they do not have an answer on this front and if they do not support the legislation — their plan for the future of the suburbs on the urban fringe.

Mr Guy interjected.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — I am putting it to you. Good, Mr Guy! I am putting it to you to support the legislation, support the contribution or front up with an alternative plan. That is what I am putting to you: front up with an alternative plan or we will end up in the same place as occurs with your press releases where six months later it is different from the leader's position.

Mr Atkinson — On a point of order, President, in a previous response to a question the minister strayed into opposition areas. On this question the minister is clearly debating the matter rather than answering the question.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I think Mr Atkinson is correct, but I also think the minister may have finished.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Northern Metropolitan) — I apologise for the delay in asking my first question; it was under the budget papers, which were in my Joan Kirner bag! Given that the minister has had an extra month to work on the details of this new up-front tax and noting that he had very little knowledge of its details on the last sitting week, can he inform Victorians whether this new up-front charge, payable on the first property title transfer, will apply to land transfers within the company structure or to land inheritances even on the death of a family member?

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Planning) — I welcome Mr Guy's question in relation to my previous answer. We have made it very clear where these charges will be incurred. We have also made it very clear that these announcements in relation to these matters have been on the record for some time, and it has taken some time to introduce these matters. We have also made it very clear that on the first sale of the title, the cost is incurred. Let us not forget that in the announcement we made around this we also took away the impending charge on a lot of land that was in the urban growth boundary, freeing up a lot of land for the future.

The opposition has got to bear in mind that this land we are defining through the examination of these investigation areas is land that will not necessarily be developed immediately. Some of it will be developed in 10, 15 or 20 years time. When that title exchange occurs and the first transaction fees are incurred, there will be a cost for that.

I know that on one hand the opposition is likely to be very critical of the growth area infrastructure contribution, and I recognise the opposition's position on that, but it is contradictory to some of the positions taken in some of the outer areas, particularly by the development assessment committees. If opposition members want to help not only the property industry on the urban fringe but the property industry in the inner city and homebuyers who want to be provided with diverse housing options across Melbourne, they should provide solutions.

I will welcome seeing the opposition's plan when we get it. I look forward to it, and I look forward to members opposite providing some solutions rather than a hell of a lot of opinions.

Budget: employment

Ms BROAD (Northern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Industry and Trade, Martin Pakula. Can the minister outline to the house how the Brumby Labor government is taking action in the state budget to secure jobs and to assist industry to adapt to the global financial crisis?

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Minister for Industry and Trade) — I thank Ms Broad for her question and for her interest in the way the Brumby Labor government is delivering strong leadership in these tough global times and securing 35 000 Victorian jobs as part of this budget.

This budget builds on the manufacturing statement that was brought out last November and on the $50 million Industry Transition Fund that was part of that. This budget, in addition to that, sees the creation of the transport infrastructure manufacturing scheme (TIMS), which is a $1.2 million scheme over two years facilitated by the Australian Industry Group. It is a scheme which will maximise opportunities for local manufacturers out of the $38 billion Victorian transport plan. It is a scheme that will help identify and promote opportunities for those manufacturers across Australia,

which will improve the identification of opportunities for Victorian manufacturers in overseas markets, which will provide assistance with technical presentations, which will provide assistance with those manufacturers being able to prove their capabilities and which will provide advice on compliance issues associated with business case development and tender submission. The TIMS will provide practical assistance to local manufacturers and will complement the work of a national task force.

Tim Piper from the Australian Industry Group made some comments on this yesterday when he said that he believed the government's increased commitment to transport infrastructure is an important part of the budget. He said that both private vehicle and public transport would be improved as a result of it.

I know Ms Broad is keenly interested in the benefits to regional Victoria. The budget will also boost the Regional Aviation Fund by $11.2 million, bringing it up to a total spend of $20 million. It will provide opportunities for regional airports to improve their safety and cater for future growth. It is a fund which is aimed, as members would know, at providing support to industries that rely on Victoria's regional airports, it is a fund that ensures that the airports are better able to meet the demand of their local industries and it is a fund that supports regional aviation businesses which are involved in those upgrades. It is a fund which has so far provided support to upgrade regional airports and aerodromes, including those in the Latrobe Valley and at Yarrawonga, Mallacoota, Stawell, Ballarat and Mildura. The money committed in this budget will build on that work and will ensure that businesses in regional and rural Victoria have greater access to markets not only in metropolitan Melbourne but also internationally.

In terms of that work on providing jobs and opportunities in regional Victoria, the Regional Aviation Fund simply builds on the other work in the budget that provides opportunities to regional companies and regional businesses, along with work like the upgrade of the South Gippsland Highway, the upgrade of the Nagambie bypass, the upgrade of the Western Highway and the increased rail services through Maryborough, as well as the rebuild of schools in regional Victoria and the upgrade of hospitals in places like Bendigo, Geelong, Ballarat, Alexandra and Warrnambool.

The budget also commits $2 million of the $8 million of the defence industry acceleration program that was announced in the Victorian industry and manufacturing statement. Through that program the Victorian government is going to help position our defence industry to leverage the opportunities in the defence sector, including the existing proposals outlined in the defence capability plan and to leverage the opportunities that have emerged recently as a result of the release of the federal government's defence white paper. That is a white paper that provides significant opportunities for Victoria's defence industry. As a result of that, we have been working very closely with Victorian companies engaged in the LAND 121 project bidding, engaged in Joint Strike Fighter bids, engaged in the air warfare destroyer module bids and engaged in the landing helicopter dock bid — companies like BAE Systems, Thales, Marand Precision Engineering, Lockheed Martin and Production Parts. We welcome the clear directions that have been set out by the federal government in this important area, and we look forward to working with both the commonwealth and those local companies to leverage all the best opportunities for our defence companies in this important sector.

The Brumby Labor government's 2009 budget builds on a very strong record of disciplined economic management. It lays the building blocks for Victoria to capitalise on the inevitable worldwide recovery from the global financial crisis. We are investing responsibly to support Victorian businesses, to secure jobs and to support economic activities for the benefit of all Victorian families.

Budget: government concessions

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Treasurer. It is in relation to the miserly increase in state concessions to be found at page 228 of budget paper 4. Do these concessions in relation to energy, municipal rates, water and sewerage continue to be capped or capped with inflation, and what is his estimate on the increase in the number of people who are likely to be claiming these concessions?

Mr LENDERS (Treasurer) — I thank Mr Barber for his question. As he knows from the budget papers, we have increased the cap by a percentage increase that is approximately equal to what the Essential Services Commission has in its draft determination.

It is worth noting in the context here what the Victorian Council of Social Service and a number of other social welfare bodies have said about the budget. Their evaluation has been a positive one.

The position of this state government under A Fairer Victoria is that each year we have gone forward. We are a Labor government that will deliver core services across the state. We will also deliver in areas where

there is great need. In an incredibly tight budget, there is a big investment in out-of-home care because it was an area of need. In very tight times, in this budget there is a big investment in disability, there is a big investment in mental health and concessions have been increased, as Mr Barber says.

Budgets are about balance. This is a Labor government with a very strong focus on a fairer Victoria. This budget has delivered in a series of areas, and the key social sector bodies have looked at the budget and given it a positive evaluation.

Supplementary question

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — Should there be a further increase to water bills as a result of the outcome of the desalination tendering process, when those costs are passed on to bills, does the Treasurer commit to increase the cap by the same amount?

Mr LENDERS (Treasurer) — The government in this budget has made a one-year decision to boost this cap above CPI. As we did last year, we made a one-year decision to boost this. Clearly on all these important issues of social policy there is a range of areas that need to be balanced. There is ongoing work that goes on in these areas. We have a commonwealth government which for the first time is starting to seriously address this. All these things need to be done in the context of the CPRS (carbon pollution reduction scheme). There is a lot of work to be done. There is a large compensation component promised under the CPRS. There is a government which has a policy of indexing these benefits. All these things need to be done in a measured and complete whole-of-government, whole-of-two-levels-of-government approach. We have two years in a row made an adjustment to the cap because of the rises in water prices, but this is a holistic review and we will look at this between now and the next budget as to what our view is for next year. But this government believes in a fairer Victoria. We have been delivering in an extraordinary range of areas. We have picked up on the years of neglect and butchering of the system by the opposition.

Mr Guy interjected.

Mr LENDERS — Mr Guy obviously forgets the Grey Sisters and the shameless massacring — and I use the term deliberately — of the community sector by the Kennett government, which ruthlessly went out and about, slashed the safety net underpinning, and for almost 10 years this government has been rebuilding it. If Mr Guy bothers to read to the end of the budget papers and strays across a concept for a fairer Victoria, which does not work all that well in his party, he will find investment of more than $4 billion over the last few years designed to fix the safety net and target assistance to where it is needed most.

We have a budget that is friendly for families and friendly for people. It is good for recovery; it is a partnership with the commonwealth; it keeps the AAA rating; and it creates jobs. That is the sort of budget this government is about. In response to Mr Barber, I think I have answered his question and his supplementary question.

Budget: bushfire preparedness

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Gavin Jennings. Can the minister update the house on how the Brumby Labor government is taking action through the package for parks and biodiversity that was announced in yesterday's state budget to reduce the risk of bushfires across Victoria and enable greater preparedness and how this investment will assist protecting our shared natural assets?

Mr JENNINGS (Minister for Environment and Climate Change) — I thank Ms Tierney for her question and the opportunity to talk about the significant investments that appear in this year's budget statement.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr JENNINGS — We should have some sort of solemnity in relation to this matter, so perhaps the only interjection I will take up is that of Mrs Peulich. I think she is on tone, and I appreciate that.

In relation to the tragedies that the Victorian environment and our communities have confronted and the very significant price borne by our community in the past months, there are significant outlays that were required to make sure we could pay for our fire suppression effort, to secure our environment and to see the emergency through. The budget paper released by the Treasury yesterday included outgoings of an additional $338 million spent during the course of that emergency period bringing the fires under control to actually restore confidence to our community and to make it much safer from the conclusion of the fires.

Part of that suppression effort required additional expenditure of the order of $5.5 million on restoring stream-side integrity of earth-stabilisation programs throughout the state. We also expended additional

funds in trying to assess fire behaviour and undertake the appropriate research so that we can take the learnings of the bushfires further in terms of our emergency response and our ability to assess and respond to those emergencies and become better versed in understanding bushfire behaviour at times of pending risk in the future due to climate change scenarios, where there may be more extreme events that we have to take account of in years to come. That is a very important part of our expenditure.

One of the areas of significant investment that is required to make sure — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — Stop showing off for — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! I remind Minister Pakula and the house that it is inappropriate for any member in here to refer to anyone in the gallery.

Mr JENNINGS — Thank you, President, for punctuating my response so that I can take a breath to talk about the significant investments that are undertaken within the budget to improve our emergency response effort in terms of communications.

Beyond the investments that have been added to enhance the bushfire information line, a significant investment of $167 million has been allocated to provide our emergency response teams with paging, radio and telecommunications equipment. More than $30 million within my Department of Sustainability and Environment portfolio will be allocated to make sure that more than 7000 pieces of equipment are purchased to assist in the communications effort.

It is obvious from anyone's perspective in the Victorian community that those communications systems were put under great stress when the emergency was at its most dangerous on 7 February. But beyond that we need to have confidence about our communications efforts, so that $30 million in my portfolio will be allocated to support that effort in the years to come.

Despite some rantings from the other side from time to time, I have been and continue to be committed to our fire mitigation efforts in fuel reduction burning. In fact if you have a look at my track record, you will find that while I have been environment minister more fuel reduction burning has taken place than in any other year since 1993. There is no pride in that, but that is the truth. That is the reality of this situation and something that I am determined to drive in future.

Under normal circumstances the fuel reduction program is actually concluded by this time. We will continue to drive the program as long and as hard as we can into winter to reduce the fuel load across the Victorian landscape and to mitigate the risk in the lead-up to the next fire season. That will continue to be something we will work assiduously to do. Fifty million dollars has been allocated for that purpose in the forward estimates to enhance that effort, and I appreciate the contribution of that effort and certainly will leave no stone unturned to try to reduce the risk in the years to come.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers

Mr LENDERS (Treasurer) — I have answers to the following questions on notice: 475, 973, 1028–31, 1258, 1266, 1747, 1960, 1990, 2360, 2362, 2374, 2383, 2384, 2387, 2389, 2409, 2446, 2544, 2546, 2549, 2555, 2556, 2558, 2579, 2580, 2583, 2585, 2770, 2780, 2782–5, 2825, 2828, 2865, 2930–2, 2966, 3000, 3001, 3004, 3023, 3043, 3044, 3080, 3083, 3124, 3180, 3260, 3278, 3279, 3291, 3315, 3552–4, 3567, 3569, 3570, 3724, 3726, 3727, 4006–8, 4530, 4618–24, 4736, 4743, 5784, 5984, 6585–6600, 6609–11, 6668–70, 6673–9, 6682, 6683, 6685, 6688, 6690–3, 6698–706, 6711, 6713, 6720–2, 6814–20, 6962, 6968, 6969, 6975, 6976, 6983, 7512–4, 7519–21, 7526–8, 7533–5, 7540–2, 7547–9, 7554–6, 7561–3, 7568–70, 7575, 7576, 7582–4, 7589–91, 7596–8, 7603, 7604, 7802, 7804, 7805, 8002–4, 8009, 8013, 8030–43, 8065–71, 8073–5, 8077–85, 8093–100, 8102, 8107–13, 8121–34, 8142–8, 8327–35, 8372–84, 8395, 8399, 8408, 8417, 8426, 8435, 8444, 8452–8, 8463–8590, 8706, 8708–10, 8712, 8716, 8718, 8720–3, 8726–38, 8741, 8742, 8744, 8822–97, 8952, 8954–60, 8962, 8963, 8987–9001, 9003, 9004, 9011, 9014, 9060, 9061, 9077, 9079, 9082, 9088, 9089, 9091–3, 9096–100, 9106.

Sitting suspended 1.03 p.m. until 2.07 p.m.

ELECTRIC CARS: PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Debate resumed.

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — I am happy to support Mr David Davis's motion today because it raises a matter of public importance, which is the principle of employing ministers and parliamentary secretaries — that is, members of the government who are privy to certain information — and what they then

do in their employment following their resignation from Parliament.

I draw to the attention of the chamber the Greens document *Making Parliament Work — Ideas from the Greens*, which we have referred to in this place before. In that document we talk about accountability of parliamentarians and a code of conduct.

We say in that document:

> Despite recommendations by the Constitutional Commission, there is no code of conduct for parliamentarians other than a rudimentary outline in the Members of Parliament (Register of Interests) Act 1978. We need a comprehensive regime to articulate and uphold the ethical standards expected of ministers, ministerial staff and parliamentarians both in the performance of their public duties and in their transition to private life.

We recommend in that document that Parliament:

> Adopt a comprehensive code of conduct setting out the standards expected of parliamentarians, including specifically a two-year cooling-off period before ministers or their advisers —

or parliamentary secretaries for that matter —

> can work in industries they previously regulated —

or had something to do with in their parliamentary duties.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — 'Or had something to do with'?

Ms PENNICUIK — In their parliamentary duties, if that meant that they were involved in that industry. Certainly Mr Evan Thornley, as the Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Premier on the National Reform Agenda and Innovation, did have something to do with the industry he is now working in.

All Victorians and particularly members of Southern Metropolitan Region need to know the circumstances behind the resignation of MPs and whether there is any personal gain involved in that resignation. Our recommendation that there be a cooling-off period of two years is followed in many other parliaments.

Mr D. Davis — It is 18 months nationally.

Ms PENNICUIK — That is right, and it should be adopted in this Parliament as a matter of course. It is bad enough when MPs who have been in Parliament for a long time resign or lose their seat then take up a position such as working for a defence contractor after being the defence minister, but when a parliamentarian who is only halfway through his first term resigns and takes up a position in an industry which has something to do with his former parliamentary duties, that rightly raises questions.

I am not prejudging Mr Thornley, but we are talking about a principle and the community being able to be assured that the right thing is being done and being seen to be done.

There certainly has been enough speculation in the media, enough documents released in public, and enough statements made in public to make it a matter of importance that the community is reassured that Mr Thornley has not made personal gain from his move from the Parliament into the private sector.

Without casting any aspersions on Mr Thornley, which I do not wish to do, I disagree with Mr Leane's statement that just because a person is wealthy, they would not be seeking personal gain. I make that as a general statement and not as a statement specific to Mr Thornley. It does not follow that just because someone is wealthy they would not be seeking personal gain. I am not saying that has any specific relationship to Mr Thornley, but in a general sense that statement does not make any sense.

This motion is not about Better Place and the pros and cons of electric cars but about the community having confidence that MPs are committed to serving them and that when they leave this place they are not using outside the Parliament knowledge they have gained, perhaps in confidence, within government. That principle has been established in other parliaments, and I recommend this Parliament should be establishing the same principle. That is why I support the motion.

Motion agreed to.

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AMENDMENT (BEVERAGE CONTAINER DEPOSIT AND RECOVERY SCHEME) BILL

Statement of compatibility

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) tabled following statement in accordance with Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act:

> In accordance with section 28 of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Environment Protection Amendment (Beverage Container Deposit and Recovery Scheme) Bill 2009.

In my opinion, the Environment Protection Amendment (Beverage Container Deposit and Recovery Scheme) Bill 2009 is compatible with the human rights protected by the charter.

The purpose of the bill is to amend the Environment Protection Act 1970 to establish a beverage container deposit and recovery scheme to be administered by the Environment Protection Authority.

The following sections of the charter are of relevance to the bill —

a) section 13: privacy and reputation

b) section 15: freedom of expression

c) section 20: property rights.

a) Section 13: privacy and reputation

Proposed section 52K involves the collection of personal information, which is a policy trigger for section 13 of the charter.

Proposed section 52K creates an offence to claim a refund on a beverage container purchased outside Victoria. It provides for an authorised depot or transfer station to request a person presenting a beverage container for the purpose of claiming the amount of the refund value to complete a declaration stating that the person has no reason to believe that the beverage container was not purchased in Victoria. Declarations must be stored for three years, and made available on request to an authorised officer.

Depots and transfer stations must comply with the Information Privacy Act (Victoria) as they will perform the functions of a public authority under section 9(1)(e) of that act.

In my view, the collection of information is justified as it is integral to the purpose of proposed section 52K, which is to prevent the fraudulent claim of a refund on a beverage container purchased outside Victoria.

b) Section 15: freedom of expression

Every person has the right to freedom of expression. This right to freedom of expression includes a right against forced expression.

Proposed section 52K creates an offence to claim a refund on a beverage container purchased outside Victoria. It provides for an authorised depot or transfer station to request a person presenting a beverage container for the purpose of claiming the amount of the refund value to complete a declaration stating that the person has no reason to believe that the beverage container was not purchased in Victoria.

There is no penalty for failure to provide a declaration, however pursuant to the proposed section 52K(4), the operator of an authorised collection depot or authorised transfer station must not pay the amount of the refund value to a person who has not complied with a request made under subsection (2) or (3).

In my view, the requirement for information is justified as it is integral to the purpose of proposed section 52K, which is to prevent the fraudulent claim of a refund on a beverage container purchased outside Victoria.

c) Section 20: property rights

A person must not be deprived of his or her property other than in accordance with law.

It may be argued that, under a beverage container deposit and recovery scheme, the 10-cent deposit has the effect of substantially depriving a beverage purchaser of 10 cents (including enjoying exclusive possession of it, disposing of it, destroying it, transferring it or deriving profits from it).

In my view, there is no unreasonable limit to property rights, as:

(i) a person may have the deposit refunded by returning the container;

(ii) the levy is not arbitrary or unlawful;

(iii) the levy is justified as it is integral to the purpose of the bill, which includes environmentally sustainable uses of resources and best practices in waste management.

Conclusion

I consider that the bill is compatible with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities because although it raises human rights issues, there is no unreasonable limit to those rights.

Colleen Hartland
Member for Western Metropolitan

Second reading

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I move:

That the bill be now read a second time.

I would like to start with a quote from Ian Kiernan from Clean Up Australia: 'Who would walk past a silver coin lying on the ground?'

Those 11 words tell you nearly everything you need to know about a 10-cent deposit on bottles, cans and cartons.

A 10-cent deposit means that we attach a value to a drink container, so it is not rubbish. And if someone does litter a 10-cent container, someone else will pick it up. It is human nature.

This represents a radical change from how we view rubbish and recycling in Victoria. At the moment it is mostly local government's job. Ratepayers foot the bill, so rubbish and recycling has to compete with aged care and libraries for our hardworking council rates.

We know we need to improve recycling, so we keep trying. We pay for education campaigns, we stencil fish on to the entrance of drains, we pay for bigger and better machines. We float litter traps on our rivers and creeks.

Once a year we turn up at the local park to pick up all the litter we can reach. At least some of us do. The people who did the littering are not there, yet they are the very people we need to reach.

A 10-cent deposit on bottles, cans and cartons turns litterers into recyclers.

It changes how they view the empty bottle in their hand. They are about to throw it out the car window, but they paid 10 cents for it. It is worth something, so it is not rubbish. You would not toss a silver coin onto the ground.

Benefits of a 10-cent deposit system

My report *Turning Rubbish Into Community Money* outlines the scheme that is proposed in this bill.

I am not permitted to table the report, but it is available on my website or via the Parliamentary Library. I will circulate a copy to each member.

The report demonstrates the economic, social and environmental benefits of the scheme.

If this bill is passed, we will increase drink container recycling from the current 49 per cent to 83 per cent.

We will provide $15.2 million in annual savings to ratepayers. Every single municipality in Victoria will benefit financially.

We will divert over 128 000 tonnes of materials away from landfill by recycling them.

We will decrease litter by 12–15 per cent.

We will reduce Victoria's greenhouse gas emissions, reduce water use and improve air quality.

We will create hundreds of new jobs.

It will create a $63.5 million fund that will meet all of the government's costs in the scheme, with money left over to promote recycling.

These are not just figures I pulled out of the air. They were calculated using government and industry sources, even when those sources were, shall we say, 'optimistic' about current recycling rates.

Why does Victoria not have a container deposit scheme?

The benefits of a container deposit scheme are so great that whenever I talk about it, the first question I am asked is: why do we not have one already?

It is a question I have trouble answering.

Julia Blunden of Hawthorn wrote a letter to the minister urging him to vote for my bill and received a response from Mick Bourke, the chairman of the EPA, on the minister's behalf last week.

This letter is typical of the government response, so it is worth focusing on. It says:

> In order for the Victorian government to decide to adopt CDL (container deposit legislation), we need evidence that its introduction would make a meaningful contribution to improved recycling rates, reducing litter and other environmental outcomes, and that it can deliver net benefits to the Victorian community.

Clearly, a container deposit scheme does all of these things. If these are the government's concerns, they should vote for the bill.

Kerbside recycling

Mick Bourke's letter focuses entirely on kerbside recycling, as though nobody eats or drinks in public. It does not mention away-from-home recycling at all.

The letter describes kerbside recycling and a container deposit system as alternatives.

But the greatest boost in recycling from a container deposit system is that it creates away-from-home recycling.

About half of our drink containers are used away from home, at cafes and food courts, at restaurants, in our public parks, at sportsgrounds, at the beach and in offices. Walk outside at lunchtime and have a look at people eating lunch in the Treasury gardens.

A container deposit system works in well with kerbside recycling. It decreases the volume of drink containers in the bin, but increases the value of those containers. This makes kerbside recycling more profitable (see pages 12 and 15 of my report).

In California, container deposit systems financially underpin kerbside by US$50 million per year. In Canada, kerbside collection and container deposits also work side by side.

If the government is concerned about kerbside recycling, they should vote for my bill.

Mick Bourke's letter on behalf of the minister expresses concern about the transaction costs associated with a container deposit system. Later I will show that the scheme runs itself financially, including transaction costs.

He concludes on the minister's behalf by saying that, instead of container deposits, the government will focus on organic waste. Later, I will also talk about organic waste and show that a container deposit system will improve organic waste recovery.

South Australia

Container deposit systems work well with kerbside recycling in countries all around the world. And we need to look no further than South Australia, which has container deposits and a robust kerbside recycling collection.

South Australia increased their levy from 5 cents to 10 cents at the end of last year. They also increased the range of containers in the scheme.

This year, their environment minister was able to stand up on Clean Up Australia Day and announce an increase of 19 million containers returned in three months, compared to the same three months the previous year.

His government had actually stopped the litter before it hit the ground.

I would like to say his government was courageous, but honestly, I do not think it took too much courage. South Australians love their container deposit system so much that any government dismantling it would fall.

Name me another government initiative that is so beloved!

Victorian support for container deposits

Ninety-four per cent of Victorians want a container deposit system, according to a 2006 Newspoll. I am reminding you of this because you are about to be lobbied by packaging companies and drink companies.

They will be relentless. I cannot fathom their gall. They are the ones creating the litter.

They have the money and influence, but this bill represents 94 per cent of Victorians, who want CDL.

Many people do not even care about redeeming the deposit — they support it in principle. Most people who have attended my community meetings want to donate their refund to charity.

The packaging industry keeps bleating about the price hike on a slab of beer, but I am yet to meet a beer drinker who cares about that. They know they can get the deposit back, or they can donate it to the local footy club. There is no rule saying beer drinkers cannot care about the environment.

Environment groups and community groups across the board support a container deposit scheme — from Friends of the Earth and Environment Victoria to the scouts. The scouts have written to me endorsing this bill in the warmest possible terms.

Across the state there is support for the concept of a container deposit scheme, from the Hamilton Ladies Probus Club to the Wodonga and Albury Towards Climate Health to the Friends of Mallacoota.

At local government there is support across the state and across party lines, from urban Yarra, Darebin, Maroondah and Moreland councils to the Yarra Ranges, Surf Coast and Hepburn shires to Ballarat City Council, to name just a few.

Everyone supports it, except the packaging companies and drink companies like Fosters, Schweppes and Coca-Cola, and their highly paid lobbyists. Now ask yourself again: why does Victoria not have a drink container deposit system?

Environment Protection Amendment (Beverage Container Deposit and Recovery Scheme) Bill 2009

I will now take you through the bill and, in doing so, I will describe how the container deposit scheme would work.

Environment Protection Act

This bill amends the Environment Protection Act 1970 to establish a beverage container deposit and recovery scheme to be administered by the Environment Protection Authority. The Environment Protection Act begins with a fine set of principles, which are all about integrating economic, social and environmental considerations.

The act uses pricing and incentive mechanisms to achieve environmental outcomes.

It speaks of prices based on the costs relating to disposal of waste, of incentive structures and market

mechanisms and of shared responsibility between industry, all levels of government and the community. It speaks of product stewardship and preventing commercial advantage to those who pollute.

This bill fits into the Environment Protection Act like a hand into a glove.

Clause 3

Clause 3 inserts new definitions into the act. The one I want to draw attention to is the definition of 'beverage container'. In this scheme, the intention is to capture all bottles, cans and cartons of drink into the scheme. This means everything from a plastic water bottle, to a glass whisky bottle, to a carton of soy milk. It means every kind of fizzy drink container, wine bottles and juice poppers.

The more comprehensive a scheme is, the better it works. Historically, schemes were set up by the beverage industry, and they naturally only wanted to capture the most profitable materials for resale or their own materials.

This makes the scheme confusing for the public to use and, as time moves on, those schemes need updating.

The recent update in New York State is a good example. When their container deposit scheme was introduced, bottled water was a rarity, so it was not included. It has taken years of campaigning to get the Bigger Better Bottle Bill through their Parliament to include bottled water and other provisions which I will talk about later.

The definition of 'beverage container' in clause 3, together with new regulations under clause 6, enables the EPA to prescribe a class of beverage container not to be a container under this act. Other than that, every container under 4 litres — that is, every bottle, can, carton or composite container — is included by default.

Clause 4

Clause 4 establishes the scheme and sets out how the scheme works. It inserts a new division 6 in the act and new sections from 52A to 52O.

The role of the EPA

The beverage container deposit and recovery scheme is funded by the beverage container environment levy, administered by the Environment Protection Authority — the EPA. The levy is the 10-cent deposit on each container.

Later, in clause 5, you will see that the levy goes into the Environment Protection Fund, administered by the EPA. This is the same fund that presently receives landfill levies. Levies are a well-established way of achieving environmental outcomes for the EPA.

New section 52C(1) sets out the new functions of the EPA.

Basically, the EPA does the central administration, liaises with the largest recycling enterprises, creates regulations, reports to the government and keeps hold of the purse strings.

Unredeemed deposit fund

The benefit of the EPA holding the purse strings is that they will retain a large bucket of money from unredeemed deposits. The scheme is self-funding, and the unredeemed deposit fund is one of three main funding sources.

My report estimates (on page 12) that 83 per cent of drink containers will be returned. This is a huge increase from the current 49 per cent. But the EPA will have received 100 per cent of drink container levies, and will refund 83 per cent.

My report estimates (on page 14) that the unredeemed deposits will create a fund worth $63.5 million per year. The administrative costs for the EPA are barely going to put a dent in $63.5 million. The size of that dent is estimated on page 21 at $1 million.

This is a generous estimate. The South Australian scheme is run by something like three bureaucrats in their EPA.

About half of the unredeemed levy funds will offset the costs for the scheme itself, via the authorised transfer stations, but there will remain a large budget for recycling promotion, education and incentives.

Subsection (2) of new section 52C enables levy funds to be used via grants and other incentives to encourage the use of recyclable and reusable containers and increase the use of recycled material from beverage containers.

It enables levy funds to be used for supporting kerbside recycling services, offsetting the collection industry costs for the operation of the scheme, product development to improve the recyclability and reusability of beverage containers, and so on.

Unredeemed deposit fund examples

In California, the unredeemed deposit fund is administered by the state.

Mr Jennings is about to visit California. He should have a word to Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger when he gets there about their container deposit system.

The Californian unredeemed deposits fund pays for the container deposit scheme. It also underpins their kerbside collection to the tune of US$50 million a year.

The governor's budget also includes funding from the unredeemed deposit fund for education programs on recycling. They are even talking about expanding the scheme, so it will include food containers and even non-food containers, like shampoo.

In New York, by contrast, they have a more old-fashioned scheme, which is run by the beverage companies. Their recent legislation — the Bigger Better Bottle Bill — requires 80 per cent of those unredeemed deposits to be given to the state. This has modernised their scheme.

The South Australian system is also an old-fashioned one, where the beverage companies own the unredeemed deposits.

If we are setting up a new scheme, it should be in line with the best practice around the world. It should pay for itself, including all administrative costs, so there is no burden on the state.

The hubs

A lot of the on-ground administration is handled by the largest recycling enterprises in the scheme. They are called 'authorised transfer stations' in the bill. That is a good description, because many existing transfer stations will adapt to a container deposit scheme without skipping a beat. I call them 'hubs' in my report.

I am going to jump ahead to new section 52J, because that describes the functions of an authorised transfer station or hub.

The EPA would make an agreement with each hub — there would be about 60 in Victoria.

Hubs do a lot of the on-ground administration of the scheme. They liaise with the authorised depots and other large collectors, and they keep the EPA's administrative function to a minimum.

The hubs will make arrangements to pay transaction fees to the depots and disburse refunds to the large collectors, such as local councils and commercial and industrial and large community collectors, who would bring their containers directly to the hub rather than via a depot.

Those commercial arrangements are not prescribed in this bill.

The hubs also sell the recyclate — that is, the plastic, aluminium, glass, liquid paperboard and so on. The sale of recyclate is the second of the three funding streams for the scheme.

Every month, the hubs make a report to the EPA on the number and types of empty beverage containers received and processed. The reports from authorised transfer stations will provide the EPA with the data it needs to report to the minister under new section 52C(1)(i).

Before I leave the hubs, I would like to point out that once we have 60 hubs established across the state, they can be expanded to service other extended producer responsibility schemes for TVs, computers, mattresses, compact fluorescent lights, car batteries and gas bottles.

Green jobs

Environment Victoria's recent report *Victoria — the Green Jobs State* made exactly that point. We need a drink container deposit scheme to create the hubs and make them profitable. Then we expand the concept of producer responsibility to a range of other products.

I am waiting for the first politician to accuse my bill of being 'the thin edge of the wedge'. I am quite happy to say it is.

Environment Victoria's green jobs report quotes the United States EPA:

> A commonly used rule of thumb is that 'incinerating 10 000 tonnes of waste creates one job; landfilling 10 000 tonnes of waste creates six jobs; and recycling 10 000 tonnes of waste creates 36 jobs'.

Using that rule of thumb, my scheme would create 384 jobs by diverting 128 000 tonnes of drink containers from landfill to recycling. My own report (at page 14) estimates 300–400 new jobs.

But that is just 'the thin edge of the wedge'. Environment Victoria estimates 2310 new jobs would be created if Victoria lifted its recycling to 80 per cent and introduced a recycling scheme for electronic waste.

Role of the producers and importers

New section 52D provides that an importer or producer of a beverage container is liable to pay the beverage container environmental levy, unless they are granted an exemption. The penalty for not doing so is high, reflecting the principle of 'no financial advantage' under section 1K of the act.

It is equivalent to the penalties for works approval offences, waste discharge offences, licence offences and pollution abatement notice offences under the act.

10-cent beverage container environmental levy

New section 52E sets the amount of the beverage container environmental levy — that is, the drink container deposit — at 10 cents. It enables a higher amount to be set by regulation.

Ten cents is consistent with the 10-cent levy in the South Australian container deposit scheme. It is the levy amount announced by the Northern Territory government on 11 March this year, when their Chief Minister said he was sick of waiting for a national scheme. He said, 'I am taking the lead and hope that other states will follow'.

New section 52F provides that a manufacturer or importer must pay the levy in a timely manner, once the drink has been put onto the market. This enables the levies to be received by the EPA's Environment Protection Fund before refunds are reimbursed to authorised depots and transfer stations.

New sections 52G and 52H provide that all beverage containers sold in Victoria must be labelled as refundable. The labelling requirements are similar to those required by the South Australian beverage container scheme.

My intention is that there will be no new difficult labelling requirements. Grab an empty container off the street — there are plenty lying around — and you will see a label saying '10-cent refund when purchased in SA'. They could simply add 'or Vic'.

Before long, it will be 'SA, NT or Vic'. Our aim is that one day, the label will say: 'in Australia'.

The depots

New section 52I provides for the EPA to approve a premises to be an authorised collection depot. It sets out the agreement between the EPA and the depot, but after that, it is basically hands-off. The depots run themselves and report to the hubs. The hubs will pay depots a transaction fee per item.

The EPA reimburses the depots for all the 10-cent refunds they have paid out, but the scheme is flexible enough that the EPA may choose to make arrangements for the hubs to perform that function when they pay for the containers.

Depots are where ordinary Victorians will take their used containers to get a refund. They will be everywhere. Business owners are practically battering down my door telling me how keen they are to establish depots, at no cost to the ratepayer.

Reverse vending machines

Many of these depots will be reverse vending machines — and these will work particularly well in the metropolitan area.

Reverse vending machines are exactly what they sound like. You put in an empty container, push a button, and it gives you 10 cents. They read a barcode, which tells them all about the product. They crush and sort the container. They deliver the containers and the data to the hub in return for a transaction fee.

They will be in the food court of your shopping centre or in the car park. They will be in the strip shopping centre. They will be next to the general store. They will be at the service station. They will be at the beach.

There is even a company getting ready to roll out a handful of reverse vending machines in Victoria for a trial, right now.

Shopping centres and retailers are crazy about the idea. Reverse vending machines are brilliant advertising. Everyone wants to associate their product with good environmental outcomes. They want to offer incentives and vouchers, as part of their advertising. Advertising and business incentives form part of the funding source for the reverse vending machines — it is the third of the three funding sources for the scheme.

Reverse vending machines in schools

These machines can also be in schools, where they will reduce school cleaning and rubbish costs. Instead of advertising, they can play important government messages on the screen.

The student puts in a container and presses the button and earns a point for their team in the school recycling competition. They may choose a voucher for the school cafeteria, or donate the refund to the school library or a

charity supported by the school. The screen can then play a message — for example, about the Kidsafe helpline or road safety.

The EPA makes the initial agreement with all depots under new section 52I, so they can restrict the types of messages or vouchers allowed on reverse vending machines in schools.

Reverse vending machines and charities

Reverse vending machines can give out cash money or a voucher. In reality, they will only give out vouchers, and manual depots will make cash refunds.

Once you have your container in the machine, you push a button to indicate whether you want a voucher, or whether you want to donate your 10 cents to charity.

Then you will choose on the touch screen which store you want a voucher for or which charity.

In this way, local sports clubs, environment groups or social justice groups can earn donations without even touching the containers.

Better than pokies machines

Reverse vending machines are the polar opposite of pokies machines.

I cannot tell you how much I loathe pokies machines. I loathe how sports clubs use them as a fundraiser.

Pokies machines make money out of misery and heartache, from family break-ups and addiction, from suicide and from crime. Fifty-three cents out of every dollar stolen from not-for-profit groups in Australia and New Zealand goes to fund problem gambling.

By contrast, reverse vending machines reduce litter and create donations for community and sporting groups.

Crushed and broken containers

The scheme will initially only provide for a refund on unbroken containers with an intact label. This covers most containers.

New section 52J(4) provides for future arrangements to be made for paying a refund on crushed and broken empty beverage containers using an estimate of refund value.

Containers crossing borders

New section 52K prohibits the claim of a refund of the levy on a beverage container which the person knows or has reason to believe was not purchased in Victoria.

It enables the operator of a collection depot to request a declaration stating that the person has no reason to believe that the beverage container was not purchased in Victoria.

Such declaration is mandatory for any person presenting 3000 or more beverage containers within a 48-hour period.

Where a person has not complied with a request for a declaration, the depot may not refund the levy. The authorised depot must keep any declaration for three years and make it available for inspection.

These provisions are consistent with the South Australian container deposit scheme.

We may be able to repeal this section if the state schemes join together for a national scheme.

Must pay the refund

New section 52L provides that a collection depot must pay a refund of the levy to a person returning a used beverage container.

A depot may only refuse to accept the container if they think the container was not sold in Victoria or a request to complete a declaration under section 52K has not been complied with.

Reverse vending machine depots may reject containers which are returned in a condition which prevents the machine from reading the label. We know that the machines can read a label that is a bit damaged or containers that are a bit crushed.

Review of 10-cent levy amount

New section 52M provides that the EPA must review the amount of the refund value at least once every five years. The EPA must have regard to the minimum refund value necessary to maintain the appropriate level of incentive to reuse or recycle, ensure high rates of recovery, reduce litter and litter-related costs, reduce waste, disposal and recycling costs and conserve resources.

Exemptions

New section 52N enables the EPA to grant exemptions for some drinks not to be part of the scheme. I call this

the 'Swords wine exemption'. It would also apply to companies such as ReWine that charge a premium for a reusable bottle, then refill it.

Those bottles are 'reusable', which is better for the environment than melting down single-use containers. An exemption is consistent with the principle of wastes hierarchy set out in section 1I of the act, by providing a financial incentive to reuse containers.

Other issues

New section 52O gives a phase-in period for the scheme — drinks that are already in the shops may be sold without a levy, but new ones arriving on the shelves must have the label and the levy.

Clause 5 amends section 70 of the Environment Protection Act to enable the Environment Protection Fund to receive beverage container deposit levy moneys and apply those moneys for the purposes of the scheme.

Clause 6 amends section 71 regulations so that the EPA can decide that something is not a 'beverage'. This means, if someone says, 'What about vinegar?', the EPA can say, 'No'.

Clause 6 also allows the EPA to prescribe that a class of beverage containers is not a 'beverage container' for the purposes of the definition of beverage container. I call this the 'future-proofing' clause. The EPA might decide initially to exclude, say, wine casks, then down the track when technology changes, it may include them. If a whole new type of beverage container appears on the market, the legislation will not need to be retrofitted.

Local councils

The biggest cost saving in the scheme is to local councils. It will save them $15.2 million.

In my own region, Brimbank would save $665 000; Hobsons Bay would save $394 000; Hume would save $543 000; Maribyrnong would save $273 000; Melton would save $226 000; Moonee Valley would save $508 000; Moreland would save $597 000; and Wyndham would save $364 000.

I recommend to each member that they take the time to look at pages 16 and 17 of my report, to see the financial benefit to the local councils in their region.

Then add to those figures the savings in litter reduction, wages and other efficiencies that are not included. If a council or shire has tourist areas and public open space, add more savings to the council or shire on the cost of public space rubbish and recycling.

When you look at those two pages, you will see two sets of estimates of total savings. One is based on local government reporting to the Victorian government, and the other is based on Victorian government reporting to the National Environment Protection Council.

Victorian government recycling figures are inflated by 27 per cent over the local government figures. This warrants further investigation.

EPA/Nolan-ITU report

Before I finish I would like to anticipate some of the arguments against container deposits.

I predict that someone will pull out the Nolan-ITU study that was published by the EPA in 2003. From past experience, I can predict that they will flap this report around until the pages get all shabby.

But the pages of that report are already shabby. Its findings have been seriously questioned in peer reviews by Perchards and Marsden Jacobs Associates.

The Nolan-ITU report is also irrelevant to this bill. Firstly, it assumes the containers will be returned to the point of sale — that is, taken back to supermarkets, where the costs of retail space and retail staff time are prohibitively expensive.

Secondly, it assumes that business runs the scheme, and that refunds will be paid by brand owners. This has nothing in common with my legislation.

The most trenchant criticism of the Nolan-ITU study is that it counted all deposits as a cost to business, when in reality the only cost is to people who throw their containers away thoughtlessly.

Advanced waste technology and organic waste

I can also predict that arguments against this bill will focus on advanced waste technology plants, which deal with organic waste.

They are sometimes called wet MRFs. They are the plants that recover organic materials from mixed waste and turn it into soil products.

Mick Bourke's letter on behalf of the minister last week says that the Victorian government is focusing on advanced waste technology, because organic waste in landfill produces 17 million tonnes of CO_2 equivalent each year. I have no beef with the government's actions in encouraging organic waste recycling plants.

A container deposit system will simply make them more efficient and cost effective. It will pre-sort most of the waste and create a separate stream of higher quality 'dry' recycled materials.

Drink container contamination is a problem for advanced waste technology plants.

Glass bottles are a particular problem. Single-use bottles are designed to be lightweight, so more than half of them shatter as they come into the plant, and it is impossible to separate all the broken pieces out of the mix. I am told that they are usually already broken when they arrive in the back of the truck. There is an attempt to remove the broken glass pieces using a de-stoner, and the glass grinds against the expensive machinery, wearing it out.

The Australian Standards for compost, mulch and soil products only allow 0.5 per cent glass. It is difficult for a plant receiving material with a 3–5 per cent contamination to achieve that standard. There is also the issue that glass, plastic and paperboard pieces look like industrial waste. This limits the market for the final product.

There are many positive benefits of organic material being diverted out of landfill towards agricultural land. It decreases the methane emissions from tips. It improves agricultural soil, so there is less need for chemical fertilisers. But when the product is contaminated with glass, plastic and metal pieces from drink containers, these stay on the surface after the organic matter is absorbed into the soil. They do not break down. Over time, they build up.

There would be fewer drink containers to remove from the mix and those containers that are removed would be worth 10 cents each — an incentive. The end product would cost less to produce and would be of a higher quality.

If the government wants to support advanced waste technology, they should vote for my bill.

Conclusion

I have only scratched the surface of the benefits of a 10-cent refundable deposit on drink containers in Victoria.

I could describe the escalating financial cost of the present system and the savings to the state of adopting container deposits. I have not detailed the greenhouse, water and pollution benefits of my scheme. There are facts, figures, reports and graphs. There are pie charts.

But instead, I will return my speech to where it began and recycle the quote 'Who would walk past a silver coin lying on the ground?'.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr SCHEFFER (Eastern Victoria).

Debate adjourned until next day.

ECONOMY: GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Mr D. DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house notes that —

(1) the state government under first the Honourable Steve Bracks and now the Honourable John Brumby as Premier and now nearing the completion of its 10th year in office has squandered the opportunities provided to it by the strong national economic conditions that prevailed through almost the entirety of its period in office and the massive growth in revenue it has received from direct taxes on Victorians and notes that the government has failed to capitalise on these historic opportunities instead failing to deliver the growth in key services Victorians deserve and expect; and

(2) the state government has failed to provide the critical infrastructure through this period that would have provided an economic advantage to Victorians and the Victorian economy and greater job security in the more challenging economic times we now face.

This is an important motion. It does not seek to replicate a budget debate but it does, by its nature, touch on some issues of central financing and the quality of outcomes that we get for the taxes and charges that we pay in Victoria. It touches directly on the outcomes that Victorians receive in terms of services and infrastructure that have been invested in this state.

What I would say here is that Victorians have every reason to be angry with this government. In the last quarter of 1999, when this government came to power, the state was in a strong economic condition and a strong position in terms of having built infrastructure and delivered on more and better services. The fact is that under this government, the government and its minions have simply coasted without taking the steps to strengthen the economy; coasted without taking the steps to reform taxation; coasted without achieving what is required in terms of service delivery increases; and coasted in terms of the failure of this government to deliver the infrastructure that is required for those services and for a strong and vibrant Victorian economy. I make the point very strongly that Victorians have a right to expect the highest quality in all respects.

They have a right to expect high-quality services and they have a right to expect high-quality infrastructure.

I want to begin by pointing out that in 1999 the state budget was around $39 billion. The budget delivered yesterday by the Treasurer was $42.2 billion, a massive increase across just less than 10 years. You have to ask what we have got in terms of services and infrastructure.

Let me put this very clearly. Recently we have seen examples of dodgy, fudged figures that have been brought to the attention of the community through the police ombudsman in the case of police and crime statistics. In the case of health outcomes and services there has been a terrible set of incidents where statistics have been fudged and manipulated by senior hospital people, and the figures for our major hospitals are so questionable that independent audits have been ordered of those figures. They are so unreliable you cannot be sure of the quality of what is being delivered in Victoria.

I want to run through and pay tribute to the work done by the shadow Treasurer, the member for Scoresby in the Assembly, Kim Wells, in his *Jobs and Services the Priority Following Labor's Decade of Neglect and Lost Opportunity — Pre-budget Summary Edition*. I want to point directly to a number of key areas of service delivery and then flesh those out with some very specific and local examples. I make the point that those examples could be drawn from anywhere around the state. Our services are in dire straits because of the failure to invest in infrastructure through the period of the Bracks and Brumby governments. This is a land of lost and wasted opportunities.

The dismal state of services in Victoria can be pointed to, category by category. Looking at health and hospitals, let me put some of these points on the record. I could go on for hours on these areas, but I intend to say this relatively succinctly: in health and hospitals we have the lowest number of hospital beds in Australia, and bed numbers have been successively cut by this government. The number of beds per thousand people is the lowest in Australia. Bed numbers are almost 1000 less than when this government came to power, at the same time as the population has increased and aged. People cannot get into public hospitals for necessary surgery and treatment, and now we find that the health minister and his hospital staff have been aware of, but have failed to deal with, the manipulation of data by our hospitals.

In education and training Victoria has not done well on comparative measures of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development student median literacy scores. Victoria has performed amongst the worst in the country, and Victorians have every reason to be very angry about that. Many of our schools are in a state of disrepair. Three-quarters of them, or 1250 schools statewide, have more than $250 million of maintenance outstanding.

This government has allowed the maintenance problems in our schools to become more severe as the 10 years have progressed. This is a government that has not delivered in the way it should. There is reliable data showing that Victoria, despite the need to be a clever state, spends less on students than any other state. It spends less on non-government schools than it should, as we heard in some of the commentary today. Victoria spends less on TAFE than any other state. This is a serious problem with our TAFE system.

Mr Drum — It's only about $70 million less, isn't it?

Mr D. DAVIS — It is significant, and that is the point. In relation to law and order, and I have alluded to this previously, the Ombudsman has commented on police crime statistics, which are as questionable as the hospital data. He concluded that crime statistics in Victoria were distorted by the underreporting of serious crimes, particularly assaults.

This government has claimed a good record on crime outcomes, but we know the statistics are unreliable. In an authoritative report the Ombudsman has told us the statistics are unreliable. These are basic services. People expect health, they expect proper support through education, and they expect proper safety and police support when it is required — but the data is not there to support it. The data is unreliable, according to the Ombudsman.

Victoria spends less on police than any other state does. This is also a scandal, given the failure of this government to invest in these services in a way that gets outcomes for Victoria. Again referencing the good work by Mr Wells, Victoria has fewer police on the beat than any other state. These are important points; these are basic service delivery points. This government has had massive revenue flows over 10 years, the state budget having gone from $19 billion in 1999 to $42 billion now, and yet we still have these basic gaps in services; they seem to be getting much worse than at any other point.

Violent crime continues to grow as police shortages on our streets worsen. There is no question that this is a very serious issue, and you only need to see the

examples of media coverage in central Melbourne and some of the surrounding suburbs to see that people are not safe and do not feel comfortable. This is ultimately the responsibility of government. The police commissioner has the operational role of putting in place the steps that are required, but at the same time the government has a direct responsibility to ensure the resources are there and that they are well utilised.

Victoria underinvests in water. If you look at state investment per capita in water infrastructure in 2007–08 — —

Hon. M. P. Pakula — You've got to be joking!

Ms Pulford — That's a first!

Mr D. DAVIS — I suggest you read some of the material that has been presented to Committee for Economic Development of Australia and elsewhere, which has been extremely well received. The fact is there are questions about the investment in water infrastructure, and now the government is starting — —

Hon. M. P. Pakula — You opposed all of it. You opposed the food bowl modernisation, you opposed desalination and now you say it's not enough!

Mr D. DAVIS — Mr Pakula wants to talk about the food bowl modernisation: again, statistics that do not stack up, savings that are unproven and have been questioned by the Auditor-General. Mr Pakula knows they are dodgy. The Senate committee found those statistics were dodgy, and now Mr Pakula as a junior member of the cabinet is going to have to take some responsibility for these matters. He cannot walk away from these things.

The food bowl modernisation is not the government's area of strength. Yes, it is a good idea to pipe channels; yes, it is a good idea to make water savings, but you must have the case right, and you need to have it worked out. The Senate committee data makes it very clear that the government cannot do that, and that is equally clear from what the Auditor-General said. No doubt Mr Drum will have something to say about that later — he may not be able to resist it.

Wherever you go in these service areas, the state government has not been able to deliver. Taking the broad parameters I have set out, I make the point that this is reflected at a local level as well. Today we are talking about services and infrastructure. In my electorate, Southern Metropolitan Region, the state government has stripped police out of the Ashburton police station. In October last year there were 11 police on the roster at that police station. The local police made the decision they were going to close that station, and the community outrage was such that they were forced to back off from that. What they did instead was strip the police out. There is now one desk jockey — —

Hon. M. P. Pakula — Mr Stensholt saved that police station, not you.

Mr D. DAVIS — The member for Burwood in the Assembly has to face up directly to the fact that there is now a desk jockey there from 10.00 a.m. till 4.00 p.m. each day. There is one officer at the station, and that is it! There were 11 on the roster in October last year; now there is one. It is a scandal and an absolute disgrace. The member for Burwood, Mr Stensholt, should hang his head in shame. The fact is that people in and around that area feel less safe now that the police have been stripped out of their suburb and are not available in the way they should be.

The traders groups are angry with the member for Burwood, and the locals are angry. Indeed today a petition was tabled here with nearly 600 signatures of people who are angry at the member for Burwood and the state government for stripping out the police from that important local police station. If that is how it works, if that is the government's idea of services after 10 years in government, after having lifted the state budget from $19 billion to $42 billion, and its solution for the electorate of Burwood is to strip out 10 of the 11 officers, that is a disgrace. The member for Burwood should hang his head in shame, as should the Minister for Industry and Trade, Mr Pakula. I very strongly disagree with members opposite; I believe most Victorians would disagree with government members very strongly.

In terms of infrastructure, I draw the attention of the house to a key report that puts the study of infrastructure in Victoria on a much more empirical basis than it has been. We know how hard it is to get statistics out of this government; we know how hard it is to get facts; we know how hard it is to get reliable information. We know the police statistics are unreliable; we know the health statistics are cooked; we know that many other areas of government reporting are massaged and cooked as well.

That is why this document *Engineering Construction Victoria April 2009*, issued by Engineers Australia, is important. It seeks to use data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics on engineering construction to look at infrastructure of various different types in Victoria in a systematic way and compare it with the Australian average amount of construction and infrastructure being built.

I also note the article in the *Age* of a week or so ago by Peter Martin, the economics correspondent. I will quote some of the dot points he puts out in his article and then discuss some of the more specific data in the Engineers Australia report. Peter Martin's article states:

> Victoria's water, transport, electricity and communications infrastructure may be in the worst condition of any state other than South Australia, a study by Engineers Australia has found.
>
> In the past two years Victoria's spending on infrastructure had shrunk 8 per cent while national spending grew 17 per cent.

This is the point about some of those areas like water that the government is scrambling now to try to belatedly catch up with in some areas, after nearly 10 years of neglect, 10 years of failure to invest, 10 years of failure to plan, 10 years of failure to deal with the drought and transport infrastructure. I will come to all those issues in a moment.

The article further states:

> Its spending on electricity and gas infrastructure kept pace with national spending until 2002, when it fell sharply below accelerating national spending.

I do not think we can presume that electricity infrastructure is secure in the state until we see further key investments.

I quote from the summary of the Engineers Australia report on page 3:

> Victoria's annual engineering construction has grown 121 per cent in real terms since 1988–89 compared to 190 per cent for Australia as a whole. When normalised by population, Victoria's infrastructure expansion path began below Australia's in 1988–89 and track consistently below Australia throughout the two decades to 2007–08.

There is a long-term issue, but I have to say that it is worse across the period of this government, as we saw with electricity and some other areas. The report goes on:

> Victorian construction of bridges, railways and harbours tracked increasingly behind the Australian trend … the gap is now at its widest ever level.
>
> Victoria's population normalised trend in the construction of electricity generation and distribution and pipeline facilities closely resembled the equivalent national trend until 2002–03. The main difference were in year on year variations. Since 2002–03 Victorian activity has continued to contract and Australian activity has continued to increase, increasing the gap between the two trends.

I now move to some specific information in other areas. Figure 3 of the report looks at public and private sector shares of engineering construction on infrastructure in Victoria. I will describe graphically what the chart on page 23 of the report shows, because the long-term trend is important. It shows a narrowing of the difference on public sector and private sector, but a widening of the private sector share being greater in the period after 2001–02.

In terms of the comparison of Victorian and Australian public sector engineering construction of infrastructure, the index that has been developed by Engineers Australia set out in figure 4 shows a widening of the gap between Australian public sector engineering construction and Victorian public sector engineering construction, which has turned down mildly while Australian construction has gone up greatly. Over the period of this government that is a massive increase in the difference.

Engineering construction on roads in Victoria can be compared with that of Australia. It is true to say that through most of the period looked at by the engineers, Victoria had less engineering construction on roads than in other parts of Australia. It came close together in the period of the Kennett government until it was equivalent to what occurred in Australia, but it widened out during the period of this government until the EastLink project was in operation.

But if you look at the 10-year period of this government and at EastLink as the one big project of its nature in that road area, you can see the massive gap that still exists.

The next graph is headed:

> Engineering construction on bridges, railways and harbours in Victoria compared to Australia.

It is clear again with this graph that across the period of this government, from about 2000 onwards, there has been a significant lag behind the rest of Australia. That was reflected in the report card that the engineers delivered two or three years ago. That report card on infrastructure provision, an important document in and of itself, is referred to in this report.

The next graph is headed:

> Engineering construction on electricity generation and distribution and pipelines in Victoria compared to Australia.

There is frankly a frightening or worrying divergence between the Australian and Victorian graphs. You can see from this document a massive divergence. It is like two tram tracks heading in opposite directions, as the Victorian investment falls and the Australian investment increases. We know that there is catch-up to be done by this government, after 10 years of squandered opportunities. It has had the revenues and it has had the

opportunities. It has not applied them in a way that has returned an outcome for Victoria.

Engineering construction on water and sewerage facilities is shown on another chart. I do not need to go on and on. The fact is that, on objective examination by the engineers — and I want to rely on this document as a useful source document — Victoria has not done well. Over the last decade Victoria has not achieved in the way it should have and infrastructure provision has not kept pace. This government should have used more wisely the resources it had over the last decade and applied them as it should have.

I know Mr Drum has helped in education and other projects, including parts of the service delivery system that need infrastructure investment, through his electorate, as do I in mine. These things are not unconnected. You cannot expect the highest quality, the highest effectiveness and the highest cost-effectiveness of health-care delivery at Box Hill Hospital if the government does not make those investments over the long haul. This government has had 10 years to make that investment in that hospital, and it has failed. It has squandered those opportunities. It has left the people of the eastern suburbs, in this case, high and dry. It has not taken the opportunities over the last 10 years when it had those powerful revenue flows to apply that money in a way that would get outcomes.

What we have seen instead in the health-care sector is a fudging, a dodging with the health statistics to cover up the government's failure to deliver services. You have this two-sided problem where services and infrastructure are not delivered in the way they should be. That is an example in the eastern suburbs of a piece of infrastructure that will stand as an emblem of this government's failure over a decade to deal with the infrastructure, as a crisis that it has allowed to develop, a crisis that is beginning to affect service delivery directly, aside from the government's mismanagement of many of our services.

This is not only about resources. It is about effective management and effective outcomes for the community. If this government cannot do it, it is about time that a government was put in that can do it. Instead, what we see in this budget is this government going further into debt and having to do that from a weaker position than it should have been in. It should have been in a stronger position to go forward. It should have been in a stronger position after key pieces of economic and social infrastructure had been put in place.

I say this government has failed in these regards. The opportunities that should have been there over 10 years have been squandered, the massive tax revenues have been misapplied and the Victorian people have not got what they deserve in terms of services and infrastructure spending. They have not got what they deserve and this government should be held accountable for that.

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — I am pleased to speak on Mr Davis's motion in which he suggests that the government has squandered opportunities and failed to provide critical infrastructure. He has also made some comments about service provision.

Government members always like coming into this place to debate infrastructure provision with the opposition. I noticed that in his comments Mr Davis was selective with his statistics about police numbers and his information on water infrastructure, so it is with great pleasure that I rise to make a contribution to this debate. I imagine the only defence for the choice of topic for the opposition business motion put by the Liberal Party members today is that they were writing this up before the budget had been released, because there is obviously a whole lot of breaking news about infrastructure spending and service provision.

Victoria has quadrupled its investment in public sector infrastructure over the last 10 years from $900 million to just over $4 billion. As members are well aware, Victoria's population has experienced considerable growth in recent times, both in Melbourne and in many of our regional centres as well. Victoria has had a rate of growth that has not been seen since the postwar years, and between 2001 and 2006 Melbourne's population grew by an additional 270 000 residents, which was 30 per cent above what was forecast. Melbourne is expected to be home to 5 million people by 2036 and that, as members know, is far greater than had been anticipated previously.

There are consequences from that growth. In regional Victoria, the government is continuing the work of restoring and rebuilding after the Kennett rampage of the 1990s. This government was the first in Australia to establish a dedicated regional fund — the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund. Originally opposed by Liberal Party members, RIDF has invested over $585 million in more than 20 capital works projects, with more than $1.2 billion spent across regional Victoria. If they are not frequent visitors to regional Victoria, members need only jump into their cars or onto a train or bus to see firsthand the revitalisation that has occurred in regional Victoria while we have been in government.

During this period, the government has helped create 125 000 new jobs across regional and rural Victoria. I

do not need to remind members of former Premier Jeff Kennett's comments about Melbourne being the beating heart of Victoria and that it was important that the heart was beating — so that the blood could flow to the toenails. I think regional Victorians have good and long memories and know why regional Victoria is experiencing somewhat of a renaissance.

On water infrastructure, the government is taking decisive action after a really prolonged period of drought. Ten years of drought and record low inflows in 2006 prompted the government to take further action in the form of the food bowl modernisation. This is a $2 billion infrastructure project to make further expansions to the water grid throughout the state, to build the country's largest desal plant at Wonthaggi and to upgrade the eastern treatment plant.

As part of our water program, there are strategies in place to encourage people to reduce consumption and to recycle. There are rebates available and shower head exchanges in our towns and suburbs. There are many, many projects, and there is a very significant infrastructure investment occurring to meet a quite unprecedented need, given the prolonged period of drought we have experienced.

The water grid includes projects like the goldfields super-pipe and the Sugarloaf pipeline. The goldfields super-pipe, which federal and state Liberal Party members had to be dragged kicking and screaming to support, is now securing water supply to Bendigo and Ballarat and providing security and increased levels of water storages for those communities.

Last week I was pleased to join Minister Tim Holding just outside Hamilton for a sod turning to mark the commencement of the Hamilton pipeline that will connect Hamilton and neighbouring communities to the water grid as well, and that is a very important project for that area.

In health infrastructure and services, the budget has provided a further $2.6 billion boost to Victoria's health services. As members know, the Royal Children's Hospital project is continuing apace, and the Royal Women's Hospital is now complete. In addition to the work that has been done in health infrastructure and service provision there will be a further $72 million provided to ensure clinical places for more than 4500 medical students, more than 12 000 nursing students, 600 dental students and almost 6500 allied health students.

The budget provides a significant boost for regional hospitals. Ms Lovell will no doubt be pleased to note the investment for the first stage of the redevelopment of Bendigo Hospital. I would hope also that members will welcome a $1.1 million investment for the Alfred burns unit. A number of Victorians suffered horrific injuries during the recent bushfires, and many of those people were treated by the highly skilled burn specialists at the Alfred.

Further to our commitment to provide services throughout regional Victoria for people accessing Victoria's health services, I was particularly pleased to see that Ballarat will now be able to develop specialist primary coronary care services and neonatal care services of a high standard. This is not something that is only benefiting people in the vicinity of Ballarat Health Services; many of our regional centres provide health and education services for people in outlying areas. For people throughout Western Victoria the additional access to specialist services for sick or very premature babies and for people requiring cardiac surgery will mean that they will need to travel a little less far from home — for some a lot less far from home — to get treatment in regional Victoria.

The budget also provides $21 million to increase the number of patients currently on public dental waiting lists being seen. We know that dental health is of paramount importance to a person's overall wellbeing, and we know that for many people the cost of going to see a dentist as a private patient is prohibitive, so that is a welcome investment in the budget. In the area of dental health the provision of fluoride to those communities that have missed out for so long will also be a welcome addition. The program continues.

In the area of public transport, in the past 10 years the government has spent over $5.2 billion on public transport projects, including trains, stations and bus services. There are 1300 additional weekly services in Melbourne, and many of them have been in response to vastly increased patronage. Again with Liberal Party members kicking and screaming and ridiculing the project every step of the way, the government has restored regional rail services in a number of places throughout Victoria.

Passengers are voting with their feet about regional rail. This project required a degree of unscrambling, with massive upgrades needed to the tracks; new rolling stock; and in more recent times, new timetabling services and fare reductions. The opposition's form on rail infrastructure is shutting lines and shutting stations.

In Horsham last Monday I was pleased to be present to wave off the first bus on a new service that travels between Horsham and Ararat. This new service will fill

a gap in the existing service because it will connect Horsham residents to the Ararat train, thereby connecting them to Ballarat, Ballan, Bacchus Marsh, and other stops on that line through to Melbourne.

The government has upgraded many level crossings as well, and this work continues. The Victorian government's transport plan will further develop the work that has been done in public transport and will address those issues of ageing stock and crowding that members who catch public transport from time to time may have experienced personally. Our rail service is certainly experiencing great demand and growth in patronage, and this spike in patronage is related to population growth and much more expensive petrol, relatively, in the last couple of years; so the transport plan seeks to address many of those issues.

A key feature is the regional rail network, which is the next piece in the ongoing regional rail project, and will enable country trains to get into Melbourne without intersecting with the metropolitan service. This will improve travel times and reliability of service.

There are also regional town bus services. We continue to invest in those, and services are continually being improved. That infrastructure project at the other end of Bourke Street — Southern Cross station — really is the sort of station that a dynamic, vibrant, modern city like Melbourne deserves. With its award-winning design and its fancy wavy roof, it is much more in keeping with a modern rail experience and is part of this government's commitment to investing where needed in all the main areas of service delivery.

Moving on to education, members opposite do not seem to have a plan or policy on this either, but when the government says it is going to rebuild, renovate or modernise every school in the state, that is probably a pretty good indicator of commitment to infrastructure for our students and their teachers in the education system.

In addition to the rebuilding program, we have continued to reduce primary school class sizes and have kept the 1999 commitment to keep the average P–2 class size below 21 pupils. These investments are absolutely worthwhile, and it is good to see that year 12 retention rates and literacy and numeracy standards are improving as well because the buildings are an important part of the equation — although what is going on in the buildings is really the most critical thing.

The budget provides a $1.7 billion boost to the state education system and will enable us to deliver more quickly on the commitment to rebuild and modernise every school in the state. In the schools I have been visiting and dealing with, as they move through the various stages of the Building Futures program, I know this is really important for their capacity to provide modern education in the modern education setting.

Funds are being provided in support of this as part of the commonwealth government's economic stimulus package, and there has been a massive contribution from them in primary schools infrastructure where they are unashamedly turning a lot of the commonwealth schools into construction sites as part of their economic stimulus activities.

This year's investment in education also includes $13.6 million for additional staff to respond to growth in demand for kindergarten places. The number of kindergarten places is increasing; also the number of hours provided for children is increasing from 10 to 15. There is $57.7 million for the continuing employment of 200 teaching and learning coaches and for 50 ultranet workers to help us with technology — although if my five-year-old and seven-year-old are anything to go by, we probably need more help with technology than they do!

There is $1.17 billion to lift teacher quality through higher pay and additional support for teachers in the classroom and $7 million to invest in more computers in schools. Education, being our no. 1 priority, has received a great deal over 10 years in this state through infrastructure investment and support for excellence in service delivery.

The other part of the Victorian transport plan is investing in major road projects in many corners of the state. I have had the opportunity to test out the new Deer Park bypass a couple of times lately, and certainly it is worth saving 10 or 15 minutes travel time on the journey through Deer Park. I can imagine that it would be really nice for the residents of Deer Park not to have so many people driving through their suburb, heading east or west.

The government is completing 59 metropolitan road upgrade projects in addition to Deer Park, Hallam, Pakenham and the upgrade of the Tullamarine-Calder freeway interchange. Plans are being prepared for a further 17 suburban projects worth $1.7 billion. This will be a massive infrastructure spend that will create jobs and secure employment for Victorians during this global economic downturn.

There are road projects going on throughout the suburbs and in our country towns, including planning

for the Horsham bypass, which I know is a matter of real concern to a lot of residents. It is a major safety issue in the middle of the night when travelling through Horsham, so planning will also commence for that project.

The transport plan also outlines a number of other projects which will be delivered, including the Peninsula Link, which will be welcomed by people in that part of the state. The Dingley arterial road in Springvale South is another major road project and is the missing link in the ring-road, and I am sure all members caught the news about that intersection in Nunawading that has been the source of some angst for a number of years. That work will also be occurring, much to the relief of people who regularly travel through that area.

I noticed that Mr Guy was carrying his budget papers around in his spot-on Joan bag during question time, and there were interjections about that. I also noticed that the President had his spotted tie on today, and I wondered whether it was just a coincidence or whether polka dots were back in style. Some of the interjections during question time would suggest that members opposite have a real problem with the government taking on additional debt as part of its response to the global economic downturn.

In this economic environment the view of the International Monetary Fund and the consensus of economists internationally is that there is a great deal of stimulus activity needed in the economy to ameliorate the worst aspects of the global financial crisis. Our budget response is one that will secure jobs; it is really a jobs plan/budget combination.

The million-dollar question in debates such as this is always: if the opposition does not want additional spending, where do the cuts come from? We know that public sector employment is always a bit of a favourite area with a coalition government for a trim and a snip. The Queensland opposition leader, Lawrence Springborg, took to the Queensland election a policy to cut 12 000 public sector jobs, but it appears that most of those people might have supported the Premier, Anna Bligh. In New South Wales the then Liberal leader took to the last New South Wales election a policy to cut 20 000 public sector jobs, and Victorians will recall that the Kennett government cut a number of public sector jobs from key service delivery areas, including 800 police officers, 3500 nurses, and over 9000 teachers and school staff.

In contrast, as a means of securing employment for public sector workers in Victoria during this economic downturn the government has revised its wages policy. The policy will be a 2.5 per cent increase going forward. This is being done as a means to ensure that we can protect public sector jobs. There have, of course, been a number of public sector agreements negotiated in recent weeks that will be implemented before the new wages policy takes effect, including large numbers of people in the Victorian public service. We are committed to protecting and securing jobs in the public and private sectors. We have invested significant amounts of money in infrastructure in the last 10 years — from $900 million in 1999 to over $4 billion in 2009.

This government is proud of its budget and of its record in infrastructure. The annual post-budget debate and the Wednesday debate on infrastructure held every couple of months is always interesting. As a regional MP, I shake my head and wonder a little about how Liberal Party members opposite think their party can compare with this government on infrastructure and support for our regional communities when they look at our record over the last 10 years and contrast it with theirs.

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — I rise to speak on the motion on services and infrastructure moved by my colleague Mr David Davis, and I congratulate him on bringing it forward. It is very timely, with the bringing down of the state budget yesterday that failed to deliver on so much in my electorate.

In response to a couple of points that Ms Pulford raised, I would like to talk about the government providing $14 million to fund an additional 4000 kindergarten places. What Ms Pulford failed to note when she read the budget was that those places were provided only for 2009. The budget actually says: '$14 million in 2009 to ensure sufficient kindergarten places'. There is no provision in the budget for those places to continue past 2009, and this could mean that in excess of 5000 Victorian children will miss out on kindergarten places in the years to come. It is also extremely disappointing that in this budget the government has lowered the standard of participation rates for children attending kindergarten.

We all know that kindergarten is widely recognised as being important to early childhood development and to giving children the best start to their education. In fact, primary school teachers will tell you that children who have attended kindergarten are far better prepared for school than children who have been in day care or who have not attended any type of children's preschool service. But the Brumby government is prepared to let these participation rates fall.

In 2002–03, 97.2 per cent of Victoria's children attended at least one year of kindergarten. In the budget paper this year we see that the Brumby government allowed that to fall to 94 per cent in 2007–08, and then in 2008–09 it allowed it to fall to 92 per cent. For next year it is projecting only 92 per cent participation. So instead of investing in early childhood education and encouraging the participation of children in kindergarten programs, the Brumby government is prepared to lower the standard and have fewer young children attending a kindergarten program and therefore not being prepared for school in the best possible manner. It has been extremely disappointing for me as the shadow Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development to see that the Brumby government has been prepared to let those standards slip.

There was not much in the budget this year for my region of Northern Victoria. I guess northern Victorians will today be lamenting the waste of the Brumby government over the past 10 years. We have had 10 years of enormous revenues flowing into this state due to strong national economic management. Now that we are facing more challenging economic times many of the things that Labor has promised to northern Victoria over the years since 1999 have not been delivered. We can go right back to 1999, when Labor promised country Victoria the world and delivered very little, and say that it has been a great waste for those communities. During the good economic times Labor has squandered money and not delivered infrastructure, and now with this budget we again see northern Victoria going without.

Labor members have talked about Labor's promise of $55 million for a new hospital in Bendigo. What a joke that is. Not one cent of that is for a new hospital in Bendigo. In fact it is not $55 million for this year; it is $55 million over the next four years, of which $17 million will be for this year. And that money is not for a new hospital; it is to keep the old, dilapidated hospital running. The old hospital is extremely run down. I visited it with the Leader of the Opposition, Ted Baillieu, one day. The plumbing is so bad that there had been no running water in the maternity ward for two days. There were two women who had been confined for the last days of their pregnancies and who had not had a shower for two days. They were not very happy with the Brumby government and its treatment of Bendigo Hospital. Whilst the government has spun the line that this is a wonderful announcement for Bendigo, this is once again a slap in the face for Bendigo. This is just money to keep the old hospital going. There is a little bit of money for the relocation of an ambulance service, but there is not one cent in this budget to lay one brick for a new hospital in Bendigo. We will have to continue to fight for the Bendigo community to ensure that this government comes up with more funding next year so that the hospital redevelopment in Bendigo can go ahead. We do not want to see the Brumby government playing games with health services in Bendigo. This is too important. This hospital services not only Bendigo, a city of over 100 000 people, but the entire Loddon Mallee region, a huge area of our state that is quite remote from Melbourne and an area that deserves health services equal to those that are provided here in Melbourne for metropolitan constituents. Bendigo has missed out for a long, long time and deserves that investment in a new hospital. This government must honour its commitments not continue to ignore them, as it has for other areas of northern Victoria.

In Shepparton there was an announcement way back in I think 2003 about an 11-stage master plan — 11 stages of redevelopment of the Goulburn Valley Base Hospital. The first stage was funded and completed in 2005, but the Shepparton community has waited in hope with every budget ever since to see stage 2 funded. There has been no mention of any further developments. The minister and the chair of the hospital board in Shepparton went out and said that the 11-stage master plan was a wonderful announcement and that it would set the hospital up to provide services for the next 20 years in Shepparton. Now, 6 years down the track, we are still waiting for even the second stage to be considered. That second stage is quite important. It is for day procedure and operating theatres, and it is also to relocate some of the services within the hospital. I have a copy of the 11-stage master plan. I am ticking them off one by one, but I am not bringing it out too often to tick off stages of that redevelopment.

The Numurkah District Health Service was also promised a staged redevelopment. Stage 1 was funded, and it opened back in about 2004 or 2005. I went to the opening of that with Gavin Jennings when he had the aged care portfolio, because stage 1 was for its aged care area. But stage 2 of the Numurkah District Health Service redevelopment has never eventuated either. It continues to wait — and wait. Country communities are patient, but they are fast running out of patience with this state government.

Among the primary schools in my region that were ignored was Lockwood South Primary School. It was promised by this government back at the time of the 2002 election a complete rebuild of the school to replace the portable classrooms. At the moment the school still consists entirely of portable classrooms. It has waited patiently — budget after budget after

budget — but still it has not seen any funding for that redevelopment.

Katunga Primary School in the seat of Murray Valley was another school that was promised a replacement of its portable classrooms with new permanent classrooms. I guess it was extremely disappointed to find out earlier this week that it would have to use federal money coming from the Building the Education Revolution funding towards the construction of the school. It was hopeful that the Brumby government would deliver on its election commitment to build it a new school so it would then be able to use the federal money to build a community hall for the school community and the wider community at Katunga. But no, it is being forced to spend that money on infrastructure for the new school. Other schools, which have been delivered new buildings, are getting to spend their federal money on items of their choice that they feel add to their school communities — but unfortunately for Katunga Primary School it will not have that opportunity.

There are a lot of things that we are extremely disappointed about in northern Victoria. One of those is that there are no additional resources for ambulance services. We know ambulance services throughout northern Victoria are overstretched. Our ambulance paramedics are doing double and triple shifts, they are moving from the Shepparton station to fill rosters at Numurkah, Cobram, Yarrawonga and Wangaratta, and they are moving between stations at Bendigo and Castlemaine to fill shifts. They are overworked, overstretched and underresourced. The government provided not one additional cent for extra resources for paramedics in northern Victoria, which is extremely disappointing, not only to the paramedics themselves but also to our communities.

Recently we had a couple of examples of where paramedics needed to be called from other stations because of local paramedics being on rest breaks due to doing double shifts et cetera. Unfortunately both those occasions resulted in the loss of life. In one case earlier in the year a young woman with an ectopic pregnancy had to wait for paramedics to attend the Cobram hospital from Shepparton, and unfortunately the time delay was not in her favour. She may have passed away regardless of the time it took for the ambulance service to reach her, but I know how distressing that incident was for the paramedics involved because I know the paramedics personally. Certainly it was not their fault that they had to be called from Shepparton to attend that emergency in Cobram.

There was also an incident where one of our young footballers collapsed on the field only 200 metres from the ambulance station. Because the ambulance crew had been called out on a previous shift they were on a rest break, so an ambulance had to be sent from a neighbouring town to attend. The delay also resulted in that person passing away. We cannot say that if the ambulance service had got there earlier neither of those people would have passed away, but we will never know what might have been the case had we had additional ambulance paramedics stationed in northern Victoria.

Police numbers are also a concern for us in northern Victoria, where many of our police stations are undermanned and often closed due to lack of shifts. We certainly looked to the budget for additional police resources to be allocated to many of our towns across northern Victoria. Again, there is nothing there for our towns, which is extremely disappointing.

There is no commitment in the budget for additional shared supported accommodation for our region. I think there is a commitment for 10 additional places statewide but when we know that there are nearly 2000 people waiting for shared supported accommodation in the disability area, it is most disappointing that there is not a greater investment in shared supported accommodation in this budget.

Many years ago the government promised to upgrade and replace the ageing infrastructure at the Bendigo Senior Secondary College. Bendigo Senior Secondary College also has an enormous number of portable classrooms. The Premier, who at that time was the Treasurer, and the local member went out and said they were going to redevelop that school. The school has waited and waited and waited and there has not been any mention of any funding for that plan or any alternate plans to provide that school — which is the largest provider of senior secondary education in this state — with any additional resources or improvements to its infrastructure so that it can better service its students and its staff can work in more productive surroundings.

The Bendigo education plan still has a black hole in it. At the last election the government promised $72 million. It has been a little bit of a drip-feed. We had $20 million a couple of years ago, $41 million last year and $3 million this year. There is still an $8 million black hole in the Bendigo education plan budget and we will be waiting for that to be filled, because we would hate to see this government cut corners and fail to deliver the state-of-the-art facilities

that were promised to the junior secondary students in Bendigo.

Bendigo also has significant transport problems in the movement of traffic through the city. A transportation study by VicRoads was promised and should have been completed more than two years ago. That is still outstanding, yet this budget does not provide for any additional resources to ensure that that transportation study can be completed. Even that is only a study. It does not provide for the additional infrastructure that will need to be built to ensure that we can move traffic more effectively through the streets of Bendigo. The longer the government holds out, though, on delivering that transportation study, the longer it can hold out on having to allocate any funds towards implementing it, so I guess it suits the Brumby government not to have that study actually completed.

Water infrastructure is sadly lacking in this year's state budget. I guess there have been commitments by the government over the past few years to the improvement of infrastructure in the Goulburn Valley through the modernisation of the irrigation infrastructure, and we all welcome that investment. The only plan of this government that we do not welcome in northern Victoria is the north–south pipeline, because there is no water to send to Melbourne. This is another betrayal by the state government of the people of Victoria. It is betraying northern Victorians by planning to take what precious little water they have, and it is betraying the people of metropolitan Melbourne by allowing them to think this north–south pipeline will be the answer to Melbourne's water problems, because it certainly will not be. Recently we have heard senior bureaucrats say that there will not be the savings there to deliver the 75 billion litres of water that have been promised to Melbourne, and that in fact as little as 10 billion litres of water will flow through that pipe. So it will be a very expensive drainpipe for very little result for Melbourne, but with a devastating result for northern Victoria.

Some of the projects the government could have looked at in northern Victoria in this year's budget are things like the promised recycling of water for the Harcourt irrigators, who have been on severe water restrictions, I would say — because they have had no water whatsoever. There is a $30 million apple industry at Harcourt that the government is putting at risk because it has failed to do the work that was promised for a recycling plant for Harcourt.

The government has also failed to fund the channel upgrade works that would improve water security for irrigators in that area in the Coliban system. The Coliban irrigation system is a crumbling, antiquated system. There are many megalitres of water to be saved by upgrading that irrigation infrastructure, and yet this government continues to ignore that work — work which would provide greater security not only to urban areas in Bendigo but also to the irrigators around Harcourt.

It is also very disappointing that there is no money in there for the small town pipeline projects that were promised to provide drinking water to towns around Bendigo at Sebastian, Raywood, Bridgewater, Inglewood and Goornong. The Sebastian water pipe, for instance, was promised to be delivered in 2001. It continues to be put off and put off by this government. These are promises that this government has made to these communities, but it is not funding them. It has not funded them in the times when we had strong economic conditions and revenue in this state, so how can we trust it to deliver on its promises when we are heading into more uncertain economic conditions?

I lament the waste of the past 10 years by this government. There could have been so much more done by investing in infrastructure and services for my electorate of Northern Victoria Region. This government has failed not only northern Victorians but all Victorians by squandering the good times, and now as we head into tougher economic times we will have to suffer because of the failures of this government.

Debate interrupted.

CLEARWAYS AND CARBON POLLUTION REDUCTION SCHEME: PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

The Clerk — I advise the Council that I have received the following letter from the Attorney-General dated 5 May 2009:

Orders for the production of documents

I refer to the Legislative Council's resolutions of 1 April 2009, seeking the production of:

> 'a copy of all reports, briefings, impact statements, economic analyses and communications with ministers, departments, statutory authorities, municipalities and business groups that are held by the Department of Transport, the Minister for Public Transport, the Minister for Roads and Ports, the Department of Planning and Community Development, the Minister for Local Government, the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Premier, relating to the Victorian state government's policy of extending clearway times'; and
>
> 'a copy of all documents, studies, evaluations and briefing papers produced by the Victorian government or its agents concerning the impact of the

commonwealth government's proposed carbon pollution reduction scheme on the Victorian economy held by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Department of Primary Industries, including studies of the economic impact and the impact on Victoria's climate change policies and/or on voluntary emission reduction activities'.

I also refer to my letter to you of 28 October 2008, in which I explained the government's process for assessing documents for potential claims of executive privilege. A copy of that letter is attached.

The government is still in the process of identifying and assessing documents relevant to the Council's resolution. Each resolution requires the assessment of a large number of documents, particularly the request for documents relating to the carbon pollution reduction scheme. I am advised that responding to this resolution could require the assessment of over 10 000 documents across government.

The government is working to respond to both of the Council's resolutions as soon as possible. It is anticipated that we will be in a position to provide a response shortly.

ECONOMY: GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Debate resumed.

Ms HUPPERT (Southern Metropolitan) — I am delighted to rise to speak in response to Mr David Davis's motion. It gives me the opportunity to put on record details of the significant investments made by the Labor government in both services and infrastructure since 1999 and also mention some of the investments in services and infrastructure that have been detailed in the 2009 state budget.

Contrary to the statements made in Mr David Davis's motion, sound economic management and investment by the Bracks and Brumby Labor governments in both services and infrastructure since 1999 has meant that Victoria is better placed than any other state to weather the challenging economic times we are currently facing. As mentioned by the Treasurer yesterday in the other place, the Victorian economy remains resilient. Our budget position is sound, and our long-term prospects are strong.

In the past decade Victoria has invested almost $24 billion in infrastructure projects which have delivered not only infrastructure but also services in economic, social and environmental areas. Investment continues, and the 2009 state budget and its record $11.5 billion infrastructure investment by both the state and federal governments will secure up to 35 000 jobs in the next financial year.

Ms Pulford mentioned a number of specific examples of those investments in infrastructure and services over the last 10 years, but it is valuable to revisit some of those figures. In the area of public transport, since 1999 the government has spent more than $5.2 billion on public transport projects, including new trains, stations and a major overhaul of bus services. This has resulted in more than 1300 weekly services being added to the metropolitan train timetable, including more than 400 in the last 12 months to meet unprecedented growth in patronage of our rail network.

The government has also reopened train lines in regional areas to Ararat and Bairnsdale, and it will be reopening the line to Maryborough next year. This is in stark contrast to what happened during the Kennett years, when regional rail lines were closed. In addition to that, the Labor government has upgraded more than 200 level crossings in the past three financial years, and there are provisions for better public transport and better rail services through the $38 billion Victorian transport plan. This 12-year plan will deliver up to 70 new metropolitan trains, 20 V/Line carriages, 50 new trams and a fleet of new buses, and it will also result in the building of extra tracks and new stations to serve Melbourne's growing population, which, together with the new fleet of trains, will build up the network to run more services for more people more often. In addition, the 2009 state budget delivers $2 billion worth of major projects to extend train services and stations and to expand the SmartBus network.

In the area of education, $7.9 billion has been invested in the system since 1999. This year alone, $34 million will be spent on literacy and numeracy programs, and there has been a $3.3 billion investment in capital works for schools. This investment in both infrastructure and programs has brought tangible results: a reduction in class sizes and Victorian students performing at or above national averages in literacy and numeracy. There has also been an improvement in year 12 completion rates. As an example of learning outcomes, testing of a range of students in government primary schools has shown an increase in median results between 1998 to 2005 and a narrowing of the gap between the lowest and the highest outcomes — clearly concrete results from investment in both infrastructure and services.

Investment in education infrastructure continues in this budget with a $1.7 billion boost to the state's education system. After adding in the investment from the Rudd federal government, the Brumby Labor government is delivering the biggest investment in Victorian schools in the state's history — more than $2.5 billion. Some $402 million will go towards rebuilding, renovating or

extending existing schools, which, in addition to creating a better environment for students' learning, will also secure jobs in the construction industry.

There is also $13.6 million for additional staff to respond to growth in demand for kindergarten places and $57.7 million for the employment of 200 teaching and learning coaches to build up the capacity of teachers and for 50 ultranet workers to help teachers get the most out of 21st-century technology. There are many more initiatives, which have been detailed in the budget. This has become clear in my electorate of Southern Metropolitan Region, where there has been an $11.2 million investment in Balwyn High School as well as a number of investments in primary schools across the electorate.

Another important area of investment in both infrastructure and services over the last 10 years is health. Since 1999 recurrent funding for health services has increased 112 per cent. In 2009 the health system will treat over 600 000 more patients than it did in 1999. This record continues with more funding for hospitals, medical staff, disease prevention and dental clinics as the main priorities of a $2.6 billion boost to Victoria's health services in the 2009 state budget. Victoria's hospitals will share in $1.2 billion to ensure that doctors, nurses and medical scientists continue to enjoy good pay and conditions and to keep Victoria's health service the best in Australia. There are many other investment details.

One of the keys to delivering services and infrastructure in our state is a strong planning system. Melbourne's population is growing. Between 2001 and 2006 it increased by 270 000, 30 per cent above forecast, and it is expected to reach 5 million by 2036. Melbourne 2030 is ensuring that there is coordinated planning of new communities in Melbourne as well as renewal of existing communities.

The $162.5 million Brumby Labor government's 2009 state budget planning package includes a commitment to working in partnership with local government and the community to maximise social, environmental and economic outcomes in the area of development. This will generate more jobs, address blockages in the planning system and direct commercial business development to key activity hubs, again allowing greater and more efficient delivery of services.

As well as some of these big-ticket items there have also been a number of investments announced in the 2009 budget for some social services. I want to highlight a few, just to give an indication of the priorities of the Brumby Labor government. There has been a $60.6 million package to support senior Victorians to remain independent in their own homes, $104.8 million assigned to address homelessness and housing initiatives, and a $86.9 million investment in disability services. These are just some of the examples of the investment in both infrastructure and key services which is being made by the Brumby Labor government in the 2009 budget, which builds on 10 years of investment in those areas by both the Bracks and Brumby Labor governments.

I wanted to highlight some of these investment areas and point out the real defect in the motion put by Mr David Davis.

Mr ATKINSON (Eastern Metropolitan) — I share the concerns of my colleagues in bringing this motion to the house today. I guess there is some correlation between the debate on this motion and the matters that will be considered in debate on the budget and, if we ever get to it, the debate on the Premier's annual statement of government intentions, which was released earlier this year but upon which this house has not had an opportunity to make comment.

These are two key documents. The Premier's statement relates to some of the vision and the blueprint that this government would have going forward, and the budget is obviously the wherewithal, the means of achieving those policies set out in that Premier's statement, which we understand is largely legislative in terms of that statement but it does go to discussing a range of government policies.

This debate has a point of difference to those two other debates — one of which will proceed in this house, one of which might be lost — on the basis that it gives an opportunity to reflect on what might have been.

Members of the government rightly point to a range of projects and achievements of this government over a period, and no doubt they will point to the quite significant program that the government has laid down in this current budget. Government members obviously have some pride in the range of projects they are undertaking; however, it would be true to say that on this side of the house there is concern about a number of aspects of that program. In some ways this motion looks backward rather than forward, and perhaps members on the other side might be critical of that, but I think we can learn a lot from looking back over what is nearly a decade of Labor government in this state and at what might have been.

I come to this particular motion today mindful of the fact that budget overruns on projects managed by this

government, the Bracks and Brumby governments over a decade, are by my calculation around $4.4 billion. In fact the shadow Treasurer has costed it somewhat higher but I have ruled out a couple of things that he had in his schedule.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — I believe you!

Mr ATKINSON — One of the major projects that he had included was EastLink, but I took that off the schedule because it was essentially delivered by private enterprise. Nevertheless the overruns on other government projects tally $4.4 billion over 10 years. Whilst in some cases it is quite likely that there are some very logical and fair explanations as to why some of those projects might have been overruns, in other cases they represent significant opportunity lost. That $4.4 billion could have wiped out a great many of the level crossings throughout the metropolitan area and tackled some of the dangerous crossings in country Victoria. The $4.4 billion might well have rebuilt four major metropolitan hospitals: the Box Hill Hospital, the Royal Children's Hospital, the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre upgrade, and the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital. The $4.4 billion would have gone a long way to actually improving the health infrastructure of this state.

The government will point to a number of projects that it is undertaking in health, particularly in this budget. I recognise some of the projects that it has already undertaken in health, particularly the Austin Hospital redevelopment and current work on both the Royal Children's Hospital and the Royal Melbourne Hospital, which are significant projects. Is it the Royal Melbourne or is it the Women's? Members opposite do not seem to know. At any rate they are significant projects but so much more could have been achieved. Instead of 'Royal Melbourne', make that 'Royal Women's' — at least my colleague knew; nobody from the government knew.

The $4.4 billion in overruns might also have gone a long way towards addressing a number of traffic bottlenecks or making a significant dent in the high-cost projects that were identified in the Eddington report and which have found their way into the government's transport plan going ahead.

The management of projects is critical. When we look at this government's track record we find to be wanting in relation to a range of those projects. I heard this only obliquely on the TV the other night, so I hope I am not misquoting her: a spokesperson from the Public Transport Users Association, if I heard correctly, was questioning the construction of the new railway to the north of Melbourne and suggesting that it is costing at least three times more to create that railway line in Victoria than it would cost to lay a new railway line in Western Australia.

We need to look at some of these projects a lot more closely. We need to ensure that we are actually getting better projects. When we look at transport we need go no further than the myki system. The overruns on that project to deliver a rather simple ticketing system for Melbourne are extraordinary. It is approaching $1 billion just to put a ticketing system in place. How many years overdue is it, and how many dollars have been wasted? Mr Pakula and I have been to China; the President and I have been to Korea. Along with Mr Eideh, in both cases we had the opportunity to see ticketing systems operating across multimode transport systems that work and could almost have been bought off the shelf. We could have gone anywhere in the world — to First World, Second World or Third World countries — and picked up ticketing systems that would have worked in Melbourne, yet we have invested nearly $1 billion, almost 10 times as much as was first expected, on that system. That wasted money might well have completed major upgrades of 20 schools in Victoria, whereas this government is having to rely heavily on federal government funding to support its program of trying to deliver upgrades to schools in this state. The money spent on that one project that overran so markedly could have otherwise achieved so much.

I come with some enthusiasm to this motion today, and I am not going to continue in terms of matters that I would expect to canvass in the budget debate, because I believe that represents a separate opportunity for commentary. This government needs to knuckle down and spend a lot more time working on the management of its projects, on getting them right, on improving its budget accountability and on ensuring that we truly deliver those projects — I say 'truly' meaning honestly — on time and on budget.

One of the mantras of this government is that projects are delivered on time and on budget, yet $4.4 billion in budget overruns puts the lie to the mantra. When you look at some of the projects that are outstanding or that have taken an excessive length of time to deliver, you see that it puts the lie to the mantra. The reality is that those cost overruns — sometimes disguised by simply changing the time frame or the budget provisions to try to keep projects true to that mantra, really only by way of manipulation and particularly at this time of year when new budgets have been brought down — have cost this state opportunities to undertake other significant projects. When you talk about a management circumstance where the budget overruns

within a decade reach a level above $4 billion, you are talking about a very significant number of projects that might well have been achieved but instead represent lost opportunities for Victorians.

It is all very well to boast about the number of projects that are being provided and the money that is being spent, but I have never been impressed by the argument that this government — and it is not only the boast of this government, most governments seem to delight in it — is the biggest spender in various areas of government discipline. The reality is that inflation creates the biggest spending, as it does the biggest taxation income for most governments. Really the sums of money are less important than the outcomes, and the outcomes are very much contingent in terms of their value to Victorians on being managed well and on delivering exactly what was promised in time frames that deliver value, because extended time frames and delays on projects obviously result in significant cost penalties for Victorians.

I do not want to see projects like the Southern Cross railway station or the synchrotron, which this government boasts about and which are important projects, because they are projects that have been reduced in scale. They were cut back because they were starting to run over budget by substantial amounts. Therefore, whilst they would also be in the list of budget overruns to the tune of that $4.4 billion that I have spoken of, the reality is that the overruns would have been higher had those two projects not been scaled back.

We have to do better than taking a 'she'll be right' attitude to the management of projects going forward. We have to start looking at projects with a more logical and common-sense approach rather than a politically driven approach. In that context I raise the Springvale Road railway crossing, which is very dear to my heart. I have been campaigning for it for many years. The government has made an announcement about that, and I welcome that announcement to some extent. The reason I pull back from wholehearted support for that project is that I would say to people, 'Welcome to Brumby's roller-coaster railway'. We have a railway line to Belgrave and Lilydale that goes underground at Box Hill and Laburnum, surfaces at Blackburn and will now go back underground at Nunawading to surface again at Mitcham. It is a roller-coaster.

It would have been so much better, and the government in its transport plan said it was prepared to allocate the funds, to eliminate a number of grade crossings — not just at Springvale Road. If that were the case, the logical, common-sense approach would have been to do Blackburn, Mitcham, Rooks and Springvale roads in succession, because, were that the approach of the government, it would not simply have relieved traffic congestion on Springvale Road but it also would have introduced a legitimate public transport improvement. Then the Belgrave and Lilydale railway line would effectively have had a free run from Ringwood to the city, with the exception of two minor crossings at Mont Albert and Surrey Hills that would have been grade separated. The result of that would have been that the government would have been able to deliver on the 1999 promise of Mr Bracks in opposition to put in a third express bypass rail line between Blackburn and Mitcham to allow for the improvement of train services.

That would be achievable had the whole lot been underground. You would have been able to increase the frequency of trains, upgrade public transport and achieve a significant benefit in the eastern suburbs in terms of traffic congestion and public transport, had that project been envisaged as one. The prospect now of simply fixing Springvale Road and achieving this roller-coaster railway means that to go back at a later date for a future government of whatever colour to address these issues will be more expensive and in an engineering sense may even be compromised because of the piecemeal approach taken on this occasion. If the money is not there, it is not there.

The point is that the transport plan said there would be money for a number of grade crossings, and Springvale Road was to be one of them. The reality is it would be better in the approach of government and the management of major projects to look at projects like that and to complete the whole project, to get a logical, sensible and effective outcome for all the community rather than to pick projects in various electorates that happen to curry favour on the basis of a political motivation rather than an effective management motivation.

This is the very approach that is contributing to these cost overruns I have spoken of. This is the approach that is compromising on the delivery of services and particularly infrastructure for Victorians. We need better. The government has undertaken a range of infrastructure projects in recent years and has a formidable program going forward. I think the government needs to show much greater scrutiny of the costs; a much greater sense of obligation in terms of delivering sustainable, effective, high-priority projects that will benefit all of Victoria and people in key areas affected by the projects rather than simply going for populist projects that address these issues.

I welcome the planned improvements to the Springvale Road railway crossing, but I particularly welcome the change of heart by the member for Mitcham, Tony Robinson, who but two years ago in letters to his constituents was telling them that the project was totally unnecessary because EastLink would reduce traffic volumes on Springvale Road by 20 per cent and that, therefore, there would be no need for that project. Consistently, I and my colleagues in the Liberal Party and people in the Whitehorse City Council argued that was nonsense and that the Springvale Road railway crossing did need grade separation irrespective.

I was intrigued by the fact that when EastLink opened magically the traffic reduction figure was exactly 20 per cent — what had been projected some two or three years before the project started. Isn't that magic! The reality is that the figures were fabricated. They were never measured and it was all a spin approach to justify no action on Springvale Road. The government has been brought kicking and screaming to that project, but what might have been had this government taken a more logical and long-term view of what could have been an improvement in public transport in the eastern suburbs as much as simply addressing the black spot of the Springvale Road railway crossing.

As I said, this debate is timely in its being held before the budget debate, because it allows members to reflect on what might have been, with many promises made but yet to be delivered, including the schools in my electorate that have gone without and continue to go without in terms of this budget process. I refer to primary schools such as Eastwood, Dorset, Springview, Nunawading and Mount Pleasant, and I could go on. The reality is that many schools which have been promised opportunities and upgrades are still waiting for the fulfilment of those promises, even in terms of forward planning, let alone actual works on their grounds.

This government, particularly at this time, needs not just to spend money for the sake of spending money but to spend money judiciously and to make every dollar work to its best advantage, both in creating the maximum number of jobs and in maintaining Victoria's momentum in these difficult economic times and in achieving projects at the best possible cost so that we are not dudding Victorians by wasting money and having episodes like myki ever happen again in Victoria. I trust the government learns from its mistakes over these last 10 years as much as it boasts about its achievements.

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — The motion before the house today, moved by the opposition, contains charges of the government having squandered its opportunities; of having failed to capitalise on historic opportunities; of having failed to deliver in key services which Victorians deserve and expect; and further, of having failed to provide critical infrastructure, thereby failing to provide Victoria with a strong economy and greater job security.

In response so far the government has had two speakers on the debate: Ms Pulford outlined the way the government has approached investment and budgets in the past as well as touching on yesterday's budget. She also gave various examples in the Western Victoria Region electorate I share with her, primarily in Ballarat and areas bordering the Western Highway.

I will attempt to cover specific practical elements of the electorate of Western Victoria Region as well and try not to cover the areas that Ms Pulford has already spoken of. We have also heard from Ms Huppert, who provided a very comprehensive analysis of all sectoral investment the Bracks and Brumby governments have made in this great state.

I remember what Victoria looked like in 1999. Every time I drive through Western Victoria or from Western Victoria to Geelong, Geelong to Melbourne, Melbourne to Ballarat on those major arterial routes, or indeed when I take public transport, I am constantly reminded about the radical transformation that has taken place in this state over the last 10 years. I am constantly reminded of a government that is really interested, very involved and totally committed to regional Victoria. In recent times we all, in our collective memories, can touch and feel the Melbourne–Geelong road and the improvements that have been made there. We have seen the improvements and the construction of significant parts of the Geelong Ring Road. It was only two months ago that would saw the opening of the Geelong Ring Road to the Hamilton Highway, and next year we will see the opening through to Waurn Ponds — just magnificent infrastructure that regional Victoria totally deserves.

We have also seen major upgrades to a significant number of regional hospitals, including the Geelong Hospital. We have seen a commitment to the rebuilding of the Warrnambool hospital, and I will touch on that more specifically a little later. We have seen significant growth, and there will be further expansion, at Avalon Airport — again, a true testament to the confidence that everyone has in Victoria and the infrastructure that is required to bring about greater growth and prosperity. We have also seen things like the transfer of the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) from Melbourne to Geelong. We have seen fast rail take off.

We have seen the construction of new railway stations and massive funds directed into schools. In the 2008–09 budget there were seven major school projects in Western Victoria and, looking at yesterday's budget, I am very happy to see that there are 47 major projects in schools in Western Victoria.

We have also during this time seen a huge number of new police stations built. Ambulance stations have also been built and ambulance service upgrades have been a consistent element of budgets current and past. We have also in recent times seen a massive injection into funding for dental health and also a significant investment not just in terms of infrastructure but in our social and financial infrastructure. An example of that is the national farmers centre that was in last year's budget. It deals with families who are having difficulties coping with the drought and what they need to do as families to be more agriculture-ready in their lives. We have also seen the investment in an emergency helicopter in the south-west.

I go also to the last budget, because it was significant. There was $70.1 million towards the Warrnambool hospital redevelopment project, and that was on top of the $16 million that we had in the previous budget. Again yesterday a significant amount of money was committed that finalises that redevelopment and fulfils the election commitment that this government took to the last state election.

We also saw the refurbishment of ambulance stations at Timboon, Anglesea, Avoca, Ballarat, Hamilton, Apollo Bay and Colac. I have mentioned the projects for seven schools that were contained in the last budget. They are Horsham West, Bacchus Marsh, Anglesea, Colac, Woady Yallock and Koroit primary schools and Lara Secondary College. We also had capital upgrades of the ambulance services at Hamilton and Avoca. There was funding for additional paramedics at Apollo Bay, Timboon and Anglesea and additional day crews at Kyneton and Woodend. Also $8 million was provided to the Hepburn Health Service for the redevelopment of 15 high-care residential aged-care beds and primary-care services. We also saw $5.5 million for Ballarat Health Services to improve access and client amenity and refurbishment of a community mental health facility.

We also saw a $110 million investment in the duplication of the Princes Highway West to Waurn Ponds and Winchelsea and $40 million for the Western Highway realignment at Anthonys Cutting, and also our share of the $254.5 million maintenance program for all regional rail lines under the country passenger rail initiative.

In respect of water, we have also invested an enormous amount in Western Victoria. There was $10 million for the 53-kilometre Hamilton–Grampians pipeline, $99 million to fast-track the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline and $20 million for the Geelong–Melbourne pipeline. Hardly a charge that we have not invested in critical infrastructure can stand.

We have also seen $24.5 million for improvements at the Geelong railway station precinct and a new pedestrian link between the station and the new TAC building, and a number of others things, like the opening of the Office of Public Prosecutions branch in Geelong and also a 24-hour sexual assault service that services Western Victoria alongside a facility that has just celebrated its first anniversary of operating in Warrnambool.

Just in terms of investment in Western Victoria, a significant amount of energy and money has been committed to the area. At this time last year, the stats were that there were 92 000 more people in regional Victoria — people who called regional Victoria home — compared to what there were in 1999. Since 1999, 134 000 new jobs had been created in regional Victoria. Building approvals had doubled to $4.47 billion. The state Labor government had directly contributed nearly $400 million through the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund to 172 infrastructure projects, resulting in more than $1.19 billion in new infrastructure investment.

Alongside these successes, the government also provided assistance to 458 regional projects, resulting in new investment in provincial Victoria valued at $8.92 million. If you go to just the one area of the regional rail passenger service, there has been a significant improvement on what the Bracks and Brumby governments inherited from the previous Liberal government. To touch on just a few initiatives, we have reopened the train lines to Ararat and Bairnsdale, which were closed by the coalition in the 1990s. We have also expanded the network by building new stations at Marshall and Sherwood Park. We have also returned rail services to Nhill after negotiations with Great Southern Rail. The last coalition government shut down services on 6 passenger train lines and to 26 stations. Since 1999 we have had a steady program of making sure those lines and stations are reopened.

In respect of some initiatives that were announced yesterday, as I said I am very pleased with the announcement that 47 schools in Western Victoria are part of a rebuilding program. There are a number of schools in this package, and there seems to be

misinformation or an ability not to want to understand exactly the way the state government has approached investing in and developing education — namely, we are working shoulder to shoulder with the federal government. We are sitting down with the federal government and working out the needs of each school.

In some schools there is a predominant amount of federal government money, and in others there is a predominant amount of state government money. For the top-up, some of it is state government money, and some of it is topped up by federal government money. That is not too hard to get your head around. It is not a matter of blaming; it is a matter of working together and making sure that we deliver the best for children in Western Victoria.

A huge amount of money — $30 million — has been committed for an extra 24-bed surgical ward at Geelong Hospital. Warrnambool Hospital, with its final stage 1c, will attract $26.2 million, and we have also ensured that new technology will be put in place for breast screening for women in regional Victoria. I am pleased that there will be significant upgrades at Wimmera base hospital, Portland and District Hospital, and the St John of God Hospital in Warrnambool.

I was extremely pleased with the Treasurer's announcement on police stations. New police stations will be built at Mortlake, Balmoral and Lara, at a cost of $2.5 million.

As a result of the transport plan a substantial amount of money in the budget will go towards the bus network in Geelong and the Bellarine area. I will be looking forward to the consultations on the timetables and the routes in respect of that. We have also seen substantial investment in the Ballarat, Stawell and Warrnambool airports, which is very important in terms of the businesses that are associated with and connected to shifting product from where it is made or grown to the port or market.

What I have raised here today are elements that affect and impact Western Victoria in respect of investment. I certainly have not gone through all of it because as I understand it, this debate started at 2.50 p.m., and from the speaking list, it looks as if we will be going well and truly into the night. I have attempted just to touch on some of the indicative investments that this government has made in regional Victoria, particularly in Western Victoria, and my contribution has not contained grandiose assertions or unsubstantiated claims, simply because I do not think it would take this debate any further than where we started this afternoon.

This motion is entrenched with popularist, throwaway lines that are not directed at encouraging popular debate but are merely a poorly thought out attempt to provide certain people with a platform to search for relevance. The motion, I would argue, lacks substance and any semblance of reality. The motion is just another time-waster for this Parliament and its members.

But the motion is coming the very day after the historic 2009–10 budget was handed down. The government looks the opposition straight in the eye and demands a list of schools, hospitals, health initiatives, road, rail and transport infrastructure that the opposition, if in government, would dismantle or take off yesterday's budget list. I put it to the house that the opposition would run a mile if it were asked to do that.

Part of the reason we are in a better situation in Victoria than elsewhere is that we have spent on critical infrastructure as well as building reserves. It was and is the proper management of the Bracks and Brumby governments that now enables us to utilise those reserves during the tough global economic times and at the same time stimulate the economy by creating and stabilising job opportunities.

What has the opposition got to offer? It has got only its own confusion — confusion over whether the government spends too much, confusion over whether the government does not spend enough, confusion over what AAA means, confusion over what stimulus initiatives are, and confusion for most things that deal with the economy of this state.

But I am not confused that the Liberal Party has a lack of policy and a lack of ideas to protect Victorians during this international economic crisis, as it has a lack of ability or simple laziness to deal with Wednesdays in this house as an opportunity to engage in proper debate.

The Labor government stands on its record of sound management and delivering for all Victorians. I urge all members of this house to reject this ridiculous motion.

Mrs PETROVICH (Northern Victoria) — For the last 10, long, miserable years we have seen the Labor government — first under the leadership of Premier Bracks and now under Premier Brumby and Treasurer John Lenders — fail to provide for infrastructure, fail to have a vision, fail to have any planning, fail to act and fail to deliver on infrastructure and services.

In all that time it was hoping that no-one would notice it was producing buckets of propaganda, feelgood statements and reports but doing very little to provide infrastructure for communities that continued to grow

and programs for those communities which are commuting, trying to be educated and live their lives.

This is obviously a failure on the basis that it is the role of government to provide those services and infrastructure. The Bracks and now Brumby governments tried to make themselves into small targets; it was and is a bit like a rabbit hiding in the grass — if you sit still long enough, maybe nobody will notice — and this is probably the result of a government that did not initially think it would be elected and probably coming from a Premier who was not elected.

While the GST revenues rolled in and a range of taxes and charges kept this big-spending but lazy and unproductive government in the black, it did little to plan, had little vision and put little effort into value for taxpayer dollars spent on the projects it has fuddled through. I will name them later, but I struggle to name one now which has been delivered on time or on budget.

I would like to highlight some of the hidden taxes that the Premier and the Treasurer have, without shame, taken out of Victoria's pockets. It had general government sector revenue in 2008–09, through taxation, of $12.7 billion, and grants from the federal government of $18.7 billion. Land tax revenue was $1.236 billion, land transfer duty totalled $2.89 billion, gambling taxes raked in $1.6 billion, including $1 billion for pokies, and $343 million came from private lotteries.

Motor vehicle taxes amounted to $1.3 billion, commonwealth grants including general purpose and capital grants totalled $18.8 billion, and there was the federal building and economic stimulus policy plan.

Traffic cameras are an area of interest for many Victorians, because they do not actually prevent accidents; they do not prevent bad driver behaviour because people do not know they are being photographed or fined until they get the bill in the mail. Traffic camera and on-the-spot fines amounted to $397.6 million, which is just about set to jump to $437 million in the upcoming year.

These fines are just revenue raising, which turns mums and dads into criminals — three strikes and you are out; it becomes a mandatory sentence. This is shameless, as is the cost shifting to local governments, which now have to find in their budgets the money to fund a range of new initiatives funded on a one-off basis by state governments. They then have to be picked up by councils.

Library funding is a well-known, blatant cost shift that has gone from an 80-20 funding mix to closer to 40-60. The enormous cost of weed management has also now clearly been handballed to local councils, and rural shires will be hardest hit. They have to pass on the cost through increased rates — and who pays for that? The ratepayers!

This is a direct impact on the capital works expenditure and capital works that councils can produce; so not only is the government incapable of providing infrastructure outcomes for its community, it actually inhibits local councils from doing that on a localised basis. The closest level of government is inhibited because of the impact of cost shifting on its capital works budgets. Local contractors and communities are missing out on much-needed infrastructure which is not able to be provided because of poor state government management.

The vision for the 2030 planning document is in tatters and has proven to be the dud that it was predicted to be by so many. The net result of this unpredicted growth, lack of planning, no vision and failing infrastructure is communities which are ill prepared for the growth which is about to engulf them.

We saw yesterday, in the budget infrastructure projects which have been announced, then re-announced and then announced again, that there is very little delivery with this government. The Alexandra Hospital is a great example of recycling, and I am pleased for that community. But let us ensure that this is not just another re-announcement. I would hope there is some action for this hospital and the ambulance station concerned, because both those projects have been announced previously.

The Gisborne Secondary College building program has been announced repeatedly; Sunbury Day Hospital was announced in last year's budget and has now been re-announced in this year's budget. We need to see some delivery for these communities if the government is truly going to stimulate an economy, which we keep talking about, and which was not in recession until a couple of weeks ago but which is now in recession. It would be prudent to get some things happening instead of just spending and propagandising with more and more announcements.

We have seen unfunded hospital waiting lists, a hospital system in tatters and a government shamed into putting money into a failing system, and we have seen ambulance systems that are at breaking point because of poor facilities, and terrible workloads and conditions. We have seen a disgusting culture of manipulating

waiting list figures, which situation has emerged recently and which was predicted by the coalition opposition. We predicted that there was waiting list behind waiting list in our hospital system, where hospitals are so stressed and so underfunded, and where a culture of lies and deceit has emerged as a way of achieving funding and fulfilling this government's requirement of propaganda to ensure that the punters do not guess that anything is wrong.

We can look at the woes predicted for our health system, too. The Brumby government is spending not even half the amount of money on our crumbling infrastructure that it did in last year's budget, which is no great feat. $15.1 million less is being spent on public health this year, and no money has been allocated to building a number of neglected hospitals, including Box Hill Hospital, the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital and Caulfield General Medical Centre.

These are key election promises made by the Labor government which have not been met. Fifty-five million dollars over four years was promised to the Bendigo Hospital, but it will not even fully prepare the new site, let alone complete the planning. Bendigo has an even longer wait for a new hospital now, and that is a disgrace.

We have heard today from a member that Bendigo has reached a population milestone of 100 000. Its hospital is like a Third World hospital and needs to be developed sooner rather than later; but effectively it has just been put further behind by what has been allocated in the budget.

According to the budget the government expects to fail to meet its own 2008–09 target to complete surgery within 90 days for the 80 per cent urgent category 2 patients, and is projecting that it will manage to treat only 74 per cent of them. Again we know the community is in dire need of assistance for dental care and people needing dental treatment will also continue to wait, because the government has made no real attempt to allocate funds to reduce current waiting times of nearly two years. That is a long time if you have a toothache. That two years waiting period is for dental treatment, and the time frame if you are waiting for dentures to be fitted is 22 months.

The press release headlined '$52.8 million boost to Victoria's public dental services and prevention programs' withers under scrutiny, because it is being divided between two unrelated programs, including breast screening. The budget will provide only 9700 extra dental treatments for people on the waiting list, which is no comfort for the estimated 117 992 people waiting. That is testimony to the neglect of our waiting lists and a hospital system that feels it has to fudge figures to gain sufficient funding to function and so that the punters do not guess that anything is wrong.

Police numbers and community safety are linked — and there should be no surprises there! This government has covered up on poor performance and provision of inadequate police numbers for 10 years, with the net effect being a police force that is understaffed, with its officers stressed.

Community safety is an issue that is not being addressed. I know from speaking to a number of senior sergeants and senior police officers that there is a constant battle to fill police rosters. Whilst figures show that we have enough police, the fact is that we do not have enough police on the beat to make communities feel they are safe. We do not have enough police on the beat to address issues such as violent crime. In many communities violent crime is simply not being reported because people know the officers cannot get to the individual cases. That is a crying shame for our communities. There has been 10 years of neglect of our police officers. We have let them down, we have let our communities down and we have not addressed the issue of community safety, particularly in metropolitan areas but also in some of our larger regional centres such as Bendigo, Geelong and Ballarat.

In education we have schools that are operating on a shoestring. New schools are not fully funded and not able to meet community expectations or demand. Wallan Secondary College is a school I have spoken about many times in this place. The comment was made to me that 'They are flying the plane while building it' — not a very easy situation for that college. The school is fighting for every funding dollar; it is a terrible example of underfunding and shuffling of deck chairs. Education plans for Bendigo, Seymour and Kyneton have all been released but not delivered. The extent to which those plans are delivered will depend on federal government money. We will wait and see. How many more announcements will we see before these services and infrastructure are actually delivered?

As a result of 10 years of lack of vision and planning and, most importantly, lack of action, projects such as the Kings Road overpass are still not being addressed. People who live in the communities of Keilor and Sydenham and people who commute from the Macedon Ranges and Bendigo on roads in those areas have to battle every day with 80-kilometre-an-hour zones and traffic congestion, which makes life very

difficult. Quite frankly, traversing those roads on many nights and mornings is nothing short of dangerous.

We have seen $55 million in funding announced for Bendigo Hospital, but we actually need 10 times that amount to provide anything like the services and facilities Bendigo needs to provide proper health care for a community of 100 000 people.

The forgotten electorate of Seymour requires major infrastructure, including the Wallan-Kilmore bypass, which I have spoken about many times, Wallan Secondary College, the overpass to the Hume Freeway from Wallan East to cope with a new housing development that has commenced at Wallara Waters, and the upgrade of the Hume Freeway to Seymour. These are clear examples of a government that is allowing huge amounts of growth without proper planning in the areas of infrastructure and community development, let alone addressing the issues of social planning. It is a government that is disconnected from these communities and has no understanding of what is about to occur. It has failed those communities with 10 years of inaction. The government cannot fix it now after there has been 10 years of inaction, lack of planning and lack of vision.

Rail infrastructure is something I could talk about for long periods of time. In the announcement on the electrification of the railway line to Sunbury we see a lack of understanding of what that community requires or desires and how it sees itself as a community. A lack of representation by the local member has obviously translated to a lack of budgetary announcements. A growth corridor through that area that will need to accommodate 1 million extra people has remained unpredicted because of the failure of Melbourne 2030. A community that does not see itself as part of metropolitan Melbourne will get the electrification of a rail line that it does not want.

Money is being squandered and ill spent, as we have seen in the lack of planning for water infrastructure, the lack of recycling, the lack of stormwater collection and the failure to look at water-saving devices. There is a lack of acknowledgement that there has been 10 years of drought. I have spoken many times in this place about when the penny finally dropped for former Premier Steve Bracks that there was a drought; it was in 2006. It is a criminal shame that communities in northern Victoria will now be paying the price with their water for Melburnians to flush their loos, wash their cars and water their lawns. This is because this government has failed to plan and to have a vision — —

Hon. M. P. Pakula — More country-versus-city rhetoric.

Mrs PETROVICH — Mr Pakula can say it is spin and rhetoric.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — No, more country-versus-city rhetoric.

Mrs PETROVICH — No, not at all. It is a lack of government planning and vision for the whole state of Victoria. It is the minister, not me, who has turned country against city.

The duplication of the Northern Highway between Wallan and Seymour is another issue that has not been addressed.

The issue of rail is something I could go back to. I could talk about the lack of air conditioning, about the failure to address dangerous rail crossings and about signalling systems which were done on the cheap at the time the fast rail project was built and which now fail regularly. I could talk about the Connex rail system, which fails to operate on hot days and has an air-conditioning system that fails on hot days, about inappropriate rolling stock and about poor signalling.

Ten years on, the chickens are finally coming home to roost. This government has missed a great opportunity. It had a surplus that could have provided great infrastructure and a great economy, but it has missed the boat. To quote Terry McCrann's comment in the *Herald Sun* today: 'Is John Brumby the new Joan Kirner — the Labor premier who sent state debt soaring and lost our AAA credit rating?'.

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — Whilst other government members have already noted that this motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition is preposterous, I am pleased to make a contribution about what the government has achieved since it has been in office in the area of core service delivery and infrastructure. The budget, having been delivered by the Treasurer yesterday, gives me an opportunity to remind members opposite who have developed selective amnesia of all the wonderful things this government has delivered in the last 10 years.

Mrs Petrovich — Name them.

Ms MIKAKOS — Do not challenge me to do that, because I would be here for a very long time. I want to briefly talk about the things in this year's budget that will benefit my and your constituents, Acting President, in Northern Metropolitan Region.

I begin by saying that the government understands we are facing very dire economic circumstances as a result of the global financial crisis. Only three weeks ago a statement by the International Monetary Fund indicated it thought the best way forward for governments to respond to the global financial crisis was to invest in worthy infrastructure projects — and that is exactly what the Brumby government has done. It has made a record commitment of $11.5 billion to infrastructure spending across Victoria as a way of promoting job growth in our state. I particularly want to congratulate the Treasurer and cabinet ministers for delivering such a significant amount of infrastructure spending in this year's budget.

I will come back to this year's budget and what is in it that will benefit particularly the northern suburbs of Melbourne. But first I want to say that this government has always seen itself as a government that is about improving the key services that Victorians regard as most important.

Education is our no. 1 priority. Since we have been in office, many of my local schools have benefited through improvements to capital works, through the recruitment of an additional 8000 teachers, through providing those teachers with better pay and conditions and giving them a boost to morale — which I have to say was sadly lacking when we came to office in 1999 — and also through making improvements to things like technology and putting in place access to broadband and many other modernisations to ensure that our young people have every opportunity in life.

That is very important to me. Coming from a working-class migrant family, I know education is so important in giving people from more disadvantaged backgrounds an opportunity to go on and fulfil their potential. That is why I applaud the efforts of this government over the last 10 years in elevating the area of education in the way it has.

I remind members opposite that before I became a member of Parliament my local community waged a campaign to save schools like the Northland Secondary College, which the Kennett government had flagged for closure and sale to the Northland shopping centre next door. I remember how much the local community rallied and how the matter ended up in the courts. Thankfully the school community was successful in that case and prevented the closure of that very important school.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the state government and the Treasurer for the announcements included in this year's budget, handed down yesterday. It again includes a record amount — more than $2.5 billion — of investment in our Victorian schools, and a huge commitment to rebuilding, renovating or extending schools across the state, in cooperation with the federal Rudd Labor government.

It is a wonderful thing that finally we have a federal government that is interested in Victoria. We know that former Prime Minister Howard was very Sydney-centric. He was focused only on the marginal seats in Sydney; he did not care about Victoria. It is a wonderful thing that we now have a Prime Minister who is taking a very strong interest in the needs of Victorians and is working in a cooperative way with us to ensure good outcomes, for Victorian schoolchildren in particular.

As part of the commitments in this year's budget in the education area, a further 113 Victorian schools will be modernised as part of the Brumby Labor government's $1.9 billion Victorian Schools Plan, which is the biggest school rebuilding program in Victoria's history. As part of that, many schools in Northern Metropolitan Region will benefit. In particular the Broadmeadows and Heidelberg regeneration projects will continue to receive funding to enable them to continue. That will ultimately provide schools of excellence to schoolchildren in those relatively disadvantaged communities.

The budget also provides funding for a specialist science and maths school at the La Trobe Secondary College site — again something that will benefit children in my electorate — and for modernisation projects that will benefit many local schools in the northern suburbs, particularly primary schools. The projects are being funded solely by the state government or in cooperation with the federal government.

I also want to briefly touch upon the commitment to kindergarten places that is included in this year's budget. I have a strong interest in this issue. I and the government acknowledge the importance of preschool education in ensuring that children get the best start to their education. We acknowledge that kindergarten gives children those opportunities. I am pleased that we are providing a further $13.6 million to ensure that all Victorian children will have a funded place at kindergarten in the year before school — that is, four-year-old kinder. This investment will deliver an additional 4000 places at kindergartens across Victoria and help to maintain free places for eligible low-income families. I want to put on record my congratulations to the relevant ministers for that commitment.

I will refer to other areas, particularly the area of health. The government has a very strong track record when it comes to core funding or recurrent funding for health and health infrastructure. I want to again go back in time a little bit and remind members opposite that it was the Kennett government that closed two local hospitals in my electorate. One was the Preston and Northcote Community Hospital (PANCH) in Bell Street, Preston, a hospital that was built through community contributions many years earlier; the other was the specialist Fairfield Hospital.

My local community saw two hospitals closed by the Kennett government. It had promised a new hospital would be opened in Epping, which was something that this government actually delivered on. The original plan was for a much smaller hospital that would not even have had the same number of hospital beds that used to exist at PANCH, despite the fact that the proposed new hospital was to have serviced a much larger geographic area.

My constituents in the northern suburbs remember all of this very well. What Labor did when it came to office was build the Northern Hospital in Epping, and over the years it has expanded that hospital. The government has expanded the emergency department and the number of hospital beds, both acute and subacute beds. Last year's budget provided for additional maternity beds at the Northern Hospital and it also had a commitment to specialist mental health beds, which are being rolled out as we speak.

Labor also made a commitment when in opposition, which it delivered on when it came to government, of establishing a new Panch health service in Bell Street, Preston. Unfortunately the contracts had already been signed by the Kennett government for the sale of PANCH, but across the road we have established a community health centre that provides many important health services, including public dental services, to that local community.

We have also put in place a new community health centre for the Banyule community in Heidelberg, and we built the brand-new Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre, which is next door to the new Mercy Hospital for Women — a dedicated women's hospital providing maternity services to women in the northern suburbs. In addition to this, we have recruited thousands of new nurses and more doctors and improved their pay and conditions to boost retention of our all-important medical staff across the state. We have a very strong track record in the area of health, and that is something I am very proud of as a parliamentarian and as a member of this government.

Coming to this year's budget, building on that strong track record the government has committed $2.6 billion to boost Victoria's health services, of which hospitals will have a large share amounting to $1.2 billion. We have a very large commitment in this year's budget to boosting cancer treatment, acute care and subacute services. Also there is dedicated funding for another blitz on elective surgery waiting lists. All these things are to be commended. This builds on commitments we have delivered on recently in relation to the brand-new Royal Women's Hospital and also the ongoing redevelopment of the Royal Children's Hospital.

We have some good commitments in this year's budget to both health infrastructure and services. I just want to touch on one additional area which is an issue of importance to me locally — that is, the public dental waiting list. I particularly want to applaud the additional $21.1 million which will increase the number of patients going through the public dental system. It is anticipated that that funding will assist an additional 20 000 patients, which will be of great importance to low-income earners in my electorate who are waiting for public dental services. There are also significant boosts to disability services and mental health services, which are, again, important areas for government.

In relation to community safety I remind members opposite who have been critical of us that we have put thousands of additional police on the streets to make our community safer; we have also embarked on a record rebuilding program of our police stations. My local community has already benefited from brand-new police stations in both Northcote and Preston and a redeveloped Reservoir police station. This year's budget also provides for upgrades for a number of police stations across the Broadmeadows, Richmond and Melbourne areas as well as some additional funding there for community safety initiatives.

In the past our government has also provided significant upgrades and services to both our paid and volunteer firefighters, and I should acknowledge that this year's budget makes a significant commitment to continuing to provide the necessary equipment to our firefighters, particularly the Country Fire Authority volunteers. Again I applaud them for their selflessness in fighting the bushfires earlier this year.

We also have significant commitments in relation to community legal centres and legal aid, which are of great benefit to my local constituents. Those commitments build on a strong track record in this area. We have had, for example, new community legal centres open in the past in my electorate, in particular the Whittlesea community legal centre.

In the area of transport we have a strong track record. This year's budget of a record $3 billion to deliver on additional transport infrastructure is set to begin the rollout of the government's $38 billion Victorian transport plan, announced by the Premier in December last year.

I said in my members statement this morning how pleased I was to have attended on Friday the Premier's announcement of $562.3 million in funding for the extension of the Epping rail line to South Morang. That will be strongly welcomed by my constituents. We have a growing community in the northern suburbs of Melbourne; as that community grows, it will benefit from that rail extension.

I said this morning that this project will be delivered without building any additional railway crossings; it will also provide for a South Morang train station, which will have a large car parking area for 500 cars and be integrated with local bus routes, provide a safe drop-off area and a taxi rank. All these things will be of benefit to my constituents. The fact that we are duplicating the railway track from Keon Park station north to Epping station will enable this project to go ahead and trains to be more regular than if that line between those stations remained a single track.

I also want to applaud the provisions in the budget for 20 additional X'trapolis trains to be rolled out as part of the train rolling stock; it will enable more Victorians to use our train system. My constituents will benefit from that and also from the extension of the existing SmartBus 901 service, which now goes from Ringwood to Frankston out to Melbourne Airport through Blackburn and particular areas in my electorate, such as Greensborough, South Morang and Epping.

I conclude by saying I have just touched upon some of the key portfolios areas this government has concentrated on since it has been in office over the last 10 years, which demonstrate that both the Bracks and Brumby governments have a strong track record in delivering important infrastructure and key services to Victorians. The last decade of a Labor government in Victoria has delivered many services and infrastructure benefits to my constituents, and I know they would join me in welcoming this year's budget and the delivery of further initiatives.

While I reject categorically the motion that is before the house, I am appreciative of the fact that it has given me an opportunity to put all of these initiatives on the record.

Mr DALLA-RIVA (Eastern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to rise in support of Mr David Davis's motion. It is a straightforward motion for honourable members and those listening to understand.

Mr Lenders — If there is anyone listening, name them!

Mr DALLA-RIVA — There are people listening on the site. The motion is:

> That this house notes that —
>
> (1) the state government under first the Honourable Steve Bracks and now under the Honourable John Brumby as Premier and now nearing the completion of its 10th year in office has squandered the opportunities provided to it by the strong national economic conditions that prevailed through almost the entirety of its period in office and the massive growth in revenue it has received from direct taxes on Victorians and notes that the government has failed to capitalise on these historic opportunities instead failing to deliver the growth in key services Victorians deserve and expect.

And then follows the second part of the motion, which refers to the failure to provide critical infrastructure.

I will go to the first part of Mr Davis's motion, which relates to the 10 years in office of this government. Labor members opposite have gone to great lengths to speak about what occurred last century, but the bottom line is that when in government we on this side of the chamber had to undertake some rigorous economic measures that were necessary as a result of the diabolical way in which the Cain and Kirner Labor governments created a huge level of debt for this state and an enormous amount of anxiety for Victorians. They left Victorians with in the vicinity of a $36 billion debt, which I find ironic given that the forward estimates show that the budget, as it was presented, is sending us towards another $39 billion debt.

Why is it that the motion talks about the squandered opportunities? We had the GST, which delivered huge amounts of money to the state governments, not only here but also around Australia. Over the past 10 years under former Premier Steve Bracks and the current Premier, something in the vicinity of $300 billion has passed through this government in revenue from the GST and growth and from the increases in stamp duty, payroll taxes, land tax and gambling tax — and the government has an addiction to gambling tax. What we have seen over the period of the last 10 years, as mentioned in the motion, has been a squandering of those opportunities.

I thought it was important in terms of the motion that we look at the failure to capitalise on these historic

opportunities. We had a change in the taxation system nationally with the GST, which generated a significant amount of tax revenue for Victoria. On top of that we had significant growth in real dollars from a range of state taxes, which have been noted — certainly land tax, payroll tax and stamp duty have been ongoing issues under this government. And let us not forget gambling taxes.

We have received those huge amounts of revenue. When the government took office the budget revenue was between $18 billion and $19 billion. We have seen from the most recent budgets that revenue has increased to $42 billion or $43 billion, so there has been significant growth in revenue.

Over the course of this debate we have heard from members opposite that there have been great outcomes in terms of services.

I put it to those who are listening and those in the chamber: has there been an increase in the services they see the government as being responsible for from the huge amount of revenue that this government has obtained? Are the road systems better? It is a question I ask generally, but are the road systems better in Victoria? You would have to honestly say no.

The road systems have consistently and progressively become congested under this government. Improvements in services have not been achieved. We now see a significant clogging up of the system. We have seen four reports under this government over the 10-year period, and it could have done something: it could have delivered a range of road structures and road infrastructure projects.

A lot of those road projects, as we know, were privately funded. EastLink is a public-private partnership (PPP), not that we would know whether we are getting fair value because the government went to great lengths to hide the details of the public sector comparator. I have put that on the record many times, but we are none the wiser in terms of whether that PPP was good economic value for the state. We have seen a number of other road projects, a significant number of which, surprisingly, seem to be commonwealth-funded programs which the state Labor governments have coat-tailed onto and then claimed them as their great infrastructure developments. The bottom line and the question I ask is: are our road systems better? You would have to say no, they are not. The government has failed on that.

I turn to the health system. This is a government that came into power and said it would fix the system. I remember the minister said, 'No, we never promised we would fix it'. Then there was footage of her saying the government would fix it. The fact is that we have a health system groaning under enormous strain. Rather than dealing with the problems of Victorians, what we find is more spin and more rhetoric about what the government is doing, what it intends to do, where it is going and how it intends to get there. But in terms of service delivery, which is part of the motion before us, has it achieved that? No. Do we see the Box Hill Hospital as an example in my region? There has much talk about it, but has it been delivered? No. Do we see people on hospital waiting lists for longer than they were when the government came to power? Yes. As we know, this was Labor's mantra in the lead-up to the 1999 election. Labor party members said that waiting lists were just a tragic case of Kennett not dealing with the health system, but it is worse now — the ambulance system, the bypass system, is worse. Yet government members sit with their hands on their hearts as though the problems do not exist. If the government does not acknowledge that they exist, then they will not be addressed. Is the health system better? No.

I turn now to public transport. This seems to be the Achilles heel of the Labor government — the lack of commitment that it has made to the public transport system. Time and again we hear about how the government has dealt with the transport system. The classic for those of us on this side of the chamber would be the treatment this government has meted out to the residents along the proposed South Morang rail line. A promise was made in 1999 that the Epping rail line would be extended to South Morang, and yet here we are 10 years later and it is only now in the budget.

Mr Koch interjected.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — It was $8 million, Mr Koch. Correct. What is it now?

Mr Koch — Six hundred million.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — It is $600 million, but the line is not even there; it is just paddocks. It makes a mockery of the government saying it is doing these types of projects because nothing has been delivered. The government has spoken about it, the spin doctors have been out for 10 years, and yet nothing has been delivered.

The question is: is the public transport system better? I always reference the fact that the government promised in 1999 to extend the tramline in my electorate from Middleborough Road through to Knox City. It stops where my electorate office is and it has been forgotten

ever since — an election promise not delivered. Yet again the government has forgotten about the needs of public transport users, leaving people out there to use either motor vehicles or infrequent bus services.

The fact is that the government has not delivered in terms of public transport. We know it is congested. There has been a series of hiccups and there has been a series of programs, such as buying old trains and removing seats from trains, and the list goes on. The very fast rail project is another example. I think it was costed at $80 million but it ended up being $1 billion-plus. One might genuinely ask in relation to this motion: do people feel as though the public transport system and the services provided are better? No, they are not.

I now move on to crime and police. The way the system has been set up is an absolute disaster. Let us look at the way the police force has been run. We now call it a police service. I do not recall any change in name. However, police members talk about it as a service. Make it a police service or make it a police force, but whatever it is called, it should deliver results. We have an out-of-control situation in the inner city which is significantly worse than when the government came to office in 1999. The issue of law and order has not been addressed. There is talk about a reduction in bicycle thefts. But I think we know why. The recent reports about the level of reporting and the dodgy figures, not only of the health system but also those of police, lead one to question whether there has been true reporting. I do not think there has been. I think the perception out there is that crime is worse under this government than it was under the previous government.

We have covered a few examples of some of the key basic services — roads, the health system, public transport and crime — that a state government must deliver. The government has failed on each of those at a significant level. It has failed for the reason that it has squandered the opportunities. It has failed in the sense that there have been massive windfalls through GST receipts and through the state taxes that have been charged. Over the last 10 years $300 billion has passed through the hands of government, and the road system is worse, the health system is worse, the public transport system is worse, and crime on our streets and in our homes is worse.

On the first part of the motion, despite the rhetoric we have heard from the government, the reality is that this part of the motion makes sense because of the failure to deliver the key services that Victorians deserve and expect. I support the first part of the motion.

On the second part of the motion, that the state government has failed to provide the critical infrastructure through this period which would have provided an economic advantage to the Victorian economy and greater job security in the more challenging economic times we now face, I put on the record very briefly that in the last 10 years there was significant economic growth, the banks were lending, there were great opportunities. One of the areas in my portfolio was the wholesale fish market. Before the election in 1999, then Premier Kennett and his ministers said that they would relocate it and the plans were drawn up. Premier Bracks was elected and he said, 'Hang on. We will stop and we will review it'. Ten years later the deadline of March 2009 has passed but nothing has occurred. I find it staggering that a simple project that could have been delivered while the economic prosperity was there has now been lost. I know I have been criticised for saying Epping is not a suitable location for the fish market, but it seems impossible to get through the heads of Labor members that to move a significant, iconic market like the Melbourne Wholesale Fish Market to an area like Epping is not necessarily going to work. On top of that, the Epping site has not even been developed.

The supposed PPP that was going to be established for the Melbourne Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Market has fallen over because — guess what? — the good economic times have stopped. It should have done it when it had the opportunity. We have had talkfests, but no decisions were made.

In terms of the critical infrastructure necessary for the fruit and vegetable market and the flower and fish markets — both significant markets — to use a pun, they are now floundering. I do not hold out much hope at the moment, even though we are pushing the government to try to get it done. That is one example of where the Kennett government had plans ready to move, and then former Premier Bracks came in. He reviewed it and then lay there like a flathead and did nothing.

Mr Koch — There could have been sharks involved.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — I do not think there were any sharks, but it was the fact that the government did not do anything. Mr Bracks will be renowned as a premier who did nothing. If you think about it, it is going to be difficult. What did Premier Bracks deliver? He could talk about the reforms to the upper house, and that is it. He came in, he knocked off Jeff Kennett and the Liberals and then sat on his hands for a long period. He went to an election, had a whinge about the desalination

plant and said Labor was going to do it, but where is it? Water infrastructure is another example. I could go on and on. The government has squandered literally billions of dollars in terms of getting projects delivered, then it claims things like EastLink as one of its own projects.

Mr Koch — Myki.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — Myki is a great example. As I said, I could go on, but I do not propose to talk much longer on that.

There is a long history of this government clearly failing to deliver on services. Paragraph (2) of the motion before the house says:

> the state government has failed to provide the critical infrastructure through this period …

We can look at road, water and transport infrastructure and at health, which I raised before in terms of Box Hill Hospital. There is nothing there. If we look at water infrastructure, we went to the last state election with a very clear policy that we would build a reasonably sized desal plant and that we would have a dam and the recycling infrastructure so that we would be able to cope with the looming water crisis. This government criticised us for the desal plant proposal and then four months later announced it was going to build a whopping big desal plant, probably the largest of its type in Australia. So that was a challenge regarding infrastructure. Now the government cannot fund it and is having problems in relation to locations and the whole lot. If it had gone to the election with an open policy and not sucked in the media and the population, maybe people would have had a better idea of what it was proposing in terms of infrastructure.

If I consider some of the so-called great successes, the only infrastructure I can think of is the north–south pipeline, which has been battered from the north to the south and from the east to the west of Victoria as a bad idea. I have a vision that when the north–south pipeline is turned on, there will just be a puff of hot air and it will blow out. We know this government and its spin doctors will run some water through it before the election. They will get water from somewhere and run it through, and then after that who knows what will happen? The reality is that this government's critical infrastructure has been fairly lacking.

In terms of road infrastructure it is hard to think of anything more telling than our clogged roads every night. It is now 3 minutes to 6.00 p.m., and people will be sitting on clogged roads. The Eastern Freeway will be clogged in certain parts, just like the Tullamarine Freeway and the Monash Freeway. The whole freeway system just clogs up; nothing has been sorted. The government is saying, 'We have this lane extension'. That is great, but it is 10 years down the track. What about the infrastructure internally, and what about the infrastructure around the road system?

Looking at public transport, there are significant problems. We saw the lack of infrastructure investment resulting in signal failures last year. We remember that after the Melbourne Cup last year tens of thousands of people had to walk home in hot conditions. It is absolutely tragic. As I indicated today in my 90-second statement, a significant manufacturing plant in the outer east of the Eastern Metropolitan Region had a blackout while I was visiting it. They said this was a common occurrence. It is a multimillion-dollar business. One of the senior managers there with me, who has worked in Asia and around the world, said the energy supply reflected Third World conditions as the plant is constantly having power blackouts. It does not have the capacity to have enough generators because of the amount of energy it uses. It has generators as backup for its cooling facilities because they got caught out last summer and are not going to get caught out again. They have made an investment, under duress, to buy generators. Their investment in critical infrastructure is only necessary because the state government does not have any critical infrastructure going.

We know the energy industry is teetering on the edge. Members opposite always hark back to the bad old Kennett days, but the fact is that in 10 years they should have delivered some solutions. It staggers me that this government had this amount of money and power — certainly in terms of the upper house, if you think about 2002–06, when the government controlled both houses — but about the only thing it did was ram through legislation which brought in a different electoral system. There were so many opportunities to deliver infrastructure outcomes with that power and money and with mates everywhere. You look back and think, 'Where did the money go?'. If you take the period 2002–06, when the government had significant power, money and the injection of funds from the feds, you have to ask: where did it go? It is staggering that the government says, 'Look, these are bad economic times, but we're going to go into a $38 billion debt to fix it'. You think, 'Hang on, what happened to the $300 million a year it churned through — —

Mr Somyurek — It didn't go into services?

Mr DALLA-RIVA — It went to services?

Mr Somyurek — I am asking: where did it go?

Mr DALLA-RIVA — The member obviously has his ears painted on, because I just spoke for 12 minutes about services. Are our road services better? I look forward to Mr Somyurek's contribution. It is amazing that he asks, 'Where did the money go?'. If it has gone into services, they certainly have not been improved. Has the health system been fixed as the government promised?

Mr Somyurek — There is a lot of catch-up.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — A lot of catch-up; it is forever the former government's fault. It used to blame the Howard federal government: 'It's their problem; we can't sort it out'. I remember a former Minister for Education, who is in this chamber, who used to get up and talk about — —

Mr Somyurek — Bronwyn Bishop.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — Not Bronwyn Bishop, Julie Bishop. The minister would always criticise the feds, saying — what was it?

Mr Lenders — Moscow on the Molonglo.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — People at the next election will make the assessment that after all this time in power and after receiving record amounts of money through the GST, the government has delivered absolutely nothing.

I will give an example. They will be at work in the city and if they can survive the day without a power failure, they will try to get on a tram — unless they are forced to wait for trams that are chockers; they will tram up to the railway station, perhaps to Parliament station; they will walk down with the masses to catch a train, unless it has been cancelled. They will sweat on the way home in a non-air-conditioned train, not expecting to get a seat because the seats have been removed.

Then their train may stop at a station and be delayed because another train has been cancelled or there is a maintenance issue with the rolling stock, because the government cannot deal with the union. Then they eventually get to their park-and-ride station, which will be cramped because there has been no investment in those facilities. They will walk to their car and drive out onto a congested road. Eventually they will get home, switch on the television to sit down and watch the 7 o'clock news — only to hear the government saying, 'You are so lucky that we are in power'.

Mr Somyurek interjected.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — Mr Somyurek, people will make that assessment because day in, day out they will be going through the process of suffering through the ineptitude of the government with the failure of service delivery and of critical infrastructure. This government has squandered opportunities and squandered the money that has been made available through the federal government and through record tax gains. People will question exactly where that money has gone.

The motion before the chamber is very important, and I urge members opposite — for those who have not got their ears painted on — to support it.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I am pleased to rise to make a contribution to this debate. I congratulate the Leader of the Opposition for moving the motion. Infrastructure is core business for state governments. The delivery of infrastructure is critical for state governments, particularly during the period of population growth that Victoria is currently experiencing.

I will start my contribution by picking up on comments Mr Viney has made in the chamber on several occasions about a 2006 meet-the-candidates function held in Eastern Victoria Region in Maffra. Mr Viney has come in here on at least two occasions and criticised me for expressing concern about the failures on the Gippsland railway line during 2006. Mr Viney's attack on me has been that the government was upgrading the Gippsland railway line as part of the fast-train project.

What I say to that is it is really symbolic of the government's capacity and ability to deliver major pieces of infrastructure. That meet-the-candidates function occurred shortly before the November 2006 state election, seven years after the election of the state government and seven years after the then Bracks opposition made a commitment to upgrade the Traralgon railway line as part of an $80 million fast-rail project, including other projects. As we all know, the cost of the project in the end was close to $1 billion; we saw the loss of track; it was over budget, over time; and it was a disgrace. It is amazing that Mr Viney would defend his government, a government that took over seven years to deliver on a project when it should not have taken that long.

If we move forward to this year's budget and the minor infrastructure works the government has committed to, it reinforces the government's inability to develop not only major pieces of infrastructure but also small pieces of infrastructure. I use the example that I have raised in

this place on several previous occasions, the issue of the Lakeside railway station.

As part of its transport plan the government announced that it was bringing forward the construction of the Lakeside railway station from 2011 to 2010. That is fantastic. After correspondence with Minister Kosky it became clear that the railway station on a greenfield site with a flat grade, a relatively small infrastructure project, would start in 2010 and not be completed until 2012 or 2013. In other words it will take three or four years for the government to build what is a relatively small piece of infrastructure, using the existing railway line on a greenfield site. If that is how long it takes for the government to deliver small pieces of infrastructure, its record of delivering major pieces of infrastructure is unlikely to improve, regrettably for the people of Victoria.

I refer to another piece of small infrastructure. Previously on behalf of the people of Beaconsfield I have raised the issue of having noise protection barriers on the Monash Freeway, as have my colleagues Mrs Peulich and Mr Rich-Phillips. Again the government made a big deal about the construction of noise protection barriers as part of the transport plan announced last year, and the members for Narre Warren South and Gembrook announced that construction on the project would commence in early to mid-2009. In recent communication with Minister Pallas, he told me that construction will not start until late 2009 — only a small slippage in time, but it is symbolic of the government that does not have the capacity to deliver on infrastructure commitments.

We have seen cost blow-outs on a range of projects. Only a few years ago the government said the cost of the Frankston bypass would be $250 million, but that cost has blown out to $750 million. Funds are available in the budget for its construction, but it is contingent on federal government funding, so there are no guarantees that it will happen.

We have seen the same with the construction of railway stations. Then Premier Bracks announced on 17 May 2006 that there would be three new railway stations at Point Cook, Cardinia and Lynbrook, commencing in 2010, at a cost of $56 million. Yesterday's budget says on page 18 of the overview that there will be $153 million over five years for new stations at Williams Landing, Lynbrook and Caroline Springs, so in other words the cost of building three railway stations has gone from $56 million when it was announced in May 2006 to $153 million in three short years.

The cost of building three railway stations has gone from $56 million in 2006 to $153 million in yesterday's budget. What I find most distressing is that the urgently needed or desperately needed railway station at Cardinia Road in Pakenham appears to have been left off several references in the budget, and I wonder whether the government is again going to delay the construction of that very important, critical piece of infrastructure.

I would like to congratulate and thank the Leader of the Opposition in the other house, Ted Baillieu, for visiting the beautiful township of Koo Wee Rup with me and the member for Bass in the other place, Ken Smith, last Wednesday, because Koo Wee Rup has gone from an idyllic, quiet town to one that sees hundreds of trucks and thousands of cars moving through its streets every day, particularly on long weekends, Friday nights and Sunday nights, which has dramatically affected the amenity of the township.

I received a letter from Mrs Dawn Juddery just today thanking me, Ken Smith and Ted Baillieu for visiting the town last Wednesday and expressing her great concern at the increase in traffic volume, the impact it is having on her and the impact it is having on the township. She also makes reference to the desalination project and the associated pipeline, and of course powerlines are a significant issue as well.

I received correspondence from Mr Mark and Ms Cath Le Brun, who also expressed their severe concern about the impact on their township of the increased traffic volumes through Koo Wee Rup. This situation is not unique. It is symbolic of a government that has failed to invest in adequate infrastructure and in effect to make hay while the sun shines. It has failed to invest the profits of the economic boom, and now as the economy slows the cupboard is bare. The government has not developed the necessary infrastructure to cope with a growing population, notwithstanding the record revenue windfall it has enjoyed.

It has been lazy when it comes to financial management, project delivery and cost control, and the consequence is that now during a period of economic contraction, or economic downturn at a minimum, we are seeing the government rapidly ramping up debt and its borrowings with the consequence being that rather than building new roads and new railway stations and providing additional water supplies, the government will be paying interest on the debts it is rapidly racking up day after day for the foreseeable future.

I again congratulate Mr David Davis on moving this motion and on putting on the agenda the issue of the

government's failure with regard to the last 10 years of the economic boom it has enjoyed, and its inability to deliver major critical infrastructure to cope with the growing population that Victoria is currently experiencing.

I make the final point that when you take away all the statistics, when you take away all the government rhetoric and when you take away what is said in this place, for the average person getting to work, getting home from work, dropping their children off at school, picking their children up from school, visiting friends, visiting relatives and wishing to use public transport — things have got harder, the time taken has got longer, the stress on people's lives has increased and after a decade of prosperity it is simply not good enough.

Mr KOCH (Western Victoria) — I think what we heard from the government in relation to the delivery of its budget yesterday left many of us amazed. After 10 years in office with huge increases in state revenue, unfortunately we have not seen a parallel in the services afforded to the state. It is unfortunate it has not been mirrored; there have been plenty of opportunities the government could have used, but with the large tax increases in specific areas that the state of Victoria has had to come to grips with, many people have found it difficult to continue to do business in the state under the Brumby and Bracks regimes.

When we look at the increases in payroll tax, land tax, ever-growing stamp duty, gambling taxes, the windfall of the GST, increased road taxes — be it registration, be it in the area of fines, be it extra water charges that are now surfacing that people are being expected to continue to prop up — in many cases hardship is becoming an issue linked to many of these taxes. And the list goes on.

I do not think there is a tax in this state that has been untouched over the last 10 years. Surprisingly, in much of the debate on this motion today, the government has been always looking at what has taken place over the recent past. Retrospect seems to drive the debate, and that is unfortunate because yesterday's budget is all about tomorrow, not yesterday. I think the spin doctoring and the shadow boxing have just about come to an end.

We have to give consideration to what has been lost again this year by various communities in Victoria, not only in the metropolitan area, which I think has seen far more opportunities afforded to it than regional Victoria, but also from my own point of view I have to say that regional Victoria has been dealt a very bad hand in what was put on the table yesterday.

From Geelong's point of view, and before I go further into Western Victoria, I do honestly have some real concerns with the dead hand that Geelong has been offered in relation to further access to larger funds in support of particularly rail commuters to Melbourne, especially those who seek employment in the metropolitan area. A large proportion of Geelong people now use Geelong as their home base, but they do and will continue to work in their earlier and future jobs in Melbourne. They have not been given any relief whatsoever in relation to the transport mode in rail. We have seen a slight increase in South Geelong and at Marshall from the point of view of access to parking, which currently is overemployed like you would not believe. People are now parking in side streets, on nature strips and everywhere else so as to access these facilities.

Police resources continue to not satisfy the requirements that we deem necessary in Geelong, Bellarine and the Surf Coast, and we know that unfortunately crime figures continue to grow in this sector. Front-line police are dearly needed through the Geelong, Bellarine and Surf Coast areas, and it is quite obvious that without further resources we will see police stations like the new police station at Torquay, built at a cost of $7.8 million, and the police complex at Corio being closed down, when these are very important locations to have police stations. To have a police station still operative on only some occasions in Geelong city is of serious concern. I know policing is being done out of provisional vans — that is, by mobile policing — and I know that plays an important part in policing across Victoria, but in Geelong's case to have these permanent, modern police stations out of order and out of the system due to lack of police numbers is something the government should be held to account for and something that communities should not have to put up with in this day and age.

We are very fortunate in Geelong that an initiative is being driven by the *Geelong Advertiser*, the available police at the Geelong police station, our local City of Greater Geelong and also particularly some of the players at the Geelong Football Club. The initiative is the Just Think campaign, which is especially assisting with the nightlife program that has given so much grief over the last couple of years. In putting that initiative together these people have turned that situation around. It is a great plus, but I have to say it has been driven locally, not by police resources out of the Brumby government's budget. I congratulate those who have undertaken those roles so successfully. They need further support on the ground, especially from front-line police.

I think the immediate start-up of new jobs through Geelong is something that was overlooked. We have only recently read in the paper — I talk of last Monday — that government members for the Geelong district have been going out campaigning and saying how marvellous the budget will be and what jobs will be maintained and found and that, due to these hard times, the government recognises and is supportive of the economy of Geelong and will find the funds necessary to assist in maintaining and finding new jobs.

Nothing could be further from the truth. When we look at the budget we see most of it is about what is to be done over a four-year period. Quite obviously, we see in that period that Geelong has been afforded $100 million. We do appreciate it, but at the same time the government will have revenues in excess of $100 billion — more in the vicinity of $120 billion to $150 billion — and Geelong has been fortunate to stump up $100 million over four years. Sure, some of it is for the hospital, and we applaud that, but that is an ongoing concern from the point of view of the Geelong community. More modern facilities at Barwon Health are something that will be required for the foreseeable future. The growth in the number of mental health beds by another eight is something that should be applauded in the current environment. There is a great need for them. But regrettably the government has underestimated the need there, and it should have made more funds available. My biggest concern with the $30 million for Barwon Health over four years is that in the start-up year, next year, only $2.1 million will be afforded in that staged process. Few jobs will be involved other than design and architectural work to carry out the redevelopment.

Little is being spent on education in Geelong beyond recurrent funding. The only project that stands out in the budget is the new science centre at the Belmont High School. This should have been completed earlier when the high school was partially redeveloped. Belmont High School is an excellent school with a very competent staff and fine students who in so many ways make very worthy contributions to their respective communities. To have not had this facility when redevelopment took place earlier is an absolute disgrace. I am very glad to see it will now come to pass, and the government has made those funds available. I look forward to the completion of those works. It is a little bit like the first home buyer subsidy being maintained. Obviously along with Belmont High School that will offer some construction jobs in the foreseeable future. That is terribly necessary to pick up the void that has been left by the lack of other infrastructure opportunities with immediate start-ups versus staged start-ups over a four-year period. I do not think there is any doubt that Geelong was looking for and should have been rewarded with a jobs stimulus that, as I said, was of a more immediate nature, not a staged nature over the extended period of the budget.

In many ways Geelong mirrors the rest of regional Victoria, and unfortunately it has been taken for granted in these difficult times. For instance, Ballarat, which not unlike Geelong has lost so many jobs in manufacturing over the last 12 to 18 months, has again been offered only lip service. No greater resources are going into Ballarat to improve the opportunities for that community.

As we go further west we see that the Coleraine Hospital, in the community in which I was born and bred, has been waiting for funding support now for four years. As a weatherboard building on the side of the hills of Coleraine township it has served the community very well for over 60 years. It has been a marvellous hospital, but due to construction over recent times we note that the hospital's life is finite.

The board of the Western District Health Service, under the direction of the Department of Human Services, has done everything it can to further the opportunity to redevelop another site. It has bought land on the flat in the main part of Coleraine, in McLeod Street, and it has bought properties to further the opportunity for this newly redeveloped hospital, but again funding has not been forthcoming. I imagine there will be much frustration within the Western District health board over the lack of recognition and support in this matter.

Importantly, after such huge tax increases in the last 10 years, I should mention that one of the areas in western Victoria that has not seen any benefits is roads, and I speak of particularly the Henty Highway, running from Lascelles in the north to Heywood in the south. We have been looking for greater works and greater redevelopment and reconstruction of this road beyond just the cyclical maintenance, particularly in the areas of passing lanes, completion of works on the edges of roads and further reconstruction to offer safer passage. This highway carries a lot of freight, particularly grain freight in the summer months, and I think it is important for the government to see fit to make resources available for highways right across the state, not just in the metropolitan area but also for our country cousins, whom I support very much.

It is only through these larger grants and better resources that we will continue to move forward and our communities will be able to move with safety along the roads.

Sitting suspended 6.30 p.m. until 8.03 p.m.

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I thank the Acting President for calling on me to make a brief contribution to debate on the motion moved by Mr David Davis. I would like to commence by saying that during the last 10 years — and $300 billion worth of revenue — of the Bracks and Brumby Labor governments, Victorians have been faced with a water crisis, a transport crisis, an infrastructure crisis, a health crisis and a law and order crisis. In fact there has been every conceivable crisis one could possibly think of, all exacerbated by the devastating bushfires we have had to respond to and deal with. They were probably more devastating than they should have been because of the poor proactive efforts of the government in minimising the fuel in our national parks and forests and in not doing the necessary burning off.

The wheels on the state train are well and truly rattling, and that is thoroughly disappointing for all Victorians who rely on the government to provide good social capital for their core needs, including health, education, law and order, and transport. They rely on the government of the day to provide the necessary infrastructure such as roads, trains and hospitals, school buildings and so forth. They rely on the government to deliver these with the least amount of financial impost on Victorian families and businesses, and to do that in an open, accountable and transparent way.

There are a whole bunch of reasons why Victorians would be terribly disappointed that very few of these things have been delivered over the 10 years of government we have experienced, predominantly under the stewardship of John Brumby, now as Premier and before that as Treasurer.

On top of all of that we now have the economic downturn. Victoria should be in a much stronger position to withstand the negative impact of this downturn, but it is not. In particular, I found the Premier's comment that this budget is a budget for a rainy day very ironic and very hollow. This budget is not a budget for a rainy day; if it were a budget for a rainy day, it would have seen sensible investment in Victoria over the preceding 10 years in the good times when employment was high, revenue collection was high and Victoria was pretty prosperous by comparison. Victorians are now left with having to buy the galoshes, the raincoat and the umbrella, but it has already started raining and there is very little money to buy those with. All the government has is the Brumby bankcard with which to buy these necessary things for the rainy day. What we have had is Labor enjoying a 10-year party and having a great time at the expense of Victorians, but Victorians are now left with the hangover. Victorians are now left to clean up the mess made by a party that has failed in its governance and failed to provide for the present as well as future needs of Victorians. The Bracks and Brumby Labor governments have relied on propaganda and the political fix for far too long, and this disaster has unfortunately crept up on Victorians without them being fully aware of the seriousness of the situation in which they find themselves.

This government has been a master at propaganda. In itself this would make a very interesting thesis of study for some academic or some media guru: how this government has brought in the political fix from the top to the bottom, to every sphere of government activity in order to cover up for its failures as a government, its failures in governance, and its failure in the financial management of the state of Victoria.

The economic downturn would have been easier to withstand if Victoria had invested sufficiently in lifting its services — in lifting education and health, and its provision for law and order. I heard Ms Mikakos talk earlier about how this government placed education as its no. 1 priority. As a former schoolteacher who taught for 14 years in the government system and is a product of the government system, I say that for this government, education has been far from the no. 1 priority. In fact, many schoolchildren would have passed through their primary school as well as most of their secondary school education without ever having decent facilities, properly maintained by an open, transparent, politically unmanipulated system which delivers maintenance money to schools, the necessary capital works, and the development of schools for the 21st century to meet the community's needs, and the computers that they require.

The Auditor-General has had a lot to say about the lack of accountability and the falling standards over 10 years in literacy and numeracy. Not only has the government failed to deliver in terms of capital works and maintenance but the PRMS (physical resources management system) has virtually become defunct; it has become an irrelevancy when it should have been a vibrant, accountable, open and transparent system through which schools are able to expect in a regular cycle, in every budget, money for the maintenance of their school buildings and school grounds. This has not happened. They have received paltry amounts, which are virtually irrelevant.

Many schools, except those which are important to this government in politically sensitive areas in key marginal seats, have fallen into a state of disrepair. They are looked after, but the schools in the key Liberal heartland have been left to go to rack and ruin. Many of them have now been through the strong manipulation and guidance of the region under the instruction of the minister and forced into mergers and amalgamations — because, as we all know, it is a lot cheaper to run fewer schools.

To members opposite who say the Kennett government closed schools, I remind them that the Labor government under former Premier Joan Kirner closed all of the technical schools, denying a generation of young men in particular the opportunity to get a technical education and to play a productive role in society. It has done that, and this Labor government continues to do so.

I would like to point to a number of primary schools in my area that are currently being merged. The driver is the threat that if you do not merge, you will not get any money for facilities. Examples in the recent round include: the Southvale and Springvale South primary schools, the Oakwood Park and Yarram primary schools, the Keysborough Park and Coomoora primary schools, the Maralinga and Chandler primary schools, and a number of other schools in the Dandenong area.

It is most interesting that while the federal government has made a lot of money available to schools through credit — again, a credit card that will be paid for by Victorians, racking up unprecedented levels of debt — Ms Gillard has said that every school will have the opportunity of applying for this money. That is not the case, because the region is vetting the applications and is saying to schools, 'You cannot apply, but you can'. Because they have a map, they have a plan as to which schools will close and which will not.

Currently they are in the Labor heartland. After the election, should the Labor Party be returned, that will move elsewhere — it will go right through Victoria according to the grand plan that is being developed in the minister's office.

This government has played a hoax on Victoria and the Victorian people, who have been lured into believing that Labor is looking after them. We have seen that the health statistics are being totally manipulated and cannot be relied upon, that the elective waiting lists are growing — but there are two sets of lists — and all of the promises about fixing the health system have evaporated.

We have also seen fewer hours of police on the beat, especially in the suburbs, with police being moved into the CBD (central business district) to respond to increased levels of violence, rather than actually increasing the number of police available in our suburbs. We are desensitising our young people and our community to a level of violence which they should not have to tolerate, not just in the CBD but also in the suburbs.

The transport system has been an absolute disaster. There is a string of failed infrastructure projects that have been announced and re-announced through five transport plans. The reason why Victorian Labor has had five transport plans is that plan no. 1 failed, plan no. 2 was not delivered, and none of plans nos 3 and 4 materialised. This is yet again propaganda at its worst. But Labor has always been about one thing — that is, looking out for themselves and looking after their mates. This permeates absolutely every sphere of activity.

We have heard that we will have a budget surplus target of $100 million, but this is being downgraded. But the Premier and the Treasurer have underestimated the risks to the budget and have made forecasts which are clearly going to be very difficult to realise. There is great cause for concern. With debt soaring to in excess of $63 billion — and that includes the unfunded liabilities by 2012 — we are looking at $2.2 billion of interest on debt. A greater amount will be paid on debt than on the entire police budget for a year. The government is denying Victorians a stream of income for the improvement of their services, which they can expect with the growth of our population.

Employment will rise to in excess of 200 000, but the federal government has come to the rescue, allowing this government to muddy the water and play catch-up and to fund it all by debt. Victorians or Australians will understand: a leopard never changes its spots. Labor equals debt. It has squandered the opportunities available and deserved by Victorian families and Victorian businesses.

We have been given assurances that Victoria will retain its AAA credit rating, and I believe there has been some reconstruction of the liabilities to masquerade the precarious financial position of the state government. I have spoken about the failure of our services to keep pace with the growth of population and community expectations, and the infrastructure has been dismal. What has happened to the Lynbrook railway station and the Cranbourne East railway station? What has happened to our public transport?

The government is introducing a host of new taxes, including the lifting of the 50 per cent cap on land tax, the tripling of TAFE fees and the indexation of all taxes and charges to continue grabbing money from Victorians. This is not a low-taxing but a high-taxing government, and this budget should have been used to make lasting benefits and improvements to Victoria for Victorians, especially as they face this difficult economic downturn. Many of the projects have not been funded; if they have been funded, they have been funded further out, until after the next state election. We know that the Labor Party is in for the political fix, and it is this that needs to be exposed.

In closing — and I understand that many members are keen to make a contribution to the debate — some of the chief strategies used by people who are experts at propaganda include, for example, strategies that we have seen in this chamber: name calling; connecting a person to a negative concept; glittering generalities — and the budget is full of them; and testimonials to endorse the Labor cause or the Labor product.

If anyone says a word that is wrong — like, for example, what we recently heard from the ANZ economist — they are browbeaten and threatened. We can only assume that there was some strong overture made to the economist to make sure that he fell into line. That is how this government does business. It is very good at empathising, it is very good at pretending to be concerned about the community — but as I said before, it is all about the political fix: it is about card stacking, it is about minimising and repressing dissent, and it is about manipulating the media. In doing so it creates a bandwagon effect and creates the impression: since everyone thinks it is okay, everyone should think it is okay. We have seen that manifest here by a discouragement of genuine debate.

I commend the Leader of the House for bringing this motion to the chamber so that we have the opportunity to work through and erode that propaganda, that public relations exercise, that manipulation of the political process that this government has been master of and is staking its future on. The bottom line is that Labor equals debt, and everything that Victorians and Australians have been promised is going to be funded by it on a credit card.

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) — I take great pleasure in rising to support Mr David Davis's timely motion, because he has given us the opportunity to reflect on what was possible but never actually happened. For me it is almost like a period of mourning. It is a very depressing landscape when one casts one's mind back through the past decade that was full of lost opportunities, inept project management, a dogged adherence to socialism and the redistribution of wealth — all under the banner of a more conservative Labor Party approach. What Labor members did was bolster its own stocks and through cronyism and all sorts of sweetheart deals pay off favours, leaving behind all the projects that would have put in place infrastructure so that we could truly operate as a 21st-century economy, which would have made the current economic situation a far stronger one.

We have got massive road congestion. Everybody knows that wherever you go within Melbourne and in many of the precincts radiating out from Melbourne, it is pretty much gridlock. A lack of proper road systems and a lack of funding for the elimination of level crossings through grade separations — all these sorts of things — add enormously to the cost of the movement of goods and to the burden on the economy and on those who need to trade within it.

Victorians deserve better. This has really set us up, and we should not have been set up the way we have been. We all know things are going to get worse as we face the economic disaster that lies ahead in a disadvantaged situation, with this state and the people in it carrying a debt burden of something like $46 000 per family in terms of the borrowings of this government.

It is interesting too that in the contributions to the debate of members of the government, each one pointed to — and I think scurried for cover under — elements of the budget released yesterday. Nobody squarely faced the reality of all the opportunities that have been lost over the past nine and a half years. Nobody came out with a 'mea culpa'. The government still does not recognise what it has not achieved. It is still thumping its chest and feeling very comforted by the fact that it squeaked over the line.

I could weep when I think of the patients and staff of Box Hill Hospital, for so long held in a state of anticipation as they wait for this government to finally allocate more than $800 million to rebuild that hospital. But oh no! The government has nibbled around the edges. It has tossed $35 million into an illusionary centre with a car park and other clinical services. The centre is dedicated — admittedly importantly — to renal dialysis activities, but there is a yawning abyss between a centre of that nature and what is required for the full-blown reconstruction of a public teaching hospital servicing an ageing demographic.

I also want to express my great compassion for cancer patients being accommodated in the overcrowded Peter MacCallum hospital, the splendid staff who work there

and all the people who are anticipating an improvement in those conditions.

When it comes to disability issues I am truly moved to tears, because I know there are 1247 families in this state on an urgent waiting list for supported accommodation for family members. I know of many situations where carers are in a constant state of distress as they feel they may pass away before their loved ones are in care. It is causing great stress and, I would suggest, a traumatised outlook for many members of the community because they cannot be assured that when they pass on there will be proper care regimes in place for their family members. We need to remember that for every disabled person, eight people are directly affected by their plight. So let us do the multiplication across the number of families who are wringing their hands in anguish because there has been only scant funding for supported accommodation — just 10 accommodation places have been added to the current provision of those facilities. This is scandalous, it is absolutely cold-hearted and the government should be thoroughly condemned for ignoring the plight of these families.

If we think about the pressures that the underfunding of our public hospitals has created, we realise we have actually engineered a culture of cheating and manipulation of surgical waiting lists so that funds, by way of bonuses for hospitals meeting key performance indicators, could be achieved. These are the sorts of crumbs and tactics that hospital administrators have had to resort to because they have been choked off from viable funding. Of course this has just led to a deepening crisis in confidence in the health system across this state.

I think of the state of primary schools. Over the last couple of years I have visited a number of primary schools in my electorate. I think of the leaking taps, the concrete troughs and the smelly toilets. Two-tiered systems are operating. Where some funding has been given for stage 1 of a development, students have to go through a good part of their primary school years enduring a two-tiered system in which one group of students has the new part and the others are dealt with as second-class citizens.

One particular school in the seat of Eltham — I am not going to name it, deliberately — looks like a prefabricated military camp. It reminds me of a military camp, called Camp Pell, that used to be in Royal Park. It was held over from World War II and was used as public housing for disadvantaged families. This particular primary school in the electorate of Eltham looks just like that. It is worth a visit to see how neglected that facility is. This is part of the pressure this government is applying to this school community. Admittedly the fact that there is the small number of just 120 students and a multi-tasking cohort of staff is holding things up for the community, but it is being choked off by funding. The circumstances of that particular primary school are utterly disgraceful and verging on Third World conditions.

It does not matter how much this government wants to flog Connex and point the finger of blame at it for its lack of performance. Connex can only do so much when it comes to the crumbling infrastructure, the poor state of tracks, the poor state of communications systems and the frightening state of signalling systems across the system. The system is close to breaking point. We see from the budget that new rolling stock will be introduced. We are all holding our breath for the arrival of that rolling stock that is being manufactured in Poland. We expect one train soon, but there is no date for when the other ones will arrive. When those 65 trains will come, I do not know. I would like to ask the government where it intends to procure those trains from. Will it look to providing a means of reviving the locomotive engineering and fabrication business here in this state? Will it look favourably on having those trains manufactured in this state?

The government is behind the eight ball. It had the forecasts and all sorts of indicators out there on population growth, the ever-expanding housing estates and the pressure on people driving their own cars. Patronage across the public transport system has risen by 40 per cent in the past three years. To come out now after knowing all that for that time and say it is going to do something is just too little too late. The government needs to recognise that transport congestion and the lack of a secure water supply are and will remain the core issues between now and the next election. It is not going to be delivering anything to solve any of those problems in that time.

There are high levels of inconvenience and suffering affecting so many Victorians. I see that the government has reconfigured a bus system for Doncaster and has had the temerity to call it a rapid transit system. I challenge it on that because it is nowhere near a rapid transit system. I know government members have travelled extensively to examine such systems in the Northern Hemisphere and through Asia. They know they have temerity in calling the bus system in Doncaster a rapid transit system. Doncaster and the area deserve a rail link, and I will not stop pressing for this until it arrives. It is overdue. It was promised by the Cain government in the early 1980s, but the government could not help itself; it had to punish the

Liberal voters in Doncaster by selling off the land in 1982. It was another disgraceful missed opportunity by Labor governments of that era and previous eras.

When we think of what could be done to alleviate pressures on water supply, we see that this government has done nothing to treat the sewage outflow at Gunnamatta and provide supplies of water for industry, the watering of sports ovals and so on.

If we have a look at the way the government has approached major projects such as farce — f-a-r-c-e — rail, we see that it cost $839 million more than the original estimated cost of building it. The myki ticketing system is a scandal and a reminder of the predilection that this government has for cronyism and turning a blind eye when it should be forensic and provide proper oversight of the management of these projects.

There is something approaching $4 billion in project overruns just because there is no proper project management technique available to the government. That money could have been much better spent on hospitals and schools and on alleviating the suffering of the disabled. This government has to stand condemned for its failure over a decade to plan for and efficiently and effectively deliver basic services of health, law and order, transport and water to the people of Victoria.

Our health system suffers from corrupt waiting lists and a climate of cheating. There are chronic bed shortages. Waiting lists are now hovering in the stratosphere. We face an extraordinary situation with new hospitals, such as the new Royal Women's Hospital. I will always call it the Royal Women's Hospital. I will never succumb to the feminist desire to chop off part of the title of that hospital and call it the Women's Hospital. It is the Royal Women's Hospital, as far as I am concerned. It is actually smaller than the old one. How can this happen? The population is growing. It grows through the intake of newcomers to this land through immigration and it also grows through live births, so how could the government have got the accommodation requirements for the Royal Women's Hospital so wrong?

In concluding my contribution I want to commend the Leader of the Opposition in this place, David Davis, for putting this important and timely motion before us. I say to government members — and I hope they are listening; I hope this rings in their ears — just remember this: socialism only works until you run out of other people's money.

Mr VOGELS (Western Victoria) — I want to make a few comments on the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr David Davis. It saddens me to do this, but I have no alternative other than to support this motion which basically states that after 10 years in office, and having collected and spent approximately $300 billion, the state is broke.

The budget brought down yesterday explains that the state will lose an expected revenue stream of approximately $2 billion in the next 12 months. Last year the budget was approximately $38 billion; the government is expecting not to collect $2 billion of that, so it goes down to $36 billion, yet the expenditure forecast for next year is $43 billion. If you do your arithmetic, there is a $7 billion gap between the amount the government will collect and what it intends to spend. That $7 billion obviously has to be on a Visa card — all borrowed money from either the state or the commonwealth. It does not make much difference if you are a taxpayer in Victoria whether the commonwealth or the state is collecting these taxes, it is still a deficit that the Victorian people will have to pick up.

Prudent managers always put away money for a rainy day. This Labor government, which has had rivers of revenue running into the state for at least the last 10 years, has managed to drive us into the position we are in. It has actually had the money to do the infrastructure work which should have been done; it did not do it. The government wasted it and now is saying, 'Sorry, the rainy day is coming. There is nothing in the budget, so we have to borrow for this rainy day'. Prudent people in the past would have saved for that rainy day, as they have always done. At the moment the deficit is predicted to be $31 billion over the next few years. I would not be surprised — and I think nobody in Victoria would be surprised — if that $31 billion became $41 billion, $51 billion or even $61 billion as we go down the track.

I want to highlight some of the infrastructure projects where moneys could and should have been spent in the region which I represent in Western Victoria. It is not new money. I have a graph here of major projects of waste and mismanagement under this Labor government over the last 10 years; it actually adds up to over $6 billion. I will mention a few of them just to prove what I am saying. Regional fast rail was supposed to be $80 million but it went up to $919 million, so there was mismanagement of $839 million; for the myki smartcard — and we have all heard about that — the budget was $94 million and it blew out to $1350 million, so $856 million was wasted. We still do not have the smartcard. My smartcard does not work, so I assume no-one else's works. Other projects include the channel deepening,

for which the cost went from $114 million to $969 million, a blow-out of $855 million, and the tollway West Gate upgrade, $1023 million to $1390 million, representing a blow-out of $367 million. I could go on and on.

I have a list here. The items on it basically add up to $6 billion worth of wasted money, overruns because of delays and so on. I heard Mr O'Donohue earlier say that three railway stations were promised for the Gippsland area in 2006 and that they were going to cost about $50 million. Their cost is now up to $150 million — that is, three times what is projected in the budget. I do not believe any of the figures I see in the budget.

Over the last 10 years I would have liked to have seen some of the $6 billion that has been wasted spent in my electorate on these projects: the Central Highlands regional library in Bacchus Marsh, Avoca, Ararat and Maryborough; a new State Emergency Service headquarters in Melton; $250 000 for the restoration of the Daylesford Spa Country Railway; the Mount Blackpool fire tower in Moorabool; the Mount Lonarch fire tower in the Pyrenees; the Western Highway duplication between Ballarat and Stawell; the Western Highway overtaking lane from Stawell to the South Australian border; water quality issues in Maryborough and Amphitheatre; the Troy Reservoirs recommissioning at Beaufort; and Avoca natural gas, which this Labor government has promised on two occasions but has now pulled the pin on.

Also on the list is the Ballarat western link road for heavy vehicle freight traffic to bypass Ballarat; the Midland Highway upgrades; the road black spot at Main Road, Ballarat; the Ballarat soccer stadium; relocation of Ballarat D24 to Ester at Mount Helen, which would help free up 10 police officers to walk the beat in Ballarat; the Ballarat Base Hospital; the Ballarat Goldfields pipeline to take water from Leaghur to Lake Wendouree to fill up the lake which has been promised on three or four occasions by this government; the Hepburn Shire Council, which is looking for money for the Doug Lindsay Reserve in Creswick; Anthonys Cutting in Moorabool shire; and recycled water piped from the recycling plant in the western suburbs to Bacchus Marsh for the fruit and vegie growers who are basically out of water, instead of sending it into the sea.

Further items on the list include the Snake Valley sewerage scheme in the Pyrenees; the Golden Plains local roads and bridges infrastructure — all local governments right across Victoria would have loved to see some of the $6 billion that has been wasted by this government spent on local roads and bridge infrastructure; and a new radiotherapy unit for Ballarat, which is very important for Ballarat.

Acting President, I know the time is getting late. I want to support the motion moved by Mr David Davis, that there has been a fantastic opportunity over the last 10 years when this government, as I said before, had rivers of gold running into its coffers. We all know that when the Labor government came to power in 1999 state revenue was about $19 billion. This year we are looking at $43 billion in one financial year — that is, more than double. Over that period of time, as I said, it has expended $300 billion, $6 billion of that being completely and utterly wasted. The councils in my electorate did not get a lot of the projects they were hoping for because of mismanagement by this Labor government. I completely and utterly support the motion moved by Mr Davis.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — It has often been asked if history repeats itself. If anybody is in any doubt as to whether history repeats itself, they should come and have a look at Victoria in 2009. We had, as we all remember with horror, the decade of darkness between 1982 and 1992 when the governments of John Cain and Joan Kirner destroyed this state and made it a rust-bucket state. They made this state the laughing stock of the nation. I fear that history is repeating itself, not just with this budget but with previous budgets, because we have seen a gradual slide over the last few years by a government that really has not got a clue about what it should be doing to manage the economy and to keep Victoria and Victorians in sound financial and economic shape.

I fear we are in for another major collapse in this state like we saw towards the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s that led to so much suffering for so many people. This is not just about dollars and financial institutions. This is about real pain being suffered by real people, and that is something this government really should take into consideration. Every time it spends a dollar, it is a taxpayer's dollar. That is the message the government should be getting through its head. It is not the government's money; it is our money. It is the money of hardworking Victorians who are forced to give it up to a government that just does not care. When a government misuses those dollars, as this government continues to do, it leads to real suffering for real people. I sincerely hope the government will take that into consideration, because as things stand on 6 May 2009 Victoria is broke. We are back in debt. I would not have thought it possible.

I was a member of the Kennett government, and I remember, as would you, Acting President, going

through very difficult times upon our return to government in 1992. It was a real struggle not just for that government but for the whole community. It was a community effort to get Victoria back on its financial feet, but we did that. Then along came 1999. We handed the new Labor government a surplus of some $1.8 billion. To my understanding, that was spent in record time, and the government has been on a binge ever since. People talk about binge drinking. Have a look at this government; it can tell us about binge spending. That is what it is still on about. Even when it has run out of money, it just cannot stop spending. This is typical of socialist governments we see right around the world: they tax and they spend. They cannot help themselves.

The Minister for Planning laughs. Let us put that on the record; he is highly amused. He should go out to the McMansions in Caroline Springs that he so disparages and talk to the people out there who are struggling to pay their mortgages and feed their families. They are not laughing. They are looking at this government and saying, 'We voted for them. God Almighty, why did we do that?'. They will be very reluctant to do it again next year. They have obviously learnt the hard way — sad but true.

The big question, which I have to say I have asked in this house before, that needs to be answered and that I hope the minister may be able to answer for me is: where has all the money gone? What have they done with all the money? No government has taxed like this government. No government received the bonus coming into government that this government received. We have been slugged with land tax, gambling taxes and with stamp duty.

Mrs Coote — TAFE tax.

Mr FINN — TAFE tax, indeed; you name it — if it moves, this government will tax it. That is what this government is on about. That is what the people of Victoria are discovering, much to their disgust. Labor means tax and Labor means debt. I heard that from a very wise person earlier today.

It is a sad fact of life that we in the western suburbs are used to being ignored. We are getting very sick of it, but unfortunately it is something we have had to put up with over a long time. If you visit any of the health facilities or hospitals in the western suburbs — perhaps some more than others — you will see a stark deterioration in quality and services compared with, say, facilities in the eastern or southern suburbs. That again is something that people in the west have had to learn to live with.

I have gone to some of the schools over the last couple of years, and I have been appalled at the physical condition of some of them. They have not had a coat of paint in decades; they are literally falling to pieces. People in the western suburbs have had to learn to live with that.

Then there is the issue of law and order on our streets in the western suburbs. I note that the Minister for Planning has decided he is not going to listen to this. I could put it down to a guilty conscience, but I have never actually heard anybody say he has a conscience, so we will not pass that on to him in that way. The issue of law and order in the western suburbs is a very pressing one because there are large parts of the western suburbs, around the Sunshine and Braybrook areas in particular, where it is too dangerous to walk the streets, certainly at night and quite often during the day. I certainly would not do it.

It was just a few weeks ago that I addressed a rally outside the Sunshine railway station that drew many hundreds of locals and local police, I might say, who are very concerned about law and order in their local communities and are very concerned that people do not feel safe to walk the streets; many are not feeling safe even in their own homes.

What an indictment of this government it is that people feel that way! People in the western suburbs have loyally given their support to the Labor Party over many years, but what has the Labor Party given in return? Nothing but contempt. This Labor government has turned and continues to turn its back on the western suburbs. What the minister is doing now as I speak epitomises what Labor has done to the western suburbs. It has ignored us just as the minister is ignoring what I am saying about his constituents right now.

Mrs Kronberg — And he is not interested.

Mr FINN — As Mrs Kronberg says, he is not interested at all. I could go on about a number of areas where the west continues to miss out, but I want to concentrate my comments this evening on one area in particular — that is, transport, both roads and public transport. There has been great excitement in some quarters, mainly in the media and amongst people who do not actually live in the western suburbs, about some supposed spending on public transport in the western suburbs.

I have to say this will make absolutely no difference at all. They can spend as much as they like; it is not going to make any difference at all. One of the areas that they are talking about and trumpeting as a great victory for

the west is the proposed electrification between Sydenham and Sunbury. I am sure Mrs Petrovich will not mind my saying, because it is her turf, that the people in Sunbury do not want the electrification. They have told the government where it can put its electrification, and I am sure Mrs Petrovich will have much more to say about this in the weeks and months ahead. Why are we putting up $270 million? You would have to say that is only a fraction of what it would actually cost anyway. It is another pea-and-thimble trick from a government that is very good at con jobs — $270 million is only a fraction of what it will cost. It brings back memories of another scheme the government had where it said, 'We will put up $80 million for a very fast train project.'. Remember this, $80 million — —

Mrs Petrovich — It has been superseded now.

Mr FINN — It has been superseded now. Many of those trains are actually running slower than they were prior to the introduction of the new service. When we hear this government talking about $270 million for electrification, we know they are having a lend of us. We know they would be taking us for a ride — if we could get on the train! That is one of the biggest problems in the western suburbs: overcrowding. I have been on trains throughout the western suburbs where I have had to stand crushed against a door hoping it would not open suddenly and throw me onto the tracks.

Mr Barber — I do that every day.

Mr FINN — Mr Barber says he does it every day.

Mr Barber — You have been on trains!

Mr FINN — I have done it on trains, but no doubt you do it on trams. I often catch the train from Sunshine. I often get the train on the Sydenham line. The trains there are best compared to cattle cars. They are a disgrace, and for this government to claim it is responsible, as it does, for improved services is a monstrous and deliberate untruth. The people of the west and the people of Victoria generally realise the government has some difficulty in handling the truth. The government does not know what truth is and could not tell the truth if its life depended on it.

As I have said in this house before, nothing will improve in terms of public transport in the western suburbs until we have a major improvement at the North Melbourne railway station.

Mr D. Davis interjected.

Mr FINN — A change of government would be very good, Mr Davis; I could not agree with you more. But we certainly need a replication at the North Melbourne railway station of what is currently the situation at the Richmond railway station. As we know most trains to the eastern and southern suburbs go through the Richmond railway station, and that station is designed to cater for that number of trains. The North Melbourne railway station is far from designed to cater for the number of trains that now service the northern and western suburbs. We have to remember that I am talking about some of the fastest growing areas in Australia. The city of Wyndham, centred around Werribee, is one of the fastest, if not the fastest, growing municipalities in Australia. It needs the services we are talking about, and this government must get its act together and realise it will have to spend dollars on real infrastructure to provide for an improved North Melbourne railway station to allow these trains to service the hundreds of thousands of people who are moving into the western and northern suburbs every year. It must actually do something about it, but we know they have failed and we know they will continue to fail.

We know that as well as Labor meaning tax, Labor means debt and Labor means failure — tax, debt and failure. That is what the Labor Party stands for in this state.

Mr Leane — That is not true.

Mr FINN — I think it is, Mr Leane. If Mr Leane were to look in the mirror, he would see debt, he would see tax and he would most certainly see failure.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (**Mrs Peulich**) — Order! I hope the honourable member is not reflecting on Mr Leane.

Mr FINN — I would never consider doing that, Acting President.

I reflect for a moment on my thoughts as I crawled down the Tullamarine Freeway this morning. It is a bit like a daily traffic jamboree as we gather in our thousands and sit in our cars on the freeway making our way into the city of Melbourne. That is the Tullamarine Freeway, and that is one of the better ones.

Mrs Coote interjected.

Mr FINN — I assure Mrs Coote that we are constantly singing for our supper. As much as I feel frustrated by this appalling situation on the Tullamarine Freeway, I feel even greater sympathy for those poor

souls who are stuck on the West Gate Bridge. They are frequently there for hours — —

Mr Koch — Stuck like glue!

Mr FINN — Mr Koch says, 'Stuck like glue'. Mr Koch knows about this because coming from near Geelong this affects not just the western suburbs but also Geelong through to the Surf Coast and to Warrnambool and beyond. We are talking about people from the entire western part of the state, including Ballarat, who are held up on this freeway that the government just will not take on as a problem. Everybody knows we need another Yarra River crossing. We know the West Gate Bridge is obsolete.

Mr Koch interjected.

Mr FINN — The Deer Park bypass has added to it. That is courtesy of the former Howard government, and we thank the former Prime Minister, John Howard, and the former Treasurer, Peter Costello, for that. That has been a boon for large sections of the west, but it has added to the problems of the West Gate Freeway and the West Gate Bridge. We have a situation where this government knows what the problem is but will not take it on. It is not interested in helping the people of the western suburbs. This government is saying, 'We don't care about the west, they will vote for us anyway.'. That is their attitude. 'It does not matter how we treat people in the western suburbs, because they are going to vote for us anyway.'. It is an arrogant, contemptible attitude displayed constantly by a government that just does not care about the people of the west. I assure members of the government that the people of the west are getting heartily sick of being treated in that way and are preparing to do something about it.

Mr Viney interjected.

Mr FINN — Mr Viney can make as many notes as he likes, but that is the fact of the matter. The people of the western suburbs are out buying baseball bats as we speak, and they will be waiting for you come the next election.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr FINN — For the record, the members of the government might be feigning horror, but they will not have to feign anything when the people of the west are finished with them at the next election!

I plead with the government to change its attitude towards the western suburbs of Melbourne. I hope that the government will give us some consideration. We in the west pay taxes too. We are as entitled as the people in the eastern suburbs or the southern suburbs to get some return on those taxes.

Mr Koch interjected.

Mr FINN — Perhaps more so, as Mr Koch says. All we in the west want is a fair go. This government refuses to give us that fair go. We will keep fighting until it arrives.

An honourable member — A hard act to follow.

Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria) — It might be a hard act to follow, but it would not be a Wednesday if I were not on my feet. I enjoy these general business debates. I must say I find it interesting that opposition members persist in spending all of every Wednesday debating issues that they think are going to punch the government, really wound the government, and today of all days the motion before us is an absolute doozey. Talk about a slow full toss on the leg side. It is just extraordinary for the opposition to put up a motion condemning this government on the delivery of services and infrastructure. We welcome the debate. Whilst I could not be here in the earlier part of the day, I was glad when I found out when I rang in that this motion came on later. I was really pleased about that because I thought, 'That's good, because I might get an opportunity to say a few words'.

Mr Koch interjected.

Mr VINEY — I thank Mr Koch very much. I am glad he was waiting for me. For Mr Finn to talk about arrogance when he was in the Kennett government is a little rich. He had the gall to come in here and talk about driving down the Tullamarine Freeway, a road that existed and that the previous government chose to put tolls on. The people of Victoria had already paid for and built that road and when he was in government as the member for Tullamarine the government chose to toll it. That is its record. I made a couple of notes and Mr Finn noticed that. They are only one-word notes because it is instructive — —

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr VINEY — I was concentrating on listening, not on writing, but I could have been listening out in Spring Street because of the volume. Mr Finn sometimes confuses volume with substance. But let us go to the first thing he was talking about. When he was talking about schools, he talked about the maintenance of schools. This is the government that has embarked on the largest rebuilding and refitting of our education system in the state's history. Every single school in

Victoria will be refurbished or rebuilt by 2016, with the work on 500 schools completed by 2011 or 2012. This budget we have introduced this week continues that delivery in a massive way. I know what is taking place in my region in eastern Victoria in the way of schools. I do not have the data in front of me as to what is taking place in the western suburbs of Melbourne, but I am damn sure that the schools in the western suburbs are getting probably the biggest investment they have ever seen — because that is part of the government's program, and the people of the western suburbs know very well that it is not Liberal governments that deliver services and facilities to them. All of Victoria knows that it is not Liberal governments that deliver services and infrastructure; it is Labor governments. It is Labor governments that build; it is Labor governments that construct; it is Labor governments that invest in the people of Victoria.

It has been a long history of Liberal governments in this state that have closed schools. When Mr Finn was last in office from 1992 to 1999, they closed 350 schools and sacked thousands of teachers. It is this government that has embarked on the biggest rebuild of our education system in the state's history.

Mr Finn talked about transport. Our solution to the transport needs of Victorians has been to buy new trains, to invest in the upgrades of the stations — —

Mr Koch — Come on! Which ones? Six sets in 10 years.

Mr VINEY — I travel the transport system from Gippsland to Melbourne a lot, and in Melbourne on the metropolitan system, because I get off the train from Gippsland at Richmond and come to Parliament. When I get off the train at Richmond and come to Parliament on the Met system, I am always on a brand-new train — one of those trains on which you can see right through from one end of the train to the other. I think they are called the X'trapolis trains.

It is this government that has invested in our transport system, and it is a remarkable thing that the people of Victoria — —

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr VINEY — What, those trains do not run in the western suburbs? That is an absolute nonsense, and Mr Finn knows it. It is this government that has been investing in that and in particular in the metropolitan system. It is a remarkable thing that the people of Victoria, the people of Melbourne, have responded to that investment with a near doubling over the last 10 years of the number of people who are using the metropolitan transport system. That is people voting with their feet and with their confidence in the transport system and the investment that this government has been putting into it. I am sure it is true of Mr Koch's region. It is also true of the regional rail system which Mr Finn chose to mock — the investment into the upgrade of our public transport system in Victoria.

Last Saturday morning I was at the Bairnsdale railway station, where over 200 people were celebrating the fifth anniversary of the return of trains to Bairnsdale. Along with Mr Ingram, I made a contribution to that wonderful community celebration. There were a couple of hundred people there genuinely celebrating the return of the train. The train that came in had 'Happy Fifth Anniversary, Bairnsdale' on it — and the people were cheering and clapping.

In the contribution I made in welcoming that train into Bairnsdale on the fifth anniversary of the return of the trains, I made a few observations. I talked about the fact that all those years ago, in 1993, I happened to be in Bairnsdale doing some consulting work for the then City of Bairnsdale. The councillors and the people of Bairnsdale said, 'We have to suspend this workshop that we are running and go down to the Bairnsdale railway station'. When I went down there, I found that there were hundreds of people down at the Bairnsdale railway station in 1993 and they hijacked the train. What did the Kennett government call the people who were standing up to retain their service in Bairnsdale? They said they were the Bairnsdale ratbags. Talk about arrogance, Mr Finn. That was the height of arrogance, calling people who were defending their services the Bairnsdale ratbags.

Last Saturday, I was proudly standing on the station with a banner that the Save our Train Group had prepared all those years ago. It said, 'Proudly a Bairnsdale ratbag'. I was very proud to stand in front of that banner on behalf of this government to celebrate that and say, 'I've been called a lot of things in politics, but this is one of the times I am very proud to be standing with the ratbags of Bairnsdale', because they stood up not just for the return of the train; they stood up for the services and facilities that are important to regional Victoria, that are important to communities. On that day in 1993 when I was at that train station, people had banners saying, 'Jeff Kennett, you closed our school' and 'You closed our kinder'. People were not just standing up for the train; they were standing up for the fundamental infrastructure and services that people in country Victoria believe in.

As I said on Saturday, they are critical for the survival and for the flourishing of those communities in regional

Victoria. The opposition brings on this debate about this government's failure to invest in infrastructure, when last Saturday that community was celebrating one of the most fundamental symbols of this government's investment in and belief in people and investment in infrastructure.

Mr Koch interjected.

Mr VINEY — We have had massive investments in transport. I say to Mr Koch that I catch the train frequently from Drouin or Warragul to the city. It is not uncommon to struggle to get a seat, because that is how successful the reinvestment in the services is. Mr Finn might like to belittle and mock this government's decision to invest in regional rail, but it is a rip-roaring success. Patronage on the Bairnsdale and Traralgon service has gone through the roof, with 40 per cent growth in the last two years in that service. People in Victoria are voting with their feet and with their support of this government's investment in critical infrastructure.

Then Mr Finn talked about hospitals. Like schools, Victoria's hospitals are having the biggest rebuild in the state's history. Just as with education, we are doing it again.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr VINEY — What about the Sunshine and Werribee hospitals? There are big reinvestments there. I ask Mr Finn: are they not in the western suburbs?

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (**Mr Leane**) — Order! For the sake of Hansard, the Clerk and the Chair, I ask members to tone down their interjections. It is very hard to hear Mr Viney's contribution.

Mr VINEY — I find it inspirational to have the other side interjecting from time to time, but I take the Acting President's point about some good order.

Let us just talk about hospitals. Back in 1988–89 I was involved in a campaign to get more beds for Frankston Hospital. At that time the former Premier, Mr Kennett, indicated that Frankston Hospital had never asked for additional beds. Yet after the supplementary election in Frankston East it emerged that in fact the hospital had submitted requests to the government for extra beds. The campaign we were running to get more beds in Frankston Hospital was mocked and belittled by Mr Kennett, who said that the hospital did not need more beds, yet when we came to office we made a commitment to put more beds into Frankston Hospital — and we delivered those beds. Now we are treating about 1.3 million patients a year through our public hospital system, about 300 000 people a year more than in 1999.

Mr D. Davis interjected.

Mr VINEY — The population has not grown by 30 per cent. I say to Mr Davis: that is just nonsense! Mr Davis should keep rolling up those full tosses on the leg side; we really enjoy them.

We have been investing in our hospitals with the largest rebuild of our hospital system. But what was the Kennett government's approach to hospitals in Victoria?

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr VINEY — I advise Mr Koch that the first new public hospital to be built in 20 years in Victoria was built by us at Berwick. And we rebuilt the Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre. We had to buy back the Latrobe hospital because of the failed privatisation system. The other side in government was trying to flog off the Austin repatriation hospital but could not get a buyer. If there had been a buyer, it would have been gone. It was this government that rebuilt the whole thing. This government has invested massively in our health system, with the largest capital rebuild the state has ever seen in our hospital system.

That is not to mention that we have been the ones reemploying nurses and increasing services in our public hospital system. The Kennett government sacked nurses and closed down hospitals: 12 country hospitals were closed. This government has been investing in our hospital system.

Mr Finn referred to police and talked about the fact that we need to catch people who commit offences. The first basic principle about catching someone who commits an offence is to have the cops on the street who can actually do it. The opposition when in government sacked 1000 police and underresourced our police force. We have put those police, and more, back in. We have rebuilt dozens of police stations across the state. As I said earlier, Mr Finn had the gall to make a contribution about the state of the Tullamarine Freeway when it was those opposite who tolled an existing road. This government has invested massively and fixed up our freeway system in Victoria. We are actually doing the massive rebuild and reconstruction of the Monash Freeway.

In 1967, the first year that the Scoresby Freeway appeared in *Melway*, Henry Bolte was Premier of this

state. He never built the Scoresby freeway, and in truth nor did Lindsay Thompson; in truth neither did John Cain nor Joan Kirner — but neither did Jeff Kennett.

The first person to commit to building the Scoresby freeway, now known as EastLink, was former Premier Steve Bracks. It was this government that put that freeway on the map and created that construction. It is this government that got the link right through the Pakenham bypass, the Narre Warren bypass, and it is this government that has been investing massively in our road infrastructure and in the black spot programs and creating safer roads.

I appreciate Mr Davis bringing forward this motion today and the opportunity to put back on the record who has really been investing in infrastructure in this state. We have heard a lot of nonsense about a wasted 10 years by this government under Steve Bracks and John Brumby. I am happy to put on record our investment in infrastructure, our re-delivery of services and the real benefits accruing to Victoria as a result. But if we are to actually put on record where the wasted opportunity has been, the real wasted opportunity over the last 10 years has been the wasted opportunity of the opposition.

The opposition has wasted 10 years in failing to produce any substantial policies that would make a difference to Victoria, and in the absence of opposition members delivering any policy on what they would do in education, transport, health, roads, police and community safety — in the absence of them putting any substantive policy on the record — it leaves us with only one space to assess the opposition, and that is its record last time in government, which was a measly investment of $1 billion in infrastructure. That is the context in which we need to be considering this debate.

We need to consider the opposition's failure to do anything in the way of infrastructure, such as its refusal to invest in schools. Its solution to maintenance issues in schools was to close them down. I know it well because I was involved in saving Somers Primary School, which my children attended. The view of the Kennett government was: 'It needs some improved maintenance; we do not have the money, therefore we will close it down'. That community rose up just as the people in Bairnsdale did over the closure of their train line. That community rose up and stopped it, and last Saturday I celebrated with the community of Bairnsdale the return of the trains after five years. They rose up at that time not only about their train service but also about their schools, their police services and their roads. They rose up and told the now opposition, then in government, that they had had enough.

So the real wasted opportunity in the context of this debate is in fact the other side, which has wasted 10 years of being in opposition and which has not done the hard work of developing policies and alternatives for Victoria. That is the real wasted opportunity.

Mr Atkinson interjected.

Mr VINEY — You may be right, Mr Atkinson, and I suspect you are. You may well be one of the people who have done some of the work, and that is why they have put you back on the back bench up there — because they cannot handle people who are prepared to do the hard work.

Mr Guy — When were you last on the front bench?

Mr VINEY — I am perfectly happy to be manager of government business, Mr Guy. The real wasted opportunity is the fact that not even you are able to do it, Mr Guy; I think you actually have some talent, but not even you are able to produce some decent policies because of the constraints of your party and the failure of the opposition. The opposition stands condemned for its failures to develop policy.

In the absence of policy we are left with assessing the opposition on the basis of what it did, which was to 'close it down and flog it off'. It closed down schools and hospitals, it sacked teachers, it sacked nurses and it flogged things off to the private sector where it could — the electricity system, public transport and hospitals. That is what it would deliver if it got back in government; in the last 10 years it has not been able to demonstrate at all that it stands for anything else.

Mr GUY (Northern Metropolitan) — I think it is time the red cordial was put away and we gave Mr Viney a dose of reality, particularly on the issue of public transport, because as we have seen from the debate on Mr David Davis's motion there has been a raft of speeches today outlining this government's failure — not a failure of the opposition as Mr Viney has ranted on about tonight, but the government's failure to perform in office for the last decade. He cited public transport as a key example of that, so I went away for 2 minutes and looked at some quick facts. This is what is always missing from the members opposite — fact.

Let us have a look at some quick facts about public transport: Mr Viney gloated about the investment this government had put into public transport so far, and Mr Finn, who is not in the chamber but was here earlier, was lambasted about the Siemens trains.

Mr Viney interjected.

Mr GUY — I am not talking about the X'trapolis trains, Mr Viney — you should know your own network. I am talking about the Siemens trains which run on the Connex south network, which, ironically, goes to Mr Finn's area.

Those trains, along with the X'trapolis trains, were ordered under contracts put in place by the Kennett government. In fact the franchise press release, which the Labor Party opposed in 1999, makes interesting reading. Allow me to read it, because maybe Mr Viney has forgotten history in the time he has been here or while he has been off buying red cordial.

> The Premier —

Mr Kennett —

> said National Express had agreed to meet commitments enshrined in the public transport passengers charter as well as investing about $1 billion —

including —

> $400 million on 62 new three-car trains to replace one-third of Bayside Trains' fleet.

What are they? They are the trains you just gloated about that you said were yours! And somehow here they are in a press release of 25 June 1999. The Labor Party opposed that!

Mr Viney interjected.

Mr GUY — And it gets better, because we go to the Connex south network and we find something called the X'trapolis trains, which Labor opposed on their introduction in 1999 as well. They were introduced; in fact there are 58 sets of them on the network — 58 X'trapolis trains — which Labor opposed.

There are 72 Siemens sets on the network, which Labor opposed. But let us look at the whole public transport system in Melbourne, including every single train running on the network today. Let us have a look: apart from the 72 Siemens trains which Labor opposed and which were ordered under agreements by the Kennett government and the 58 X'trapolis sets operating on the network which the Labor Party opposed, there are 14 sets of Hitachi trains running today. Who ordered them? You got it: it was the Bolte government, another Liberal government, in 1971. And of course 66 per cent of the entire network is run with Comeng trains, which were ordered — wait for it — in 1981. I wonder who was in government in 1981? The Liberal Party. They were ordered by the Liberal Party, so in fact every single train running on the network today was ordered under or by a contract put in place by a Liberal or Liberal-National government, and that is fact. And over 120 of those train sets were opposed by Mr Viney.

Mr Viney interjected.

Mr GUY — Mr Viney opposed them, so he should not come and lecture us about fact.

Let us go further and look at the $175 million spent on 59 state-of-the-art, low-floor trams for Swanston and Yarra trams, the Citadis trams. Who ordered those? They were ordered under contracts set up by the Liberal government and opposed by the Labor Party. So do not come and talk to us about investment.

Mr Viney ought to look further at the National Express contract, because it talks about the extension of the railway line from St Albans to Sydenham. Who opposed that again? The Labor Party. These guys have a habit of taking credit for everything. They took credit for CityLink, they took credit for the new museum, they took credit for the AAA rating — bizarrely — and now they are taking credit for the contracts they opposed in 1999.

And it gets better: the Liberal Party was responsible for $158 million spent on 58 high-speed diesel multiple units, called 'velocity cars', to run at 160 kilometres per hour around country Victoria, but, lo and behold, the Labor party opposed them and then went on to claim them as their own. 'We introduced these', said members of the Labor Party. The Labor Party opposed these in the contracts set out by the Kennett Liberal and Nationals government.

Mr Viney — When you privatised the system.

Mr GUY — Mr Viney, if you do not believe in franchising the system you should move a rescission motion on the franchise — do it tomorrow! I dare you to do it tomorrow. Get your mates in the other chamber to move a rescission motion. We will have the debate, you will probably get the Greens votes so you could probably pass it through this chamber. Bring it into this chamber; bring it on!

If you think franchising is such a bad deal then why are you about to re-sign those contracts? If you reckon it is so bad, do not go and re-sign the contracts. We will remember today — whatever it is: 5, 6, 7 or 8 May — and Mr Viney opposing the public transport contracts, the franchise. I will wait for him to cross the floor later in the year when, no doubt, the government members will move a motion against it. We will wait for him to vote for them because he obviously hates it.

The reality is that every train on the Melbourne metropolitan network was ordered by the Liberal and Nationals government. After a decade in office the Labor government has ordered 20. We were in office for seven years and we ordered 72 plus 58. I am an arts student, so my maths are not that good — but it is more than 20, that's for sure!

I remind the government about country trains. It was in 1981 that former minister Rob Maclellan launched the new deal for passenger transport. All of the rail cars were refurbished. The wooden carriages were taken out and they brought in these new stainless steel carriages; they were ordered by a Liberal government. The only upgrade in public transport since then has been the DMUs (diesel multiple units) introduced by the Kennett government. I might add that the Kennett government was the only government since 1932, when Harold Clapp ran the railways in this state, to have increased passenger rail speeds to 80 miles per hour.

In the 1980s the Labor Party in government promised to introduce the XPT. The Wran government in New South Wales bought it. Members of the Labor Cain government said, 'We will bring it in'. Who actually brought it in after seven years of promises? It was the maligned Kennett government. Who standardised the railway line to Adelaide? Who presided over that? It was the Kennett government.

Who extended the electrification of the rail line to Cranbourne? Wait for it — the Kennett government. So Labor need not come into this chamber and lecture us about the seven years when we faced a budget deficit of over $2 billion that a Labor government gave us. We faced a state debt of $30 billion. This government inherited from the Kennett government a AAA rating and a $2 billion recurrent surplus. It has had a decade in office and $60 billion in surpluses, but the reality is that it has done nothing with it and it stands condemned for 10 years of failure, particularly in public transport.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (**Mr Leane**) — Order! The number of speakers on this motion has expired.

Mr D. DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to rise and comment on some of this long and productive debate. It is exclusively the case that on this occasion the intention of the motion involved a criticism of services under the Bracks and Brumby governments — and the house should remember that John Brumby was Treasurer under then Premier Steve Bracks. He was responsible for the allocation of money and for many of the infrastructure issues under the control of many areas of service delivery, but there was a failure to deliver a service at a level of infrastructure provision that is satisfactory for Victorians.

The government has had enormous amounts of money; it has had almost 10 years, but it has simply failed. The community has every right to be angry with the Bracks and Brumby governments' period in office. It has been a squandered or lost opportunity. Infrastructure that should have been built has not been built, and example after example has been put before this chamber today.

Service delivery standards have fallen, the number of services has fallen in key areas, and the reporting of those services has become manipulated and falsified on a systematic level by this government. It is a crooked government; it is a bad government; it is a government that has not delivered. I ask members to support this important motion.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 17

Atkinson, Mr	Koch, Mr
Coote, Mrs	Kronberg, Mrs (*Teller*)
Dalla-Riva, Mr	Lovell, Ms
Davis, Mr D.	O'Donohue, Mr
Davis, Mr P.	Petrovich, Mrs
Drum, Mr (*Teller*)	Peulich, Mrs
Finn, Mr	Rich-Phillips, Mr
Guy, Mr	Vogels, Mr
Hall, Mr	

Noes, 19

Broad, Ms	Pakula, Mr
Darveniza, Ms	Pulford, Ms
Eideh, Mr	Scheffer, Mr (*Teller*)
Elasmar, Mr	Smith, Mr
Huppert, Ms	Somyurek, Mr
Jennings, Mr	Tee, Mr
Leane, Mr	Theophanous, Mr
Lenders, Mr	Tierney, Ms
Madden, Mr (*Teller*)	Viney, Mr
Mikakos, Ms	

Motion negatived.

BUSHFIRES: VICTORIA

Debate resumed from 1 April; motion of Mr HALL (Eastern Victoria):

> That this house acknowledges the tragic impact of the recent bushfires on many Victorians and Victorian communities and notes the role and responsibilities of the state government and the royal commission in the aftermath of the fires.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I would like to read a couple of statements:

> We were prepared for a bushfire, we weren't prepared for what came over that hill ...

That was said by Mrs Norma Nelson of Strathewen, as reported in the *Age* of 9 April.

> It is my opinion that the extent and severity of the 2003 and 2007 fires is a result of poor public land management over the past 30 or so years exacerbated by the effects of a decade of drought, almost certainly made worse by climate change ...

That was said by Dr Kevin Tolhurst, a noted bushfire expert, in his submission to a Victorian parliamentary committee that pre-dated this tragedy.

These are two statements with which we should all be able to agree, but agreeing on a way forward could be somewhat harder. I am addressing that part of the motion which relates to what we believe the royal commission should be examining.

In my speech on the condolence motion on this tragedy I said that heroes are people who take responsibility, even if that leads them to some sort of physical risk or personal sacrifice. Thinking about that, I have been posing to myself the question, 'What is a politician's responsibility in marking out a way forward?'. I believe it is, firstly and most importantly, to keep an open mind about the causes of the tragedy and the solutions for ensuring it never happens again. It is certainly not to run to the nearest media outlet, while the fires are still burning and while people are out there fighting and risking their lives, and scream, 'We told you so', it is not to retreat to what you think is your safe political ground, and it is not to try to split a community in half, when that community is already suffering a lot of pain, in the hope that some votes will come out of it for you from somewhere. It is also not to amplify the most aggressive voices at the expense of all community members who have a right to be heard.

This is a new realm we are moving into. We experienced fire weather at levels never before measured. So if it is blame you are looking for, you will find it very hard to completely blame any one factor — or to absolve anyone, either.

The forest fire danger index is something that members may know. It is that scientific calculation, based on weather variables, that tells us the degree of fire danger. We are more familiar with it by the words 'moderate', 'very high', 'extreme' and so on that we see on those roadside signs.

When it was first developed the index was set at around 40 or 50 for 'extreme' fire weather, the sort of weather where there is very little you can do to directly fight a fire. I believe that 100 on the index was set as the weather we would have seen in the 1939 bushfires. On Ash Wednesday it was reportedly about 130.

The prediction for the fire danger index for the Melbourne area for Saturday, 7 February 2009, as at 4.45 p.m. the night before was 164. The index consists of: H = relative humidity from 0–100 per cent; T = air temperature; V = average wind speed; and D = drought factor in the range 0–10, which tells us how wet the fuel is likely to be from recent rain or moisture. That gives us the formula $FFDI = 2^{(0.987\log D - 0.45 + 0.0338T + 0.0234V - 0.0345H)}$. What you immediately note about that, if you have a bit of mathematics, is that it is an exponential equation to the base 2, meaning that for every increase of one unit of fire weather there is a doubling of fire danger. By contrast, a fire's rate of spread increases roughly linearly with the increase in available fuel.

The establishment of a parliamentary inquiry into the impact of public land management practices on bushfires in Victoria was supported by the Greens. We proposed to the committee chair a group of experts who could be called, and many of them were. One of them, Kevin Tolhurst, made his views quite clear. He said:

> … under extreme fire danger, weather will dominate fire behaviour. With low to very high fire danger, fuel levels are particularly important to fire behaviour.

Contrast that with the statement of Mr Philip Davis in this debate, referring solely to public land management practices. Referring to public land, he said:

> … land management practices, which were the major contributor to the fires.

Already you see there is a bit of a diversion from the biophysical reality into the political agenda. The Liberals at their core have a group of people who bathe in comfortable familiarity, whose minds literally shut down in the face of rapid change from past circumstances. These are not the sorts of people we want guiding us through the current era of climate change.

In his work for the CSIRO Kevin Hennessy has used established weather models to study the possible impact of climate change on the forest fire danger index, with temperature one of the major variables. It is possible to say that the effects of climate change are already to be found in the more severe fire weather we are experiencing. As Hennessy has stated, the frequency of extreme fire weather events could triple in coming decades, and unfortunately, as members should understand, temperature increases over the next couple of decades are already built into the system, arising from the current concentration of CO_2.

Our current suite of policies was founded a quarter of a century ago out of the learnings from the Ash Wednesday fires. In those fires most able-bodied persons could save themselves and their homes by 'staying and defending'; most people who died were in vehicles or were frail or elderly or were firefighters in a risky situation. Studies of building design and situation show that a combination of preparation and good design could seemingly almost guarantee survivability. If you were capable of defending your home and were well prepared to do so, you could stay in your house while the fire raged around you. Even if the house caught fire, you could survive inside it for 15 or 20 minutes until the fire passed, then you could escape to burnt ground.

This became the basis of our current policy set, which is: 'Prepare, stay and defend or leave early'; fuel reduction burning; local, volunteer CFAs for rapid first attack and asset protection; exemptions from tree-clearing rules and recommended design for building location; and a building code for specified bushfire-prone areas.

That policy set failed us in the February fires. The proof is in the losses and the deaths. The proof is already there in the anecdotes from people who described the fires as something beyond imagination or experience. And the proof will soon be available in scientific analysis that is under way. Those were the right policies for past circumstances, and to researchers such as David Packham and Phil Cheney we owe our respect and gratitude. Unfortunately though, circumstances have changed, and our policy settings must change as well.

If someone is a climate change sceptic — and there are plenty of them lurking around here — they will see no need for a change to our existing suite of policies. They will think we just need to do all of them a bit better. To them this fire was just an extreme statistical outlier; we had one in 1939, we had one in 2009; sometime in the next 100 years we will have something similar. But odds on the next one will be less extreme and those existing policy settings will be sufficient. Fortunately, the state parliamentary inquiry that I referred to dismissed the sceptics and recommended that the Department of Sustainability and Environment incorporate climate change predictions into its key planning.

The committee, however, did not exactly put its thinking cap on and map out any overall approach that could be taken in order to do this, because, to be candid, the existing policy set is a relatively easy and low-cost one for governments to implement compared to some of the alternatives. It leaves most of the decisions, and therefore most of the responsibility, to individuals.

Many are going to shy away from a total reconsideration of the past suite of policies. Those policies will still be effective in fires less severe than those of Black Saturday and the days that followed, but clearly the public is already making up its mind. People's understanding about what a fire-prone area is has changed. It now includes established suburbs and regional towns. People in Bendigo were staggered to see a fire, apparently a bushfire, in houses 5 kilometres from its GPO. The people of Warburton evacuated en masse as the fire risk rose in the week after Saturday, 7 February, and many of the survivors of the fire say they would never consider staying to defend their house again. The truth is those official policies suggesting certain behaviours bear little resemblance to reality in a fire event. It would be better if we started with that acknowledgement even though it raises more questions than it answers.

Some of the answers could come via region-wide fire planning. I argue that the royal commission should recommend the state government lead an effort involving emergency services and those responsible for planning controls on private land to assess the likely risks of more frequent and intense fires across whole regions. It is practical to do so. There are computer models available to estimate the progress of a fire at the landscape scale, taking into account vegetation, fuel, slope, weather, and incorporating assets and human population into an overall risk assessment. Those models should be run for all populated areas. The results themselves might provide a wake-up call to communities and responsible authorities but the results could be used to design more scientifically our defence mechanisms.

The Greens pushed for, as part of the Rudd government's stimulus package, additional funding for the bushfire cooperative research centre. They and their associates have plenty of expertise for this task. That methodology would allow actions such as fuel reduction burning, land-use controls, building controls and evacuation plans all to be better informed by possible fire behaviours. I want to discuss each of those issues. Firstly, I will quote from the parliamentary inquiry:

> In the committee's view, a minimum average of 5 per cent of the public land estate should be treated by prescribed burning each year. This would represent an annual target of 385 000 hectares …

This annual figure of planned and controlled burning they recommend has only been achieved once since

white settlement. What does such a seemingly precise figure mean anyway, in the context of more than 2.5 million hectares having been burnt in the last three bad fire seasons? Reading the report, I could not find any link from the evidence to the recommendation.

There is a report called *Analysis of Disturbance by Fire on Public Land in Victoria*, which was put together by public land agencies in 2002. It was the first effort at setting ecological benchmarks for burning frequency and comparing them to the actual situation of public land at that time. Those benchmarks arrive out of ecological drivers, such as maintaining biodiversity and regeneration needs of different plants, mostly — the effect of different fire regimes on fauna populations is something we do not know enough about. Members might like to look at Birds Australia's publication *Fire and Birds — Fire Management for Biodiversity* of September 2005, which says:

> Biodiversity loss is associated with high fire frequency, intense broadscale fire, and fire exclusion, all of which tend to homogenise the landscape.

In the earlier report I mentioned it was shown that each broad ecosystem type, and there are 200 of them across Victoria, has a tolerable fire interval. For dry forests, as an example, it is between 10 and 50 years. We know that 10 years post-fire fuel loads in dry forests recover to about 10 tonnes a hectare and then stay on that level on an ongoing basis. They will not get much higher; they will not get much lower. The climate over the first 10-year period could have a real influence, particularly as it determines how much fuel gets created.

With more than a third of all public land having been burnt in just three bad fire seasons since the publication of that report, it is time for that to be completely revised. That is the sort of scientific base that we would need to plan for burning for the preservation of the ecology. But such a program is probably not going to do double duty as a fuel reduction program. Yes, it will reduce fuel loads at the landscape scale and in some ecosystems; in others the accumulation of fuel and biological matter over centuries is the norm.

Flying over Kinglake it was quite noticeable that even in the midst of this conflagration there must have been a range of fire intensities. You could see it by the extent of damage to the canopy and the pockets of lightly burnt forest among the devastation. That is not surprising given the diversity of ecosystems and the fact that — take out the Wallaby Creek catchment — 20 per cent of the Kinglake National Park had been fuel reduced over the last decade, much having been done recently.

Tolhurst illustrated in his research into the alpine fires that fuel reduction across the landscape more recently than 10 years ago can reduce the extent and severity of wildfire in time and space. That can make a difference, but it will not provide the surety you are looking for for your town or home. The ecological illiterates out there would not know the difference between burning for fuel reduction and the best fire regime for biodiversity health across 200 different ecosystems, but they will happily grab a convenient standing argument and turn it to another purpose. The problem with that is it will not get anyone the outcome they are looking for. Kevin Tolhurst, in his submission to that same inquiry, said:

> At the moment the primary method of quantifying fire management effectiveness is to tally the number of hectares burnt in prescribed burning programs or the area burnt by wildfires. These are easily measured parameters but do not give much indication of how effective management is being.

It will mean resources will be redirected into burning hundreds of thousands of hectares out there in the Big Desert or Coopracambra national parks just to achieve the magic number without offering greater certainty of safety to Kinglake or Cockatoo. It is a feelgood target, it is a political target, it is a 30-second sound byte target, but it does nothing to ensure the confidence of towns and communities across Victoria. The government, quite rightly, did not take the bait on that.

Clearly what is needed to make Victoria a safe place to live is a strategic approach to burning, particularly in what the Department of Sustainability and Environment fire plans call zone 1 asset protection. It is the area managed for maximum fire protection for human life, property and highly valued assets. Take the example of Marysville pre-fire. According to the plan its fuel management zone 1 and 2 area is about 45 square kilometres, and that is on all sides of the town. Some 9.5 square kilometres of that had been fuel reduced in the last 10 years; most in the last 5 years, in fact.

Over the next two years a further 5 square kilometres was planned as a series of very small burns measured in hectares rather than square kilometres and nestled tight up against the town. The fuel reduction program made some difference to the fate of Marysville, even under the extreme conditions felt during those devastating fires. Precisely how much of a difference is something only an expert can tell you. If a greater area had been burnt, it probably would have made some difference.

It may have reduced the energy of the fire but maybe not its speed, at least not to the extent that anyone would have noticed. Intense and broadscale burning within many kilometres of the town may have reduced the amount of spotting, but that was never going to

happen because the surrounding mountains are cloaked with wet forests managed for timber production, not fuel minimisation.

While we are at it, let us get rid of this preposterous argument put around by the Victorian Association of Forest Industries that forest thinning reduces fuel. Here it is from the *Native Forests Silviculture Technical Bulletin No. 13*, Forestry Tasmania:

> One of the major planning constraints associated with thinning is the higher level of fuel present after the operations.
>
> Tree crowns (heads), bark, and other harvest residue make up the fuel load. The climate on the floor of the forest is altered by thinning, with higher wind speeds and temperature, lower humidity, and lower moisture content in the fuel itself.

On fuel reduction, the figures speak for themselves, and they are well known. There was a precipitous drop in the extent of fuel reduction burning with the arrival of the Kennett government. Public land was not a priority for it, except where it could flog it off. And with that fall no doubt there was a fall-off in the ability to maintain expertise and long-term professional development among firefighters. In Kinglake over the entire decade of the 1990s there was one recorded fuel reduction burn in 1999 totalling 148 hectares.

Mr Philip Davis said, 'Even the people in the leafy suburbs and even some of those people who might have voted for Mr Barber at the last election would now accept that there has in effect been flawed policy in relation to public land management'. Yes, many of them live in bushfire-affected areas, as he well knows. I am sure he scrutinises the voting results across his electorate as closely as anyone. He would be wise to take some time to listen to their voices instead of the echo of his own.

Economic rationalists, not environmentalists, need to step up and take the blame for the failure to keep up fuel reduction burning. That much is clear. Fuel reduction obviously reduces fuel; it does not eliminate it. There is always going be a residual fire risk, and, as Tolhurt has demonstrated, in extreme fire weather that risk rises exponentially, with the chances of extinguishing a fire at first attack falling off quickly under those conditions.

People printing 'No fuel, no fire' bumper stickers are basing their campaign on a fallacy. There is no such thing as no fuel in a natural or farmland area, even immediately after a fuel reduction burn. Those slogans are just meant to kick people in the guts, not to educate or empower them. Putting priority into fuel reduction burning in close proximity to towns, in some cases right up to back fences, obviously creates a whole new level of difficulty. There is real risk to health and amenity and many of the other things that make it great to live in those areas.

High levels of communication and consultation are required, and the liability for escape burns gets higher, and that cannot just be swept under the carpet, as Mrs Petrovich tried to do. I know she will be the first and loudest to blame the government when something goes wrong.

The Victorian National Parks Association claims that only one — —

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

PARLIAMENTARY SALARIES AND SUPERANNUATION AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction and first reading

Received from Assembly.

Read first time for Mr LENDERS (Treasurer) on motion of Mr Jennings.

CRIMES AMENDMENT (IDENTITY CRIME) BILL

Introduction and first reading

Received from Assembly.

Read first time for Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Planning) on motion of Mr Jennings.

ADJOURNMENT

The PRESIDENT — Order! The question is:

> That the house do now adjourn.

Lockwood Primary School: land purchase

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — The matter I wish to raise this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Education. It is in regard to the Lockwood Primary School's bid to purchase adjoining church land. My request to the minister is for her to provide sufficient funds to enable Lockwood Primary School to purchase the land and that this funding be provided without the condition of a merger with Lockwood South Primary School tied to the funding.

Lockwood Primary School is a rural school with a population of about 158 students. Unfortunately a

considerable portion of the school's current land is taken up by a large, fenced-off dam which naturally limits the play area available for students. Unlike schools in metropolitan and regional centres, rural schools commonly have dams, and they can constrain the provision of play space for students.

The school hopes to purchase land that was owned by the Church of England. Due to the church's urgent need to sell, the land has been purchased by a benefactor who is holding the land in anticipation of the school receiving funding. The church land which adjoins the school already provides desperately needed play areas. It contains the school's playground, which is quite substantial. This land also provides the students with shady trees to play under, and without it the schoolyard would almost be devoid of trees.

The cost of purchasing the church land, which is just under 1 acre, would be about $70 000. Lockwood Primary School applied to the regional office for funding to purchase the land but was told the school was at capacity for entitlement to land. Unfortunately the region did not take into account the large dam on the school land which, as I said, is fenced off and should not be counted when it comes to assessing land for the students' recreational area. The school was also told that there would not be funding available for the purchase and that it was not permitted to use the first $70 000 of the Rudd government money it would receive under the Building the Education Revolution program if it remained a stand-alone school. However, the president of the school council has informed me that the school has been told it would be permitted to use the federal funds to purchase the land if it were to merge with Lockwood South Primary School.

Placing such a condition on Lockwood Primary School is unacceptable and constitutes a kind of blackmail to force the school to consider merging. It really is a disgraceful state of affairs when a school is told it has to merge with another school to gain access to funding to improve its grounds. Labor is getting a name for itself as a bully that forces schools to consider merging in exchange for desperately needed funding.

Two Golden Square primary schools are reportedly discussing a merger, and schools in other parts of the state are expected to follow suit. Lockwood Primary School students deserve a safe, shady place to play, and the education minister should be working with the school to deliver this outcome. My request of the minister is that she provide sufficient funds to enable Lockwood Primary School to purchase the land and that this funding be provided without the condition of a merger with Lockwood South Primary School tied to the funding.

VicForests: firewood contracts

Mr HALL (Eastern Victoria) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Treasurer, who has responsibility for VicForests. It also impacts on the Minister for Environment and Climate Change and potentially the Minister for Agriculture because it concerns commercial firewood operations in eastern Victoria. On 2 April this year the Minister for Environment and Climate Change issued a press release announcing that the government would be developing a firewood strategy for public land. In that press release the government indicated that a discussion paper would be put out in the first half of 2009. I look forward to that discussion paper being published, because the press release is unclear as to whether licensed commercial firewood operations are going to be included in that strategy.

In eastern Victoria firewood for commercial operators is controlled by VicForests, which auctions firewood lots. VicForests then arranges to have the logs harvested and delivered to the commercial operators. I understand that VicForests' firewood auction in 2008–09 sold just 300 cubic metres. I am also aware of comments made by the Minister for Agriculture on 2 April this year that of the 48 000 households across Gippsland that use firewood, 39 000 of them do so for primary heating purposes, and those 48 000 households use 90 000 tonnes of firewood per year.

Many people seek permits from the department to collect their own firewood, but there would still be a great number of people who rely on a supply of firewood from commercial operators throughout East Gippsland. My feedback from the commercial firewood industry in Gippsland is that the VicForests system of allocation of the resource is simply not working, and there are potentially some serious shortages in the availability of firewood for eastern Victoria this year.

I call on the Treasurer, as a matter of urgency, to put in temporary measures to secure the needs of firewood users this winter and in the longer term to undertake a broader review aimed at achieving a sustainable and workable commercial firewood industry in eastern Victoria.

Buses: Doncaster

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My adjournment request is to the Minister for Public Transport and goes to the park-and-ride facility located

in Doncaster. It is a very successful park-and-ride and allows commuters to easily and effectively catch public buses to and from the city. But so successful is the park-and-ride that it is often very difficult to find parking spaces. One way to reduce congestion and pollution and to improve physical fitness would be to promote the use of bicycles to get to the park-and-ride. An important way to increase public use of bicycles would be to provide a safe place for the storage of bikes by commuters.

My request of the minister is that she provide for the Doncaster park-and-ride facility a bike cage or other such mechanism to ensure that cyclists have an opportunity to cycle to the park-and-ride, safely secure their bikes and be able to commute using the bus service to and from the city.

Lake Connewarre: environmental management

Mr KOCH (Western Victoria) — My matter is for the attention of the Minister for Environment and Climate Change. Lake Connewarre is the largest lake in the Geelong region and has been designated as a lake of international significance under the Ramsar convention. A lack of tidal flow has resulted in inadequate flushing of the lake, severely deteriorating this important marine environment and hatchery due to a build-up of inland silt. Recent years have seen the lake change from a haven for many migratory birds, including the majestic black swan, into a smelly, shallow bog that, according to neighbours and a series of previous environmental studies, threatens the whole ecosystem of the region. Its restoration is well overdue.

Despite government expenditure on reports over almost a decade, the Brumby government remains uncommitted to addressing the ongoing issues of restoration affecting the lake. Two reports have previously been completed, with no result. Now a third report is being undertaken by the Lake Connewarre restoration committee chaired by the member for Bellarine, the Minister for Mental Health, and assisted by the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority. Now the member for Bellarine's committee tells me that its report has not seen the light of day, not even a draft for community comment.

In 2005 the member for Bellarine announced that the state government would spend $175 000 on restoring the lake, but four years later the lake still languishes. More than 50 per cent of it is now less than 18 inches deep. Is community concern the reason why the local member has not revealed the outcome of the latest report? The process has stalled, nothing is being done and meanwhile the lake deteriorates. We need to see this report, and a solution needs to be found and implemented.

Despite Minister Neville's ongoing promises, nothing has been done to secure and improve the quality of the lake or its surrounds. In March a public meeting was held to discuss the condition of the lake. The minister, who is chair of the restoration committee, was invited, as were key investigating agencies that manage the parkland reserve. They were not represented at the public meeting.

I will continue to pursue the government on behalf of the Lake Connewarre restoration committee and the community because I believe that rather than resolving this important environmental issue now it is in the interests of the local member to intentionally hold over the report until mid-2010 in order to seek some personal political gain leading into the November 2010 election, to the lake's continued detriment.

My request is that the minister comply with the objectives of the Ramsar convention by restoring this internationally recognised wetland to its previously sustainable environmental status before it is lost forever.

Rail: Connex services

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. Last week two of my staff had unpleasant experiences travelling in to work on Connex trains. When I say 'unpleasant' I mean more unpleasant than the average delayed, overcrowded commute on our privatised public transport system.

On the morning of Tuesday, 28 April, the 7:45 a.m. Werribee train was overcrowded to the extreme. There was no announcement about the late arrival of the train. It was a struggle for people to board the train at Westona station and over a dozen people were stranded at Seaholme station because there was no more room available in the carriages. People were crushed in the doorways. One female passenger nearly fainted. The woman who works in my office said it was the worst morning train commute she has endured in a long time.

My other employee travelled on two trains from the eastern suburbs and both were delayed. Due to signal failures on the Belgrave and Lilydale line, trains were reduced to a crawl and for over 10 minutes were at a complete standstill.

Passengers waiting for the Sydenham train at Southern Cross Station were told to change platforms and when

the train did not appear there was no announcement. The complete lack of communication is unnecessary and creates uncertainty and stress among commuters. It takes very little effort to keep passengers up to date on cancellations and delays. I do not know why this is not a standard provision across all stations on the network. I do not understand how we can charge people considerable sums of money — we have a most expensive public transport system — to endure such unsafe and stressful scenarios every day. I would like to emphasise that these problems occur throughout the day and not just during peak hour. I tried to board a Sydenham line train last week at 9 p.m. and no seats were available. It was as crowded as if it were peak hour. In fact, peak hour is all day on Connex.

My request to the minister is that she confirm whether the government will be taking action to address the unsafe overcrowding on suburban trains.

Victorian Law Reform Commission: identity records reference

Mr ATKINSON (Eastern Metropolitan) — My matter is for the attention of the Attorney-General, but it will also be a matter of some interest to and recall for the minister at the table, the Minister for Environment and Climate Change.

I raise this issue on behalf of a young lady, Lauren Burns, who would no doubt be familiar by name to the minister. She is a young woman who, in the context of the discussion on the Assisted Reproductive Technology Bill, made a number of representations to members of Parliament and the government in respect of accessing information on her parentage — that is, details of her parents and of her father in particular. In the context of those representations, she was most concerned about the health aspects in the backgrounds of her natural parents, their genetic materials and so forth.

The campaign she spearheaded ensured that the government brought to that debate a proposition that it would refer to the Victorian Law Reform Commission the question of access to identity records. The debate, as members and particularly the minister would recall, was a wide-ranging, protracted and quite fluid debate in terms of a range of concessions made by the government and matters considered by the committee and subsequently adopted by the government.

Perhaps the government is of the view that it resolved the matter Ms Burns raised as part of those deliberations of the committee. Ms Burns is certainly concerned that her specific circumstances have not been met by the legislation that was passed, and she still wishes to have the issue of people who currently are not able to access information on their parents considered by the Victorian Law Reform Commission in the context of the government's concessions in that debate.

I therefore seek an indication from the Attorney-General of his preparedness to continue with that reference to the Victorian Law Reform Commission in the context of Ms Burns's issues.

Children: infant hearing screening program

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Health and is to do with the Victorian infant hearing screening program (VIHSP), which has been operating in Victoria since 1992 and in major metropolitan hospitals since the early 2000s.

The program offers hearing screening tests to newborns in those hospitals. The Ewing distraction test, which was performed by maternal and child health nurses, was discontinued across the state in July 2005, thus removing the only screening test available in most regional areas. The state government made an election promise on 30 October 2006 to roll out the Victorian infant hearing screening program across the state to all birthing hospitals and it committed $10 million to this program. Since that time two and a half years ago only 11 hospitals have introduced the program and only one of those is in regional Victoria, and that happens to be in Healesville. The program was announced in Bendigo but ironically it is still not available in Bendigo.

In Queensland the program was introduced in 2004, and by the end of 2006 it was available across the state. We have fallen behind other states in the hearing health of newborns. In New South Wales 95 per cent of all newborns are covered by the screening test, in South Australia it is 97 per cent, in Queensland it is 99 per cent, in the Australian Capital Territory it is 97 per cent, in Tasmania it is 80 per cent and in Western Australia, even with its vast outback region, it is 43 per cent. The Northern Territory is not up to speed. Amongst all this, Victoria comes in at 30 per cent of all newborns being covered by this screening program. It is an absolute disgrace.

The lady who alerted me to this problem, Ms Andrea Floyd, said that her son Jacob was left undiagnosed for 15 months. Children who are left undiagnosed and who do not receive early intervention treatment before six months demonstrate slower speech and language development than those who do receive treatment. Without screening programs babies are not diagnosed

until they are at least one year old — in Jacob's case it was 15 months — but often it is as late as two to three years before children are diagnosed and in those cases they have a higher risk of poorer long-term outcomes in language and learning.

Prior to the implementation of the VIHSP, in New South Wales, the average age of detection was 18 months and here in Victoria it was 22 months. Since that program has been introduced in New South Wales, the time of intervention is now down to six months.

My request to the minister is that this program be rolled out across the state as was promised prior to the last election and that the health and language and learning development of children that is currently being delayed be acted upon immediately — that the government follow through on its announcements and its promises prior to the last election rather than just making headlines.

Bushfires: fencing

Mr P. DAVIS (Eastern Victoria) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Environment and Climate Change. I point out that the government's overzealous restrictions on access to Victoria's bushfire areas are preventing the recovery of a vast amount of timber for fence posts and firewood.

In eastern Victoria, millions of tonnes of timber in the area burnt in the Churchill Black Saturday fire are deteriorating beyond use because the government is maintaining a lockout of professional contractors. The government has made only minor concessions to give landowners access to limited quantities of timber.

Landowners from the Churchill and Traralgon South to Yarram fire areas are being advised that they can obtain permits from the Department of Sustainability and Environment for collection of timber from a 300-tonne stockpile that has been established on private property on the Carrajung–Woodside road. But there are thousands of kilometres of farm fences that need replacing, and farmers do not have the equipment or the time to collect the timber and cut it into posts. Many are having to accept the use of pine posts, which are more expensive and less durable than hardwood posts.

Farmers could obtain permits and engage professional contractors to get the timber and cut it for them, but the contractors are not allowed near it on their own. No-one is being permitted access to the vast quantity of timber along the many kilometres of firebreaks or to timber that remains standing in the bushfire areas because it is covered by forest special protection zones. Any suggestion that the contractors might get involved also raises the spectre of VicForests and its commercial monopoly on wood harvesting in the east of the state, a problem with which the minister is intimately familiar.

The minister undertook in a statement on 2 April that his department would make timber available to replace firewood and fence posts burnt during the Black Saturday fires. The undertaking sounded promising, but in practice virtually nothing has happened because of the government's constraint on access to public land for timber harvesting and its commercial stranglehold on the contractors.

Contractors are readily available in Gippsland to meet the need, but they face a continuing lockout because of this ridiculous situation. Some are in fact without work and relying on social security benefits. We really need common sense to prevail, and I ask that the minister act immediately to revoke the restrictions for protection zones in the Churchill and other Victorian bushfire areas and to authorise access for contractors to cut posts and firewood from timber felled for firebreaks and from that which is recoverable from standing timber.

Racing: jumps events

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Racing. It concerns the issue of jumps or steeplechase racing. I have forwarded a number of questions to the minister for which I am awaiting answers, so he is aware of my interest in this issue.

In yesterday's *Age* online, an article by Andrew Eddy entitled 'Hulls waits for excuse to axe jumps racing' appeared. The article reports Minister Hulls as saying that:

> … jumps racing's future was bleak if the spate of equine deaths in recent years does not end.
>
> The death of a horse is not an acceptable by-product of jumps racing … If we continue to have the number of falls and injuries, you've got to ask whether jumps racing is sustainable.

I agree. The evidence is that it is not acceptable, it is not sustainable and it is not humane. Horses are not designed for jumping. The injuries they suffer are horrific, and some of the footage I have witnessed is highly distressing.

Minister Hulls was also quoted as saying:

> You've got to ask the question about jumps racing if it gets to the stage that the number of deaths and falls in jumps racing actually has an adverse impact on the racing product generally.

What stage is that? In 2008, 1 in 24 jumps horses that competed were killed on the racetrack, but an estimated 1 in 4 horses sustained injuries and have not raced since, presumed dead. The fact is that jumps racing is dangerous for horses and jockeys. Falls and deaths are continuing to happen. There have been reviews in 1991, 1994, 1998, 2002 and 2005 and promises to fix the problems. The new safety modifications brought in after Judge Jones's review last year have not prevented falls or deaths.

Shrogginet became the first victim of jumps racing in 2009 when he fell in a trial at Cranbourne racecourse. Hanging Rock died at Yarra Glen on 26 April. Twenty horses have fallen so far this year, compared to only four at the same time last year. Another two horses, Weeping Willow and Port Phillip, have sustained serious injuries this year and are unlikely to race again. The fate of many horses injured on the racetrack and never seen again is unknown. In 1991 the Senate Select Committee on Animal Welfare called for jumps racing to be phased out on the grounds of cruelty.

My request to the minister is that he not wait for more inevitable falls and deaths of horses and injuries to jockeys. I request that he move now to ban jumps racing in Victoria once and for all, just as it is banned in all other states except South Australia.

Daylesford Spa Country Railway: funding

Mr VOGELS (Western Victoria) — I raise an issue for the Minister for Regional and Rural Development, Jacinta Allan. It concerns the Daylesford Spa Country Railway. The Daylesford region bushfires on 23 February destroyed 1.6 kilometres of track on the Daylesford–Bullarto tourist railway line. Some 2000 sleepers were destroyed, the track buckled in places and the last two broad-gauge cattle pit logs on a running railway in Victoria were also destroyed.

The Daylesford Spa Country Railway is a real tourist attraction for the region bringing hundreds of visitors every weekend, and it will take urgent government support to fund the restoration works that will allow the railway to run its full track. Without the funding for upgrades the railway's viability, and potentially that of the Daylesford Sunday market, is threatened.

The action I seek from the minister is to work with the Hepburn Shire Council and the Daylesford Spa Country Railway and to make available the $250 000 required to get this important tourism icon up and running again. All infrastructure, if left idle for too long, deteriorates before your eyes, and it can become even more expensive to upgrade in the long term.

Planning: Eastern Victoria Region zoning

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Planning. It concerns the rezoning of land in two locations from rural to green wedge in the Eastern Victoria Region.

Let me say at the outset that the Liberal Party has a proud history of preserving and growing the green wedge. Previous planning ministers, such as the Honourable Alan Hunt, were critical to the establishment of significant areas of Melbourne's green wedge that current generations are lucky to enjoy.

In recent times the government has rezoned significant parcels of land from a range of zonings to green wedge zoning. This has left business owners — these two business owners specifically — in a state of limbo where they do not have planning protection to continue their businesses. One of the two examples I refer to is La Fontaine Estate on Manks Road, Clyde, which is owned by Mr Brett Glover. Mr Glover owns a winery and was operating a restaurant as an adjunct to the winery. The restaurant is critical to his business's wine sales. Subsequent to the rezoning of the land the City of Casey advised him that the restaurant does not comply with the requirements of green wedge zoning, and he was forced to close it and to terminate approximately six staff members.

The second example relates to Mr Steve Wales, who since 1979 has operated a contractor's yard and business from 110 Lowes Road, Yarra Junction. He has approximately 20 permanent full-time employees. In recent times, his land was rezoned from rural to green wedge. The Shire of Yarra Ranges has advised Mr Wales that his business is now a non-conforming use within green wedge zoning and it wants his business to be relocated. Mr Wales does not know of any suitable sites in his vicinity and will not relocate the business. If he is forced to close, he will terminate the employment of the 20 staff members he has. During this period of economic downturn, jobs must be the no. 1 priority.

It appears to me that through the rezoning process the Minister for Planning is unable to protect pre-existing businesses. Businesses that were in existence before the land was zoned green wedge have not been adequately protected. This is simply not good enough during this period of economic downturn. I ask the minister to investigate the two cases I have referred to this evening — and I am happy to provide whatever additional details he requires — and to do everything he can to ensure that there are no additional job losses at

either business, and at a broader level I ask him to review the way the land is rezoned so that pre-existing businesses are protected and further job losses do not occur.

Montessori Community Preschool: relocation

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, and is in regard to Montessori Community Preschool in the Prahran electorate.

Montessori Community Preschool is currently located on the site of Stonnington Primary School in Hornby Street, Windsor. For some time it has been rumoured in the community that the centre's future on the current site is not assured. Recently the department of education informed the principal of Stonnington Primary School that the school will need to take over the area currently inhabited by Montessori. The reason for this is believed to be ever-increasing pupil numbers at the school. The Montessori community is now looking to the government to relocate the preschool to a similarly suitable location.

The Montessori community is disappointed that the member for Prahran in the other place, Mr Lupton, is not listening to its concerns or being of assistance in this uncertain time. I urge the Brumby government to engage with the Montessori community and work with concerned parents to ensure that a suitable new site for the preschool is found.

Many children have flourished as a result of the wonderful Montessori philosophy, and the preschool has become a valued part of the Stonnington community. The revolutionary Montessori teaching method, of teachers looking to the children to know how best to teach them, has had an enormous impact on current practices in education.

Mr Jennings — I hope they didn't write that sentence on your behalf!

Mrs COOTE — It reads better than it sounds.

We entrust a huge amount to preschools, in the form of the early care and education of our children, and the community is grateful to Montessori for the programs it has implemented.

The action I am seeking is for the minister to work with the Montessori Community Preschool community as a matter of urgency to ensure that a suitable relocation site, which is in keeping with its desires, is found.

Violence: rap music

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Premier. In doing so I refer to recent examples of violent rap music involved in what the house would be aware was an appalling criminal act in Werribee, one that we are all too familiar with, and the North Melbourne Football Club 'chicken sex video'. I understand when the rap music is played over this video it is changed from what would appear to me to be something of a comedy to a vile piece of degradation of women.

My understanding is that there are various forms of rap music, and some are quite innocent and indeed respectable, but there is also a violent form of rap music that is a major threat, I believe, to the safety of women and to other law-abiding citizens within society. It encourages violence against women and law enforcement officers. It encourages illicit drug use and gang violence. Music, as I am sure the President would be aware, has influenced many in society over many, many years for good and perhaps not so good reasons at times, but this form of music has had a profoundly deleterious effect on many people, especially young people.

Given that the Premier has recently held a summit on violence at football matches — a problem that in my view does not actually exist — I ask him now to conduct a summit on an issue that does exist. I ask him to get together the various stakeholders in this area — police, women's group representatives, music industry representatives and others who would have an interest in this — to tackle this major cancer within society.

This is an area where the government can have a significant impact on the welfare of society and its citizens. I ask the Premier to convene that summit as a matter of priority and to act upon its recommendations.

Bushfires: shire of Nillumbik

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Local Government. The Nillumbik Shire Council has been severely impacted by the Black Saturday fires. The following horrifying statistics say it all. There were 41 fatalities; over 126 houses were destroyed and 10 were damaged; and 22 per cent of the shire was burnt in areas including St Andrews, Christmas Hills and Strathewen. The bushfire area contained 240 properties. There were 53 dead animals, and the shire had to deal with the removal of 50 kilometres of roadside vegetation. Community infrastructure impacts include 55 kilometres of affected roads and the loss of the

Strathewen Primary School; council halls and pavilions; one bridge; road surfaces; sporting oval surfaces; water tanks; fences; street, directional, township and tourism signage; guide posts; and drainage infrastructure and culverts. The direct financial impact has been that the shire has lost 1 per cent of its rateable base.

In order to preserve its environmental integrity, in the past the council adopted a very conservative approach to building approvals, thus strictly upholding the tenets of the green wedge. That has meant that over recent decades the number of rateable properties has been limited. The council already has the second highest rates in the state and has very little room to move on the revenue side. As the result of the destruction of dwellings and business properties, the council has lost $32 000 in rates as at 1 April. It has had to expend an unbudgeted sum of $742 000 that is mostly not refundable under current arrangements, and forego statutory fees amounting to $284 000. The council has a total budget of $65 million, with total rates, municipal and garbage charges amounting to $37 million. It is facing an extremely difficult financial impact on top of the almost incalculable level of human suffering and the devastation wreaked on the environment.

I ask the minister to provide the details of the state government grants that will be made available to the Nillumbik Shire Council to provide immediate and direct assistance to a shire devastated by the bushfires. To delay funding to alleviate the shortfall would be tantamount to yet another example of brutal cost shifting.

Planning: housing projects

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Planning. It relates to several matters but it all began with a constituent calling into my office with a copy of a book the Minister for Planning wrote before he became a member of this house, called *Real Footballers Don't Cry*. The back cover of the book shows the Minister for Planning exposing a little more than I would have cared to have seen. My constituent wanted to talk about the cracks in the planning system.

Mr Guy — Don't do it!

Mrs PEULICH — I am not going to move that it be incorporated. Even though it has escaped the scrutiny of our censors, I do not believe that would be appropriate.

However, the discussions and concerns about planning have raised a very recent concern following the minister's answer in this place about his preparedness to exercise his right to intervene and fast-track particular projects and planning applications. Jobs in housing have been funded in the current budget to the tune of $3.2 million through the development facilitation unit. In the government's press release it says that money will be used to mediate between councils, the development industry and government to ensure good developments are fast-tracked and jobs in housing can be delivered more quickly.

I welcome the plan to build social housing, with 5000 units being funded by the federal government to get the state Labor government off the hook. However, I am aware that there may be some political opportunism here and that some of those large clusters of social housing units may be perched in politically sensitive electorates which need a couple of hundred votes to prop them up here and there. There is a range of concerns that inappropriate sites will be selected for some of this social housing because of that political opportunism.

What I am asking of the minister is a guarantee that he will do what he has committed to do — that is, ensuring that the projects he does fast-track and pull out as a result of appeals going to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal are still going to be good quality projects that protect the livability of the communities where those projects will be developed. I seek an assurance that he will set aside any partisan interest, any political benefit that may arise as a result of these large multistorey developments of social housing, where they may be perched in inappropriate sites, in electorates where a couple of hundred voters sympathetic to the Labor Party may give significant benefit at elections.

It is important not only that any development is good for those residents and provides open space but also that the amenity of the communities which are to be developed is protected.

Wattle Park: lone pine

Mr D. DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Environment and Climate Change. It concerns Wattle Park, an area of land administered by Parks Victoria and one of the minister's responsibilities. I will start to explain this by putting on the record that on the Sunday before Anzac Day I attended a very important ceremony and service at Wattle Park conducted by Tom Thorpe and addressed by a number of people, including Lieutenant Colonel David Ford, the former president of Melbourne

Legacy, life governor of the Shrine of Remembrance and member of the Victorian Veterans Council.

His speech was highly relevant on the day, but it dealt in particular with the lone pine at Wattle Park. Just to familiarise the chamber with the lone pine at Wattle Park, many members will know the story of the Lone Pine battle at Gallipoli — a very important piece of Anzac history. After Gallipoli there were two pine cones brought back to Australia, one or which was in the possession of Private McDowell who returned home and kept it in his possession for 13 years.

His family propagated that pine and five young seedlings were propagated. One was planted at the shrine, but the very first in Victoria and possibly the first pine planted in Australia was planted at Wattle Park, and that was planted on 7 May 1933 by the then mayor of Box Hill.

Unfortunately in 2006 the Wattle Park lone pine suffered some damage in a storm. It is now of course a very old tree but a significant tree to many veterans and those who celebrate the Gallipoli tradition and wish to ensure that that tradition is protected and fostered.

My point here is that there have been pines propagated from the same stock: a new one was planted at the shrine two or so years ago, and a new one has also been planted at Gallipoli to replace the one in trouble at the shrine.

I seek the minister's support and assistance to work with local historical groups, to work with Parks Victoria, including the Melbourne Tramways Band that has an affection for this tree, and local RSL groups and others to support the planting of a new pine of the same stock at an appropriate local ceremony and in an appropriate location near to where the current pine exists. I ask that he do that in a timely way to ensure that it is replaced before the current tree dies.

Responses

Mr JENNINGS (Minister for Environment and Climate Change) — I have 43 responses to various matters raised on the adjournment, ranging from 4 February 2008 to 2 April 2009, and for expediency's sake that list is being circulated to the chamber.

In relation to the matters that were raised this evening on the adjournment, Ms Lovell raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education seeking her support for Lockwood Primary School buying a property adjacent to the school.

Peter Hall raised a matter for the Treasurer, seeking the Treasurer's support of VicForests in allowing for the commercial availability of firewood in eastern Victoria.

Brian Tee raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport seeking her support for adding to access and availability of the park-and-ride service in Doncaster, an important part of the commuting experience of people in his electorate.

David Koch raised a matter for my attention. Interestingly enough I signed off an adjournment response to his leader today about exactly the same matter, as it turns out, so obviously the opposition is on message and united in wanting to make sure that Lake Connewarre is restored to better environmental outcomes and circumstances. I share the opposition's concern about trying to ensure that at the earliest opportunity greater environmental outcomes occur there, given the available water supply and within a restoration regime determined by local participation of community members and with the involvement of my ministerial colleague in the other place, who also happens to be the local member.

I can assure Mr Koch that his suggestion that the report may have been delayed for some political reason could not, from my vantage point, be further from the truth. In fact if there is a viable plan and that restoration of those values is determined in a way that provides us with confidence, it will move forward at the earliest opportunity.

Colleen Hartland raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport seeking her identification of the program to try to reduce the overcrowding on the suburban train network.

Bruce Atkinson raised a matter for the Attorney-General, and before he left the chamber Mr Atkinson and I had a private conversation in which I confirmed it was my belief that I had received a letter from Lauren Burns, the constituent he referred to. If my memory is correct, I have personally referred to the Attorney-General this matter on aspects of the committee stage of the assisted reproductive treatment legislation relating to the availability of information for people who may have been born through assisted reproductive technologies.

Damian Drum raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Health in relation to access to the Victorian infant hearing program, seeking early access to that service particularly within his region and with a general point about access to that service.

Philip Davis raised a matter for my attention, and even in the construction of his contribution, whilst he did

seek particular intervention by me, there was probably the implied assumption in the tail that it was exclusively my responsibility to fix the problem he raised. Going by the way he couched his matter, he probably realises there is a connectivity between what may be available to me in terms of my statutory or programmatic opportunities, which are limited to some extent by the involvement and interests of VicForests, which are not my responsibility. However, I am happy to play my role in remedying the situation the member refers to, and I will see whether other parts of government or government agencies, and specifically VicForests, are as amenable as I might be to remedy the situation.

Sue Pennicuik raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Racing seeking his intervention — in the context of his being the Minister for Racing, I believe — in relation to steeplechasing matters in Victoria.

John Vogels raised a matter for the Minister for Regional and Rural Development seeking her support for the Daylesford spa railway and seeking that she work with local communities to ensure the appropriate availability of that service.

Edward O'Donohue raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Planning, citing two examples of what he believes to be either longstanding or totally appropriate land uses within the green wedges that are not available, and he may provide the Minister for Planning with additional information to assist in trying to remedy that situation.

Andrea Coote very eloquently advocated on behalf of the Montessori preschool in Windsor, seeking the support of the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development in the relocation of that preschool in a timely fashion.

Bernie Finn raised a matter for the attention of the Premier, seeking his personal intervention in the international phenomenon that is known as rap music and what Mr Finn describes as the unfortunate subculture within rap that may support antisocial behaviour. He is seeking the Premier's involvement in calling a summit on the matter. I am sure the Premier will respond in an effusive fashion to Mr Finn's suggestion.

Jan Kronberg raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Local Government, seeking his support for grants that may be available to the Shire of Nillumbik, given the impact of the bushfires that may be borne by the community.

David Davis raised a matter for my attention. Even though his understanding of the history of pine plantings in the Victorian community may be a little bit different from mine, he nonetheless pointed to the significance of the pines that relate to the Battle of Lone Pine in World War I. Whilst it is probably not wise for environment ministers in the state of Victoria to say they are associated with pine planting, I will have a look at this issue, given its symbolism and significance.

I think the matter raised by Inga Peulich should be dispensed with this evening because what she has sought from the Minister for Planning is for him to act in accordance with his ministerial responsibility in relation to planning decisions. I confidently assert on behalf of the minister and the government that the minister will meet the preconditions Mrs Peulich seeks of the minister in making his determination on these matters.

Mrs Peulich — I have taken a point of order, President, in relation to the authority of the minister conducting the administrative proceedings of the adjournment to dispense the responsibilities of another minister serving this Parliament. I would appreciate it if he extended the same courtesy to this matter as he extended to all the others, and that is to undertake his administrative responsibility of referring the matter to the minister to ensure that those obligations are met.

I do not believe the minister is in a position to dispense with or to discharge the matter because he is not responsible to this Parliament on that matter; the Minister for Planning is.

The PRESIDENT — Order! This issue has been raised before, and the ruling at the time was that, whether or not people agree, the minister's capacity to dispense with a matter is a matter for the minister. That is consistent with our standing orders. I think, from memory, I suggested to members of the house that it was a matter for them to change those guidelines or standing orders, which they have the capacity to do. As far as I am aware, that has not happened. Therefore the previous ruling stands. The minister does have the capacity to dispense with the matter, and there is nothing I can do about it.

Mr D. Davis — On a different point of order, President, the matter of your ruling just at the moment has been discussed in the chamber a number of times. There are obviously different points of view, but the minister sought to discharge the matter by giving an undertaking on behalf of another minister. This is a different or separate point. I do not believe the minister can actually indicate what another minister will do. He

may helpfully indicate that he believes the other minister will or will not do something, but he is not able to give an undertaking on behalf of another minister.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I will refer to a previous ruling:

> The adjournment debate is similar to question time with ministers free to respond to matters raised in the manner they deem appropriate. The minister's response disposes of the matter.

There are numerous rulings going back to 1996 through to 2004 that say exactly that.

Mrs Peulich — Further on the point of order, President, my interpretation of that standing order is that the minister referred to there is the minister responsible for that particular responsibility in this chamber, not the minister who is merely serving an administrative duty to this chamber on behalf of the government. I believe it is an incorrect reading of the standing order. I would ask that you seek some advice in relation to that, because I believe it is curtailing the democratic rights of every member of Parliament to raise a matter, on behalf of their constituency, with the responsible minister. The minister has curtailed that right.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I do not accept the member's interpretation that her ability to raise a matter is curtailed. The fact is she has raised the matter and it has been dealt with in accordance with the standing orders. I reiterate that the minister's response disposes of that matter. Again I know there is a lot of conjecture about this and a lot of disagreement among members on my left. It is simply a matter for the house to change those standing orders.

I think I have said this before: I can only play with the hand I am dealt. I am of the view that the minister does have the capacity to dispose of the matter, and he has done so.

The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned 10.57 p.m.