

PROOF

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

DAILY HANSARD

Wednesday, 16 September 2009

**SUGGESTED CORRECTIONS FOR THE FINAL EDITION MUST BE NOTIFIED TO THE EDITOR (COUNCIL) BY
12 NOON — FRIDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER 2009**

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

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Dr S. O'Kane

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Mr DAMIAN DRUM

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Coote, Mrs Andrea	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Madden, Hon. Justin Mark	Western Metropolitan	ALP
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Darveniza, Ms Kaye Mary	Northern Victoria	ALP	O'Donohue, Mr Edward John	Eastern Victoria	LP
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Davis, Mr Philip Rivers	Eastern Victoria	LP	Pennicuik, Ms Susan Margaret	Southern Metropolitan	Greens
Drum, Mr Damian Kevin	Northern Victoria	Nats	Petrovich, Mrs Donna-Lee	Northern Victoria	LP
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Elasmr, Mr Nazih	Northern Metropolitan	ALP	Pulford, Ms Jaala Lee	Western Victoria	ALP
Finn, Mr Bernard Thomas C.	Western Metropolitan	LP	Rich-Phillips, Mr Gordon Kenneth	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Guy, Mr Matthew Jason	Northern Metropolitan	LP	Scheffer, Mr Johan Emiel	Eastern Victoria	ALP
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

CONTENTS

WEDNESDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 2009

PETITIONS

<i>Housing: Moorabbin</i>	1
<i>Planning: growth areas infrastructure contribution</i>	1

PAPER.....	1
------------	---

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

<i>Shire of Nillumbik: Recent Acquisitions 2009</i>	1
<i>John Cummins</i>	2
<i>Shire of Mitchell: buy local campaign</i>	2
<i>Government: performance</i>	2
<i>Women: Premier's summit</i>	2
<i>Cardinia Combined Churches Caring: Slog to Sale</i>	3
<i>Rail: Pakenham crossing</i>	3
<i>St Bridget's Primary School: Father's Day breakfast</i>	3
<i>Australian Football League: finals</i>	3
<i>Police: Bendigo</i>	3
<i>Ballarat: government initiatives</i>	4
<i>Mordialloc and Carrum electorates: government performance</i>	4
<i>Public transport: Seniors Week</i>	4

DISPUTE RESOLUTION COMMITTEE

<i>Planning Legislation Amendment Bill</i>	4
--	---

VICTORIAN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS AND MUSIC:

COURSES.....	12, 31, 37
--------------	------------

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

<i>Planning: City of Brimbank</i>	21
<i>Manufacturing: south-eastern suburbs</i>	22
<i>City of Brimbank: government grants</i>	22, 23
<i>Manufacturing: Sancell products</i>	24
<i>Information and communications technology: Satyam Computer Services</i>	25
<i>Economy: performance</i>	26
<i>Victorian Funds Management Corporation: chief executive officer</i>	27
<i>Planning: broiler farms code</i>	28
<i>Hazardous waste: Tullamarine</i>	28, 29
<i>Innovation: government initiatives</i>	30

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR.....	37
----------------------------	----

STREET VIOLENCE: GOVERNMENT RESPONSE.....	52
---	----

WATER: STORMWATER RECYCLING.....	74
----------------------------------	----

ALPINE RESORT AREAS REVIEW, ELECTRIC CARS, CARBON POLLUTION REDUCTION SCHEME, CROWN CASINO, CLEARWAYS and RENEWABLE ENERGY FEED-IN TARIFFS: PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS.....	84
--	----

PLANNING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

(No. 2)

<i>Introduction</i>	92
---------------------------	----

VICTORIAN RENEWABLE ENERGY AMENDMENT BILL

<i>Introduction and first reading</i>	92
---	----

VALUATION OF LAND AMENDMENT BILL

<i>Introduction and first reading</i>	92
---	----

ADJOURNMENT

<i>Child care: regulations</i>	92
<i>Gaming: Echuca Workers and Services Club</i>	93
<i>Asbestos: reporting</i>	93
<i>Mental health and community services: western Victoria</i>	94
<i>Mount Martha: beach renourishment</i>	95
<i>Consumer affairs: residential parks</i>	95
<i>Youth: hospitality industry training</i>	95
<i>Burke Road North–Lower Heidelberg Road, Ivanhoe East: pedestrian crossing</i>	96
<i>Shire of Pyrenees: suicide intervention program</i>	96
<i>Small business: defence submission</i>	97
<i>Medical practitioners: regional and rural Victoria</i>	97
<i>Responses</i>	98

09:30

Wednesday, 16 September 2009

The PRESIDENT (Hon. R. F. Smith) took the chair at 9.34 a.m. and read the prayer.

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Housing: Moorabbin

The petition of certain citizens strongly opposes the decision to build a seven-storey development at the back of the Kingston town hall and draws to the attention of the Legislative Council that this federally funded and state 'fast-tracked' social affordable housing-public housing development accommodating 150 to 200 people notes:

1. that the seven-storey public housing development would be a gross overdevelopment of the site which already suffers from a chronic shortage of car parking;
2. the site is not suited to public housing where families and children would have minimal open space and be sandwiched between the danger of the Moorabbin railway line and congested Nepean Highway and South Road;
3. that this development undermines the viability of the heritage listed and well utilised Moorabbin-Kingston town hall and the Kingston Arts Centre, and limits the future potential of the Moorabbin station precinct which should be redeveloped into a modern, subregional transport facility, with greater park-and-ride facilities and mixed-use shops to strengthen Moorabbin's commercial future.

The petitioners call on Premier John Brumby and the state and federal governments to immediately suspend this project to identify a more suitable site and to prevent an act of planning vandalism.

By Mr D. DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (151 signatures).

Laid on table.

Planning: growth areas infrastructure contribution

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 concerns of the local community that the proposed growth areas infrastructure contribution of \$80 000 per hectare for land brought into the urban growth boundary (UGB) in 2005 and \$95 000 per hectare for land brought into the boundary in or after 2009 is a grossly unfair tax.

Imposing this tax at a flat rate per hectare on the first property transaction places an unfair burden on landowners as it does not take into account differing property values, development potential or the nature of the property transaction.

Your petitioners therefore request that the state government immediately withdraw the proposed tax in its current form and consults further with affected landowners to create a fairer outcome.

By Mrs PETROVICH (Northern Victoria) (378 signatures).

Laid on table.

PAPER

Laid on table by Clerk:

Ombudsman's Office — Report, 2008–09.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Shire of Nillumbik: *Recent Acquisitions 2009*

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) — The Shire of Nillumbik is to be congratulated on its current exhibition *Recent Acquisitions 2009*. Those behind such an event deserve special mention, especially the curator Delsha Rees and her team. Members of the arts community of Nillumbik were warmly welcomed by the mayor, Cr Bo Bendtsen.

Because of Nillumbik's history as a district renowned for its rich tapestry of artist colonies and the vibrancy of its artistic community, the art of Nillumbik has long been of special significance in the state. *Recent Acquisitions 2009* exemplifies the range and depth of artistic talent that has flourished in the area for many decades. Preservation of the body of works for future generations is uppermost in the thinking of those responsible for the collection.

The collection features many works of historical significance to the area, thus providing important points of reference and inspiration while forging important links between Nillumbik's arts heritage and the artists of today.

Deborah Halpern, one of Melbourne's renowned sculptors, formally opened the exhibition. Those of us present were treated to her recollections and fascinating account of the history of Potter's Cottage, which was founded by her parents, Sylvia and Arthur Halpern.

As the patron of the Araluen Centre's arts program Art Connects I was particularly delighted to see the works of John Alexopoulos, a long-term client of the Araluen hanging in such an august collection, woven as it is into the very fabric of Eltham. The works of Elsa Arden, Gus McLaren, David and Joan Armfield, Harold

09:35

09:40

Hughan and Gail Nichols, to name but a few, continue to inspire today's artists.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The member's time has expired.

John Cummins

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — John Cummins was a friend of mine and of my husband, Victor. He was an outspoken trade unionist whose main concern was the welfare and safety of members of the then Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) and the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union. However, he was more than a trade unionist; he was a dad and a husband.

John died three years ago of a brain tumour. Along with 3000 people I attended his funeral and was struck by a story his son told of how John helped train his junior football team. This would have been during the time of the deregistration of the BLF by the then Cain government. He would have been working 14 hour days and he was jailed several times, but he made sure he had time for his kids.

John's spirit lives on in the memorial fund that last year raised \$105 000 for Austin Health; \$22 500 for medical equipment for Melbourne City Mission; \$17 000 for 22 scholarships for high school students; and \$6000 for the North Heidelberg junior football club so that 60 kids could get to play in a football team.

John is missed by many people. He will never be forgotten.

09:45

Shire of Mitchell: buy local campaign

Ms BROAD (Northern Victoria) — Last Monday in Wandong, together with Cr Bill Melbourne, the mayor of Mitchell shire, I was very pleased to launch a campaign which asks people to shop locally. I am very pleased that the Brumby Labor government has been able to provide a \$10 000 grant to Mitchell shire to support this very important campaign. Members will recall that the February bushfires devastated some 78 communities and thousands of farms and businesses and local traders were affected, many of them in Mitchell shire. The Brumby Labor government has responded immediately by providing funding, including a \$51 million business assistance package to help small businesses and farmers to recover.

Today I congratulate Mitchell shire council for coming up with a buy local campaign to encourage people to shop locally and help the bushfire recovery effort, which is ongoing. I also congratulate the 56 sponsors of

the campaign. Families in large and small towns across Mitchell shire can return the support that local businesses provided to these communities by shopping locally. I certainly encourage people to do so and to pick up a bright yellow reusable shopping bag, 10 000 of which are available as part of the campaign.

Government: performance

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — This Friday we will commemorate 10 years of Labor government in Victoria. I say 'commemorate' and not 'celebrate' because we in the west of Melbourne will not be celebrating 10 miserable, dark years of Labor government. Labor promised much to the west when it was elected 10 years ago, but it has delivered very little — one only has to look at the freeways and the West Gate Bridge, every day in gridlock, with the bridge groaning under increasing traffic, and the government doing nothing about it. Public transport is a farce. It is unreliable, with commuters being crammed onto trains like cattle. The only thing missing is the fat Japanese bloke pushing them on at the stations.

In many cases health services in the west are third class and would not be tolerated in the eastern or southern suburbs. The Labor Party is still using and abusing local government. The Brimbank scandal is just the tip of the iceberg, and it still took 10 years — a decade! — to do something about it. Some 10 years on Labor still regards the people in the west as idiots who will vote ALP come what may. I can assure this house that we in the west will no longer put up with the duds dumped on us from the other side of Melbourne. The people in the west are waking up to what the ALP is doing to them, and we will not put up with it any more.

Women: Premier's summit

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to congratulate Premier John Brumby and the Minister for Women's Affairs, Maxine Morand, on another successful annual Premiers Women's Summit, which was held on 8 September. I was pleased to attend this year's summit, which focused on women's leadership in the workforce. I congratulate the government on its policy of aiming for 50 per cent of all appointments to government boards and committees to be women. We are making great progress with regard to women holding leadership positions on government boards. One of the largest government bodies, the Victorian WorkCover Authority, is chaired by Elana Rubin.

By way of comparison, it is surprising to me that in this day and age, with 46 per cent of women in the workforce and a high number of graduates being

women, the numbers of women represented at board director level in the private sector decreased from 129 in 2006 to 125 in 2008, a woeful 8.3 per cent. Recently on Equal Pay Day the Minister for Women's Affairs, Maxine Morand, sought to encourage community debate on this issue. Such debate should be encouraged, as is greater recognition of the benefits presented to organisations when women participate in leadership roles. Evidence from Australia and overseas has found that those companies with the highest representation of female managers had a 34 per cent higher return to shareholders. Last sitting week I was disappointed to hear that Mr Rich-Phillips has such a myopic view of the appointment of women to board positions. I support this government's policy to break down barriers and encourage equal opportunity for everyone.

Greythorn for its Father's Day breakfast event, which I attended along with my Eastern Metropolitan Region colleague Mr Bruce Atkinson a couple of Friday mornings ago. This is an annual event that St Bridget's primary school puts on, usually with some guest speakers. A couple of guest speakers this year concentrated on the theme of the importance of fathers not only to their own children but also to other young people in the community and the importance of embracing them. It was great to see so many fathers with their children at this event.

Australian Football League: finals

Mr LEANE — I am sure that everyone in the chamber is very pleased to see that the remaining Australian Football League football clubs are all from Victoria. I am sure we are all very proud of that fact and the fact that a Victorian club will win the premiership this year. I would like to congratulate all the remaining clubs and wish all luck to the Collingwood Football Club.

Police: Bendigo

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — These Victorian-centric people who do not understand that it is the Australian Football League should wake up and come into the 21st century.

However, we need to focus on police numbers in Bendigo at the moment. If we were to listen to the Labor Party, we would believe that there has been some gradation of increased police numbers in regional Victoria, but this is clearly not the case. Bendigo Trades Hall Council secretary Karen Kyle has come out and effectively said that the problem associated with police numbers in Bendigo is a problem of Bendigo police and their problem alone. She has been quoted as saying that Bendigo police are lazy, that any anger 'ought to be directed squarely at Bendigo police' and no-one else, that we should certainly not be blaming her friend Bob Cameron, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and that we should not be blaming the Brumby government.

These comments have been rebuked very roundly by Bendigo police officers themselves, who quite simply have commented that they are putting in unparalleled, unpaid time as never before. They are giving up their own time to complete reports and to be at the station doing work they simply do not have time to do when they are on duty. Apart from being assaulted when they go out on the streets, they are underresourced, and they need this government to fix up that resourcing problem

09:50 **Cardinia Combined Churches Caring: Slog to Sale**

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I wish to make a statement in relation to the Cardinia Combined Churches Caring, otherwise known as 4Cs. It does a great job for those who suffer disadvantage in the shire of Cardinia, and unfortunately demand for its services is increasing exponentially. It receives no government assistance, and it relies broadly on the goodwill of the community — on people giving their time and donating food and money.

Shortly the Slog to Sale — the bike ride from Pakenham to Sale, which raises funds on behalf of 4Cs — will take place, and I wish all those taking part in this worthy endeavour all the best. I hope they all make it safe and sound and that they can raise a lot of money for this magnificent organisation. It is very sad that in a growing outer suburban metropolitan area such as the growth corridor of the shire of Cardinia people are going without food and sleeping in their cars, as they are often homeless. This is a very sad situation in what is otherwise an affluent society.

Rail: Pakenham crossing

Mr O'DONOHUE — I call on the Minister for Public Transport to expedite the construction of the crossing at the western side of McGregor Road, and I ask her to personally intervene to expedite this critical safety project. I also wish Collingwood the best for the game this Saturday.

St Bridget's Primary School: Father's Day breakfast

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I would like to congratulate St Bridget's Primary School in

so that Bendigo police can effectively have the numbers they need to police Bendigo.

09:55

Ballarat: government initiatives

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — On Friday of last week I was pleased to be able to inspect a handful of the more than 200 infrastructure projects that are currently under way in the Ballarat region as a consequence of the federal government's economic stimulus activities. Tony Canavan, the Victorian coordinator-general for the economic stimulus package, has a big job ahead of him to ensure that all the projects identified for economic stimulus are undertaken in the time frame determined by the federal government.

We had an opportunity to visit Gordon Primary School to see the refurbishment of classrooms; a level crossing upgrade project at Wallace Road in Bungaree; improvements to social housing in the form of renovations and interior improvements in Walker Street, Ballarat; the construction of a new multipurpose centre at Mount Pleasant Primary School; and the construction of a new multipurpose centre at Delacombe Primary School. It was a great opportunity to meet with some of the people who will enjoy the benefits the package will bring to the local community.

Mordialloc and Carrum electorates: government performance

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — It has been a stalled and disappointing decade of state Labor government for the Mordialloc and Carrum electorates, and the report card for the Brumby government is that it has been lacklustre and, in fact, coasting. As a result of its mismanagement of key policies, including those in water, gaming, environment, planning, health, transport and, of course, law and order, the Brumby government has caused the Kingston community to experience crisis after crisis. In 1999 the Bracks opposition told the Kingston community that Labor recognised that providing community safety was one of the greatest duties of government in a civilised society and that only Labor would cut crime, as part of its community safety policy.

Ten years later we have had a 23 per cent increase in overall crime in Kingston, and a 33.9 per cent increase in assaults. Melbourne Water has failed in its obligation to maintain the water quality of Patterson Lakes, and the eastern treatment plant remains fairly dysfunctional in terms of its commitments and potential. Transport is appalling, with delays and cancellations on the Frankston rail line. The Dingley arterial and the Mornington Peninsula freeway extension were both

promised to be finished by 2009, but basically that was a blatant lie. The decision to issue a 15-year permit for a concrete crusher in Clarinda is deplorable. The Monash Medical Centre has seen a 157 per cent increase in the category 2 semi-urgent waiting list. The neglect cannot be addressed by glossy brochures, government propaganda or slick community cabinet visits.

Public transport: Seniors Week

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — Next month Victoria will celebrate Seniors Week with the Victorian Seniors Festival, which will involve some 1000 free and low-cost events across metropolitan Melbourne. It is really a celebration of the contribution that older people have made to our community in building up our community and the infrastructure which we currently enjoy. To acknowledge and support this outstanding contribution, the Victorian government is providing eight days of free transport for seniors, and I am very pleased about that. Between 4 October and 11 October all metropolitan public transport will be free for Seniors Card holders.

In Melbourne's east more than one-quarter of the community is over 55. As remaining active as we get older is incredibly important for both mental and physical health and wellbeing, I encourage all senior residents to take advantage of the free public transport and to explore the wonderful events at the festival, and indeed all that Melbourne and Victoria can offer. I thank the Victorian government for its generous support for this wonderful event, I welcome the initiative, and I am sure the festival will be a great success.

10:00

DISPUTE RESOLUTION COMMITTEE

Planning Legislation Amendment Bill

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

That there be laid before this house a copy of a report by a number of members of the Dispute Resolution Committee of the Victorian Parliament to the Legislative Council.

Yesterday there was wide discussion in this chamber as part of the debate on the take-note motion on the dispute resolution document that was tabled. Many of the issues that this report deals with were canvassed in that discussion. The resolution of the chamber on 2 September 2009 was:

That this house believes that as much of the proceedings of the Dispute Resolution Committee as possible should be conducted in a way that is transparent to both chambers of the Victorian Parliament and to the Victorian community and that

regular reports, including interim reports of the deliberations of the committee, be made public.

The report that Mr Hall and I seek to table is pursuant to that and is consistent with section 65B of the Constitution Act of Victoria. We make a number of points, most of which were made in the chamber yesterday in the debate on the take-note motion. There are matters of substance around dispute resolution in terms of policy, and serious matters of process and constitutional issues are highlighted. I believe that over time the Victorian community will need to deal with the constitutional issues that surround this section of the constitution dealing with dispute resolution between the houses.

As I have said in this chamber before, on the evidence, when the bill was rammed through by Labor in the last Parliament very little discussion or debate in the chambers was devoted to the dispute and deadlock provisions of the constitution. That happened, the election has taken place and the shape of the houses is as it is, but the Dispute Resolution Committee is a wholly unsatisfactory device in the way it functions, and the constitution will ultimately need to deal with the secrecy provisions in some coherent way. However, pursuant to that and consistent with the constitution, I seek to table this report that gives a clear description to the house of my views and those of Mr Hall.

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — I support Mr Davis and Mr Hall on the tabling of the report which may be viewed as a minority report even though there was not a report put forward by the government from the Dispute Resolution Committee. As I mentioned yesterday, that should have happened for the benefit of the Parliament and the people of Victoria. All we got was a very brief explanation of the resolution and the proposed amendments to the supposedly new Planning Amendment Bill (No. 2). As I mentioned yesterday, it is very unclear whether presentation of a bill so-called is in compliance with the constitution.

I agree with the sentiments that were expressed by Mr Davis yesterday regarding the unsatisfactory nature of the conduct of the Dispute Resolution Committee. My view is that section 65 is unclear, confusing, has serious constitutional problems and should be repealed. Members of the Labor Party may say they brought in legislation to reform the upper house and improve democracy, but that is completely undermined by the undemocratic nature of section 65. I support Mr Davis and Mr Hall in tabling their report, and I support the content of the report but, as I stated yesterday, I differ

from the coalition in that I do not support the resolution that was put forward by that committee.

Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria) — The government's concern on this is that it is somewhat of an ambush.

We are being asked to vote for a motion to enable a report by a number of members of the Dispute Resolution Committee to be tabled in this chamber without knowing what it is essentially about. Mr Davis has not come to anyone in the government to explain this resolution, to talk to us about what is in the report that he wants tabled. The government's concern is that the constitution — — 10:05

Mr D. Davis interjected.

Mr VINEY — I do not know what it is, Mr Davis. Mr Davis has not given us the courtesy of letting us know what it is. The government's concern is that there are elements of the constitution that specify that the deliberations of the Dispute Resolution Committee should be held in private. The deliberations of every select committee I have served on have been held in private and the deliberative meetings of every joint parliamentary committee are held in private. In terms of parliamentary practice, then, that the deliberations of the Dispute Resolution Committee are held in private is no surprise; it is not any great development in parliamentary practice.

My understanding is that the Dispute Resolution Committee adopted the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly in relation to any select committee it might set up, where its own decisions are silenced. My understanding is that those standing orders would suggest that the deliberative meetings of the Dispute Resolution Committee should be held in private.

The dilemma that we as a government have is that if we were to support this motion and allow the tabling of a report it could potentially be in breach of the constitution. Then we end up with a constitutional problem in terms of how that might be resolved. Government members have a real difficulty with supporting this motion at this point, basically because we are being asked to support something without knowing what will ultimately be tabled in the chamber.

I do not know how we get around this. We are not taking a view to oppose this outright, because we just do not have any idea where this is headed. We should be avoiding, if we can, a conflict with the requirements of the constitution, and we should be recognising the fact that there are good sense reasons why the deliberative reasons of the Dispute Resolution

Committee might be held in public. In particular, just as all of us sit down from time to time as parties or as representatives of parties or groups in this chamber where no party has a majority and try to nut out a solution to different perspectives we might have prior to coming into the chamber, to my knowledge — and with due respect to everyone involved in this chamber in those discussions — those discussions to try to solve a problem are almost always kept private. That is what happens when we sit down with one another before we walk in here to try to sort out a difference of view that we might have on something. That is a good thing and it is essentially what makes the Parliament workable, that people are able to sit down, have a talk and see whether we can work through differences of opinion. Sometimes we find solutions; sometimes we do not. Sometimes to find a solution the house divides and one side or the other wins. That is the parliamentary side of what happens in the chamber, but trying to solve problems sometimes involves people sitting down to try to nut out the differences.

10:10 It becomes impossible to nut those differences out if those discussions become public, because then all of the posturing and responding to particular stakeholder interest groups and so on becomes public. Then it becomes much more difficult for people to compromise and for people on all sides of politics to concede their position.

The dispute committee exists as a mechanism to try to resolve a clear difference that has arisen in the Parliament and to try to find a resolution. Just as when we sit down as members of Parliament outside of this chamber and try to nut out a difference — on the understanding that it is Chatham House rules, that we are going to have a discussion and it will be between us — the same sort of principle applies in terms of the dispute resolution process. The committee tries to resolve the differences and get to a common-sense resolution without members having to compromise their position in front of stakeholder interests.

The important thing is that the resolution but not the private discussions that take place get to be reported to the Parliament. The alternative, if you are going to make the dispute committee deliberations public, is that those discussions will happen before the dispute committee sits down and talks formally. These are the things that happen in politics.

If Mr Davis's motion is about in any way breaching the constitution, then we have obviously got a serious problem with it, but we are not in a position to make that decision because no discussion has been had. I do not want to have revealed to me the processes that took

place in the dispute committee, but there is nothing to stop Mr Davis talking with Mr Jennings, the Deputy Leader of the Government, who I understand is a member of the Dispute Resolution Committee, and saying to him, 'This is what we want to put into the minority report that we want to table in Parliament'. Mr Davis could have had that discussion before today and tried to work through those issues. But to ask the house to support a resolution before it to allow the tabling of a document that could potentially breach the provisions of the constitution, without having given us the courtesy of at least knowing what is in it, is a bit difficult.

I intend to move that debate on this matter be adjourned for one week. In so moving I propose that an opportunity be provided to Mr Davis to have those discussions and to allow the government some time to consider whether or not it is appropriate for such a report to be tabled in this house. I move:

That debate on this matter be adjourned for one week.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The question now before the house is that debate on this matter be adjourned for one week. This is a procedural motion and there is a 30-minute time limit.

Mr D. DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — The opposition will be opposing the government's procedural motion to delay the tabling of this report. It is important that reports on the dispute committee are able to be tabled proximate to the tabling of dispute resolution documents — indeed, as I have pointed out, even if an interim report was required. We believe this is an unnecessary delay and the opposition opposes that.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Minister for Industry and Trade) — I rise to support Mr Viney's motion and to express my disappointment at Mr Davis's unwillingness to support it. He might describe it as a delay which is unnecessary but I think it could also be characterised as a delay which does no harm.

Mr D. Davis — No, it does.

10:15

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — No, it does no harm, because it allows two very important concepts to be considered. Firstly, Mr Viney raised in his contribution the possibility that Mr Davis's motion may be a breach of the constitution. I think it is not unreasonable at all for the government and indeed all members of this chamber to take soundings on that matter — given that we have had no notice of it — and to ascertain whether or not our agreeing to this motion would involve a breach of the constitution.

Secondly, I think a delay for one week would allow members to reflect carefully on whether or not this is a road we as a Parliament want to go down. I think it is an important issue, because this is yet another step down the road of delegitimising the normal behaviours and practices of politics.

We are all robust people. We come into this Parliament and put robust views on the record, but everybody knows that behind that robustness, a range of discussions and conversations go on all the time. In those conversations members seek to find compromises and walk back from their sometimes vigorously stated positions in order to find a way through an impasse. Once their position is on the record, if the negotiations to try and find a compromise are equally put on the record, then politicians will by definition be far more reluctant to engage in those conversations and negotiations to try to find a way through, to try to compromise, to try to see each other's point of view and perhaps finally ending at a position which might be different to that which they have stated on the record, if they are going to be shown to have been putting two different points of view in two different forums. That is what happens all the time. Everybody knows it: Mr Drum knows it and Mr Davis knows it.

We put our position on the record in the Parliament. We argue vigorously for it, but sometimes in order to reach an accommodation, particularly in a chamber such as this where no party has a majority, we need to get in and have some serious discussions, negotiations and compromise. That process should not in itself be compromised by members of this house being at risk of having contradictory positions on the record.

If Mr Davis's motion is passed, it will inhibit the willingness of members of this chamber to negotiate in a full, frank and open way. It will inhibit the willingness of members of this chamber to deal in an honest and open way with their counterparts across the aisle if all the records of those negotiations are possibly going to be put on the public record.

It would be no different to any other form of negotiations. When negotiations are carried out by parties, whether it be in relation to business, industrial negotiations or any other type of negotiation, the outcome — not all of the positions that the parties have adopted throughout the negotiations — is what is recorded. What is ultimately recorded is the outcome: where you get to.

It is no good saying, 'This is where we got to but nudge, nudge, wink, wink; we would like everyone to know that what we really argued for during the

negotiation process was this' because that is a dishonest way to negotiate. When you negotiate and reach a compromise, what matters is where you end up. The resolution of the Dispute Resolution Committee is that result. All of the other negotiations that carry on throughout the process do not need to be on the public record.

I think this motion puts all of that at risk. It will inhibit members of Parliament. There is no reason why Mr Viney's motion delaying Mr Davis's motion should not be accepted; that would give all members of Parliament the chance to reflect on this motion.

Mr HALL (Eastern Victoria) — I rise to speak against Mr Viney's motion to defer debate on the tabling of this report for one week and to support the motion moved by Mr Davis. I want to make a couple of comments on what Mr Viney said. Firstly, he has described this report as a minority report; it is not a minority report. The report of the committee was tabled yesterday in full; it was not accompanied by any minority reports. This is a report by two members of the committee containing further deliberations and comments in respect of the process involved which led to the report and conclusions of the committee.

10:20

It seems to me that the government is mainly opposing this motion, which simply seeks to table the report, because it has been caught by surprise. It is taking offence at the fact that a committee report has been brought into the house today with the government having no knowledge of its contents. I say to the government that that happens every day in the weeks when Parliament sits. Various committee reports are brought in here as part of the procedures, and there is a slot in the program of the day for the tabling of those reports. If you are a member of the committee tabling a report, you will have some knowledge of the report's contents. If you are not a member of that committee, you will have no knowledge of the contents. It is a normal procedure whereby committees of the Parliament are able to report to the Parliament without all other members having knowledge of the contents of those reports. In that respect this report is no different.

The government has also expressed some concern that this report may contravene provisions in the constitution which require the committee to meet in private. It is true that the committee is required to meet in private, and I said yesterday when we took note of the committee's report that I believed that all members of the committee observed that privacy. But I also make the point in respect of privacy that the deliberations of the committee were not undertaken just by members of that committee. The committee required and asked

other members of the Parliament — public servants and ministerial staff were involved as well — to negotiate, to talk and to try to reach some compromise in respect of the position of the bill before the committee. It was not just members of the committee who discussed the bill and sought an outcome from the committee, it was also people other than committee members — other members of Parliament, ministerial staff and public servants. That raises a whole issue about privacy, and if the government wants to clarify something, maybe it would be better to clarify the issue about the committee meeting in private and whether we can incorporate external views from members other than those on the committee. I respond in that way to the point Mr Viney made about the issue of privacy.

Finally, I want to say that this is just a simple motion which seeks to formally table the views of Mr Davis and me in respect of the process that has occurred with the Dispute Resolution Committee. It is not an ambush on the government, and indeed the government would have the ability beyond the debate on the tabling of this report to formally give a notice of motion that on the next day of meeting the house will take further note of the report or discuss this particular item of business. To defer a motion which simply seeks to table a report that puts on the public record the views of two members of the Dispute Resolution Committee is absurd. I do not think deferring comment on this is logical. It is simply the tabling of a report. Members can go away and read that report; it can be brought back to the house in the next sitting week if they want to have further debate, and we can have the debate then. There is no reason to defer debate on this motion any further. The report should be tabled so that all members and indeed the public can have an opportunity to read it in the fullness of time and give full consideration to the views expressed by Mr Davis and me in it.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS (Northern Metropolitan) — I would like to make a few comments in support of Mr Viney's motion. This is an issue to which members ought to give great consideration before they rush in and allow the tabling of this report to take place in the way that is being suggested. Members should bear in mind that there was a report and a take-note motion moved in the house yesterday. Both of the members who produced the report before us today — we will not call it a minority report; we will just call it a report — were at liberty to get up and put their argument on the Hansard record. They could have virtually read out the minority report or whatever report it is they want to now put on the record; they could have done it in debate yesterday during the take-note motion.

Mr Barber — What is the difference?

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — There is a significant difference. A committee has been established under the terms of our constitution. That particular committee does not have the ability to produce minority reports, so a minority report was not produced in relation to the particular report that was debated yesterday in the house. This is a backdoor method to try to put before the house a report which was not done in the normal course of events. What normally happens in the house is that there is a report produced, and if someone wants to do a minority report, that report is attached to the main report and that is how it is debated in the house.

This is a completely independent process, and it has been pointed out that it is not a minority report. It is just two members of Parliament deciding to come in and produce a report and then wanting to table that report. That would give it the imprimatur of somehow being a report of the Parliament. If that were to be the case, it would open up a significant new way of doing business in this house whereby any two members — in fact any member or any person — would be able to go, without any process attached to it — —

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — Hang on. Just listen for a moment, because you are going into a very delicate area. Remember, there is no commission from the Parliament to produce a report. This is the important difference. 10:27

Mr D. Davis — Yes, there is.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — There was actually no commission for the two members to produce a minority report, and, because there was no commission, what we are saying is that anyone could go off and produce a report. I could come in tomorrow with my own report and say, 'I want to table this report as an official report on the Ombudsman. I have a few things I would like to say about him!'. It is possible for anyone to simply produce a report, but it is different when the Parliament says, 'We want to establish a committee', and we send that committee off with the task of producing a report and bringing it back to the house. Then there is a process associated with it.

This is a new and potentially very dangerous set of circumstances that members are moving into, and I urge them to consider this idea carefully. Beyond that, the delay of a week, as Mr Viney has proposed — —

Mr Drum interjected.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — That is just not true.

Mr Drum — It picks up a defeated bill.

Hon. T. C. THEOPHANOUS — It is just not true. What we are talking about here is delaying for a week debate on Mr David Davis's motion to allow people to consider these very important issues about how to deal with this kind of thing in the future. It is a very sensible motion that Mr Viney has moved. He is not seeking to rule out the motion; he is seeking a week's delay in the debate on the motion to allow the parties — the Liberal Party, the Labor Party, the Greens and anyone else who wants to — to have a discussion about this and to think about whether in the future we want to use this process to have these kinds of minority reports brought up. I urge people to reflect on what Mr Viney has proposed. He has not proposed that Mr Davis's motion be ruled out, but that debate on it be deferred for a week. Let us consider how this should be done in the future, let us get some advice from the clerks and let us think about a new process that may actually deliver something useful in the future that we could all use, if that is the way we want to go. Let us not do it in this ad hoc way that has been proposed by Mr Davis, simply because it is politically expedient.

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

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — I would like to speak against the motion moved by Mr Viney. As I think Mr Hall said succinctly, the two aspects of Mr Viney's reason for moving his motion are that the government has been caught by surprise and that the Dispute Resolution Committee must meet in private under the constitution. What we are talking about here is a motion to table a report.

The processes that the Dispute Resolution Committee operates under are in fact not laid out anywhere, and it is for this chamber to decide how it deals with anything that comes from the committee. It should be no surprise that an attempt is being made to table a report by two members of the committee about that committee. It was open to the government yesterday to table a comprehensive report of the committee for the chambers and the people of Victoria, but it chose not to do so. It chose to table just its dispute resolution, with the briefest of explanations from the minister, another member of the committee, about what that resolution meant.

As I alluded to yesterday in the debate on the motion to take note of the dispute resolution, privacy was already

breached in the operation of the committee. That motion was totally appropriate. It was appropriate that the government move the take-note motion; it should have done so. However, it did not provide the community with a report of the outcome of the committee's deliberations or the context in which the committee operated. As I mentioned yesterday in the debate on the take-note motion, the committee did not operate in private, so it is not appropriate for the government to use the notion of privacy as a defence against this motion to simply table a report. That is all that is being sought here, and it is important that members of Parliament and the community be able to view that report.

Members in the other chamber are now debating the new bill that has come out of that dispute resolution, and the Parliament and the community need to understand the context in which the resolution that gave rise to that new bill came about. I am presuming that that is what is in this report that Mr Hall and Mr David Davis are seeking to table today, because Mr Davis mentioned that it goes to the issues that were raised yesterday.

Mr Theophanous said there is no capacity to table a minority report. There is no capacity not to, either. The way this committee operates and reports to the Parliament is completely a matter for us to decide; we can set the precedent.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — So we can all do whatever we want to do, unless there is a rule saying we cannot — that is the logic?

Ms PENNICUIK — I take the point that we are setting a precedent here on what happens in the committee. It follows the successful motion last week that the operations and proceedings of the committee should be public and as open and transparent as possible. That motion was carried with the agreement of the government.

That is all that is happening here: an attempt is being made to table a report on the proceedings of the committee being open and transparent for the Parliament and the people of Victoria. The tabling has to be done by opposition members of the committee because the government has done nothing about that. It has not sought to table a report on the operations of the committee for the benefit of the Parliament or the people of Victoria. The responsibility for doing so falls upon members of the opposition, so that when the new bill is being debated people have the full information before them — because the government has not

provided the Parliament or the people of Victoria with the full information, and they certainly need that.

We are setting a precedent here. It is well within the rights of this chamber to set precedents on how it will operate. I would like to conclude my contribution in opposing Mr Viney's motion to defer debate on this matter by supporting Mr Hall's remarks, that the government can move a take-note motion on this report if it wishes. I repeat my earlier statement that section 65 should be repealed.

Mr ATKINSON (Eastern Metropolitan) — I must confess I am a little confused. This is the government that talks about open and transparent government, is it not? Is this not the government that has a boast about open and transparent government? Is this not a government that boasts about having introduced proportional representation in the Legislative Council, thereby giving this house an opportunity to better scrutinise government and legislation?

It is absolutely ludicrous that the government opposes this particular position. I think the Dispute Resolution Committee process is an absolute travesty. It has thwarted the constitutional rights of this house, it has stifled or sought to stifle debate in front of the public, and it has sought to try to reduce the government's legislative ambitions to backroom deals and bullying tactics because it happens to have the requisite numbers on committees to force its position.

Mr Viney — On a point of order, Mr Acting President, we are actually debating a deferral motion, not the substantive motion. We are debating a motion moved by me to defer debate on the matter for one week, not the substantive motion of Mr David Davis.

Mrs Peulich — On a further point of order, Mr Acting President, Mr Atkinson was merely setting this particular motion in the context of what was a very little known fact in the constitution that enabled a bill which was defeated in this chamber to be resurrected by secret process, and I think that context is very relevant.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmarr) — Order! There is no point of order. I understand Mr Viney had a point of order, and I ask Mr Atkinson to discuss only the adjournment of debate on this motion, not the substantive motion itself.

Mr ATKINSON — It is all relevant, because the reality is that — —

Mr Jennings — You are not disputing the Chair's ruling, are you?

Mr ATKINSON — I am telling you it is all relevant, because the reality is that this is again about a government seeking a deferral of time — —

Mr Jennings — I think you take the Chair pretty seriously, do you not?

Mr ATKINSON — I think this is all about the government seeking a deferral of debate on the matter for one week so that it can find another way to get around this motion and around tabling a report to this house and the people of Victoria about a process which has been an attempt by this government to actually stifle debate on legislation.

This is not about commercial in confidence; this is not about anything other than legislation and the processes of this place. The Dispute Resolution Committee has been established by this government to compromise the house's ability to scrutinise government and legislation. 10:37

Members of this house have a right to bring any matters of public importance before it. There is a clear need for the house to examine the consequences of the Dispute Resolution Committee and to understand its processes, how it arrives at decisions; it is more than appropriate that members do that — and do it at the earliest opportunity.

The motion to adjourn debate, as moved by Mr Viney, is simply an attempt by the government to prevent debate taking place on this notice of motion so that it can go away and find some other way to circumvent the rights of this house.

Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria) — I do not know how many times I have been verbally in this chamber, but again today I have been verbally. The government is not trying to stifle debate, and my point has been proven by this debate on my motion to adjourn debate.

My point is that if deliberations of the Dispute Resolution Committee are in the public arena, then the public posturing that members take makes it impossible to compromise. We have had more public posturing from the Greens today who yet again are taking the opportunity to side with their coalition partners, the Liberal Party, with which party they vote 77 per cent of the time; and they are doing it yet again today. Public posturing by the Greens is refusing to allow compromise on a sensible and simple proposition that I am putting.

The government is not saying it is shocked and surprised; it is saying this is an ambush. Mr David Davis's moving his motion today to allow a minority report of the committee to be tabled, potentially in

breach of the constitution of Victoria, amounts to an ambush.

All I am asking is that there be a delay of one week so a discussion can occur between Mr Davis and Mr Jennings as to what might be in that report. The house has heard more from Mr Hall's contribution about what might be in that report than it knew before.

I am asking the house to defer the debate on Mr Davis's motion for one week, to allow discussion and some common sense, as both Mr Pakula and Mr Theophanous have correctly pointed out.

report, which I have moved should be tabled, is in direct response to that. An important principle is to be established in being able to table that sort of report. This is an important step in transparency.

As we move forward with potentially further examples of these dispute resolutions, it may well offer an opportunity for members to make more timely reports and to involve thereby other members of the chamber. Points were made in the debate on the take-note motion yesterday that members of the community and other members of this chamber were involved. The response of the government has been extraordinary. The idea that the tabling of a report would be delayed to a time distant to the report is foolish and misses the point.

A point Mr Hall made to me correctly is that any member of the chamber has the opportunity to take into account this report at a future time and to launch a debate with notice in this chamber on this report on the dispute resolution matter and on other surrounding matters if they wish to, as well. Those debates would be in the public interest, and this important report could form the basis of such debate. The opportunity is there for other members of the chamber to make comment in a fully transparent way.

As for the idea that it is unusual for reports to come to this chamber without having been seen by other members of the house, it is not unusual: minority reports come to this chamber all the time, but this is not a minority report.

Mr Jennings interjected.

Mr D. DAVIS — No. I am giving you the principle. I am explaining the principle.

Mr Jennings interjected.

Mr D. DAVIS — No; I said it was not. They come to the chamber as a matter of course in a regular way, and they are not seen by others.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr D. DAVIS — This is a report by a number of members. My point is that this is a significant step in enabling greater transparency. The committee meets in private, but the reporting to the chamber, as requested by the chamber, is undertaken in this report process.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The question is:

That the motion be agreed to and that the paper referred to do lie on the table.

House divided on question:

10:45 **House divided on Mr Viney's motion:**

Ayes, 18

Broad, Ms	Pakula, Mr
Eideh, Mr	Pulford, Ms
Elasmar, Mr	Scheffer, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)
Huppert, Ms (<i>Teller</i>)	Smith, Mr
Jennings, Mr	Somyurek, Mr
Leane, Mr	Tee, Mr
Lenders, Mr	Theophanous, Mr
Madden, Mr	Tierney, Ms
Mikakos, Ms	Viney, Mr

Noes, 19

Atkinson, Mr	Hartland, Ms
Barber, Mr	Koch, Mr
Coote, Mrs	Kronberg, Mrs
Dalla-Riva, Mr	Lovell, Ms
Davis, Mr D.	O'Donohue, Mr
Davis, Mr P. (<i>Teller</i>)	Pennicuk, Ms (<i>Teller</i>)
Drum, Mr	Petrovich, Mrs
Finn, Mr	Peulich, Mrs
Guy, Mr	Rich-Phillips, Mr
Hall, Mr	

Pair

Darveniza, Ms	Vogels, Mr
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Motion negated.

Mr D. DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — My motion is an important one. If passed, it would enable the tabling of a report. As Mr Hall said, it is not a minority report but a report of members of this place. It is an important step in response to the motion debated in this Parliament on 2 September, and my comment is in direct response to Mr Theophanous's comment in the procedural debate — that any member could table anything.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr D. DAVIS — No. In that case the motion before the chamber on 2 September was that members of the Dispute Resolution Committee give regular reports to the Parliament, and thereby to the community. This

Ayes, 20

Atkinson, Mr	Hartland, Ms
Barber, Mr	Koch, Mr
Coote, Mrs	Kronberg, Mrs
Dalla-Riva, Mr	Lovell, Ms
Davis, Mr D.	O'Donohue, Mr
Davis, Mr P.	Pennicuik, Ms
Drum, Mr	Petrovich, Mrs
Finn, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)	Peulich, Mrs
Guy, Mr	Rich-Phillips, Mr
Hall, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)	Vogels, Mr

Noes, 18

Broad, Ms	Pakula, Mr
Eideh, Mr	Pulford, Ms
Elasmar, Mr	Scheffer, Mr
Huppert, Ms	Smith, Mr
Jennings, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)	Somyurek, Mr
Leane, Mr	Tee, Mr
Lenders, Mr	Theophanous, Mr
Madden, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)	Tierney, Ms
Mikakos, Ms	Viney, Mr

Pair

Kavanagh, Mr	Darveniza, Ms
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Question agreed to.

10:55

VICTORIAN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS AND MUSIC: COURSES

The PRESIDENT — Order! Prior to calling Mr Atkinson I advise the members of the gallery, who I understand are all students of the Victorian College of the Arts and Music, that this will be a reasonably robust debate. and that they are not allowed to engage in it or interrupt in any way. I am sure I can trust them all to abide by the required standards of the house. I hope they enjoy the debate.

Mr ATKINSON (Eastern Metropolitan) — I would not in fact have expected a very robust debate; I hope the motion will enjoy the support of members across the chamber. I guess the lesson for those people in the gallery — without actually looking towards them, President — is that theirs is not the only vocation that involves song and dance!

I move:

That this house —

- (1) expresses its concern about the proposed changes to the faculty of the Victorian college of the arts curriculum and budget cuts by the University of Melbourne and calls on the Premier to make representations to the vice-chancellor and the university council to ensure the continuation of the specialist performing arts degree courses and practical training under the Victorian college of the arts;

- (2) notes Melbourne's pre-eminent position in the performing arts and the substantial contribution of the musical theatre and other performing arts to the Victorian economy and recognises the significant role the Victorian college of the arts has played in teaching performance skills and developing successful performers for Australian and international theatre, film, television and musical productions;
- (3) further notes the support of former Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett and other former ministers of the arts, including Mary Delahunty and Race Matthews, as well as the commitment of the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Ted Baillieu, to the continuation of the specialist courses and function of the Victorian college of the arts;
- (4) notes that the University of Melbourne has limited and cut courses on offer through the Victorian college of the arts and has abandoned various commitments made in agreements that led to the Parliament agreeing to the Melbourne University (Victorian College of the Arts) Act 2006; and
- (5) expresses its concern that the actions of the University of Melbourne, with limited consultation, have not been consistent with the assurance of the state Minister for Finance in the second-reading debate of the Melbourne University (Victorian College of the Arts) Bill in 2006 that the integration would 'guarantee that the college's role as Australia's pre-eminent provider of visual and performing arts training and education can continue'.

This motion is essentially one of support for the continuation of the model that has been used by the Victorian college of the arts for many years with considerable success — a model which is under some threat because of a change visited upon the college's program, curriculum and processes by the University of Melbourne. The University of Melbourne is itself pursuing something of an American and European model in terms of its course delivery going forward and is trying to apply that to an institution in Victoria which is revered by many Victorians for its accomplishments.

It is revered also for the many young people who have been turned out from courses at the former Victorian College of the Arts and who have gone on to be great contributors in Australia and overseas in many fields of the arts and indeed in broader fields of life because of the way in which they were equipped with skills at the college of the arts. The University of Melbourne, as will come out in some remarks I will make shortly, has taken a view that this training is somehow a very closed form of training which only skills people for a performing arts career. However, the sorts of skills that students obtain and the confidence and relationships they form in a setting such as the Victorian college of the arts very often equips those young people to go on to do a great many other things well beyond the arts and to rack up many successes and accomplishments in life.

I want to reflect very briefly on something that some members may think is out of context, but it occurs to me that it is quite poignant that this debate should have to be held at this time, in a year when we have lost three people who were absolute superstars of the Australian performing arts community. I am referring to Bud Tingwell; to Ray Barrett, who we lost in the last few days; and also to Rob Guest, who was an absolute legend in terms of musical theatre. Whilst those people were not graduates of the former Victorian College of the Arts, I think they certainly appreciated the work the college did. In a broader sense they have been an inspiration to so many young performers and to the talented people who have created productions that have made Melbourne the arts capital of Australia and one of the most notable arts centres in the world. Melbourne is indeed the cultural crucible of Australia. It is a centre that has long enjoyed a reputation for its encouragement of the arts and for the accomplishment of so many of its performers as well as all the other people who work to put on productions, films, television programs, musical theatre and so forth.

Yesterday some of us, including the President, met with a delegation of parliamentarians from the British Parliament. Interestingly enough in the meeting over lunch delegation members mentioned they were off to see *Jersey Boys*. They wanted to see that production because they were aware of the high calibre of that popular show's production assembled in Melbourne. I saw *Jersey Boys* in the United Kingdom in July and was impressed with that production, but I also intend to see the Victorian version in the next few weeks, because like the members of the UK delegation I appreciate that Victorian productions are of world standard and an example to many other producers in terms of innovation in performance.

I want to briefly touch on the economic value of the contribution of the Victorian college of the arts and the arts community generally to Victoria. It is interesting to consider just how strong the contribution of the arts in Victoria, particularly musical theatre, is to tourism in this city. Many members of this Parliament would recall packages that have been offered to shows such as *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Les Miserables*, *Wicked* and a host of other programs that have run over the years. Those packages were offered interstate but also in New Zealand and were sometimes coupled with other tourism packages marketed overseas.

significant contribution in terms of royalties. It is an export earner for Victoria, and it is as significant a part of the economic life as the cultural life of this particular community.

It occurs to me that in many ways the arts are a mirror of today and a photograph for the future. They are a mirror for today because they actually capture what is happening. They are a reflection, if you like, of our contemporary views and experience. They are certainly a photograph for the future, because they capture that experience for the future so that others can see the time frames and the experiences, the attitudes, the views and so forth of what we have today.

I am particularly mindful of the dominant culture of America that is in so much of the arts, its attempts to intimidate how we think, how we see ourselves and the experiences that people ought be enjoying. I think the Australian experience is very different, and at every opportunity what we need to do as legislators and as people responsible for public policy is to ensure we are able to maintain the capacity of the community to reflect and record what is the Australian experience. I think in some areas that is lacking.

I compliment the government. I think one of the great initiatives of this government in its current term has been the establishment of the writing and ideas centre. I think that is a fantastic contribution to the arts. I hope it will be one of the very positive legacies of this government going forward and that it will generate significant benefits to Victoria in the future.

It occurs to me that certainly in writing, and particularly in film that I take a special interest in, there is all too little examination of our experience of a whole range of things. Certainly there are examples of films that address these subject areas, but I think they are underdone. I think the experience has been chronicled far too briefly for its importance to Australia in regard to Australians at war, the migrant experience, the experience of our senior citizens and our young, the farming and rural experience and the indigenous experience.

When you stop and think of the range of Australian films compared with international films, and for that matter the theatre productions we see and the books we read, there is all too little about some of those sorts of areas that are so important for us to document as part of the Australian experience rather than to learn more about what Americans think of themselves.

At this time I reflect briefly on the fact that as members of the house would be aware, yesterday I varied slightly

11:02 Bringing those people to Melbourne to see world-standard productions has certainly contributed to the income of airlines, accommodation, restaurants, shops and a wide variety of other pursuits in Melbourne. The arts in Victoria has also made a very

the motion of which I gave notice in the last sitting week so as to reflect what I regard as the one genuine criticism which was brought to me — and I think in fact it has been communicated to all members of Parliament.

I thank Professor Susan Elliott, the Acting Vice-Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, for saving me having to photocopying her letter. There was one element that I reflected on yesterday in changing the wording of my motion to ensure that she was under no illusion, and that the house was under no illusion, about what we are talking about in terms of what the Victorian college of the arts (VCA) is.

I certainly accept it is a faculty; it has not existed in its own right since 2007 because of an amalgamation, and in fact it was subject to legislation that went through this place. I am happy to use the nomenclature that the professor uses in referring to the VCA as a faculty which, of course, is combined with the music faculty at the University of Melbourne.

In regard to the rest of the letter that has been circulated to members of Parliament and which certainly made the *Age* yesterday in some detail, I was at a bit of a loss with some of the comments. I thought my colleague David Davis, the Leader of the Opposition in this place, made some outstanding comments. I could not have advanced any comments as effectively in rebuttal of the acting vice-chancellor's remarks, that this Parliament ought not be in a position to form a view on the Victorian college of the arts. In response, Mr Davis said yesterday in the *Age* that:

To now invoke a defence of academic freedom because the Parliament is seeking to debate in open forum the failure of the University of Melbourne and the state government to live up to their commitments is a cynical abuse of principles of academic freedom ... The university cannot strip the college of its schools, diversity, independence, academic staff and training while simultaneously condemning anyone who opposes this for intervening in the affairs of the university.

The vice-chancellor suggests this house does not have a capacity to pass a view on a matter as important as the Victorian college of the arts, particularly given its economic contribution to the state, and particularly given its nurturing of many of the people who will go on to become some of the great creative talents and drivers of our arts industry as much as contributors to the ongoing development of our culture, the integration into our culture in terms of that Australian experience importantly of the experiences of so many other people who have come to Australia in recent times.

We read about violence and associated issues on the streets, racism and so forth, but the arts is one of those

areas where we deal with those issues because we are able to chronicle them, we are able to explain them, and we are able to gain an understanding of people from different backgrounds. I think these people are going to perform a very important role in that, and it is absolutely absurd to say Parliament ought not make some comment on that.

I point out also that I found some confusion in the letter of the acting vice-chancellor. I am not sure whether it is a glitch in her typewriter, but the reality is that in a statement she suggests that I have made an error. She says: 11:10

It is incorrect to suggest that the university has changed the programs of 'the VCA' or done so with limited consultation.

That is a fairly strong statement and a challenge to my position on this matter. Yet the very next sentence says:

The faculty of the VCA and music proposes shortly to begin a process of wide consultation ...

She says I am wrong about there being limited consultation, but then she says they are going to do it. She has just proven my very point, that there has been limited consultation. That has certainly been of concern to the students, to the staff and people who are associated with mentoring and support of the college, and to the broader community.

In her letter the acting vice-chancellor indicates that the approach that has been taken by the University of Melbourne to the integration into the university of the then Victorian college of the arts was effectively a position agreed by the transition committee. That committee was set up in 2005 essentially to start looking at a merger of the Victorian college of the arts with the University of Melbourne that was a financial necessity at the time. I will come back to that.

Whilst the position advanced by the acting vice-chancellor is that it is an agreed process, the reality is that the University of Melbourne has been changing some of the ground rules. I believe the people from the Victorian college of the arts entered in good faith into negotiations with the University of Melbourne to ensure the continuation of the VCA not just as an entity — and that is now under challenge, too, in the current proposals — but also as an approach to curriculum, training and so forth in this important area of the arts, recognising that the arts is a very different industry from accounting, architecture, law or some other areas. They were very conscious of the fact that they were putting the VCA in a position with the university and considered that they would be able to demonstrate the value of their programs and simply get on with those

programs. They were not worrying so much about the administration and financing — the added costs, if you like — of running an independent organisation, and that there might be some economies of scale and some synergies in the back office if they were combined.

It seems to me that the University of Melbourne has rather seen this period of five years in which it was decided that there would not be any significant changes to the operations of the Victorian college of the arts as simply a rather inconvenient brake on its change agenda, and that is most unfortunate. That brake has not been all that effective. Perhaps we are on a downhill run, but the vehicle seems to be skidding a little bit anyway, because the University of Melbourne has already effected a number of changes.

Might I also mention, as a sideline, that, if the University of Melbourne is so concerned about academic freedom, perhaps it ought to have conceded that a little more carefully when it carpeted Paul Mees for his criticism of the government in regard to public transport matters. It is quite extraordinary that it should adopt a fairly high-handed approach on this occasion when its own record is not all that terrific. It occurs to me that, particularly in terms of training people to take up key positions in the arts, universities need to be a little bit more like a laboratory and a little less like a factory, with a little more flair and a little less pomposity and self-importance.

I come back to one of the paragraphs of the motion which mentions that there has been very wide support for the VCA, from the arts community certainly but also the political community. Former ministers of the arts such as Race Mathews and Mary Delahunty have been very keen that the Victorian college of the arts maintains its practical approach to training, the very successful formula that it has had in turning out so many accomplished alumni over so many years. Jeff Kennett, a former arts minister, is also a very strong supporter, and the Leader of the Opposition, Ted Baillieu, has also made a commitment, stating that if he were to succeed at the next election in 2010 he will:

ensure the shortfall of up to \$6 million currently preventing the VCA from fulfilling its purpose is restored;

will move to return the VCA to its previous independent and autonomous status, if Melbourne University is unable to adequately meet the requirements of the VCA and the intent of the Melbourne University (Victorian College of the Arts) Act 2006;

ensure the college is able to provide practical training, teaching and instruction in accordance with the needs and requirements of a school of the arts; and

ensure the VCA has full control and direction of its curriculum, operation and the structure of its schools and courses.

I do not run away from the fact that some of this trouble for the VCA was visited upon us in Victoria by the fact that the federal government changed some of its funding policies. Its changes to federal funding had an adverse outcome for specialist training colleges such as the VCA. If I had been in any position of government at the time, I would have been lobbying for the federal government to review its funding criteria and ensure some continuation of certainty of funding for the VCA rather than forcing this amalgamation that occurred under the 2007 act.

We need to ensure that this college's operations are adequately funded and that it is able to continue doing what it does best and has done so well. The University of Melbourne has to come to understand that the templates it sets for other areas of academic discipline do not necessarily apply, and in some cases absolutely do not apply, to the Victorian College of the Arts. The proposition that people undertaking these courses need to do an extra two years of study in subjects other than those provided in the practical arts areas by the VCA does not recognise that one's life span as a dancer is not an extended period, that people with degrees in architecture will be driving taxis for a lot longer than dancers will be on stage or that many people who gain skills at the VCA need to get entry level into the industry at a very young age and take up opportunities very quickly or else those careers will pass them by while they sit in the draughty rooms of the University of Melbourne or, worse, with an iPod in their ear at home, poring over books on psychology, mystic religions or something else.

There is bipartisan political and broad community support and admiration for the creative talent in the arts community. The arts have defined, enriched, advanced, challenged and developed Melbourne as an international city. They have given us a rich and important heritage, and Melbourne and Victoria are the better for all that. I would frankly hate to be the Minister for the Arts or the government on whose watch that was diminished.

Mrs Peulich — Who is it?

Mr ATKINSON — It is Minister Kosky, who had been reluctant to meet with students and people associated with the Victorian college of the arts.

Mrs Peulich — In hiding again?

Mr ATKINSON — The good news is that she has met with some people, probably not as many as she ought to have in terms of getting input on these issues. It is amazing what a motion on the parliamentary notice paper can do, because that meeting took place quite quickly after notice was given of this motion last week.

11:20 I applaud the minister for at least having the gumption to set up what is an important meeting.

A number of matters have been outlined in a Save the VCA publication issued by people who have the future of the college very much at heart. I will not go into those matters in detail because other members want to contribute to the debate; I want them to have an opportunity to put on record their support for the Victorian college of the arts and their support for this motion in that context.

I simply say that the documentation provided has shown, contrary to what the acting vice-chancellor said in her letter to me and to other members of Parliament, that the University of Melbourne has already been cutting back in a number of areas, in contrast to the undertakings and the understanding that existed at the time of the amalgamation.

Some of those matters are perhaps matters that were not necessarily in writing but have the impact of a serious change in direction for the college and serious implications for it. I refer, in particular, to the charging of rent.

The University of Melbourne did very nicely in terms of assets when the merge took place, because it gained about \$138 million or more of assets from the Victorian college of the arts at the time of the merger and is now happily charging \$6 million a year in rent. I understand that rental figure might increase to over \$9 million next year, forcing the Victorian college of the arts to find budget cuts to meet that rental commitment as well as an agreed \$5 million cut to funding, which in this year represents \$11 million; next year it will represent something more like \$13 million or \$14 million.

Obviously that would have an impact on programs and teachers. The University of Melbourne is already saying to the college, ‘You will not use so many external tutors and experienced performers coming in to work with the students, you will cut some of the programs’. The puppetry program has been cut as has the music program. Earlier I talked about the logo of the institution and about the understanding and recognition at the time of the merger that the Victorian college of the arts would be retained as an entity; apart

from anything else, it deserves to be retained because of its accomplishments.

The community needs to honour these institutions that have contributed so strongly and effectively to Victoria’s development over so many years, yet in April this year the logo was changed; now there is an attempt to change the faculty name. The current head of the faculty believes that the name is inappropriate and awkward — ‘awkward’ being my word, not her word — but all that ought to change as well.

Those changes are not in the best interests of the artistic community, the students or Victoria. This motion asks the Premier — and I would be happy if he does so through the agency of the Minister for the Arts — to intervene and to convene discussions that will lead to a better outcome, an outcome more consistent with the understanding at the time of the merger. If we cannot achieve a better outcome and an outcome that continues to focus on practical training for students in the arts, then I invite the government to consider pinching yet another coalition policy, as it has shown an enthusiasm for in more than 50 instances over the last couple of years, and follow the lead of the policy of the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, Ted Baillieu, and return the Victorian college of the arts to an independent status if it cannot be guaranteed some sort of autonomy and a continuation of its very effective and successful curriculum processes and operating basis, going forward.

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — I am pleased to rise to speak on this motion as moved by Mr Atkinson. In doing so, I comment on the President’s earlier suggestion that this could be a robust and argumentative debate, because I am in furious agreement with a great deal of what Mr Atkinson said. I am conscious that members are now speaking in front of a great many students from the Victoria college of the arts. I am sure they are incredibly talented people and have been selected for entry into courses through an incredibly competitive process.

I am one of three siblings, and I really missed out when the genetics for performance and creativity were being handed out. I have a brother who is an actor and a sister who is a musician, and I find myself here in an occupation that is sometimes referred to as ‘show business for ugly people’, so I hope the house will bear with that.

My brother was overseas for a number of years after I was elected to this place. After I had been here for a while, he came for lunch, perhaps to check out the building and see what I do. I told him about the adage

of Parliament being show business for ugly people just before I sat him down in the public gallery at the commencement of question time. Every moment I looked across at him for the best part of an hour he was really struggling to contain his laughter; he thought my description of politics was most apt.

Mrs Peulich — It was a free performance — although not free for the taxpayers.

Ms PULFORD — That is right, this is publicly funded entertainment. Perhaps it is a case of, ‘Do not judge me as my siblings would be judged by people with your considerable skill and creativity’.

11:27 The government is incredibly committed to supporting our arts community and all creative pursuits in a number of ways. As a Labor Party member, and a member of a Labor government, I am incredibly proud of the support that Labor governments have provided to the arts over decades — for example, the Whitlam government’s commitment and the considerable investments of the Keating government — and the many ways that governments support the arts and support education for excellence in the performing arts. Mr Atkinson talked about the economic and tourism benefits of our stage performances. Very important cultural benefits are delivered to Victoria by having such a robust arts community: one that nurtures talent and can assist our young, talented people to fulfil their creative potential.

By way of a little bit of background and for the benefit of members, predecessor organisations to the Victorian college of the arts (VCA) date back in Victoria some 140 years — it is quite a legacy that we are all entrusted to preserve. The VCA was established formally in that incarnation in 1981, but in 1988 had to enter into an affiliation agreement with the University of Melbourne so that it could participate in the national education system. The higher education system is constantly experiencing reform, and this was a period of considerable reform.

The relationship with Melbourne University goes back some years. In 2003 the Howard federal government ‘reforms’, for want of a better word, led to a 35 per cent reduction in funding to the VCA from 2005. That is where the current problem began to take shape.

There have been a couple of heads of agreement between Melbourne University and the VCA: one in 2005 and one in 2008. The government has not been a party to those agreements other than to support through the house the legislative instruments that enabled those arrangements to continue.

Members opposite might not be aware that university funding is a commonwealth government responsibility. There are two streams of funding: the normal higher education funding that fund all university courses — for example, for some of those classes that Mr Atkinson referred to and which students there perhaps do not want to undertake. Then there is federal funding from the federal Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, which is funding for specialist institutions. This is where the VCA starts to differ from many institutions which you would think were providers of comparable courses and training for excellence for artists.

The Australian National Academy of Music, the Australian Youth Orchestra, the National Institute for Dramatic Art (NIDA), the National Institute of Circus Arts, the National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association, the Australian Ballet School, the Flying Fruit Fly Circus and the Australian Film Television and Radio School receive funding from both streams, whereas the VCA receives funding from only one stream.

Funding per student at the VCA in Melbourne is around \$10 000 compared to \$33 000 per student at NIDA. Representing a rural constituency, I am often involved in this place in debates and discussions around the importance of access to education services for all people, no matter where they come from. I am reminded of that because it seems a frightfully unfair thing that somebody participating in a course at NIDA has such a substantially greater level of federal government contribution per student than a student at the VCA in Melbourne. If you add on to that the rural access overlay, it suddenly becomes a very expensive business and very difficult thing for students to participate in these courses.

This might sound a little dated, but I understand that performing arts courses have considerable requirements on students to be available for performances and rehearsals in a manner and pattern that is not particularly conducive to balancing regular part-time employment. I am not sure if that is still the case, but that was the case when my brother started his course. To balance, say, an acting degree with 20 hours of work every week is an incredibly difficult thing to do and requires a pretty flexible employer at best, or a very busy summer break from study while the student saves money for basic living expenses over the rest of the year.

I must comment on the correspondence we have all received from Melbourne University. Melbourne University contests some of the points in Mr Atkinson’s

motion and points out that the faculty of music and the faculty of the VCA have merged recently after a medium-term arrangement of sorts that has morphed over a number of years — that that formal merge has just occurred.

I understand that there is a great deal of anxiety being experienced by students and by teaching staff both over the VCA part of that merger and over what was the Melbourne University school of music part of that merger, which of course is also occurring in a context where Melbourne University is shedding considerable numbers of staff and bringing about substantial change in the form of the much talked about and reasonably controversial Melbourne model. The chronic underfunding of the VCA by the federal government combined with significant upheaval and change in Melbourne University can only have led to substantial anxiety about courses. For any student who is in their first or second year of study it is not so much to ask for a little bit of certainty about what the structure of the course will look like down the track. For people who are perhaps in the latter years of secondary school and hoping to be undertaking this type of study to have some expectation of what that course will look like, to me, is completely reasonable.

The university states that it has fulfilled all the commitments that have been undertaken in the discussions between the two organisations that led to the merge earlier this year of the departments. There is of course this ongoing problem of the \$6 million hole in the VCA budget, and Melbourne University has subsidised this, but its obligations to continue the subsidy are coming to a conclusion.

Mrs Coote — What about the advertising campaign? Ten million on the advertising.

Ms PULFORD — Who is spending \$10 million? What are you talking about?

Mrs Peulich — Your government.

Mrs Coote — Your government — millions and millions.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Vogels) — Order! Mrs Coote! Through the Chair.

Ms PULFORD — The obligations on Melbourne University that are part of those arrangements are of course coming to an end, so it is imperative that this underfunding is dealt with sooner rather than later.

Mr Atkinson's motion makes a request of the Premier. The Minister for Arts, Lynne Kosky, has been dealing

with this issue on behalf of the Victorian government. She has had discussions with federal arts and education ministers Peter Garrett and Julia Gillard, and has also been speaking with Glyn Davis and Sharman Pretty. A guarantee has been sought from Melbourne University that any new courses in the combined entity, the VCA music entity at Melbourne University, will be comprised of at least 75 per cent practical studies. Of course this is essential. Mr Atkinson spoke about those incredibly important skills that are developed through the practical nature of these courses. The fact that graduates of these courses are participating in auditions and working in the industry is of paramount importance in terms of having a successful career. These courses play an essential role in developing a very professional group of performing artists. The university has guaranteed that 75 per cent of studies will be practical studies, which is certainly an important step.

The government has called on the commonwealth to review the 2005 decision made by the Howard Liberal government which has led to this predicament that the VCA students and teaching staff find themselves in. We have asked the commonwealth government to provide funding to the Victorian College of the Arts and Music that properly reflects its role in Victoria and the nation as a centre of teaching excellence for performing arts students, like the other institutions that I named. The minister is also meeting with the unions that represent the teaching staff who are affected and is accepting and will be tabling a petition from the very many supporters of this fine institution.

The government's support for the VCA will continue. The underfunding we hope will be addressed and remedied so that students can have certainty about their studies, people who aspire to be in these fine courses can have some certainty about what that means and employers in the industry can continue to be confident that this institution is producing fine professionals who are work ready and highly skilled as well as highly talented. I thank Mr Atkinson for moving the motion and giving us the opportunity to discuss this very important issue affecting an institution that plays an enormously important role in the creativity of Victoria.

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — It is a pleasure to speak today on Mr Atkinson's motion regarding the Victorian college of the arts (VCA), as I will refer to it in my contribution. I thank him for bringing it to the chamber today. 11:42

Can I say at the start that support for the performing and visual arts is a matter of great importance to the Greens, to me personally, to many parliamentarians, to artists themselves and to the people of Victoria who love our

artists and their work. We know that VCA graduates are world renowned in film and television, on the stage in drama and musical theatre, behind the scenes in production, costume design et cetera, and in dance, music and visual arts. The long list of alumni of the VCA, particularly for the last 30 years or so, in its recognisable form is a rollcall of high-quality artists worldwide and something we should be proud of — and I certainly am.

In the debate on 31 March in this chamber on the Melbourne University Amendment Bill I referred to the concerns that past staff and students, unions, members of the arts community and others were raising with me about the future of the VCA through its school of music amalgamation with the University of Melbourne conservatory of music and the strange name change that ensued — from the VCA to the faculty of the VCA and music — that was the subject of that bill seemed to be symptomatic of what so many people were feeling and saying was not right about the amalgamation.

Those feelings have been getting stronger and those voices have been getting louder ever since. They should not be ignored. People feel that something precious is about to be lost, but it should not be lost. The VCA has a proud history, and we should ensure it has a secure future, not one compromised by penny-pinching funding cuts. These voices need to be listened to; if the new arrangement is not working, then it needs to be rethought.

That so many people are speaking out — and as this motion mentions, that includes a host of former arts ministers — means there is a problem. The problem can and must be fixed. At its heart it is a funding problem, and it was, as Mr Atkinson acknowledged, caused by the removal of funding by former federal education minister Brendan Nelson that led to a chain of events that has seen the full amalgamation of the VCA with Melbourne University.

That has complicated funding arrangements, which I will talk a little about later in my contribution, that are really leading to the faculty of the VCA and music being dubbed by the university as financially unsustainable. How that situation has come about is no fault of the college; it is the fault of the funding bodies which are not funding it properly. That is the crux of the problem. Even Ms Pulford mentioned that in her contribution and seemed to be laying part of the solution for it at the feet of her federal colleague, the Minister for Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Mr Garrett. I certainly think he needs to step up to the plate. I know my federal colleague Senator Milne, who

has carriage of the arts for the Greens, has written to Peter Garrett with words to the same effect.

Since we had the debate on 31 March regarding the name change, which was really the end of the amalgamation process, I have met with past and present staff and students of the VCA, members of the arts community, representatives of the National Tertiary Education Union and the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance. I have corresponded with the VCA student union which is now defunct due to the amalgamation. I have met with the new dean of the faculty of the VCA and music, Professor Pretty, and with the pro vice-chancellor (global relations) of the University of Melbourne, Professor Bebbington. I did seek to meet with Glyn Davis but he is overseas so Professor Bebbington kindly met with me to discuss the concerns that so many people have been raising about what is happening, or appears to be happening, to the VCA.

I am pleased to say that I attended a rally on the VCA's open day. It was addressed by Noni Hazlehurst, who is one of my favourite actors — that was a thrill for me. I was able to speak to her about the issues although I just missed her speech because I was inside the building at the time listening to a music student's performance; as I came out, everyone was applauding Noni. I was lucky enough to catch that speech on YouTube later. I think Noni made a pertinent comment, amongst many, and I quote:

If these changes ... are actually going to advance the cause of arts in society, and if all the kids who want to study here are going to be better actors, better musicians, better dancers, better producers, better technicians — fantastic. But prove it.

I think that is the crux of the problem. What is being said by both the dean and the University of Melbourne — and it is as much about what is not being said as what is being said — is causing so much confusion and angst in the community. People do not know what is planned, but they can see what has happened: some of the promises that were made at the time of the amalgamation have not been kept.

I spoke at a rally on the steps of Parliament House. The MC for that rally was the fabulous Julia Zemiro, who is a VCA graduate; also Heidi Victoria, the member for Bayswater in the other place, the actor and journalist John-Michael 'Hollywood' Howson, and former minister Race Mathews spoke. A friend of mine was at that rally, She said to me, 'I was there on Friday at the VCA rally cheering and shouting and screaming and booing and singing and crying and smiling. And then shouting some more. What an amazing event it was. I

have been to many rallies but this was something special in so many ways’.

And so it was. It was a fabulous rally and you could not help but be moved by it. I would like to pause here to pay tribute to the staff, students, alumni and supporters who have organised these rallies and especially that absolutely fantastic rally that went through the streets of Melbourne with all the students dressed up, dancing and singing and coming up to Parliament House, engaging with the police and security guards in a positive way and really showing why we need to keep the VCA traditions alive and well.

I pay tribute to all those people for organising those rallies and for the ongoing campaign they are running in support of the VCA. At that rally Race Mathews said that the VCA was a national treasure — and so it is, but it is not being treated as such; or at least that is what it looks like to everyone outside the dean’s office. I think it is fair to say that the dean has not handled the situation well and that a lack of genuine consultation, as much as anything else or as much as what is being seen to happen, has led to the current public unrest. I think the dean has her work ahead of her, to explain what she has in mind, how the VCA traditions can be retained and how trust can be reinstated into this whole situation.

It is worth going back a bit. Minister Kosky has belatedly involved herself in this issue. It is a good thing that she is involved now but perhaps she could have been a bit more active earlier, as indeed could have the Premier.

11:52 In 2006, before I was elected to Parliament, the Melbourne University (Victorian College of the Arts) Bill was debated and passed. It is worth repeating what Ms Kosky had to say at that time in her second-reading speech:

This bill has been prepared at the request of the college and the university and will ensure the long-term financial viability of the college.

In addition, the integration will guarantee that the college’s role as Australia’s pre-eminent provider of visual and performing arts training and education can continue.

She went on to say:

In 1972 ... the Victorian College of the Arts was proclaimed with the school of art becoming the first school of the college in 1973. Over the coming decades, the college was expanded to include the schools of music; drama; dance; production; and film and television ...

The former faculty of art and design at Victoria College was also incorporated into the school of art.

The minister said that the college would retain its position financially and as a practical-based training institution. This is what it is and has always been, and this is why it attracts students. It does not attract students because it provides theoretical studies in the arts, dance or music. At the time of the amalgamation the previous director, Professor Andrea Hull, produced a student information sheet along the same lines. She said:

... the integration is the result of significant decisions by the federal government which cut the college’s recurrent budget by 35 per cent and required the university to make up this funding shortfall out of its own resources. Neither the VCA nor the university believed that this situation is fair or sustainable and therefore agreed to find a more appropriate and mutually beneficial ongoing arrangement to provide the college with a more secure funding base.

She went on further to say:

This integration will not in any way affect your study —

she was addressing the students —

at the VCA. Courses at the VCA are already accredited ... and ... a successful student of the VCA will continue to receive a University of Melbourne degree ...

The VCA will continue to operate from its current Southbank site ... and will retain its close links with the many arts institutions ...

In summary, the VCA has a secure and vibrant future.

We hope it does. They were the promises and statements made a few years ago.

I will now read from a briefing paper prepared by the Save VCA organisation which was circulated to ministers and generally in June this year. Quite a few points are made in this briefing paper which go to show that those promises have not been kept. For example, following a reduction in federal government funding, the University of Melbourne undertook to provide a \$5 million subsidy per year from 2007, but the university is charging excessive overheads and inflating the subsidies. The briefing paper goes on:

VCA (as distinct from the former music faculty which has maintained separate accounts) is ‘contributing’ to university overheads at a rate of 83.3 per cent of earned income, while the average for other faculties is 46 per cent. Why such a high charge for the VCA?

In 2006, VCA administration costs were \$11.69 million or 47 per cent of faculty revenue. On integration ... many functions moved to the university and VCA costs were reduced to \$6.274 million.

However, the university levied an additional \$9.231 million for overheads, so ... administration costs rose to a total of \$15.505 million ...

University overheads for 2009 are listed as \$14.4 million, or 83 per cent of VCA income, which is a 55 per cent increase within two years of integration. You would have to ask why that is. The paper goes on:

On integration, the university acquired VCA assets valued at \$103 million. The land and buildings are owned by either the university or the Crown and, prior to integration, no rent was charged.

That is a very big question. The university is charging the VCA \$250 per square metre in rent, which equates to \$6 million per year or more than \$6000 per student. This has not been the case in the past. Given that the VCA brought with it physical assets it owned, why is the university now charging rent? If that particular cost being pushed onto the VCA by the university were removed the so-called unsustainable budgetary position of the VCA would disappear, so in some ways that budgetary position of the VCA is a manufactured one. The fact is that the VCA used to survive on an average budget of \$28 million, recording a surplus in four out of every five years while still managing to teach to the highest international level.

The briefing paper goes on to mention a number of breaches of the heads of agreement governing the amalgamation of the University of Melbourne with the VCA. For example — and I think Mr Atkinson referred to this in his contribution to the debate — one of the undertakings was that the VCA logo and branding would be retained. However, the university removed the VCA logo from stationery and the website in April 2009, and we know that a certain name change has already been made.

The heads of agreement also said that the distinctive VCA pedagogy — that is, the atelier tradition of the VCA, which is the practical-based training — would be retained — —

12:00 **Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.**

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Planning: City of Brimbank

Mr GUY (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is to Minister for Planning. Noting that in June the planning minister ordered his departmental secretary to urgently inquire into planning decisions made in the City of Brimbank, I ask: what is the status of this report, and will its results be made public?

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Planning) — I welcome Mr Guy's interest in these matters, and I welcome the chance for Mr Guy to ask the first

question as opposed to Mr David Davis. I was almost expecting Mr Davis to ask the first question. There is a look of slight disappointment on Mr Davis's face today at Mr Guy getting to ask the first question.

Specifically in relation to Mr Guy's question, I did make a request of my department to check if there had been any significant decisions made in relation to decisions by the planning minister or by the planning authority vested in the department under the planning minister in relation to matters in Brimbank. I recently received a response from the department. I am considering that, and I will be happy to present to that to Parliament in forthcoming days.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Northern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for his answer, but in light of the damning allegations that were made by Bill Scales in the most recent inquiry into the City of Brimbank, and most concerning the fact that the Scales report highlighted that planning probity concerns had arisen after the minister had announced his departmental inquiry, I ask: in the interests of full planning probity will the minister now release the full terms of reference and the reporting guidelines of his departmental inquiry, and can he advise of the time line of the scope of this inquiry?

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Planning) — To cut a long story short — it is not often that I do that, but I would like to do so today — I made a request of my departmental secretary to investigate these matters. I did not give him any terms of reference; it was up to the secretary to determine those matters, because of course I did not want to be prescribing to him how the inquiry should be undertaken. I asked him basically to do an audit of what has occurred regarding any significant matters in relation to planning within the authority of the department, and that has basically extended over the time frame from the point of that request. Once I provide the letter to the Parliament in relation to the response I have received from the secretary, then I am sure that will give an understanding of the context and the time frame in relation to these matters.

But it is worth remembering that in all these matters the government has acted appropriately on the recommendations of independent reports by the Ombudsman and by Mr Scales, and of course the government is particularly concerned about any local government not operating to the best of its ability. No doubt in my portfolio I am very committed to making sure that local government provides services, particularly the planning services, in the best and most

efficient way so it can give certainty, confidence and reassurance to the community and anybody who wants to invest in that community — and more often than not it is people within that community — that all their local governments are performing up to the standards they need to, particularly in the area of planning activity.

Manufacturing: south-eastern suburbs

Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Industry and Trade, Mr Pakula. Can the minister provide the house with an example of a local automotive component manufacturer in Melbourne's south-east that is successfully supplying local demand as well as exporting to major global markets?

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Minister for Industry and Trade) — I thank Mr Somyurek for his question and his commitment to manufacturing in his electorate of South Eastern Metropolitan Region. Last week I had the absolute privilege of visiting a very innovative company, Mett, out in Noble Park. Mett was established in 1983, and it is the leading aluminium high-pressure and gravity die caster in the country. The company employs around 300 people and has a turnover of \$50 million or thereabouts, and it recently won the General Motors (GM) supplier of the year award for the fifth time. Having visited the facility, it is very easy to see why: the company's commitment to quality manufacturing was extraordinarily impressive.

Mett was judged against global suppliers, and the success of its endeavours highlights the truly world-class capabilities of many companies in our local automotive manufacturing industry. This is a company that embodies the notion of concept to container. Products are designed at Mett; raw aluminium is tooled, cast, finished, machined, assembled and tested all at the Noble Park facility; and it makes those parts to create products for GM Holden here in Melbourne but also for General Motors around the world and for Ford, Robert Bosch, Saab and many other companies in the automotive industry.

In late 2008 GM awarded Mett a contract, against worldwide competition, to supply the high feature V6 engine front cover assemblies for a range of GM vehicles, including those produced at Flint, Michigan, at St Catherine in France, and indeed here at the Fishermans Bend plant as well. It has also been busily localising product that was previously sourced from overseas.

As a result of that contract win Mett has invested up to \$6 million to install new plant and equipment, and the

government is certainly very pleased to have been able to help facilitate that investment. The new GM contract has enabled Mett to largely maintain its workforce in the eye of the global financial crisis. The GM contract also demonstrates just how local automotive manufacturers can remain internationally competitive by plugging themselves into global supply chains.

In 2009 alone Mett has won new export contracts for both France and North America. The company has already generated significant exports, which will be worth approximately \$16 million this year. It exports 60 to 70 per cent of all the product manufactured at the site, and it is currently sending between seven and eight shipping containers of its product to the United States every week of the year. Because of this strong performance over many years Mett is now in the position where it is actively investigating more overseas markets, and with further assistance from my department Mett intends to pursue more opportunities both locally and abroad.

This government recognises the importance of our automotive manufacturing sector, which generates \$3 billion annually and which employs 35 000 people. We have supported it through the \$6.7 million Victorian automotive manufacturing action plan and also through our collaboration with the commonwealth. Mett is one of the many fantastic manufacturing export success stories. If I could be so bold, I suggest to those opposite, particularly those who represent the South Eastern Metropolitan Region, that they take the opportunity to pay Mett a visit. That would be a far more productive use of their time than peddling doom and talking down the opportunities and successes of our automotive manufacturing sector.

City of Brimbank: government grants

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My question without notice is directed to the Treasurer. I note that the 2007–08 annual report of the Brimbank City Council states that 16.5 per cent of its total revenue — some \$28 million — comes from government grants, including state government grants, and I ask: what steps has the Treasurer taken to protect the state government's financial contribution to Brimbank from the undue and inappropriate influence first identified in the Ombudsman's report and now identified in the damning report of the municipal inspector and from the corrupt behaviour of Labor Party officials?

Mr LENDERS (Treasurer) — I thank Mr Finn for what I think is the first question he has asked me in his two and a half years in the chamber.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — They have let him off the leash.

Mr LENDERS — He has been let off the leash.

Mr Finn's question to me as Treasurer is about what actions I take in relation to state government grants that go to a particular municipality.

12:10 As Mr Finn well knows —

Hon. M. P. Pakula — Or should know.

Mr LENDERS — That is right, Mr Pakula, as he should know — every amount of revenue from the state of Victoria that this Parliament appropriates is accountable back to the Parliament. We have outputs across the Department of Planning and Community Development, outputs that are put in place and grants to local government — I think that is what Mr Finn is referring to — are probably the pass-through grants that the commonwealth government gives as a percentage of income tax that the States Grants Commission then recommends to the Minister for Local Government and me, as Treasurer, be passed through to local government under a formula. I assume that is the money Mr Finn is referring to.

I can assure Mr Finn of this: firstly, the Auditor-General oversees state government grants that go through; secondly, the Minister for Finance, WorkCover and the Transport Accident Commission, who I represent in this place, sets financial directions to the 600-odd Victorian instrumentalities that receive money from government or are government-owned and they are reported back against. The minister for finance, tables in Parliament a response to all outstanding reports of the Auditor-General so that the Parliament has once a year a government response on what it has done with any reports from the Auditor-General.

They are the checks and balances that are in place. I might say, President, unlike the government of which Mr Finn was a member, that actually voted to nobble the Auditor-General — Mr Finn was one of the shameful 61 in the Legislative Assembly who voted to nobble the Auditor-General, and we pay heed to it — they are the accountability measures that I as Treasurer and as minister representing the minister for finance, have applied.

The overall and overarching issue is that the Ombudsman made a report on Brimbank City Council, the government acted, carried out every recommendation and now the inspector has made a report on Brimbank; the Minister for Local

Government has gone to the executive council and suspended the Brimbank council.

The government takes these issues seriously. It has responded, as it will and continue to do. The government believes in good governance. It is not afraid of watchdogs. It carries out the recommendations put to it, unlike the government Mr Finn was a member of, which closed down Parliament, gagged the Auditor-General, gutted his powers and as the ultimate irony, appointed a member of the executive to chair the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. The former government's idea of accountability was probably where it was having its next lunch.

Supplementary question

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Given that the municipal inspector concluded:

... it appears the St Albans branch —

of the ALP —

has attempted to bind particular councillors to the organisation's position rather than have them assess the particular matter on its merits, as required under the Local Government Act ...

will the Treasurer now investigate the influence of this malignant Labor branch on Brimbank council's decisions where they involve state government money, of which he is custodian?

Mr Viney — On a point of order, President, I am not sure how it could be in the administrative functions of the Treasurer to investigate any particular political party branch of either the Liberal Party, The Nationals, the Greens or the Labor Party. I do not believe that question is relevant.

Mr D. Davis — On the point of order, Mr Finn's question refers to the Treasurer's custodianship role of state money and it is clear that money goes from the state government to that council; and it is also clear that there is a malignant collateral influence. The Treasurer ought to assure the house, he should answer the question — and I know it is a sensitive matter for the Labor Party — but he is the custodian of the state's finances.

Mrs Peulich — On the point of order, President, the Local Government Act requires that councillors act impartially and that resources are dealt with in a responsible and accountable fashion.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The member is debating the point.

Mrs Peulich — No, I am not.

The PRESIDENT — Get to the point of order.

Mrs Peulich — President, the Local Government Act requires a certain form of conduct. The Labor Party rules require a different form of conduct and the accounting rules and reporting and accountability to this Parliament require another sort of conduct. All of this falls within the purview of the Treasurer, and he should answer the question.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Finn, I ask you to ask your supplementary question again so I am crystal clear on what you are asking.

Mr FINN Given that the municipal inspector concluded:

... it appears the St Albans branch —

of the ALP —

has attempted to bind particular councillors to the organisation's position rather than have them assess the particular matter on its merits, as required under the Local Government Act ...

will the Treasurer now investigate the influence of this malignant Labor branch on Brimbank council's decisions where they involve state government moneys of which he is custodian?

The PRESIDENT — Order! This is a very arguable supplementary question, and I will rely on the judgement of the Treasurer as to whether he believes it is within his portfolio

Mr LENDERS (Treasurer) — I stand by my substantive answer.

Ordered that answer be considered next day on motion of Mr D. DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan Region).

Manufacturing: Sancell products

Mr SCHEFFER (Eastern Victoria) — My question is for the Minister for Industry and Trade. Will the minister advise the house how the Brumby Labor government supports innovative Victorian manufacturers that are looking to explore new export markets for their products, and can he provide recent examples?

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Minister for Industry and Trade) — I thank Mr Scheffer for his question, because it again gives me the opportunity to talk up and express my confidence in the manufacturing sector of the state.

The government is taking action to grow the economy and to secure jobs.

I can advise the member that the government has a range of support and funding programs designed to help small and medium-sized businesses to expand their export horizons.

I recently enjoyed a site tour of Sancell, which is a bubblewrap manufacturer in Carrum Downs. Sancell is a leading manufacturer of industrial packaging products. Importantly the company has developed the world's first 100 per cent degradable bubblewrap called EnviroBubble. I am surprised it had not been developed earlier, because I think some members opposite have been living in an enviro-bubble.

Sancell has also developed a range of high-quality solar pool covers and greenhouse material designed to withstand this country's harsh climate.

It is a company which employs around 50 people, and it has already started forming strong export ties with New Zealand and the Pacific islands. The government has recently provided Sancell with a \$10 000 First Step Exporter grant that will go towards the costs associated with going to the USA and meeting potential clients and potential distributors in the USA later this year. That grant comes from our \$4.8 million Opening Doors to Export program, which is specifically designed to help small and medium-sized enterprises explore their export potential by researching new markets. 12:17

During my visit to Sancell we discussed the enormous opportunities. You would have to have been stuck on Gilligan's Island for the last 30 years not to know and understand the enormous opportunities that are opening up in the field of biodegradable packaging, particularly in the increasingly environmentally conscious US state of California. As part of that, I also suggested to the company that whilst they are in California they make contact with our VGBO (Victorian government business office) commissioner to the Americas, Victor Perton, to discuss further support and networking opportunities that the office, including Mr Perton, can provide to Sancell while they are visiting the States.

Sancell has also benefited from a business mentoring program focusing on strategies for growth and funded through the government's Grow Your Business initiative. Sancell received a \$7500 grant through this program earlier this year to help it prepare a business development plan. I can inform members, and Mr Scheffer in particular, that since 2007 we have provided more than \$3.6 million in Grow Your Business grants to Victorian small businesses to help

them develop and implement strategies to become internationally competitive. We continue to provide strong leadership during this period of difficult global economic instability because we understand that Victorians, and particularly Victorian SMEs (small-to-medium enterprises) are concerned about the state of the global economy. That is why we are taking action to enable local companies to boost their export capacity, to boost their networks and, importantly, to export Victorian ingenuity and Victorian technology into some of the world's toughest export markets.

**Information and communications technology:
Satyam Computer Services**

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Information and Communication Technology. I refer to the government's *ICT Industry Plan 2005–10* — *Progress Report* released in February, which states:

Between July 2005 and December 2008, the Victorian government directly facilitated:

5052 jobs.

Can the minister confirm that this includes 2000 jobs for the Satyam project which will now not be realised?

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Information and Communication Technology) — I thank Mr Rich-Phillips for his question and his new-found interest in ICT. It is extraordinary when you have a great project that does not proceed, a great potential project which has not moved ahead, how it excites the opposition unbelievably. Mr Rich-Phillips refers to 5000 jobs. I will take on notice the particular technical question he asked, but even if you accepted his premise it says everything about this opposition. There is no mention here of facilitation that, even under his worst-case and gloomy scenario, means 3000 Victorians have a job in ICT that they otherwise would not have had. There is no mention of that. My colleague Mr Theophanous is a parent of many of these new ICT jobs, from his days as minister when he went out there, rolled up his sleeves and got jobs. We hear no mention from Mr Rich-Phillips about 3000 Victorians who now have a job in a new and emerging industry because of the actions of this Labor government — not a mention, not a word.

What Mr Rich-Phillips says says it all for the opposition. Sometimes you would think they are, as Mr Pakula said, on Gilligan's Island — perhaps waiting for Thurston Howell III from another house to give instructions as to what they should be doing. Let us look at what we are talking about here. It is a plan. Let

us use the word that Mr Rich-Phillips said. There is a plan, an ICT plan. This government has a plan that is in stark contrast to some others. There is a progress report on the plan — again a stark contrast to where it has come from. Thirdly, even under Mr Rich-Phillips's most extreme and negative — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr LENDERS — He is a very negative person in this house. I am disappointed. He is the god of gloom. There should be a shrine for him and the gloom gods opposite! Even under his scenario, there are 3000 new jobs, which he does not acknowledge.

I will take on notice the technical part of Mr Rich-Phillips's question as to whether the Satyam jobs are counted in those 5000, but I look forward to his supplementary question, where he may be asking about what changes to people's lives it has made that there are 3000 people at least who, because of this government's action, have jobs in ICT that they otherwise would not have. I look forward to the supplementary perhaps asking what difference it has made to their lives in this great state of Victoria.

Supplementary question

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — At the risk of disappointing the minister, I am surprised that he cannot tell the house whether the 5000 jobs he claimed in his progress report in February do indeed include that 2000 from Satyam. I would like to ask him: given that progress report claims also that the government had facilitated investment of \$809 million in ICT, can the minister confirm that that includes the \$75 million for the Satyam investment that also will not be realised?

Mr LENDERS (Minister for Information and Communication Technology) — I have taken the first part of Mr Rich-Phillips's question on notice, I invite him — perhaps with Mr Theophanous — to go to Burnley, to the Computershare site, and look at some of the 1270 ICT jobs that have been created by this government in a venture with the private sector, which I am sure that Mr Rich-Phillips — or whoever had responsibility on that particular day in the 1227 lost days of Mr Baillieu's leadership — would have criticised, I am sure. Perhaps he could go with me, or perhaps Ms Pulford could take him, to Ballarat to look at IBM and some of the 600 jobs that young Australians in Ballarat have in ICT through a partnership between the state of Victoria, the University of Ballarat and the IBM company. Again, in a competitive environment,

these are not jobs that have gone overseas; these are jobs in Australia.

Mr Rich-Phillips could even go to his own electorate, and I am sure he does. If he were to wander down to McDonald's in Dandenong, for instance, and he found that a cash register had seized up, he would find that the young Victorian working in McDonald's in Dandenong will ring another young Victorian working at IBM in Ballarat as the help desk. That is because we as a government, with our great partners — the University of Ballarat and IBM — have got jobs for young Victorians helping other young Victorians. It is a great interconnect.

He could also go to NEC out in the east of Melbourne and talk of the 150 jobs there. Again, in a strong Japanese company, there are R & D and new high-tech jobs in Australia facilitated through this government's ICT policy. He could go to Exinda Networks and find 58 jobs. With Mr Theophanous's stewardship in this portfolio, he will find that 58 more jobs have been created. He could go to Hewlett Packard in Blackburn. Perhaps he could go with his colleague Mr Atkinson. He would find another 250 ICT jobs facilitated. Again, they are new jobs on the watch of this government. This is like a tale around Victoria. Perhaps Mr O'Donohue could take him up to Wodonga — certainly Mr Scheffer or Mr Viney would happily take him to Wodonga — and look at the 226 Adacel ICT jobs. He could go to IR Gurus Interactive here in the city of Melbourne, where he would find another 150 jobs.

12:27 *Honourable members interjecting.*

Mr LENDERS — I know Mr Rich-Phillips is good at counting; he will probably be thinking a bit more about counting this afternoon in case there is a need to count in terms of his preselection. But Mr Rich-Phillips will find if he starts adding these jobs up that they add up to quite a few. He could go to LogicaCMG here in the city, with another 148 jobs; perhaps he could go to NICTA in Parkville, with another 80 jobs. Mr Jennings would be very interested in the NICTA jobs. Or Mr Rich-Phillips could go to Fujitsu in Dandenong in his own electorate and find another 69 ICT jobs that have been created.

This is a long answer to a supplementary question, but I get very excited about ICT jobs being created in Victoria, particularly the Ballarat ones, which otherwise would have gone to a call centre overseas. What I will conclude by saying is that this government will work with industry, we will work with people and we will work with our educational institutions to create jobs. ICT jobs are great jobs of the future, and unless we

work on them, unless we talk up this state and unless we go out there and roll up our sleeves, we will not get any. This is the state of Victoria; it is not Gilligan's Island, where you ring the next house and ask Thurston Howell III what his thoughts are. Even Thurston Howell III would have thought of something in 1227 days.

Economy: performance

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — My question is to the Treasurer, John Lenders. Can the Treasurer update the house on the current level of consumer confidence in Victoria, and what impact it has on the Victorian economy?

Mr LENDERS (Treasurer) — I thank Mr Eideh for his question on consumer confidence. Before his life in Parliament Mr Eideh was a particularly successful businessman, and he certainly knows how the Victorian economy works and how important confidence in the Victorian economy is. He knows that unless you have confidence you will not have the job growth that we as a Labor government expect to deliver for the next generation.

Mr Pakula mentioned Woolworths yesterday and the creation of 15 000 jobs across Australia through a buoyant economy, with a large slab of those jobs in Victoria. We are leading the way in Victoria. We have seen Costco invest in similar terms. We have seen the tourism minister today announce strong tourism figures. We have seen the height of first home buyer growth in the state of Victoria. We have had the college of the arts discussed here today, and we have even seen, in terms of issues of confidence, that whether it be *Wicked*, *Jersey Boys* or a lot of other such productions, confidence creates jobs and means people move forward.

We will see a boost to our economy even through the four final Australian Football League teams being Victorian teams. There are a lot of confident Victorians who will go out there and support their team and enjoy the great cultural spectacle. It is a pity, President, as you, Mr Finn and I are equally agreed, that one team is not in there, but we will see the confidence factor going forward.

There are a couple of measures of sentiment. We have just seen consumer sentiment go up in Victoria. The index is at the highest level since July 2007. Probably the best way to illustrate what confidence does is through your own behaviour. Sitting opposite are 14 members of Parliament who are seeking preselection again; the nominations closed at noon today. If those

people are unopposed, their confidence will be extremely high. They will walk out of here with a spring in their step and plan their future with much greater certainty than if they were fearful that someone else would try to take their preselection. The reason I use that as an example is that there will be some anxiety — I have seen a lot of people looking at Blackberrys with some anxiety today to see whether they are opposed or not — and it reinforces my point. If a person gets preselected unopposed, they will strut out of here with confidence and get on with the rest of their life; if they lose confidence or are fearful, they will act very differently.

It works exactly the same for consumers. A confident consumer goes out there and spends, buys and invests, and a confident business does the same; and that creates jobs. I would call on opposition members, who are now closer than most to experiencing this confidence factor, to realise that their negative behaviour has an effect on jobs in Victoria. I wish everybody opposite well. There are lots of huts on Gilligan's Island that they can go into, I am sure. There is room for everybody. Consumer confidence is up, and that augurs extraordinarily well for further jobs in the state of Victoria.

**Victorian Funds Management Corporation:
chief executive officer**

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Treasurer.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — Gee, he sounds confident!

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — Read into that what you will, Minister! Why has the government failed to appoint a permanent chief executive to the Victorian Funds Management Corporation six months after the resignation of Syd Bone?

Mr LENDERS (Treasurer) — I am pleased Mr Rich-Phillips is confident; I do not know if I would be confident if I had Mrs Peulich behind me on the ticket. Nevertheless, I am sure Mr Rich-Phillips is very confident and with very good reason. Mr Rich-Phillips asked the question, and he is smiling and anticipating my answer. I cannot think of any other reason why he would be smiling now. Let Hansard record that he is smiling; perhaps a graphic in *Hansard* would be great.

The Victorian Funds Management Corporation, as Mr Rich-Phillips well knows, is an institution which manages Victoria's funds. The CEO (chief executive officer) of the VFMC, Mr Bone, retired some time ago, and I wish him well. He delivered five years of very strong service to the organisation. The VFMC has a

new chairman, Mr John Fraser, who has taken office quite recently. Despite some sniping in this place about Mr Fraser being an international businessman — he is a former deputy secretary of the Australian Treasury, a former leading banker in London and an extraordinary find for Victoria in difficult financial times — the organisation is going forward on seeking a permanent chief executive officer.

The VFMC is very ably managed by an acting CEO, the chief investment officer, Justin Pascoe. If Mr Rich-Phillips is saying we should not follow proper process and that the government should intervene and rush a statutory body into seeking a CEO — if that is the implication of his question — I am very disappointed. I think that would be the last thing anyone would ask the board of the VFMC to do. The VFMC has a very capable acting CEO, and the chair and the board are going through a process, as is appropriate, where they are seeking to appoint a permanent CEO to the organisation. That is good corporate governance. I hope Mr Rich-Phillips is not suggesting that ministers should start meddling in these matters, because that would be a completely different approach from the approach of his hero, Mr Stockdale, the former Treasurer, when he was in charge of the VFMC operating a far more professional corporate approach.

Supplementary question

12:35

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I am pleased the Treasurer raised the issue of corporate governance because that is the subject of my supplementary question. Under the VFMC (Victorian Funds Management Corporation) structure the chief executive has an important oversight role with respect to the chief investment officer (CIO). Given that the CEO (chief executive officer) and CIO roles are currently occupied by the same person, what mechanism has been put in place to ensure the governance role of the chief executive is performed independently to that of the chief investment officer?

Mr LENDERS (Treasurer) — It is very evident that Mr Rich-Phillips has never met Mr John Fraser, the chair of the VFMC (Victorian Funds Management Corporation) — and that is not a criticism of Mr Rich-Phillips. What I would say to him is that on any governance issue every board has responsibility to me as the responsible minister and shareholder in the organisation. The boards are responsible, as they are in the corporate sector, for managing corporate governance issues. The board of the VFMC is a strong board; it is a board with a broad diversity of members, and it has one of the strongest chairs.

I am sure Mr Rich-Phillips is just trying to trip me up. I do not believe he would not understand these corporate governance issues. There is a board, and the board has its own committee system. It has a chair which is independent of government, and it has a board of independent directors; in fact they are all independent directors now because there is obviously a vacancy in the CEO (chief executive officer) position.

I am very confident that the correct governance is in place. I welcome Mr Rich-Phillips' question because we are all interested in good governance in government bodies in this place, but I say to him that as the minister I have recommended to Governor in Council a strong chair with international financial experience to chair the VFMC. We have an acting CEO, and the VFMC is itself in the process of advertising for and appointing a CEO. I am not about to intervene, and I am confident it has the correct governance in place.

Planning: broiler farms code

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria) — My question is for the Minister for Planning. Can the minister please update the house on how the Brumby Labor government is ensuring environmental benefits and economic growth for the farming industry?

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Planning) — I welcome Ms Pulford's interest in this matter. Agriculture, in terms of land use and the various uses that occur on the land, is particularly important in terms of the planning system. Today I would like to advise the house that I have approved a new planning code for Victoria's \$400 million broiler farming industry. This may not necessarily be one of the most glamorous industries in terms of agricultural produce — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — It is great to hear from the battery hens on the other side of the chamber. This will provide significant benefits to industry, the community and particularly to local government. The new Victorian Code for Broiler Farms 2009 will deliver sound environmental performance in the planning, design, construction and management of broiler farms. The new code outlines clearer requirements and standards to guide the assessment of broiler farming, particularly to those making a planning permit application.

It also includes changes to separation distances and boundary setback requirements that are more straightforward. These changes provide more clarity for industry, which is vitally important, but also for the

community and for local government. At the end of the day that clarity will give people a lot more confidence about what can and cannot happen in these systems.

A review of the code was announced in 2006 to ensure the code remained relevant and reflected the latest industry best practice, but which also took into account environmental standards and relevant knowledge of the industry. A draft code was available for comment from March to May, and submissions and feedback were invited and received from interested parties. No doubt this has led to much more consideration of the impact of broiler farming, particularly on neighbouring properties.

It is important that we ensure economic viability. No doubt when members of the opposition are biting into their chicken schnitzels at lunchtime today they will not necessarily appreciate where the chickens came from but they probably came from one of the various broiler farms around Melbourne. Often these places are located either in interface areas or in rural areas, and also in interface locations around the perimeter of some of our provincial centres.

It is important that we support the industry and the jobs, and of course support the food production that goes with it. It is very important that everybody has security and certainty about what can and cannot take place. It is a part of amendment V060 which also includes a number of other initiatives, particularly in relation to renewable energy, solar and wind energy, oceans and waterways.

When we talk about oceans, it again reminds me of *Gilligan's Island*, Mr Lenders. It is good to clarify oceans and waterways because we know the opposition is marooned or stranded in opposition, and has been so for some time. The amendment also gives clarity around the agricultural industry and also about native vegetation.

It shows our commitment to more than just housing and the urban initiatives that need to take place. It is our commitment to agriculture, to production and to all those initiatives that are vitally important to jobs and food production in Victoria, so we can make Victoria — and commit to making Victoria — the best place to live, work and raise a family.

Hazardous waste: Tullamarine

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Environment and Climate Change and is in regard to the Tullamarine toxic tip. The government, EPA (Environment

Protection Authority) and TPI (Transpacific Industries Group), the owners of the tip site, have made many statements and promises over the past year that they will work with the community in a cooperative and transparent way.

I have attended two meetings of TLRAC (Tullamarine Landfill Rehabilitation Advisory Committee), the last one being on 8 September, as an observer. What I saw at the meetings were the residents being patronised by the consultants employed by the government to run the process, and a refusal of the EPA and TPI to supply basic information.

On behalf of the residents I ask the minister to explain why the EPA is allowing a cap to be put on this toxic landfill that the residents believe is less robust and safe than what is required for municipal landfill?

Mr JENNINGS (Minister for Environment and Climate Change) — I thank Ms Hartland for her question and for her ongoing concern about the wellbeing of people in the west, and particularly those people who live in proximity to the Tullamarine landfill site that is currently being rehabilitated by TPI (Transpacific Industries Group). It is doing so in a process that she quite rightly identifies is intended to be a collaborative one that brings local residents and interested parties together with the company which, along with the EPA, has the responsibility for rehabilitation of the site.

12:42 This is not the first time that Ms Hartland has raised questions in this chamber about that process and the important environmental outcomes and the confidence that needs to be built within the community. Given her perseverance and ongoing monitoring of the situation, I am very happy for her to continue to play that role and provide me with the opportunity to provide reports back to her, the rest of the chamber and the community.

I receive reports on the ongoing operations of this consultative mechanism, and I understand that there are contested views about the appropriateness and viability of the capping regime. At this point in time that is perhaps the most contentious issue between the various stakeholders and participants in that process. I continue to be advised by the EPA that the environmental assessment and the independent scrutiny that has been brought to bear on this proposed capping regime and the independent appraisal by international experts of the capping regime provide the EPA with the confidence to continue to provide me with confidence about the proposal. However, I understand that this information and analysis have not been to the satisfaction of a number of community activists who participate in the

consultation process. I know that there is ongoing information sharing and argument that surrounds the appropriateness of this capping regime, but I know also that the consultative committee has the degree of sophistication to have a number of agreed items on its agenda.

Whilst there is some quarantining of disputes within the framework at the moment in discussing the capping issue, as I understand it there are quite constructive conversations taking place about groundwater, and there has been a specific request for information about leachate and an expectation that that information will be provided in the near future. Certainly it is my expectation that the information that has been requested will be shared with the members of the consultative mechanism in the very near future.

At all times my interest in and scrutiny of this process have been trying to ensure that there is a meeting of minds and a greater degree of confidence and not only appropriate establishment of environmental outcomes but an inclusive process that engages the community. I am aware that there are ongoing disputes within the structure of that group, but I also understand that notwithstanding those disputes they have been able to find productive issues to work through constructively. I hope that ultimately that method that applies to those agreed agenda items may permeate the whole range of the issues that the group needs to work through.

Hopefully I have conveyed to Ms Hartland and other members of the chamber that I have an ongoing knowledge of what is being undertaken by this panel. I receive regular reports and have an expectation that the EPA and the consultants involved in this process will facilitate an ongoing, harmonious relationship that is an equal meeting of minds on information that is relevant to the considerations of the group.

Supplementary question

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — Unfortunately the meeting I attended last week was anything but what the minister just described. If it was a good, transparent process, why is it that I was required by residents to yesterday place on their behalf 20 questions on notice to the minister that had not been answered since they requested this information earlier in the year?

Mr JENNINGS (Minister for Environment and Climate Change) — I would not know. That is a pretty hypothetical question. It could be because Ms Hartland is an agent provocateur; it could be because she is

trying to do the right thing by the people in the community.

Ms Hartland — I would go for the second one.

Mr JENNINGS — I give Ms Hartland the benefit of the doubt just as I give the community the benefit of the doubt, that we are trying to work these things through properly. That is the spirit in which I will respond to them.

Innovation: government initiatives

Ms HUPPERT (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Innovation, Gavin Jennings. Could the minister please outline to the house how the Brumby Labor government is taking action to further Victoria's leadership in scientific research, development and commercialisation?

Mr JENNINGS (Minister for Innovation) — I thank Ms Huppert for her question and the opportunity to briefly report to the house about an important part of the Victorian Science Agenda. As members of this chamber have heard me speak about many times, the combination of the Brumby and Bracks governments in the last 10 years has invested something in the order of \$3 billion to support a science-based innovation agenda across Victoria. That will lead to infrastructure of greater capability to support our science agenda, high value-added products and services that come out of our community to assist our medical research institutes to develop their capabilities and to have great research facilities in which our very talented scientists can work and develop their skills and responses to some of the many public policy challenges that confront our community, whether they be in the medical field or in terms of sustainability or productivity.

Earlier this year as part of the Victorian Science Agenda I launched a \$41 million fund to provide support to the industry and its institutes through the Victorian Science Agenda Investment Fund, which was designed to support industry-led initiatives in terms of dealing with specific projects and proposals that we are currently seeking to support through the community. In the last week we have added to the armoury of that program with the \$25 million strategic projects fund, which is part of that allocation and seeks expressions of interest from our research institutions and university sector, those who have the capability of developing world-leading technologies, to apply to that fund for strategic leveraging investment to underpin the development of that infrastructure. We are hoping those institutes will take that opportunity. The expressions of interest process is open until 16 October, when we will

assess the first round and then take those proposals further in November.

We are also seeking to obtain matching funding and other leveraging funding from the commonwealth. There is a number of commonwealth programs that may support greater levels of investment coming into Victoria. Whether they be through the Australian Research Council's Centres of Excellence program, the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy or the CRC (cooperative research centres) program, there is a number of commonwealth programs that we think can augment our investments in Victoria and lead to higher science proliferating in Victoria.

There have been a couple of demonstrations of the quality of our science just during the last few weeks. From the commonwealth's perspective, I can say that when the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) sat down recently to consider the 8000 projects across Australia that are currently being undertaken through funding through the NHMRC, they selected the top 10 projects across Australia and 4 of those top 10 were in Victoria. That is one measure of our science capability.

When you cross-reference that with fellowships that have been allocated by the Australian Research Council recently, 60 of the 200 research fellowships across Australia were allocated in Victoria. Not only does that provide encouragement to our emerging scientists but it is associated with \$43 million of funding to support their work.

Whether it be through the direct investment of the Victorian government working in collaboration with our teaching institutions, medical research institutions and the commonwealth, there is a very high degree of investment in building capability in Victoria and added to through our collaborative engagement with the commonwealth government. The Brumby government is certainly very pleased to be providing such leadership and support for high science, high value-added jobs, great goods and services, and medical responses to meet markets and provide for a better quality of life for not only our citizens but citizens around the world.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Now is a convenient time for us to break for lunch, but prior to going, I have been remiss. Someone tried to steal my thunder this morning by announcing that it is Mrs Kronberg's birthday. She has done a runner, but we wish her a happy birthday.

Sitting suspended 12.52 p.m. until 2.03 p.m.

VICTORIAN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS AND MUSIC: COURSES

Debate resumed.

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — Before the break I was referring to a Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) briefing paper put together by Save the VCA, and I mentioned that the University of Melbourne had on amalgamation acquired significant assets valued at some \$103 million. It has been quoted in other places that the university is charging the VCA \$6 million per year and that the shortfall in the VCA budget is around \$6 million a year. One would have to ask: why can that situation not be remedied by not charging that rent to the VCA, given that it had substantial property holdings which are now in the hands of the university?

I have seen a few tables of figures supplied by the university — by Professor Pretty and from other sources. They all vary slightly; the funding and the accounting processes could be described as ‘clear as mud’. They probably need to be more transparent and open so that the community, everybody who is involved and we in the Parliament can make informed decisions about what is happening. I am putting on the record today the concerns raised by the Save the VCA campaign in regard to the funding, which as I mentioned before is really the nub of the issue. There are also challenges to the traditions and the pedagogy around the VCA.

I said earlier that the VCA logo was meant to be retained; it was not retained. The vibrant VCA graduation ceremony where each school performed was meant to remain; it has not remained and was replaced this year by the standard university ceremony with only one musical piece. Another issue raised by the Save the VCA campaign — and this is one I wonder about — is that under the heads of agreement the VCA integration committee is meant to meet not less than once per year. It is not clear how often it is meeting or what it is doing, but one would think that given the recent unrest and problems that have come to light with the amalgamation it should be meeting more often — and in a public and open way. I am not sure what the situation is regarding that.

The VCA undergraduate study program uses an across-arts program which comprises 12.5 per cent of the course. Some people have said that increasing it to 25 per cent to accommodate the Melbourne model and leaving 75 per cent of the course to teach specialist skills could be part of a compromise, but I would have to say — and I know that is something Minister Kosky

has put to the University of Melbourne — that it is not clear to me that 75 per cent is a magic figure.

It is a significant reduction in the practical component of the VCA course, or it would be if that were to be implemented, so I would still have concerns about making that the benchmark figure. I think it is more an issue of the requirements of the courses to meet the needs of the students in their various chosen professions. Basing the practical component on a benchmark figure of 75 per cent may or may not be useful, but it is not clear to me that it is entirely useful.

I also have some budget figures on the VCA. If you look at those figures and do a comparison, you find there are some interesting things to note. Between 2002 and 2009 commonwealth government financial assistance was reduced from almost \$15 million to less than \$8 million. Victorian government financial assistance was around \$9 million in 2002 and by 2005 was reduced to \$17 000; it now does not exist at all. The total income of the VCA has fallen from \$33 million in 2002 to \$17 million now. That definitely shows a shortfall in funding. That, as I said, is the crux of the issue. That income is made up from course fees, investment income, research training, institutional grants et cetera, including miscellaneous other revenue. That shortfall — funding has basically been halved — is the crux of the problem that we need to look at.

The VCA has also raised the issue of scholarship trust money. The former VCA and the former faculty of music had substantial trust funds awarded to students across a broad range of disciplines and expertise. The university says it takes the management of those funds seriously and has strict legal requirements governing them. I am sure it does, but I do not think it is clear to everyone whether the trust funds transferred to the University of Melbourne on integration are being allocated directly to the VCA. That is something that we could certainly do with clarification of from the university.

The university has claimed in its publication *Debunking the Myths* that the key planks of the curriculum of the former VCA have not been reviewed for more than 30 years and that a move to the Melbourne model will address temporary education imperatives and initiate curriculum innovation. However, the reality is that the school and its curriculum of the school have continually been updated. The premise upon which the school has been based is that you learn by doing. That is the part that does not work so well for the university model.

I will later say a bit more about the figures that have been presented to me by the university, but without

14:07

going into too much more detail about those figures it is worth noting that the Save the VCA campaign is asking that we as parliamentarians note that from its point of view the VCA is being put under extreme pressure through the university applying standardised accounting practices to a small faculty located on a big campus and that Save the VCA wishes parliamentarians to consider the acknowledged value of the VCA and ensure that the university charges the VCA a more standard rate of overheads and no rent. The campaigners ask our help to secure the VCA's future so that Victoria continues to lead the way in the arts. I agree with that sentiment. That is why we are having this debate today.

I mentioned earlier that I met with the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance and with the National Tertiary Education Union and that they put their concerns to me. I will summarise them: that the VCA has had an internationally respected tradition of training quality practitioners in the arts for 37 years and has operated independently, pursuing a culture of elite training for its students; that the VCA is the last full arts college in Australia that offers rigorous training in specified arts fields; that it is facing cuts of \$11 million next year; and that the schools of dance, drama, film and television, music production and the visual arts are set to be dissolved into three schools that offer a generalised Melbourne creative arts degree — the kind of degree that is available at any institution. That is not why people aspire to attend the VCA. It will see them preferring to attend other specialist schools, such as the National Institute of Dramatic Art or the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, and thus Victoria will lose its talented artists. That is a real fear and consequence of what appears to be happening with the amalgamation.

The unions' concerns were put as follows:

The primacy of the multidisciplinary focus of the VCAM curriculum may be undermined as a result of the introduction of the Melbourne model;

the integrity of the VCAM as a specialist teaching institution may be under threat due to a failure of the University of Melbourne to uphold undertakings made in the 2006 heads of agreement;

substantial changes are being made to individual course offerings without extensive consultation with students or the arts community; and

funding constraints exacerbated by the rigid implementation of the responsible division management (RDM) policy is threatening VCAM's ability to provide high-quality vocational and specialist training.

I know that the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance and the National Tertiary Education Union have been

doing their best to meet with the university and with the dean to raise these issues on behalf of students.

I mentioned earlier in my contribution that I met with Professor Pretty on 2 July; I thank her for putting aside time to meet with me and discuss the community's concerns. She said at the meeting — and I would not be breaching any confidence to read the main points from my notes of that meeting — that she is concerned with the budget deficit that is facing her as the dean, that has led to not rehiring casuals and to the suspension of the puppetry and musical theatre course.

14:15

She mentioned that it is intended that they may be incorporated into other courses and that no final decisions have been made. She assured me that individual one-to-one tutelage will continue and that she is looking at overseas models. She made the comment that the VCA-type courses are no longer current practice in training for the arts — I know that is a point that has been made about which there is certainly vigorous disagreement and debate — and that there will continue to be consultation with students and staff regarding the future directions. That is good to hear.

Certainly though we are hearing from staff and students that consultation has been limited, to say the least. I know that, for example, staff did not attend the rally that was held on the steps of Parliament House at which I and my colleague from the lower house, Heidi Victoria, spoke, as I mentioned before. We were both told at that rally that staff were not there because they were told not to attend.

Another person asked me over lunch, 'Are the staff behind the students in this campaign?' and I said, 'They are but you are hearing mainly from former staff because the current staff are either being directed or feel that they are unable to speak out'. We should never have such a situation in Australia. People should be free to speak out about what is concerning them in their employment and in terms of the future of the VCA. I make that point, I raise it as a concern and I encourage the dean and the university to remedy that situation if in fact that situation is coming from any directive on their part.

I also sought a meeting with vice-chancellor Davis but he was overseas, so Professor Bebbington, who is the pro vice-chancellor (global relations), agreed to meet with me. Again I thank him. We definitely had a frank discussion. I made some notes at the meeting; I discussed with him that I would be using them in this debate and he was agreeable to that. The points that he made, from the point of view of the university, were

that the issues of puppetry and musical theatre were best directed to the dean. I think I have discussed those already.

He made the point that the University of Melbourne

... has a proud history of supporting the performing arts and arts more broadly — we have had a successful music faculty and conservatorium for over a century, our 33 cultural collections and programs include the Melbourne Theatre Company, the Aust National Academy of Music, Meanjin Magazine, the Sidney Myer free orchestral concerts, and much more.

He said that the university:

... does not have a closed mind regarding the future structure and content of the courses at the VCA and M, and is soon to launch a quite open discussion process in which staff, students, community representatives, and representatives from the performing arts industry will all be involved.

That is great; that is good to hear. It is something that should have been happening earlier, but if the university is saying that is going to happen, we look forward to it. Certainly other speakers have mentioned they have heard that is going to happen. It would be good if it happened as soon as possible, that it was open and people were able to freely discuss it. From his point of view:

The university's obligations under the 2005 heads of agreement — to supplement the VCA funds until the end of 2011, and to make changes only as agreed by the VCA integration committee — have both been honoured, and will continue to be honoured.

He said further that the University of Melbourne:

... does not have a single, fixed 'Melbourne Model' which it is insisting should apply to VCA and M. The Melbourne Model courses are different in different fields. Engineering opted out for the first 12 months, the former faculty of the VCA indicated they did not wish to implement such a model before 2011, and both decisions were respected. The issue of 'breadth' is also misunderstood. Different courses have different approaches to breadth — and in any case the length and content of breadth is currently under review in the university itself.

He said:

... there is also no intention to abandon individual arts practice as the core of art-form education ... we wish to ensure the future VCAM courses compare with world's best practice, and have the full confidence of arts practitioners internally and externally.

If these commitments are adhered to, we may end up with a good outcome.

He also made the point that:

All universities are in financially difficult times, and in the present climate we have no choice but to live within the funds available from government and other sources.

He said that the subsidy to the VCAM, which is approximately \$18 million at present — another different figure:

... places a very real burden on the other faculties of the university, who must cross subsidize it. But beyond the present subsidy, VCA and M has its own \$1.3 m budget shortfall this year, which they must take steps to contain.

That is what Professor Pretty told me is the situation facing her.

I asked him about the situation on rent, and he wrote it was basically 'an accounting issue'. I agree; it is an accounting issue that can go one way or the other. It can be accounted out so that the VCA does not have to pay for it; or it can be accounted in, as it is at the moment. I thank him for his comments. I sense a bit of movement on the part of the university to listen and to hear what people are saying, and I think that is a good thing.

I wanted to make one small comment about the letter that was sent to all members by Professor Elliott. I will not repeat the comments that were made by Mr Atkinson, but the professor made the comment that she did not think it was appropriate for the Parliament to be discussing the courses at the university or what happens to the VCA. Apart from not really agreeing with that at all, I would say it is very much the role of this Parliament to discuss matters of public interest, and because this Parliament passed the act to amalgamate the VCA with the University of Melbourne — before I was a member here — it is incumbent on us to keep an eye on what is happening, because, as I mentioned earlier in my contribution, various speakers, including the Minister for the Arts, made commitments that the VCA would maintain its status and funding, and that is not what we are seeing. I do not agree with what Professor Elliott had to say in terms of that.

There is a lot to say — and I know I have been speaking for a while, but it is an important issue. It is very important that the Parliament puts on record the concerns of the community and what each side has said. I have made it my business to speak to all the sides — the university, the dean, the students and staff and to read everything that has been put out into the public realm about it.

We are at a turning point, and we now have an opportunity to decide whether the integrity of the VCA will be maintained or not maintained, depending on the actions taken from now on.

I mentioned that the university says there is going to be open consultation. That is a good thing. That consultation should include staff and students, and even alumni who could make a valuable contribution, as well as members of the arts industry. The current premise of those consultations seems to be people asking why the VCA should stay the way it is and the people who are supporting the VCA feeling that they have to defend it. There has been somewhat of an undermining of the VCA in statements made by the current dean, for example, that somehow the VCA's courses are not with it any more, that they are not the way they should be and that therefore change is needed. I would rather the premise be that the VCA has a great tradition, it has been working well and it has been producing fantastic artists, and that if there is any need to change it, then that argument needs to be made rather than the VCA having to defend its traditions. At the same time there needs to be a round table of relevant ministers who have some ability — —

Mrs Coote — State and federal?

Ms PENNICUIK — State and federal; thank you, Mrs Coote. There needs to be a round table of state and federal arts and education ministers who can make a difference and who should be making a difference. While these consultations are going on the ministers should be getting together to work out how the situation can be reclaimed and the autonomy of the VCA maintained. If the amalgamation has been a mistake, then a demerger should be considered.

Some speakers have mentioned NIDA (National Institute of Dramatic Art), and the NIDA model is one that could be looked at. For example, from 1959 to 1969 NIDA was funded by the commonwealth government through the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust with the addition of student fees. The University of New South Wales provided financial assistance as well as rent-free buildings and facilities, and the ABC provided training in radio. From 1970 to 1978 the Australia Council for the Arts provided commonwealth funds for NIDA. Between 1979 and 1981 NIDA was funded directly by the commonwealth Department of Education, and in 1982 NIDA's funding was transferred to the then Department of Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories, and now it is provided by the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, which is the responsibility of the minister, Peter Garrett.

Both NIDA and the VCA take students from around the country, so they are both national institutions, even though one is called national and one is called Victorian. There is a place for both of them, and we

need to ensure that the VCA maintains the place it has, because if the VCA is to disappear, the number of places available in Australia for the type of training it provides will also decrease.

I was disappointed to read in an article in the *Age* of 12 September that Premier Brumby has rejected calls for the state government to provide a financial lifeline to the VCA. He is reported as saying that it is not a matter for the state government, it is a federal funding matter. The article reports that Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard said it is not a federal funding matter; she has batted the issue back to the university and the state government. So far there has not been a lot of word from the federal arts minister, who should be looking at this problem.

Mrs Coote — It is not rock'n'roll!

Ms PENNICUIK — I am a great fan of rock'n'roll, Mrs Coote.

Mrs Coote — So am I.

Ms PENNICUIK — It is not good enough for all of this buck passing to be going on between state and federal ministers. On their watch the VCA could disappear, and that is the issue they should be turning their minds to. As Mr Atkinson acknowledged, the previous federal government made a mistake in removing the funding that was sustaining the VCA, and it is up to the current federal government to fix that problem and reinstate the funding.

I will make one more swipe at the state government and say that if the state government can continue to fund the grand prix — the cost of the event to the taxpayer has quadrupled since 2005 and is now expected to come in at \$50 million this year; it is an event that has very little public benefit; and claims by the government that it attracts tourism have been pooh-poohed by the Auditor-General, who has said there is no evidence that that is the case — similar amounts of money could be provided by the state government to support the VCA.

I thank all of the students and staff who have written to me, sent me emails and called me. I pay tribute to the people who are running the campaign to save the VCA, and I will continue to do whatever I can to support them. I thank Mr Atkinson for bringing this motion forward. I hope the government takes note of the level of concern in the community about this issue, and I hope that both state and federal governments can find the funds and find a way for the amalgamation to work in such a way that the VCA remains autonomous and remains the fantastic institution it always has been, turning out great artists in Australia.

14:32

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — On 21 August on the steps of Parliament House, together with the member for Bayswater in the other place, Heidi Victoria, and Sue Pennicuik, who has just spoken on this motion, we were joined by probably 500 supporters of the Victorian college of the arts (VCA). Those young, progressive, fresh, vibrant, creative and passionate supporters were an inspiration. Their speeches were about the importance of the VCA, not just to the state but to Australia and the international arts world. At the conclusion of the highly successful rally, they danced to a song; I will not attempt to sing it but it was *I'm Gonna Live Forever* from the musical *Fame*. I will read the first verse because it encapsulates what is happening:

Baby, look at me
And tell me what you see
You ain't seen the best of me yet.
Give me time,
I'll make you forget the rest.
I got more in me,
And you can set it free
I can catch the moon in my hand
Don't you know who I am?

The refrain is:

Remember, remember, remember, remember.

We are remembering in this chamber, thanks to this excellent motion moved by Mr Atkinson, because many of us in this place debated the bill that proposed to amalgamate the Victorian college of the arts with Melbourne University. During that debate members spoke about how important it was that the VCA maintained its integrity. We are now discussing the very concerns that we had with the bill. Members were most concerned that the VCA would be swallowed up by the academic Melbourne University, that it would be swamped and its artistic standards and creativity would be lost, as Ms Pennicuik said, to Victoria forever.

The VCA is in my electorate. It is an institution that has a very long and valued history. I remind members it evolved out of the technical schools from the then Prahran Technical College, now Swinburne University of Technology. It started as a skills-based school. It was for those who had expert skills such as in lighting, set design, costume design — practical hands-on skills that make it essential if we are going to mount excellent productions in this state.

It developed and grew, which we were all pleased to see. The expertise of the VCA has been known internationally at the highest of levels and builds on the issue that in Victoria we are the arts capital of Australia, that it is not just our performing arts but all the other work that goes on in the background as well.

On the same site of the VCA was the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary College. More recently the member for Bayswater, Heidi Victoria, in the other place and I visited the new site of the VCA secondary college. I want to relate what we found there. We found young, clever, artistic people doing the most wonderful work. There were young teenage men dancing, young girls using musical instruments and also doing secondary college subjects such as science, maths and other study.

At that time the principal spoke to us and said that these students were looking to move to the VCA when they completed their secondary schooling at the VCA secondary college. The reality for these young students at the college was that had they been in mainstream schools listening to classical musical or dancing, in the case of the young boys, they would have been ridiculed. They would have been ridiculed by the rest of their classmates and would not have had a chance to shine and show the excellent skills they had.

The principal was concerned that because of the situation with the VCA those young students were being plucked by the Western Australia performing arts, NIDA (National Institute of Dramatic Art) and New Zealand. They would not stay in Victoria because the VCA was no longer providing them with the sort of structure and courses they needed to be able to show and continue the excellence they were achieving. This was a major concern for the very heartland and growth area of arts and artistic people in this state.

Right at the beginning this is an important aspect. It is salutary to look at when this issue was first mooted. An enormous amount of detail was put out at that time. The cynic in me says it now looks like empty rhetoric. I refer to an article in the *Age* of 9 December 2005, which states:

The VCA council's president, Ian McRae, says Melbourne University's vice-chancellor, Glyn Davis, views the integration as the addition of an arts jewel to the university. 'Stability is the most important benefit of the move' ...

which is a very long way from the truth we are facing today. In fact, Glyn Davis's point of view is quite different from the point of view expressed in this article. The principal of the VCA, Andrea Hull, was reported in this article as having said:

... the VCA has also developed a common curriculum for all the schools -another world first.

She went on to say:

We want artists to be able to thrive, not just survive...

As I said before, the cynic in me says that this is pure rhetoric, because that is exactly what they are trying to undermine as we speak on this motion today.

An article by Robin Usher, printed in the *Age* of 5 December 2005, warns about amalgamation. He is talking about amalgamation with Melbourne University as a major concern, and the article states:

‘It has the potential to be the biggest and best musical school in Australia’, says ... Professor Barry Sheehan, but warns about the danger of ‘destroying each other in the process’.

I suggest the VCA is being destroyed in this process. It is incumbent upon the members of this place through this motion to make certain that the chamber works collaboratively so that the VCA and its excellence in all of its programming is protected into the future.

14:40 In September 2006 an article appeared in the *Australian* about the Melbourne model. The article states:

Unlike so many of their tertiary-trained peers, VCA students learn in flexible environments that focus on individual nurturing of often extraordinary innate artistic talents.

...

Says Ian McRae —

again! —

‘The VCA’s great strengths are its studio teaching model, its talent-based entry and the fact there are six schools on the one campus.

That is how it should remain — or should have remained.

I turn to the current debate and some of the articles that have been written recently about this issue. I refer members to another article by Robin Usher which appeared in the *Age* of Monday, 13 April. The article is about the new dean of the college of the arts, Professor Pretty. The article states that her ‘grand plans for VCA’ are to:

Merge the music schools at the college and the University of Melbourne to create Australia’s largest music faculty.

Share \$11 million a year from the budget.

Create general three-year undergraduate fine arts or music degrees.

Halve the number of schools at VCA from six to three.

Build a new centre for the study of music and opera.

Find a better name for the Faculty of VCA and Music.

Nowhere does this dean talk about excellence of performance. Nowhere does she talk about the artistic

talent of the young people or of the dedication of the teachers. In her vision we are not hearing about excellence and creativity: this is her statement and her vision, and creativity and passion have been left out of it.

Members of Save the VCA have managed to get a copy of the business plan, which shows the reality of what is to be expected. On pages 3 and 4, point 1.2 under the heading ‘The Need for Change’, the plan states:

To move to a less intensive teaching delivery model that aligns to the university academic calendar.

Development of an interim professional staff structure which merges the professional staff from the Faculty of the VCA and the Faculty of Music, and associated costings of salary savings and redundancies plus new proposed professional positions.

Analysis and modelling of projected salary saving targets for academic staff to enable achievement of a student staff ratio of 12:1 over 3 years and communication of the savings targets to be achieved to Faculty Executive.

Once again, where is the creativity? Where is the nurturing and understanding of a very valuable resource, our creative young artists of the future? They are nowhere to be seen in the business plan.

The current debate has been excellent, because it has raised the level of debate and the awareness of the VCA amongst us all. Such people as Geoffrey Rush have been very important in this public debate. On 21 August at a Save VCA rally he said:

Where are the open statements, where is the public debate on an issue which has become so undeniably controversial ... I can’t get past that there is a smell in the air that the Melbourne model has an economic rather than an artistic priority ...

I think this is the absolute truth. Geoffrey Rush has been involved with the VCA for a very long time, and I think he has encapsulated it all. This is about economics, not about art. If we succumb in this state and do not look at bolstering our arts, we run a very grave risk of having a second-rate arts program at the VCA and indeed in Victoria.

As Ms Pennicuik has said, we plough an enormous amount of money into sport in this state — not just the grand prix but into sport right across the spectrum. It is about time we matched this with sufficient, long-term sustainable funding for the arts. I am not usually in furious agreement with members of the Labor Party, but in this instance I am — with Dr Race Mathews, a former Victorian Minister for the Arts. With 10 former living arts ministers he has been lobbying this very government on this matter. An article in the *Age* of 9 September quotes him as saying:

Successive Victorian governments have made significant investment in magnificent arts infrastructure — the NGV, the Arts Centre, the museum, the Melbourne recital Centre —

that is debatable —

and support a wide range of festivals and arts companies.

They recognised that this investment is just one part of what makes Victorian life, culture and arts industries remarkable. Yet they also recognised that the infrastructure would be under-used, and the arts groups unsustainable, without the constant renewal which comes with each generation of aspiring artists.

It is the generation of aspiring artists who we are fighting for today, and it is absolutely imperative that we continue to do just that.

Having read many of the student blogs on this debate, I can see that they seem to take the attitude that the Labor Party has control over the arts, but I would dispute that. If we are talking about arts ministers, we only have to look at former Liberal Premier Sir Rupert Hamer to see the excellent work he did with the arts.

People in the arts community will even say they support Jeff Kennett for the amazing work he did as arts minister, by giving the arts the priority they deserved by placing the arts portfolio with the Premier's portfolio. This Premier has not seen fit to do that, and we are seeing a consequence of that. The present Minister for the Arts has the transport portfolio as well, and we all know that transport in this state is in a parlous state — it is absolutely appalling — and she is doing her level best to make certain the arts are following in the same direction.

The Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, Mr Baillieu, has pledged to save the VCA. He has said that when the Liberals win the next election, funding of \$6 million a year will be raised and that that promise will be met. He has said he is fully supportive of the VCA. My understanding is that Minister Kosky and a number of people met recently. It would seem that the federal arts minister, Mr Rock'n'Roll — Peter Garrett — does not want to put in any additional funding and wants no intervention from the state.

The fact is that he is not going to be helping this situation at all. It is fairly simple. All this government needs to do is stop spending on spin and advertising and put some of the millions of dollars it is using on advertising such things as empty dams into the arts. Spending \$6 million on the arts when compared to the tens of millions being spent on advertising is literally a drop in the ocean.

It really is very distressing that we have to be here today to talk about this motion, because it should have been resolved more simply than this. Everyone agrees that the VCA is an excellent institution that has been at the heart of Victorian arts for a considerable time. Former ministers, people in the arts community and members of this chamber all agree furiously that the VCA is important to us all.

Recently young filmmaker Robbie McEwen accepted a degree in front of the vice-chancellor of Melbourne University, Glyn Davis. He said:

People could thank the University of Melbourne for ripping the heart out of the VCA.

It is incumbent upon the house to make sure the heart of the VCA is not ripped out. I will finish my contribution where I started — from *Fame*:

I feel it coming together
 People will see me and cry
 Fame!
 I'm gonna make it to heaven
 Light up the sky like a flame
 Fame!
 I'm gonna live forever
 Baby remember my name
 I feel it coming together, dance, light up the sky like a forever
 Baby remember your name.

VCA, we will remember your name!

Debate interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

The PRESIDENT — Order! I wish to bring to the attention of the house the presence in the gallery of Mr Neil Lucas, a former member for the upper house seat of Eumemmerring in this place.

VICTORIAN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS AND MUSIC: COURSES

Debate resumed.

Mr JENNINGS (Minister for Environment and Climate Change) — What is wrong with the VCA (Victorian college of the arts)? It punishes its students with afternoon detention by having them listen to debates in the Parliament of Victoria. Obviously it is a vexatious organisation that wants to punish its students.

However, beyond that, the VCA has an outstanding pedigree and commitment to a whole suite of arts and to the ability of our people to tell our stories. We need to be able to move our citizens by having people come

and immerse themselves in the stories of this country and to immerse themselves in the rich talents we have within our community. We should have every reason to be proud about that. I think that is the one uniting moment of this protracted debate, which probably could have done with a good edit.

14:50 It has probably had too many words and not enough action. Nonetheless it is a debate in which there has been some meeting of minds across the chamber about the aspiration of the community and a civilised society such as Victoria's to have within it a centre for excellence in the arts. I think every contribution that has been made to this debate so far has dug deep and found that connection between us all. What I would encourage us all to do is to find the way in which we can use that recognition, spirit and connection to identify the solution to the range of problems that have led us to this motion today.

Unfortunately given many political frameworks and some paradigms, in terms of outlining and doing justice to the passion and cause we are mobilised about, sometimes we spend a disproportionate amount of time worshipping the problem as distinct from identifying the solution. I think that is something that has bedevilled this debate for some period of time. I am not apportioning any blame in relation to that, but too many people have spent their time — —

Mrs Peulich — You are a smooth talker. Why don't you get in on the act early?

Mr JENNINGS — There are some acts I would be quite happy to be a participant in. If there are acts that might be facilitating an outcome in relation to this matter, I would be very happy to provide a supportive role. It is the way in which that is — —

Mrs Peulich — Are you an extra today?

Mr JENNINGS — Certainly you are. In fact I would have thought if there were anyone who had had some experience in theatre sports, Mrs Peulich, it was you, because your timely interjections to try to either keep this debate ticking over or to paralyse it with an air of tension you create in the debate is quite exemplary.

Mrs Peulich — I am glad my skills are appreciated.

Mr JENNINGS — You are noticed — if not in fact appreciated — by the gallery. One of the issues we all have is whether we play to the gallery or do the business. There is a bit of work — —

Mr Atkinson interjected.

Mr JENNINGS — I reckon, Mr Atkinson, you might know there is a gallery here. I reckon we might have created the form to enable us to position rather than resolve. That is what I wanted to make a contribution to — the motion. There are some issues that need to be addressed. Clearly there was an expectation established when the Victorian College of the Arts joined the University of Melbourne. The relevant bill passed through this Parliament, and because of that and because it is a matter of importance for the Parliament of Victoria, of course it should be discussed here. Anybody who is confused about that clearly does not understand how a vibrant democracy works. Having said that, I wonder whether there is some preciousness about in regard to what this scrutiny might bring and whether in fact it is a useful contribution, because everybody tries to spin the story in their own particular way.

Whose fault is this situation? Ultimately the fault relates to a couple of things happening in coincidence over a four or five-year time frame. One was the alignment of the VCA with the University of Melbourne in an environment where sufficient funding was not provided by the commonwealth government to enable the college to maintain its core capability, its curriculum and its support of students in the ways it wanted. Clearly there was a monumental problem in the way in which the funding arrangements worked. That was a problem the then federal education minister, Brendan Nelson, introduced, and no federal minister has resolved that since. That is clear. Beyond that there is the integration of the way in which the course, curriculum and key activities of the VCA work and are reconciled with the introduction of the Melbourne model. There has been some competition in relation to the way in which subjects should be taught and the connection between the breadth of the program and the need to specialise. Those two factors have actually been seen as in conflict rather than capable of being reconciled.

There is certainly not a meeting of minds about where those courses and that interaction should take place. Trench warfare has been established about the location of where these things will happen and their morphing into the broader dimensions of a program the Melbourne model is hoping to achieve and provide to a broader cross-section of students into the future. I lament that there has not been a space where there could be a reconciliation of those philosophical, financial and logistical arrangements or a prism through which all relevant stakeholders could feel their contributions were being heard simultaneously and considered.

Mr Atkinson — Too little consultation.

Mr JENNINGS — We can drill down and give it a label, Mr Atkinson, but ultimately there is a complex basket of issues that need to be resolved. About the University of Melbourne, to which I have already given a bit of a backhander in my contribution, we cannot say simply in respect of the way it constructs its finances and cost-shares across schools whether it is appropriate for it to skew its resources. I reckon there has been an inbuilt assumption on the part of many people, who are quite rightly passionate advocates of the VCA, which has perhaps not fully recognised that problem. It is a problem. There are many benefits to the Melbourne model. It has had a lot of teething problems but there are many benefits in relation to broadening the hearts and minds of students. Ironically you would assume that the type of student who would go through the VCA would be receptive to the notion that students should generally have a greater appreciation of hearts and minds and a greater awareness of philosophical issues to bring to their discipline and that that be a part of their education.

There has been no space for that conversation to be resolved in a way that builds confidence and moves through the range of issues in a concerted, coherent fashion. I have a vantage point and a perspective gained from interventions on a number of occasions; I have an interest, not that it is always recognised, in the wellbeing of the film component of the program. Through that capacity I have met with a number of stakeholders, and on every occasion in my conversations I have restated my desire to try to help reconcile matters and establish a framework that that enables these issues to be worked through.

I know my colleague the Minister for the Arts has been trying to achieve this. I am absolutely clear on that, because I have had conversations with her privately in the context of our various responsibilities and of how she will assume responsibility for dealing with these matters on behalf of the Victorian government as well as trying to find avenues where this may be remedied.

14:57 Many of the remedies in Mr Atkinson's motion have already been tried in a variety of ways. They have not got through the perceived impasse which is the subject of ongoing scrutiny. There is obviously work to be done, but given how the President originally perceived this debate might proceed I think there is far more of a meeting of minds than might otherwise have been anticipated.

Ultimately, in relation to how this should progress in the future, this morning I was mindful of the best way

to embark upon this. In terms of political activity you probably need to have an organising principle. Some people might see that in Machiavelli, some in Marx and some through other prisms. I will just drop it down to popular colloquial action starting with Dale Carnegie and the notion of how to win friends and influence people. That is the starting point. It is not necessarily always essential to have successful political outcomes through that method, but it is useful. People should not adopt the method of Mark, known as Chopper, Read, who wrote a book entitled *How to Shoot Friends and Influence People*, and certainly not the method advocated by Simon Pegg in his film *How to Lose Friends and Alienate People*. Ultimately, to resolve this matter we will have to get some people in the room to work these things through and there will have to be some give and take.

On where I come from on this issue, there are people associated with progressive outcomes, who see themselves as part of a forward guard of enlightenment or experience. I encourage people to embrace some degree of change, because when you do that and steer the change you — —

Mrs Coote — You could embrace a change of government.

Mr JENNINGS — I do not think that is a cost the people of Victoria will be prepared to make — regardless of my view, I do not think so. I think a half-baked or lesser solution that may have been proposed and put into the political — —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr JENNINGS — Let go of the balloon of the \$6 million. That will not fix the problem. That political balloon will not necessarily establish a political momentum which will see the downfall of the government. I am not responding to this issue, as important as it is, through the prism of worrying about where the political fortunes may lie. There is substantive work that needs a resolution, and it is will be resolved by the wit and wherewithal of the University of Melbourne and its constituent units, which include people who have an active and ongoing interest in this. It will involve the wit and wherewithal of the Victorian government trying to encourage the commonwealth government to face up to its share of responsibility and respond to a quite reasonable claim by many people from all parts of the debate in relation to the appropriate degree of financial support that the commonwealth should provide to the Victorian college of the arts.

Mrs PETROVICH (Northern Victoria) — I wish to start my contribution by congratulating the previous speaker on showing some signs of encouragement. It is amazing what sort of response you get when you have a conversation going. However, I think it is a little late. There has been an enormous discussion around this for quite a long time now, and the government has come to the table a little late. There has been a very short-sighted approach to the whole issue of the Victorian college of the arts both by the government and Melbourne University. It is clearly an economic issue. It is about rationalising courses and a \$6 million shortfall.

The disappointing part is that in the past three years alone VCA alumni have directed or produced \$172 million worth of drama and documentary projects in Victoria. They produced 24 per cent, wrote 33 per cent, directed 43 per cent, shot 28 per cent and edited 21 per cent of all drama and documentary projects in the state. That is — —

Mrs Coote — Fantastic!

Mrs PETROVICH — It is pretty impressive, Mrs Coote. From a \$250 000 investment by the state six years ago in establishing VCE production courses, the VCA has trained producers who at the start of their careers have brought over \$3.5 million worth of productions to Victoria. These are very impressive figures. Many of these careers will be cut short as a result of this homogenising of arts teaching in Victoria. As with many things that this government has introduced, it is a one-size-fits-all approach and there is a lack of acknowledgement of the diversity of skills and the amount of practical experience required so that we have these brilliant young people who provide us with not only a source of entertainment but also economy benefits that Victoria has grown to rely on. This industry is something that Melbourne has become known for. We need to support the industry we are all so proud of. Melbourne is known for its culture and performance-based arts, and it should be acknowledged that these artists tend to live and work in the community they have trained in.

I believe the economics are obvious. To have a strong, locally based pool of performers saves an enormous amount of money in relocation and travel, and it is much more sustainable from an artist's and the industry's perspective. I am very proud of Melbourne and Victoria and its ability to produce world-class films and productions that I believe rival some of the Hollywood movies and Broadway shows because there is a realness about what we do here. Very clearly that sets those films and productions apart from what is

produced elsewhere. To maintain that we need to ensure that our graduates are emerging with the skills that ensure that the work they can produce is relevant to the industry. They need qualifications to make sure they are task-ready, so that when they graduate they can go into their chosen field and perform. Unfortunately, under the Melbourne model many students will graduate from this course without practical experience and will not be ready to go straight into performing. We need to emphasise the value of this training, which is about underlining the creative, economic, social and artistic benefits to Victoria.

This is all about money. The \$6 million shortfall we talk about is a very real issue, and I think that is why we have ended up in this position. In the 10 years of this Labor government we have had 25 new taxes. If it is about dollars and the shortfall, maybe we should also be lobbying the Treasurer, who is in the house at the moment. If you look at some of the revenue that is being raised, you see that payroll tax on apprentices and trainees has raised an additional \$336 million since 2003 and police fines have increased by 397 per cent to \$492 million. This government has collected billions in taxes, charges and tolls, and it has wasted an enormous amount of money. If this is about economic rationalisation and a \$6 million shortfall for a course, then we should be ashamed of ourselves. When you start looking at what this course produces in the way of careers and input into the economy and joie de vivre for Victoria and Melbourne, it is a disgrace.

If you look at some of the quotes from the people who have supported this campaign, you see that there is an enormous depth of talent in the people who have got behind the VCA program. The alumni include Geoffrey Rush, Noni Hazlehurst, Julia Zemiro, Stuart McDonald and John Powell.

A series of former arts ministers of all political persuasions have stood up for this excellent program.

15:07

I would like to highlight that the Victorian government, based on commitments contained in a heads of agreement document between the VCA and the University of Melbourne, passed the Melbourne University (Victorian College of the Arts) Act 2006, and VCA became a faculty of the University of Melbourne in January 2007. It then amalgamated with the faculty of music to become the faculty of VCA and music, or VCAM, and Professor Sharman Pretty became the dean in 2009. Whatever had gone on before, the culmination of this series of events has been a disaster.

In 2011 VCAM will move to the Melbourne model, which requires 25 per cent of undergraduate course content to come from another faculty. There is talk about 'breadth subjects'. Unfortunately, people studying for performing arts degrees probably do not need breadth subjects; they probably need specialist expertise. The example supplied on ABC TV by VCAM's dean, which has been used previously, was that a musician might study psychology because the psychology of how you manage your nerves and focus on your playing is a critical part of the training of a musician. That is quite unusual and probably quite irrelevant. I will not play to the gallery, but I found it amusing.

At 1.2 of pages 3 and 4, VCAM's business plan for 2010 shows the modelling of undergraduate courses from 2011. With the 25 per cent breadth subjects and a 25 per cent reduction in teaching hours, with semesters going from 16 weeks to 12 weeks — I am painting a picture here —, the practical arts training components of the Melbourne model's VCAM degrees will be 56.25 per cent of what is currently being taught. The possible introduction of further generalist subjects, which has been discussed with some staff, would reduce practical training content to below 50 per cent.

The popular music theatre degree has already been suspended in its inaugural year, as has Australia's only degree in puppetry.

An honourable member — Shame!

Mrs PETROVICH — It is a shame. There are fabulous productions with internationally trained actors, such as *Avenue Q*, that are great examples of the talent that is available, but that sort of training will be denied to our young arts students in Victoria.

There is also a concern about the practicalities of the Melbourne model's three-year undergraduate plus two-year postgraduate structure, particularly for age-sensitive career paths such as dance. This is in contrast to Dean Pretty's public statements, which suggest that, unlike 20 years ago, few people go into a job after only three years of study; now that it is usually five years. It shows a lack of understanding about a performer's working life and the physicality that is involved in many of the performance arts that we are talking about.

Mr Viney — I wish you would talk to your leader about people reading speeches.

Mrs PETROVICH — I am reading from copious notes, and I mentioned that I was quoting.

Mr Viney interjected.

Mrs PETROVICH — This is a very serious issue, Mr Viney.

The PRESIDENT — Order!

Mrs PETROVICH — Through you, President, it is important to ensure that one's performance life, particularly in dance, is maximised. The extension of a course reduces a performer's performing life by a significant number of years, particularly when you are spreading the expertise of that course very thinly. We need to understand that the body can maintain its physicality in some of these disciplines for only a period of time, and time is crucial in a performer's working life.

I am going to quote again, for Mr Viney's benefit, from the briefing paper, which refers to UoM (University of Melbourne). Importantly: There are multiple breaches of the agreement on which government approved the integration including that:

UoM would maintain and strengthen funding for VCA's activities: UoM has put the VCA in the untenable position of having to come up with an extra \$6 million of rent —

which has been discussed previously and will increase in the coming year, and —

... forcing staff cuts that threaten the quality of teaching.

No alignment of VCA's funding to other faculties until after a review in the fifth year of integration ...

UOM would recognise bringing the distinctive pedagogy of the VCA into UOM: The new dean has publicly sought to dismiss the VCA as an entity — e.g. 'the VCA no longer existed' (The Age 21/05/09). The jargon now used is 'VCAM, formerly known as the VCA'. The Melbourne model's introduction from 2011 and the loss of courses (music theatre and puppetry) are in direct opposition to VCA's longstanding focus on providing elite, specialised, intensive training across the arts spectrum.

The VCA logo would be retained: The logo was removed in April 2009.

The graduation ceremony where each school performs would remain: Removed in 2009.

None of these promises has held water. All of this has been withdrawn, and I hold accountable the government and those members sitting opposite who have sought to trivialise this issue today.

It has been interesting to see the duckshoving around ministerial responsibility for the arts. Minister Kosky has tried to shove responsibility back to the federal government Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Peter Garrett. When a colleague in the other

place wrote to the Minister for Skills and Workforce Participation about the economic benefits to the community coming directly from the arts, the minister, on 22 August 2006, spoke glowingly about participation, commending the bill to the house and saying:

Every member has spoken quite glowingly of the role that the Victorian College of the Arts plays in developing and nurturing young talent in the state. This bill provides for the practical, operational matters ...

But when it came to the crunch, she referred that matter back to Minister Kosky. I have to say little words are pretty words, and it has taken an enormous amount of effort to raise this in the mind of the public and gain any support for the VCA, although those connected to it have been more than passionate. From a government perspective there has been a hush-up attitude to this particular issue. Hopefully the fact that the issue has appeared on the notice paper today will move it forward.

A lot of what I could say has already been covered today, but I will commend those people who have stood up and loudly and proudly supported the VCA right from the start. They include Liberal members, the member for Bayswater in the other place, Mrs Victoria; Mrs Coote; Mr Atkinson; the member for Warrandyte in the Assembly, Mr Smith; and our Liberal leader, Ted Baillieu. They have never wavered in their support for the VCA as has Ms Pennicuik, from the Greens, who has stood on the steps of Parliament House with these Liberal members.

Mr Lenders — What about Brendan Nelson, who cut its funding?

Mrs PETROVICH — What about Peter Garrett, who today has backed away once again from federal funding to assist the VCA and shoved it squarely onto this state government's shoulders?

Mr Lenders — But Brendan Nelson cut, and you were mute.

Mrs PETROVICH — That is an interesting mix. Quite frankly, now we have wall-to-wall Labor, and this government needs to stand and face up to its responsibilities.

Mr Lenders — Western Australia has a Labor government now?

Mrs PETROVICH — As the Treasurer, Mr Lenders probably has the greatest capacity to influence this, and he is very quick to shove it back to

the federal government. This is clearly a state government issue.

Mr Lenders — You get up every day and say we spend too much.

Mrs PETROVICH — I get up every day and the devil says, 'Thank God she's up'.

In an open letter to the staff and students of VCA, I finish by commending our leader, Ted Baillieu, who, as part of his portfolio and also his passion for the arts, has committed that a Baillieu government will:

15:17

ensure the shortfall of ... \$6 million currently preventing the VCA from fulfilling its purpose is restored;

... move to return the VCA to its previous independent and autonomous — —

Mr Lenders — You will return the VCA to the school in Seymour, will you?

Mrs PETROVICH — Is this painful for you, Mr Lenders?

Mr Lenders — No, I am just trying to keep it consistent. You want us to spend more on the school. What are you going to take it out of?

Mrs PETROVICH — You keep moaning on incessantly instead of fixing the problem which I am finding very irritating. He will:

... move to return the VCA to its previous independent and autonomous status, if Melbourne University is unable to adequately meet the requirements of the VCA and the intent of the Melbourne University ...

ensure the college is able to provide practical training, teaching and instruction in accordance with the needs and requirements of the school of the arts; and

ensure the VCA has full control and direction of its curriculum, operation and the structure of its schools ...

Mr Lenders interjected.

Mrs PETROVICH — That means no Melbourne model, and as the Treasurer Mr Lenders is in full control of that situation and he could fix this.

Mr Lenders — No, you do not want to suspend anything.

Mrs PETROVICH — You could fix this. Before I finish I conclude by correcting a couple of statements that were made by Ms Pulford in her contribution, when she referred to a funding figure of \$15 200 for a commonwealth place. That figure is actually \$10 000 and that is simply wrong. It is incorrect because she

cannot add up, but it is quite a significant difference if you are a student studying anything.

As I said, I have just had confirmed today that the federal Minister for Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Peter Garrett, will not give the required federal funding. It is now up to Minister Kosky and Minister Lenders to step in and do the job they are employed to do for the state of Victoria and preserve a Victorian icon and this great industry. We had a commitment previously and I ask the government to honour this commitment.

Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria) — The sad thing about some of these debates is that there is a lot of posturing and grandstanding and there are a lot of attempts to gain the hearts and minds of people who might be interested in these matters. We have these debates in this great theatre of the round that is the Parliament and yet it does not change much because it does not ultimately change the functions of what government is required to do and the business of government and the position that a government might take — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr VINEY — If members opposite would like to listen, just for a minute and let me get more than two sentences out, they might learn — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr VINEY — But perhaps they do not want to hear that the government intends to support this motion because they do not want to hear that. They do not want to hear that it is this government that has been strongly behind the arts in this community, building capital infrastructure in the arts, encouraging and providing great shows to Melbourne as part of our events program, making sure that Melbourne and Victoria have a great arts program as a basis of a vibrant and diverse community socially, culturally and economically. The arts play a critical role in the economic structure of this state.

Ms Lovell — And who recognised that? Who was it that recognised that and established the major events program in this state?

Mr VINEY — I think I can hear Dorothy from the *The Wizard of Oz* going down the yellow brick road with the tin man, the man with no heart, and the straw man, the man with no brain. I can hear all that happening as some background noise here, but let me just say that this government has had a commitment to the arts — —

Ms Lovell — That followed on from the commitment of the former government.

Mr VINEY — That is a continuation of what has been a bipartisan position of support to the arts in this state for many years, Ms Lovell. I remind Ms Lovell that this is the government that actually has revived its support to the arts in regional Victoria as well, an area that the Kennett government referred to as the toenails of the state.

This government has been supporting the arts in regional Victoria. In my own electorate just a few months ago at a community cabinet the Minister for the Arts came down and announced a big capital funding initiative for the Warren Performing Arts Centre. This is the government that has been putting money in; it has supported putting investment into the arts consistently since 1999 when it came in.

I am not saying that previous governments did not — of course they did — but for opposition members to come in here and somehow try to paint this government as the one that is the terrible actor in this theatre-in-the-round performance here today is just ridiculous. It is absolutely absurd. There has been a strong commitment to the arts in Victoria because it is an important part of the social, economic and cultural fabric and life of this state and that has been supported by all parties and all governments.

In the current scenario the Victorian College of the Arts is involved in a process of change. It is going through some difficult negotiations and right now those negotiations are coming to the pointy end, but let us look at where the fundamental problem lies. The fundamental problem lies in the lack of funding into this area of higher education, of tertiary education, and that started in 2005 when funding to the Victorian College of the Arts was cut by a third. That is when it started. It was started by the then federal education minister of the day, Brendan Nelson. I welcome Mr Atkinson's motion and indicate that the government will support it.

I think it is a good initiative. We might make some criticisms around the edges in relation to the wording of it, but the intent of the motion is good and the expression of support by this chamber for the Victorian college of the arts is a worthwhile thing to do. I do not know whether we needed quite this many hours of debate, but nevertheless that is where we have been today. What some members took 45 minutes to say maybe could have been said in 4 or 5 minutes.

There has been a long tradition of support by all parties, and all governments, to the arts in Victoria. I make the point that the problems the Victorian college of the arts and the University of Melbourne are having right now relate fundamentally to a funding issue. When funding to the Victorian college of the arts was cut by a third — by Dr Nelson as part of the Howard government — I was in this chamber in the last Parliament throughout that whole time but did not hear moved during general business on a Wednesday one motion by the opposition complaining about the cuts to funding. That did not come up, but I welcome Mr Atkinson's motion now, and the government will support it.

There are some important things to put on the record in relation to this debate. There is strong support by this government for the arts. We see the Victorian college of the arts and music as a fundamental underpinning of an incredibly important part of our cultural and economic life in this state. There has been clear support by the minister — and this comes back to my initial comment about the posturing and grandstanding that might happen in this theatre of the round known as the Legislative Council — but if members opposite think that ministers of the day were on the steps of Parliament House, expressing their support at all sorts of rallies, it would be pushing it a bit.

Members of the public sitting in the gallery who are interested in this debate might not be aware that there would not be a sitting day when there would not be one or two rallies on the steps of this building. That is an important part of democracy: people express their views, and I congratulate them for bringing their views forward. As a student from the 1970s, far be it from me to talk about students not expressing their opinions at a rally!

The minister has continuously expressed her support. She wrote to Dr Nelson when he was federal Minister for Education way back in 2005, when the funding cuts first took place. She has advocated for proper and appropriate funding to this college not only to Liberal governments federally but also, since the election of the Rudd government in 2007, to Labor governments. She has had meetings and discussions with the two relevant federal ministers.

As I understand it, she had meetings today with the unions involved. She has had discussions with the key players at the university. The government's decision is well known by the university and the college of the arts. It is somewhat ludicrous to suggest, as some members opposite have, that the minister has not been fulsome in her support, because they, in opposition — and it is always easy to express an opinion in opposition —

managed to get themselves onto the front steps of Parliament House, while the minister did not. The minister has a task in representing the government of the day and making representations in an appropriate way. The minister has been doing that extensively, in writing, on the phone and in person.

As a government we say that if this college was properly funded by the federal government — for example, in a similar way to that of the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) in Sydney, which receives funding of \$33 000 per student whereas in Victoria the VCA gets about \$10 000 per student — we probably would not be having the difficulties that the students who are in the gallery today, the university and the managers of the college are having; one where they are trying to manage a program with funding that is perhaps not adequate for what they are trying to offer.

A number of years ago, as Parliamentary Secretary for Innovation and Industry, I had the pleasure of going to the college and having a look around. I happen to have some children that are very interested in the artistic aspects of life — —

Hon. M. P. Pakula interjected.

Mr VINEY — Perhaps not the high arts! I do not know whether you call screamo music high art, but one son reckons it is and his band has travelled around. Another one of my kids is interested in drama, and I have a stepson who is a bit of a comedian. I have some personal interest in it, and I had a look around the college.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — Must have got it from his stepdad!

Mr VINEY — None of my kids received artistic talent from me! There are other members of the government who have a personal interest, one of whose son has studied at the VCA.

There is strong support for the college and for the arts, and I repeat that we are happy to support the motion from Mr Atkinson, albeit that I think there are a couple of misconceptions in it. I think, though, the general intent of what Mr Atkinson is trying to achieve through this motion is to get an expression of support for the college, for the students and for the future of the arts in this state. I think it is appropriate for this house to express that support, and after discussions with the minister I can say that the minister thinks it is appropriate for this house to express that support. The minister has asked that I put on record that she is continuing to work assiduously to try to get an outcome that is accepted by all and that ensures not only the

15:32

economic viability of the college as part of Melbourne University but perhaps more importantly from the students' point of view the artistic outcomes that students and their teachers are seeking from their courses. We welcome the opportunity of putting on the record in this house that support for those students, for their teachers and for the arts more generally. The government will continue to do all it can to get the commonwealth government to fund the VCA in an appropriate way that takes that pressure off all the stakeholders involved.

Mrs KRONBERG (Eastern Metropolitan) — It is a great pleasure to rise to speak in support of Mr Atkinson's motion, and I do so with a great degree of pride, because again the Liberal Party as part of the coalition here in this state is leading the charge and answering the clarion call that has been put out by the students of the Victorian college of the arts — I am going to stick to that term. For the purposes of my contribution I am not going to use the term that has come about through the amalgamation process with Melbourne University — the Victorian college of the arts and music. My personal background is that I actually love Melbourne University, and I am very proud as a Melburnian that Melbourne University is one of the top 20 universities in the whole world. We should all be applauding its pursuit of academic excellence. The only problem is that a poor decision was made in 2005; I wish it had never been made.

Today, on the day that Dr Brendan Nelson is giving his valedictory speech in the federal Parliament, I am reminded of the fact that the decision was made because the Victorian College of the Arts was funded through an education funding process when all along it should have been funded from an arts portfolio perspective, where the true value of the performing arts, the creative arts and the fine arts could have been given proper consideration. If it is looked at purely through the lens of an educational funding regime, that can never happen. I believe it also needs to be looked at through the lens of how you provide funding for a body such as the Australian Institute of Sport, because we are actually looking at the pursuit of excellence and at drawing out individual talents and skills, some of them coming from the very physical effort of students.

Within Melbourne University's regime at the moment the ratio of 7 students per instructor is being looked at and compared with other forms of instruction where the ratio is 12 to 1. They are looking at the economic modelling of that. I ask of those people who made the decision to cut the funding for the school of puppetry and musical theatre whether they have ever seen a brilliant puppetry performance or enjoyed brilliant

musical theatre? Obviously not. In the field of creative endeavour you never know if one genius — one world-class genius — who will provide an answer and a reverberation in terms of the economic modelling will be in a year's grouping. One genius is all you need out of any one year's intake. I am sure the potential for encouraging genius and fostering the talent that is obviously in abundance needs to be supported by the community.

I am very pleased to hear that Mr Viney moderated his contribution. His afternoon contributions during opposition business on Wednesdays are normally quite vociferous, so I have to congratulate the members of the student body of the Victorian college of the arts for coming in here today. They have actually tempered the government's responses immeasurably. I want to congratulate them on their efforts, on their campaign, on the fact that they have sat through this process all day and on the brilliance of their theatricality in raising awareness when they came in here for their protest — even if they had to adopt mankinis and be Melburnians' answer to Borat.

A lot of these decisions are made purely from an economic perspective, so my suggestion to government members that they read the work published in 2005 by Richard Florida, *The Flight of the Creative Class*. In that book the author ranked Melbourne as a third-tier city. His argument was that Melbourne could only ever get out of the trough of being a city of third-tier status, like Istanbul, Kuala Lumpur and Belgrade, and move to second-tier city status, like Sydney, by actually drawing upon all of the energy, force and attractiveness which go to the heart of any economic modelling and which justify subsidising and underpinning the pursuit of excellence and the quest of creative genius, because the creative class has enormous drawing power.

It is a very profound economic model. I suggest that Mr Viney read Richard Florida's work, *The Flight of the Creative Class*. It is very important. It will give him great comfort in the support that he has have provided on this motion.

15:40

Mr Viney — We brought Richard Florida out to Melbourne when I was the parliamentary secretary for innovation and industry, so do not start lecturing me about the creative class!

Mrs KRONBERG — That is very nice to hear. I am very glad to hear that. Maybe Mr Viney could just go and read what Richard Florida has actually written, get out his highlighter and take note of the main points he makes.

I have to congratulate Ted Baillieu and Heidi Victoria, my colleagues in the other house, all of the contributors to debate in this chamber, including Mrs Coote and Ms Pennicuik, and my colleague Mr Atkinson for his wisdom and timeliness in bringing this motion to the house, which we are overjoyed to hear that the government will support. I congratulate all involved, and I hope that the students of the VCA ultimately have a climate in which their creativity can flourish.

I speak about this from the heart as a person who studied drama at Melbourne University and who really knows what it was like to move from a drama major on a Monday — that was quarantined — to the academic departments to study English, history and politics. I moved between academia and performance orientation, where I learnt about stagecraft, where I experienced improvisation and where I learnt dance, all the theatre crafts and all the performing arts — and there is a huge difference. If I had not needed to try to change the government's mind, I would have dwelt on that personal account, because there is an enormous difference.

Talented people studying the performing arts need a raft of skills to help them survive in the commercial world so that they will not be subject to pariah-like commercial agents or agencies that will exploit their talents. They need to be grounded in marketing in a commercial reality so that they can look after their own welfare. Beyond that, their creativity must be fostered in the right kind of environment — an incubator that encourages everything. Sometimes it takes time, and it is very hard to fit this into an economic model. The way we have got the VCA at the moment is unfortunately a square peg in a round hole in a model with Melbourne University's academic quest and the need to keep those standards up. I hope it does not end up looking like what happens when two tectonic plates clash — one is subsumed, and there is an earthquake where they meet at the edge.

Mr Vogels — And a tsunami.

Mrs KRONBERG — And a tsunami. There is probably a lot of arm wrestling going on across the table. I am glad that the government is supporting this motion; it must take it to the next level. It must do all of the inveigling, persuading, arm-twisting and whatever it takes to keep the Victorian college of the arts as a viable and specialised entity for Australia and for the competitive advantage of the state of Victoria, otherwise all of our talent will naturally drift to NIDA (National Institute of Dramatic Art). I say congratulations to everybody who has been part of this

process. I urge everybody to speak publicly and forcefully in support of it.

Mr GUY (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak in support of the motion that I understand, after hearing Mr Viney's speech, the Labor Party has decided to support. It is good to see the Labor Party come on board to support this motion, albeit very late in the piece.

Mr Vogels — They have got the money.

Mr GUY — Mr Vogels is right; they do have the money. They do have the money indeed.

I would like to be very brief in my contribution because I do not want to talk forever, but the reality is that the soul and culture of a people is what defines it. We all know that to be the case. From the 1970s onwards Rupert Hamer, a former Liberal Premier of this state, built in a bipartisan way for a number of years over successive governments a very strong culture in Victoria that we have developed to be part of the brand of this state. The brand of this state is about Victoria being the cultural heart of Australia. There is no doubting that. We do not have warm, sunny beaches; we have beaches, but not warm sunny ones like those north of Townsville. We do not have a high-rise Gold Coast. We do not have a harbour bridge that looks like a big coathanger over the city like in Sydney, and we do not have a big rock like the Northern Territory has. But we have something that the rest of the country does not have — we have a cultural heart that is indeed the cultural heart of this nation. We should be doing everything possible to not just preserve but enhance it. Successive governments — the Hamer, Thompson and Cain governments; even the maligned Kirner government; the Kennett government; and, until today, the Bracks and Brumby governments — have done everything possible to ensure that our cultural heart remains.

In this chamber we often talk about competitive advantages. Politicians on all sides come in here and talk about our competitive advantages in relation to land supply, taxation and a whole range of things. I would say to the government: do not take this motion as just one to be supported on the voices and then walk out of here today and forget it. Being the cultural heart of the nation is a competitive advantage that Victoria has. Our competitive advantage lies in the strength of what we as a people are producing out of this state for the rest of the country. It is so strong in this state that it is seen and acknowledged by all people and all parties — usually — that this is an advantage this state has. We should be preserving and enhancing it. Six million

dollars a year is all it will take to preserve the Victorian college of the arts (VCA) where it is — \$6 million a year. Six million dollars a year is what it will take to preserve such an important — —

Mr Viney interjected.

Mr GUY — Mr Viney can play politics with it all he likes and make silly comments, but there is a simple fact behind it: he is in government. He has the ability to change this today. He has the ability to go into the cabinet room — and so does the minister next to him — and say, ‘We are spending \$10 million to advertise the M1 upgrade and other transport projects. We spent \$8 million to advertise water with Steve Bracks, looking like a Hollywood star with his whitened teeth, in a helicopter over the Eildon Reservoir, Cairn Curran and other reservoirs’. The government has got all this money it is spending to advertise John Brumby and to try to humanise this demon into something with a personality. The government is spending all this taxpayers money on advertising itself.

Mr Viney interjected.

Mr GUY — For \$6 million, Mr Viney — one, two, three, four, five, six. In Russian it is ‘шесть’. What is ‘six’ in French?

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr GUY — ‘Six’. Six million dollars! How many ways does the government need it to be said for it to understand it? Six million dollars is all it will take to save the VCA. This is serious. I will say it again: the cultural heart of a people is what defines it. This is what has been acknowledged by all parties in Victoria from the 1970s to today. It started with the Hamer government — hence Hamer Hall — and we on this side are exceptionally proud of Rupert Hamer, who acknowledged, admitted and knew that our cultural heart was one of the identities and strengths of Victoria. We do not have a rock; we do not have a coathanger; we do not have warm, sandy beaches; and we are not off in — I was going to mention something in South Australia, but I will not be disparaging — but we do have a cultural heart that beats in Victoria and that leads the rest of the nation that we should be nourishing.

While I have been on my feet some disturbing news has been passed to me. It seems that the demountable dance buildings which have been in active use for years have been demolished today — while this debate has been happening — to cut the University of Melbourne’s rent, which is done by a floor space system. If that is the case, that is outrageous. They are totally usable

buildings that were only refurbished in March, and they have been demolished because of a rent system. If that is the case, that is an outrage. That news has been presented to me while I have been on my feet. If the University of Melbourne is responsible — and I suspect it is — it should be ashamed of itself.

I say it again: universities and governments should be encouraging cultural diversity and encouraging their people as much as possible to be culturally aware and culturally active. There is no use merging the VCA with the University of Melbourne. If a trombonist wants to concentrate on being a trombonist, there is no use saying to them, ‘You have to go out and do ballet for one session as well’. That is not what their skill is.

You have to actually encourage people to use the skills and strengths they already have. We train people to be accountants; we do not say, ‘Go off and do government relations or marketing or architecture for a session’; we say, ‘Concentrate on what you are good at because that is what we are going to breed you as. That is what our society is going to build you to contribute back to it’.

15:50

I say to the government, to Melbourne University and to others who are responsible for this funding: there is an opportunity today for us all not just to agree to this motion on the voices but to do something about it. I do not care if Brendan Nelson or someone else took the money away, the reality is that we are elected politicians in this chamber who can fix the problem. I say again to Mr Viney and to the minister, ‘You are reasonable people. Go away and listen to this problem and fix it’. All it takes to save the VCA is \$6 million; that same amount is all it takes to retain Victoria’s cultural diversity and cultural leadership in this nation, which is so important to the branding and marketing of this state, that your government and every government uses it in tourism, and we want to keep using it in our tourism campaigns because it is right and because it is important. Save the VCA and give us the \$6 million tomorrow!

Mr D. DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I have listened closely to much of this debate, and I pay tribute to Mr Atkinson for bringing this motion to the chamber today. I wholeheartedly support the motion, but my purpose in speaking today is not to cover the ground that has been so eloquently covered by my colleagues. I believe there is a great deal of passion for this issue, and I pay tribute to the work of Andrea Coote; Heidi Victoria, the member for Bayswater in the other place; and Bruce Atkinson in bringing this motion forward. I also pay tribute to others; indeed across politics I pay tribute to the work of the previous arts ministers in fighting for this very significant Victorian institution.

The two points I want to make are, firstly, I totally reject the imputation in correspondence by the University of Melbourne to me and to other members of this chamber that for some reason this Parliament is not equipped or not able to make a contribution on matters of public significance such as this. Not only are universities established under state acts of Parliament and not only have state governments been funders of universities but the role of educational institutions like the VCA (Victorian college of the arts) is a matter of public concern in this state, as it is around the country. The place of the arts in the community is very significant, and the Victorian college of the arts is a critical part of that culture. It is a critical part of Melbourne and Victoria's place in national life.

I make the point that we have an increasingly hostile federal government in the form of the federal Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Peter Garrett, and the Prime Minister, Mr Rudd, who have become increasingly focused on New South Wales and Queensland; they need to begin focusing on Victoria. We need a Premier who is prepared to fight for Victorian institutions like the VCA. This is first and foremost a Victorian issue that requires Victorians to fight in a united way. The opportunity is here for the Labor Party to join the Liberal Party in this fight to ensure that the resources are put in and to ensure that the money is — —

Mr Viney — So is this your promise?

Mr D. DAVIS — We have made a number of promises.

Mr Viney — I know, you have made more promises than you can fund.

Mr D. DAVIS — We will fight for these institutions, and we will fight for a proper share of federal funding. Whether it is Mr Garrett's activities in the environment where he slashed and burned the funding to Victoria or whether it is his activities in the arts where he has not treated a number of prestigious and central institutions properly, he needs to understand that Victoria has its own culture and its own arts background, and that needs to be protected. Proper federal money needs to be made available and proper state support needs to be available as well.

It is unfortunate that the Premier is so weak on these issues. He ought to be getting involved in the fight; if necessary he could go and knock on the door down at Melbourne University.

Mr Viney interjected.

Mr D. DAVIS — You are saying that there cannot be any state funding of institutions?

Mr Viney interjected.

Mr D. DAVIS — I am saying that there is a long history of state governments funding tertiary education institutions in this state. For goodness sake, it is unbelievable; and just ridiculous to hear the Labor Party say that a state government cannot put money into tertiary education and tertiary institutions in this state. But that in no way absolves the federal government of responsibility either. You need an active Premier who is prepared to stand up to his mates in Canberra and make the points.

The second point I want to make is that this is about the long-term future of the arts in Victoria. We need to fight for these cultural institutions which have so much significance for cultural life and are also of significance economically; we need to hold the government to account. I totally reject the University of Melbourne's concept that this chamber is not entitled to examine these issues and express a view.

We ought not to lose sight of the fact that the commitments that were made by the state government and by the university at the time of that earlier legislation have been breached. The University of Melbourne, and in particular the current vice-chancellor, has form on this matter. Commitments were made about the Victorian College of Agriculture and Horticulture as well.

I remember before 1999, when I was part of the government in this chamber; members of the other place and here were aware of similar commitments being given by the University of Melbourne about protecting the unique nature of the Victorian College of Agriculture and Horticulture. The University of Melbourne did not honour those commitments. It wound back key agricultural and horticultural tertiary education facilities, and it is doing the same thing with the arts.

Unless we fight for these things, unless we are prepared to explain to key institutions like the University of Melbourne that they are part of a broader social structure, that they are part of a cultural structure and that they need to work within that structure, and unless we explain to the federal government in particular that it needs to step up to the plate and protect arts culture in Victoria, we are going to suffer very badly.

I compliment Mr Atkinson on moving this motion. He has my wholehearted support, and I urge members on the other side to stop their mealy-mouthed speeches, to

step forward and get the Premier to be active. He has got to get off his tail; he has got to start fighting for Victorian cultural institutions, and he should start with the VCA.

15:57 **Hon. M. P. PAKULA** (Minister for Industry and Trade) — I was not planning to speak on this notice of motion but comments made by the Leader of the Opposition and Mr Guy warrant a response. I say at the outset that the government supports Mr Atkinson's motion. It is an extraordinary proposition being put by both Mr Guy and Mr David Davis that the way you fight for the Victorian college of the arts and the way that as a state government, a state Premier or Minister for the Arts, you will hold the commonwealth government to account, the way you hold Melbourne University to account, the way you try to have funding — —

Mr D. Davis — Why are you frightened of a public debate?

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — Mr Davis should not be a clown! It is an extraordinary proposition to say that the way you ensure that those organisations, whether it be the University of Melbourne or the commonwealth government, are held to account and the way you ensure that arts funding that has been withdrawn by the commonwealth is restored, is to put your hand up and say 'You know what? We will pay for it'. Mr Davis suggests — —

Mr Guy interjected.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — That is a completely different situation, Mr Guy, and you know it. Mr Davis says that the Premier should be prepared to fight for resources for Victoria — and that is exactly what the Premier is doing. The Leader of the Opposition suggests that the Minister for the Arts should fight for more resources for the Victorian college of the arts, for Melbourne University — and that is exactly what she is doing. What they do not need is the Leader of the Opposition undermining their negotiating position by saying that if the Liberal Party were in government in Victoria it would stump up the cash. What does that do to the Premier's and Minister Kosky's capacity to have this funded rightly as it should be by the commonwealth, to get the funding restored, when they are able to look them in the eye and say 'Hang on, Ted Baillieu said he will pay for it, so what are you complaining about?'. You cannot have it both ways. You cannot on the one hand say 'Premier, you should be knocking on doors' and on the other have him with one arm tied behind his back by saying in public that the state government should pay for it.

How can you ask the Premier to seek to have the funding restored when the opposition has publicly said it is a state responsibility? If the opposition is fair dinkum about wanting to get this matter resolved it ought to present a united front with the government in its representations to the commonwealth. There should be a united front where both sides of politics in this state recognise and argue for the commonwealth to restore this funding. The opposition should not be undermining the state position by publicly, for purely political motives, saying it will take on federal government funding responsibility as a state responsibility. In doing so it is undermining the ability of the state to negotiate this matter properly with the commonwealth properly.

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I think I am probably at the bottom of the list so I have had the pleasure of listening to a lot of the debate. Some of the debate has been succinct and interesting, particularly from those on this side of the chamber. Mr Pakula has tried to mount the argument that the only way to be really effective is for the opposition to stand united with the government — that is, united in failure. The only reason why this house is having this debate is because of the notice of motion and because the opposition is using this parliamentary theatre to shine a light on an area where something has gone wrong.

Mr Pakula says that it is all about funding. No doubt there are issues about funding. The point was also made that every year \$16 million is derived in rent from the facilities that were previously occupied by the Victorian college of the arts (VCA). That more than adequately fills the hole of \$6 million that is left annually by the merger. I beg to differ with some of my colleagues. It is not about just funding. It is about structure, culture and focus and the academic reform that has been instigated or followed through the merger.

It is my great pleasure to say a few words in support of the motion and the VCA. When this chamber has debates one tends to immerse oneself in the metaphors of the subject of the debate. You wonder: which genre does that contribution best fit into? It was interesting that the debate started with Ms Pulford who, in her very unassuming, gentle manner and demeanour, has some credibility because she has some family members who were into the arts. Mr Jennings has a very strong personal history of involvement in the arts. He was able in a very clever fashion, because he is a very persuasive and experienced minister, to chameleon-like woo the house and suggest that the best way of doing this is not by posturing or belting the government over the head but by working together with the government.

This government would not have lifted a finger without this notice of motion being on the notice paper and without those people in the gallery to whom I should not be referring under standing orders handing out their flyers at various events, some of which I have attended, and if they had not been rallying on the steps of Parliament and standing up for themselves. This government is more than happy to let things go under the radar. It has been caught out in so many areas that directly affect young people in Victoria.

16:05 Government members have been appalling in their delivery of outcomes for young people. Their bungling of the 2 o'clock lockout is a prime example of total incompetence. Never is there any realisation of the importance of providing young people with public transport so they can get out of the crucible of the CBD rather than be exposed to a culture that has become violent over time.

Also appalling is what the government has done by relinquishing control over Olympic Park, the icon of our sporting heritage. So many young people have realised their dreams or had their dreams fuelled by some modest success to go on and achieve greater things. Government members have handed control over to mates at the Collingwood Football Club. Eddie McGuire and Premier Brumby — both mates — are handing over the state's major facility and sporting icon of this state only a few weeks after Swan Street was renamed Olympic Boulevard in that area.

At the federal level there have been youth allowance reforms, which would make education more difficult and less affordable for young people. The TAFE reforms would jack up costs to young people by three times. For the first time they will be required to take out HECS (higher education contribution scheme) loans. The track record of ignoring the needs of young people is appalling. This is emblematic of this government's failures in youth policy.

I am the mother of an aspiring musician, who began his musical interests with a classical training but who unfortunately has gone down the track of electro house. I was very circumspect about this development, but I have developed a taste for it. He assures me that all of my investments will one day pay off. He and many of his friends, and the many people who have contacted me about this issue, have insisted that I get up and support it and speak on behalf of it. They become incensed when they see government advertising promoting its achievements, when the fact is that the government's achievements have been so lacklustre.

A perfect example is the current Shine education campaign that the government has mounted. It is about what young people need so as to shine. Whether young people are struggling, suffer from disabilities, are mainstream or are gifted, they need access to resources, access to teachers and skills and the right culture so that their needs, their talents and their interests can be tapped. They need an opportunity to achieve their potential — so then they have an opportunity to shine.

Clearly there has been a very strong debate about which model best delivers the opportunity for these talented young people — past, present and future students of the VCA — to shine. The model has been very successful so far, and we have seen the benefits of that. The VCA has strengthened the culture of this capital city, which benefits enormously from the major events and performances in the various arts facilities which attracts thousands of tourists internationally as well as domestically.

There are enormous business and tourism benefits, and they put Melbourne on the map. It is not only people in Victoria and Australia who are proud of this culture; there have been some significant performances internationally, which really puts Australia on the map.

We have to get beyond the propaganda and understand that this government is very much about plans, gloss and promises. Mr Viney talked about how we were making unsustainable promises. Unlike the Labor Party, we are making promises and commitments. Members of the Labor Party have constantly lied. They have made promises and failed to deliver, and that is the difference. Government members say what it takes, but they never deliver. The situation that has developed at the VCA is one example of this approach.

When Mr Jennings spoke earlier I noted that he is obviously a very capable actor. I wondered what particular artistic or theatrical metaphor or event I could relate his performance to. Having taught *Macbeth* a million times in my life in my former days as a teacher, I thought of Macbeth's soliloquy on the death of Lady Macbeth. Not to be outdone by Mrs Coote, let me quickly read that particular soliloquy. This would have been Labor's approach if these young people had not been organised and if this motion was not being debated, to shine a light on the problem and to get the university, the stakeholders and the Minister for the Arts, who is more than happy and content to work 9 to 5 — probably ABC hours, or something like that — and to allow a lot of these problems to go unaddressed until there is public pressure, until they are cornered or until someone drags them to the table by the ear to intervene.

I will not act out that soliloquy; I will read it. Macbeth says:

She should have died hereafter;
There would have been a time for such a word.
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

Today we will signify something, because we have a backflip from the government which would not have been achieved if this action — this grassroots activism — had not been mounted.

Mrs Kronberg spoke about the VCA being an incubator of talent with focus, development and skill. Obviously now it has been needlessly squeezed, and the programs have been restructured with a higher component of theory rather than practical focus. There are significant concerns about the reduced emphasis on practical skill, and the university must address that issue.

I also received a letter which claims that somehow we were misguided and did not quite understand. That may well be the case. Obviously it is the case with the students and the former arts minister who wrote that letter. Clearly this misunderstanding is fairly pervasive, so the university must instigate immediate consultations to make sure that the processes and the concerns about the structure of the course are addressed. We need to ensure that we do not lose something that was very successful and to ensure that the money that is required to maintain that incubator effect for that talent is not lost.

However, it is not all about money. As I said earlier, communication and consultation has been inadequate and ineffective. We in the Liberal Party believe that in order for young people to shine they need to be supported to achieve their potential and realise their dreams. Ted Baillieu today announced that if there are still problems after the next state election, and if we are in a position to form government — and I believe we will be in a very strong position to do so — then he will move to restore the autonomy of the VCA and address funding shortfalls. That money is already there, so it should not be an issue.

Obviously the Minister for the Arts, Lynne Kosky, has been stung into some sort of response by this public attention and the listing of this debate in the Parliament.

It is good that the government has done a bit of a backflip and will not vote this down, but let me say this: if this had not occurred, the solution would have been less than savoury and would have diminished the arts in Victoria forever.

This government is not inherently democratic; it does not like democracy. This government thinks that democracy is slow and a pain in the butt because not everyone agrees with it, and government members will do anything they can to curtail democracy at every step. The government's track record is not strong.

I am very pleased to see the support of talented students from the VCA. They are standing up for themselves so that we can stand shoulder to shoulder with them. If we cannot do that, then we are wasting our time, and we certainly do not deserve to be members of Parliament. I would like to see that continue. I call on the Labor Party not only not to vote against this motion but also use their influence with their federal colleagues to get the outcome that is needed. They should use their influence with the university to make sure that all of those concerns are addressed. There is no doubt that we cannot turn back the clock; however, many issues need to be resolved, and the sooner the better. With those few words, I commend the motion to the house.

Mr ATKINSON (Eastern Metropolitan) — This has become something akin to a Cecil B. DeMille movie; there have been so many speakers.

16:15

Mrs Peulich — An epic.

Mr ATKINSON — Yes, it has become of epic proportions. Like any great script, there has been a twist at the end. Quite sadly, the twist at the end was brought to us in an email that came during the course of this debate. As Mr Guy said, the demountable dance buildings which had been in use for many years at the Victorian college of the arts have been demolished whilst this debate proceeded today.

I do not know whether that is a vindictive act by someone at the University of Melbourne, whether it is sheer arrogance or whether it is sheer foolishness. However, by any count, given the course of this debate today and given the expressions of support for the Victorian college of the arts — which I think have given strength to the Minister for the Arts; to Mr Jennings, who indicated he also was a minister with responsibilities crossing some of the college's disciplines; and to the Premier, who I named as the figurehead of government efforts to ensure the college is maintained in its current form with the diverse and

practical training in its curriculum — it is an act of treachery to chop down those buildings today.

It has been done on the absolutely ludicrous premise that the college's rental calculations are based on the square metres of space utilised, so in getting rid of the demountable buildings, the amount of space on which rent is paid is decreased, while the dance classes will be moved across to the high school, where the college is already paying rent, so there will be a saving. That decision in my view is as ludicrous and as penny wise and pound foolish as the decision of Brendan Nelson, the then education minister, to cut the funding originally.

In my contribution at the start of this debate I made no bones about my belief that the federal government got it wrong when it changed the funding system and left organisations such as the then Victorian College of the Arts outside the funding template. As Mr Viney says, there probably should have been a lot more kaffuffle back then in terms of attempts to address that funding issue at the federal level at that point rather than entertaining a merger or a marriage of convenience, which now seems fraught because of people's attitudes.

The attitudes are obviously running very deep, notwithstanding the goodwill that Minister Jennings tried to bring to this debate in terms of the discussions he had had with various parties. They must be running deep for somebody to take the action they took today to demolish those buildings while we were here, debating the aspirations we have as legislators and as custodians for Victorians of much of the rich heritage of this state. This is the importance of retaining this national treasure, which is a term I think Race Mathews, a former minister, also applied to the Victorian College of the Arts — 'a national treasure'.

I thank members from all corners of this chamber for their support of this motion. I indicate particular appreciation and admiration for the work of the member for Bayswater in the other place, Heidi Victoria; Andrea Coote; and Sue Pennicuik in addressing people outside Parliament. They have shown a genuine commitment to this issue — a commitment shared demonstrably by other members of this chamber. Nonetheless in many ways they constituted the alert that prompted me to move this motion today, and I am gratified that members of this house have been prepared to support it.

Can I indicate for the sake of some of the Labor members who contributed to this debate that from my perspective this debate was not about grandstanding but about tackling a very real issue. It was about trying, as

Mr Jennings said, to achieve a resolution to the issue, not simply to have a talkfest. We want this fixed. We want to make sure that the future of the Victorian college of the arts is confirmed and that it has a sustainable future and is able to continue to turn out talented young people with the skills they need to continue to make the economic and, much more importantly, the social and cultural contribution to Victoria, Australia and the world that so many of the college's alumni have in the past.

I think this motion goes a long way, as I said, towards giving strength to the government's hand in its negotiations, and I think every member here shares the view that we simply want the matter resolved. We do not want this debate to be lost in a rubble as those temporary dance rooms have been today.

Motion agreed to.

STREET VIOLENCE: GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Debate resumed from 2 September; motion of Mr DALLA-RIVA (Eastern Metropolitan):

That this house —

- (1) expresses its concern at the Brumby government's inadequate response to the growing levels of violent crime in Victoria and calls on the Premier, in conjunction with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, to accept responsibility for this situation and the violence on our streets; and
- (2) notes that on 29 July 2009 this house referred these issues to the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee, which is to report by 30 August 2010.

Mr DALLA-RIVA (Eastern Metropolitan) — I am very pleased to continue my contribution to my motion about violent crime, which I originally moved a couple of weeks ago. I do not propose, given that the very important and successful debate on the VCA (Victorian college of the arts) has now concluded, to go on for long; I understand a few members want to speak on this motion.

For the benefit of members the motion is that this house:

- (1) expresses its concern at the Brumby government's inadequate response to the growing levels of violent crime in Victoria and calls on the Premier, in conjunction with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, to accept responsibility for this situation and the violence on our streets; and

- (2) notes that on 29 July 2009 this house referred these issues to the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee, which is to report by 30 August 2010.

At the time I read out data about a series of assaults that had been occurring, and unfortunately almost daily now we hear about the continuing violence on our streets and about the government's piecemeal approach in trying to come to a solution. Earlier this week we heard that the government is getting tough on the issuing of knives. I went to an open market at the weekend where of course you can buy knives as you wish. It seems silly that on the one hand there is open slather in the purchasing of knives but on the other hand the government professes to be cracking down by having a voluntary surrender of knives.

Mr Atkinson — You could go to the shop and buy one!

Mr DALLA-RIVA — Indeed, Mr Atkinson. You could go to a shop and buy a new one, and that is the point we have raised. I want to read into *Hansard* some additional statistics from Victoria Police. The statistics compare what was happening at the end of the Kennett era to what is happening now. In 1999 there were 31 372 violent attacks; there are now 43 971, and this is after 10 years of Labor government. We are now seeing violent attacks increasing substantially — at a proportionately greater rate than the population growth. Youth crime incidents have increased from 2769 to 6429; the number of assaults by 10 to 14-year-old offenders has increased from 670 to 1245; staggeringly assaults have gone from 19 856 to 33 668; and assaults by a stranger, again as reported in the Victoria Police statistics, have risen from 1418 to a massive 4512. The figures showing a threefold increase in assaults by a stranger indicate that people in our community feel they can get away with assaulting anyone and without knowing the victim. There has also been an increase in property damage incidents from 38 360 to 54 122.

The Victorian budget papers show that in 1999 police fines were \$99 million. In the 2008–09 period they were \$492 million — a staggering increase of just under \$400 million. Where has that money gone? Mostly likely it has gone into consolidated revenue and nowhere else. The figures show that while violence increases, the fines imposed on law-abiding citizens also increase.

I was going to read a list of performance targets, and I have a list of crime statistics by local government area which I have read previously in relation to other motions. The interesting thing is that every figure is up substantially. It is not just up by a small amount but by multiples of numbers. I understand other members on

this side of the chamber may read the relevant statistics for their area. Having said that, I do not wish to continue on too much further from what I mentioned a couple of weeks ago. I look forward to the support of the government for this motion and indeed of the minor parties in terms of expressing their concerns that something has to happen and something has to stop. This government really does not get it. Despite all the rhetoric and all the spin the government is not delivering, and that is what this motion is all about. The motion expresses our concern, and I hope the house expresses its concern.

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan) — I am very pleased to be able to speak on the motion. Certainly the government does not accept that it is not adequately addressing the issue. We acknowledge there is community concern around the issue of alcohol-fuelled violence in Melbourne's CBD (central business district) and in other parts of our state. As a parliamentarian who represents the cities of Yarra and Melbourne it is an issue that is very much at the forefront of my concerns.

While it acknowledges there are concerns about this issue, the government has a multifaceted approach to tackling it. We believe we have adequately resourced Victoria Police to be able to respond to the issue both in terms of police numbers and in terms of the powers it has available to it. Recently the Premier indicated that we will be further enhancing those powers. We do not regard the motion before the house as being justified. We believe it is important that we have community discussion about the issue. It is not just about police responding to the issue; it is about requiring a whole-of-community response, including young people taking responsibility themselves when they are engaging in social activities with their friends in Melbourne's and Victoria's nightspots, and also responsibility on the part of parents and responsible adults. There needs to be an effort made by everybody in the community to tackle the issue.

In relation to the motion itself it is important to put on the public record that our crime rate has fallen again for the seventh consecutive year, with a decrease of 1.7 per cent. I am very pleased that since Labor has been in office, and since the year 2000–01, we have seen a 25.5 per cent decrease in Victoria's crime rate. In fact it is at its lowest point since the introduction of computerised recording in 1993.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics, which collects this data, has found that Victoria remains the safest state in Australia. That is an important track record of the government in relation to the overall phenomenon of

crime and tackling crime in the state. Over the past year most categories have declined. Overall crime against the person is down by 0.2 per cent, robberies are down 1.7 per cent and overall crime against property is down by 3.5 per cent.

The fact that the figures for public order offences, including arrests for drunkenness and disorderly offences, have increased is in response to a concerted effort by police to tackle these offences, and that is something all of us welcome. The number of persons taken into custody for being drunk has also risen by 23.4 per cent. Again, that is something we should welcome because it shows that the police are cracking down on antisocial behaviour, and in particular on public drunkenness and the associated problems that that can lead to in terms of criminal behaviour.

16:32 As I said at the outset, the government has taken a multifaceted approach, and I am sure that my colleagues on this side of the house will elaborate on those strategies in considerable detail. Very briefly, our track record of boosting police numbers since we have been in office is a very positive one: of recruiting 1400 additional police since 1999. We promised an additional 350 police during this term of government, and that has already been committed to and funded through previous budgets.

Most recently, last month the Premier announced an additional 120 police on top of those numbers I have already mentioned, of which 94 will be directly deployed to the operational response unit to crack down on trouble spots and target liquor-related crime.

In addition to the considerable powers that police and Liquor Licensing Victoria have been given through a series of legislative amendments over the last few years, the Premier also recently announced that the government will be introducing legislation to give the police even further powers. These will include the introduction of tougher random search powers for weapons in designated areas. This is in direct response to recent media reports that there seems to be a very worrying trend developing among young people in particular, of visiting public areas with knives on their person.

The Premier also indicated that the police will be given the power to direct people to move on from an area where there is a fear that there will be a breach of the peace, and there will also be a new offence of disorderly conduct, which will provide for an on-the-spot penalty of \$234. The government has flagged that these additional changes will bolster the

already considerable powers that have been provided to police.

The most significant ones in my view are the ability to shut down licensed premises immediately for 24 hours in the event of violence occurring which could risk public safety and the ability to issue banning notices. I understand that 1500 such banning notices have been issued since their introduction. I remind members opposite who introduced this motion in the Parliament that when we brought to the Parliament the legislation in relation to the introduction of those banning notices, the opposition opposed it. It is all very well for the opposition to come here and make noises about these issues, but its track record in relation to this issue is questionable.

The police currently have the ability to issue on-the-spot fines to people who damage property, behave offensively or are drunk, violent or quarrelsome and refuse to leave a licensed venue. There has been a range of reforms in the area of weapons offences in recent years as well as the director of liquor licensing having been given much broader powers to deal with licensed venues that are not undertaking their responsibilities appropriately.

The last thing I want to refer to is the Ministerial task force on Alcohol and Public Safety, which was established in late 2007 and which has embarked on a whole-of-government approach to preventing and reducing harm associated with alcohol misuse in Victoria. That has been accompanied by a \$37 million alcohol action plan. There has been a range of public education awareness campaigns including one that ran earlier this year called 'Will you handle your alcohol? Or will alcohol handle you?'

It is important when we are discussing this issue that we look at a range of strategies and not just focus on the regulatory framework or the policing side of things. As I said at the outset, this is a whole-of-government but also a whole-of-community responsibility.

It is of great concern to me that young people seem to be drinking large volumes of alcohol, and obviously this is having an impact on their health. Research is showing that it has an impact on the brain development of young people, and clearly that can have lasting harm for them. It is important that we seek to educate our young people about that in the same way as in, say, the last decade young people have become more aware of the long-term consequences of cannabis use and the links it has to the development of psychoses and schizophrenia, for example; it has been linked to triggering such events in certain young people. It is

important that we educate our young people about the consequences of binge drinking not just in terms of their health but also in relation to the consequences it can have in their either committing a crime or becoming a victim of crime.

As Mr Dalla-Riva referred to in his motion and in the last sitting week, the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee is looking at the whole issue of crime. I am a member of that committee, and we have already embarked upon research on that inquiry. We are undertaking other inquiries simultaneously, but I am confident that the committee is going to be able to table reports in this Parliament before the election next year so we can assist with recommendations in regard to all of these issues. It is important that we have a coherent debate about these issues that is not about either vilifying young people or engaging in a scare campaign in the community.

Sadly, the statistics show that it is young people, in particular young males, who are most likely to be the perpetrators of alcohol-fuelled violence but also to be the victims of it, so it is important that we get that message out about the need to drink responsibly, to have designated drivers, to ensure that they are aware of the consequences of drinking to excess and also the potential consequences in terms of their dealings with the police. I do not have any difficulty with having moved this motion. It is important that members here have an opportunity to put on the record what the government is doing in relation to this very important issue.

We reject Mr Dalla-Riva's premise that the government is not responding adequately to this issue. We believe many strategies have already been embarked upon and many that the Premier has recently flagged are intended to address this issue. It is an international trend at the moment. In all Western nations there is a problem of binge drinking amongst young people; it is not a phenomenon peculiar to Australia. We need to look at which strategies work internationally, which work here in Australia and in our state, and continue with those strategies where they are successful. We will be opposing the motion.

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — I rise to speak on the motion moved by my colleague Richard Dalla-Riva, and I congratulate him on bringing forward for debate in this Parliament such an important issue. As it is with debates of importance like this, it is always disappointing that the government chooses to put its head in the sand and pretend it is doing a good job.

Does it want to talk about dollars and cents? Yes, it can talk about an increase in the budget from 1999 to 2009 for police resources, but that is 10 years ago; I would hope there has been an increase in the budget for and the amount spent on police. Unfortunately it has not equated to the level of protection that the Victorian community needs and deserves.

In those years the number of violent attacks in Victoria has risen from 31 372 to 43 971 in the last financial year — that is, between a 35 per cent and 40 per cent increase.

The incidence of youth crime has more than doubled, from 2769 to 6429 this year, and the number of 10-to-14 year old assault offenders have more than doubled, from 670 in 1999 to 1245 in the 2008–09 year.

We have also seen assaults not quite double from 19 856 to 33 668 assaults. Assaults by a stranger have more than doubled, from 1418 to 4512; and property damage incidents have risen from 38 360 to 54 122. On every indicator, violent crime is up in this state and clearly, to talk about dollars and cents is not addressing this problem. Too often this government reverts to talking about dollars and cents but refuses to count the human cost of its inaction

When you see on TV, families with their loved ones who have been violently attacked in the streets on a Saturday night, that is the human cost. Go down to a nursing home where a young man who has been violently attacked and left with an acquired brain injury is languishing, and count the human cost! The government should not keep telling us what is spent on police, because it is clearly inadequate.

The police themselves have identified this. At the moment the police have a campaign called Save Our Streets through which they have identified the number of extra police they believe they need in each district throughout Victoria — but that runs into thousands of additional police.

I will talk about two areas in my electorate. The first one is the city of greater Bendigo where we have recently had a number of incidents with late-night antisocial and violent behaviour. From 2001 until 2009 in the city of greater Bendigo the incidence of rape increased from 12 to 48 — a 300 per cent increase. Sexual assaults increased from 99 to 154 incidents — almost a 56 per cent increase. Assaults increased from 404 to 675 — nearly a 70 per cent increase.

Violent crime has been on the rise in Bendigo, but do we have adequate police numbers in Bendigo? No. The total number of police officers on duty on a Thursday,

Friday and Saturday night in the city of greater Bendigo, a city of 100 000 people, is the sum total of four. Can anyone imagine 100 000 people at the MCG for a Grand Final, but with only four police officers on duty? It would be an absolute nightmare — and the situation in Bendigo has become a nightmare for the residents.

One of my constituents, Carol, who lives in Napier Street, Bendigo, recently moved to Bendigo and is absolutely scared out of her mind on a Saturday night. She recently phoned me to tell me about one incident that happened on a Saturday night. She was alone in her home and telephoned the police because perpetrators were trying to break into her home. They had already kicked her front gates off the hinges, ripped her security door from the doorframe, and were bashing on her front door, trying to break through the door while she was on the phone to the police.

The police could hear all this while they were talking to her; the answer from the police officer was, 'Go and turn on your front light, and they will go away'. The intruders were trying to break into her home, yet a police officer told her to go and turn on the light, that that would make them go away. The reason she was told that was because the police officer on the phone did not have anyone to send to help her. The four officers on duty were spread over two patrol cars, but they were already busy.

I phoned the police on the following Monday and complained about this incident. The acting inspector phoned me back to say that he had listened to the tape and was horrified at the treatment Carol had received. He felt that the police officer who took that phone call should have had a lot more empathy for the situation Carol was in, but it was not about the police officer having empathy — it was about not having the police she could send to Carol's aid. The poor policewoman on the other end of the phone, who could hear people breaking into Carol's, home had no-one to send to her.

A police officer then visited Carol at her home to inspect the damage. That police officer said to her, 'Lady, you are going to have to get used to this. You live in the main street of Bendigo, get used to it'. It is not about people getting used to a rising level of violence; it is about this government providing Bendigo with the adequate number of police officers so that they can protect the residents who are being threatened in their homes.

The police in Bendigo have widely acknowledged that they are under resourced; as I said, they have acknowledged publicly that there are only four police

officers on duty on a Thursday, Friday and Saturday night. The Police Association say that the city of greater Bendigo is short 81 officers. We all know that with any association, that is probably a bit of an ambit claim, but even if we were to say it was a fairly unrealistic claim and let us cut that to 25 per cent of that claim, it is still 25 officers — and that would be cutting it down to an unrealistic amount.

In Bendigo we are severely short of police officers. What has been the response of Trades Hall in Bendigo to this revelation? Karen Kyle, the secretary of the Bendigo Trades Hall Council, sent a letter to the editor of the *Bendigo Advertiser*, saying it was not the fault of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Bob Cameron, or the Brumby government that there were no police officers in Bendigo; it was the police themselves who were at fault; police officers are lazy and will not work on Saturday nights. She attacked the hardworking police officers in Bendigo in order to protect her mate Bob Cameron. That has sparked outrage in the Bendigo community. There was a number of letters to the editor slamming Karen Kyle for her comments. The Police Association itself felt the need to write to the Bendigo paper and complain about the comments made by Karen Kyle. What was her response to that? She sent another letter to the editor claiming exactly the same thing. This was all done just to defend her mate Bob Cameron, but in his local electorate my constituent Carol who contacted me is not being protected on Saturday nights. Karen would rather cover for Bob's incompetence than advocate for more police in Bendigo.

Carol moved to Bendigo in about June and she knew I was her local member because I sent her a 'Welcome to the electorate' letter within a couple of weeks of her arrival. Last week she finally received a 'Welcome to the electorate' letter from Bob Cameron's office. She decided to ring Bob's office to make an appointment to see him. The response from his office was, 'Why didn't you ring us before you rang Wendy Lovell and went to the media and told the story?'. Carol said, 'Well, how would I know who Bob Cameron was? I only received this letter from him today. I had no idea who he was'. Bob Cameron's electorate officers did not say 'We're sorry about the fact that you have been scared in your own home, that people have tried to break in and have done significant damage to your home, and that there were no police to come and see you'. No, that was not the response. It was, 'You went to the Liberal Party and to the media. Why didn't you come to us?'. How childish! Carol finally does have an appointment to see Bob Cameron, and I hope that when he sees her in person he treats her with more respect than his electorate officers did.

16:50

Denis Naphthine, the member for South-West Coast and the shadow Minister for Racing in the other house, was in Bendigo with me a couple of weeks ago. We met with Carol and a number of her neighbours. The stories we heard absolutely horrified Dr Naphthine. He has been a member of this Parliament for more than 20 years and he had never heard stories that were so bad. In addition to the story I have already told about Carol's treatment by the police and her night of fear in her own home, her neighbours told us stories of cars being set on fire, fences destroyed, and girls screaming so much that one neighbour felt he did need to intervene because he thought she was being raped. When he went out she just said, 'Oh, no, no. Go away, I am with my boyfriend and only joking'. There were stories of pot plants being stolen, of residents sleeping with baseball bats beside them because they were frightened of being in their own homes, and of trailers being placed in the middle of a section of the Midland Highway, which is extremely dangerous and something that could cause the death of an innocent motorist.

All this happens every Friday and Saturday night in Napier Street, Bendigo. Carol is right: unfortunately for Napier Street residents it is like living in a Third World country. They feel that living in Napier Street, Bendigo, is like living in a lawless state. That is a sad indictment on the record of this government. Some of the residents are so disillusioned with the level of policing in Bendigo that they have set up their own security cameras at the front of their homes to try to protect their own properties. The week before last Carol had to endure the return of the perpetrators of the crimes against her property. She could hear them at the front of her house bragging to their friends about how they had kicked in her gates, torn the security door from the door frame and banged so hard on her door that they broke the stained glass window from the frame. She was petrified. That is a sad indictment in the police minister's own electorate.

In my home town of Shepparton things are a little bit, but not a lot, better. In Shepparton from 2001 until 2009 we had a 50 per cent increase in the number of rapes, a 16 per cent increase in sexual assaults and a 26 per cent increase in assaults. Over the years we have largely suffered antisocial behaviour incidents and violent incidents, particularly in our nightclub area. Just a couple of years ago we suffered significant problems of violent attacks and other incidents in nightclubs. There was a spate of attacks that included stabbings, glassings and one murder.

About that time I went out with the local police from midnight until 5.00 a.m. to observe the antisocial behaviour around the nightclub area in Shepparton.

Believe me, my hometown at 3.00 a.m., 4.00 a.m. and 5.00 a.m. was a very different place from what it is at 3.00 p.m., 4.00 p.m. and 5.00 p.m. Of particular concern to me was the number of 14-year-olds roaming the streets at night. Where were their parents? Why did they not know where they were? The brazenness of these young people was of concern to me. When the police approached them, they gave backchat to the police officer. At that age I would have been scared stiff if a police officer had approached me, particularly at that time of the morning. At one place we went to there was loud music from a party. The police officers were standing on the footpath talking to a group of youths, probably aged about 19, when some 14-year-olds walked right through the middle of the conversation. That is how brazen they were.

In another incident we attended, an intoxicated patron had left the nightclub with his girlfriend, who was also intoxicated, and was having a domestic with her in the middle of the street. He threw his jumper on the ground and one of those young people walking along the street purposely walked straight over that jumper, stood and almost jumped on the jumper. That happened in front of that guy, who was absolutely fuelled with alcohol and violent and aggressive at the time. It really concerned me that those young people would put themselves in that sort of danger.

16:57

The community of Shepparton actually stood side by side with the police and said, 'We're not going to put up with this any longer' and together with our local paper waged a campaign. Our local police are particularly good at keeping the late-night licensees in Shepparton in line. Things did improve, and we are very grateful for that. However, our police officers are still well and truly underresourced. According to the Police Association, Shepparton is 50 officers short. Again, that is an ambit claim; let us say the number is half that, 25. That is still a lot of police officers to be short, and the number that they really need is probably more like two-thirds of that figure.

In 2001 the cells in Shepparton were upgraded to A-class cells but there were no additional police put in to service those cells. That means that often police have to be pulled off the beat. Police have to come back in off patrol if they need to deal with prisoners in the cells, which are often full or overflowing. Recently in an article in the Police Association magazine one of our local police described that and said that we need something like 10 additional police officers just to service the cells. They have never been provided by this government, which is using the Shepparton cells as a semipermanent prison. Prisoners are brought from all around the Goulburn Valley to those cells.

One Saturday night just a few weeks ago, in mid-August, Shepparton once again suffered a spate of 14 violent attacks. Our police just could not cope. Where do they have to go to get additional police? This is a real problem in the country. If Bendigo officers need additional police, where can they call them from? If Shepparton officers need additional police, where can they call them from? If Melbourne officers need them, they might be able to call them from Carlton, Brunswick or St Kilda and they would arrive in a few minutes. When there were 14 assaults in Shepparton on one Saturday night and the police needed backup they had to call officers from Echuca. Echuca is nearly an hour away. Not only did it take them an hour to travel there to assist the police who needed them immediately but that also left the Echuca community underresourced with police.

As I said, this is a significant problem in the country, where this government is underresourcing our police stations. Country police just do not have the backup available to assist them. In the shire of Moira, a large area along the Murray River where the population swells tremendously over the summer with people camping along the river, there is not one 24-hour police station. So police have to call for backup from Shepparton — again, leaving Shepparton underresourced. Yes, there are police on call in Moira but there is not one police station where you can actually go at midnight and say, ‘I need the assistance of police’.

Once again I congratulate my colleague Richard Dalla-Riva for bringing this motion before the house. It is a most important motion because it goes right to the core of safety for Victorians. I think all Victorians are sick and tired of the amount of violence that occurs on our streets, whether in the CBD (central business district) of Melbourne, the CBDs of Bendigo or Shepparton or in one of our suburbs or smaller country towns. We do not want to put up with those violent attacks but those hardworking police who are out there need additional police resources to keep this activity in check. The only way to do that is to have a police presence.

In Bendigo, for instance, with just four police officers on duty on a Friday night, those officers are not able to actually go into the nightclubs to see what is going on — to see whether there are people dealing drugs in there or what else is happening. They cannot be proactive in preventing violence from happening. I urge our police minister, Bob Cameron, who lives in Bendigo, to actually come with me on a Saturday night. I suggest we go to the nightclubs in Bendigo and observe what is actually happening. Bob Cameron

needs to get his head out of the sand and provide adequate police to ensure that his community is safe and that we do not see further incidents like those Carol had to endure in Napier Street.

I was disappointed to hear Ms Mikakos in her contribution just quote dollars and cents. I think the government needs to stop counting the dollars and cents and start counting the human cost of not providing adequate police to the Victorian community.

Ms HUPPERT (Southern Metropolitan) — I rise, as did my colleague Ms Mikakos, to speak in opposition to the motion that has been moved by Mr Dalla-Riva. The government recognises that Victoria does have an issue with alcohol-related violence. We can hardly ignore that fact because it is being reported at great length in the media. Rather than using scaremongering tactics, the government recognises that there are no easy solutions to this problem and has introduced a range of measures to tackle it.

I am a mother of three teenage sons, the eldest of whom is of drinking age and does venture into the central business district and inner suburbs on a Thursday evening with his mates. I know he is out until very late and I do get concerned that he is out there. I am also concerned about my younger son, who has not yet reached 18, because I see there are plenty of parents in the community who have not educated their children about the dangers of excessive alcohol consumption and do not seem to realise that problems can arise when young children engage in binge drinking.

That is why the government has taken a multifaceted approach to this problem, setting up the ministerial task force that my colleague referred to, the alcohol action plan and public awareness campaigns, because only by educating communities of the dangers of alcohol abuse is it that we can hope to make any inroads into this problem.

17:05

In addition to that, as Ms Mikakos mentioned, the government has allocated significant resources to the police, both in terms of police numbers and also police powers. I will not repeat the information that she has provided in relation to that but will merely say that there has been a recognition that this is a problem and that a number of the new police officers who have been appointed are to be allocated to the trouble spots to target alcohol-related crime. There are also additional transit police to tackle the difficulties being experienced at some of our railway stations and on trains. The powers that have been given are specifically targeted towards dealing with these issues, because they target

the drunk and disorderly type of offences and also the problems of behaviour surrounding licensed premises.

I repeat that what we do not need is scaremongering. What we do not need is making people too scared to leave their streets. Yes, there are problems, but what we need to do is take a reasoned approach to investigating the causes and trying to create an education campaign so that people will change their behaviours. It is not just police resources and police powers that will resolve this problem; there are behavioural issues in the community that need to be addressed. The government recognises that and is working towards that end. For that reason I urge you all to oppose this motion.

Mr ATKINSON (Eastern Metropolitan) — I do not intend to speak at length on Mr Dalla-Riva's motion because I have had a fairly busy day, but I think it is important for me to make some comments in support of it. I noted Ms Huppert's reasoned contribution just then, and I think that many on this side would agree that there is absolutely no point in drumming up hysteria and creating a climate of fear around the central business district in particular but also other places throughout Melbourne and, as my colleague Wendy Lovell has indicated, throughout Victoria.

As was indicated by way of interjection earlier, it is not the Liberal Party and its coalition partners that are drumming up this hysteria and this level of concern in the community; indeed the media has played a key role through its prominent reporting of a number of very unsavoury and unfortunate incidents over many months. Even without the media's attention to those matters I think there is a growing concern in the community about what people are seeing and what people are aware of in terms of increasingly violent behaviour amongst many people who are out and about in the community.

By way of interjection earlier Mrs Peulich mentioned the issue of drugs. I have a very strongly held position on that issue: I believe that if the government has not defined the problem correctly, then inevitably its strategies are going to be wrong. This government seems not to want to whisper the word, but the reality is that drugs are at the centre of much, if not all, of this horrendous violence that we are seeing the media carrying reports on week in, week out. There are a few incidents that appear to involve racism and that may not actually involve drugs, but many of the other attacks, including the apparently random attacks, are carried out by people with aggressive behaviours, and those aggressive behaviours without a doubt are related to some of the insidious drugs that are being used by young people today.

In fact Mrs Peulich and I have had a number of conversations about this issue, and one of our shared concerns — I think Mrs Peulich will also be contributing to this debate, so I hope I am not stealing her thunder — is that the approach that this government has taken in talking about increasing liquor licensing fees is not the right strategy to deal with the issue. It will not result in an improvement because the liquor issue is not the key issue in terms of this violent behaviour. Liquor is obviously present in some of the young people involved — very often there is a cocktail of drugs and liquor — but drug use is the issue that is central to these horrific incidents that we are reading about.

Many people who take in excessive amounts of alcohol are basically incapable of those attacks; they are actually rendered senseless in their own right. There are certainly some who become a little bit more belligerent under the influence of alcohol, but by and large most people do not behave that way. Indeed it has been suggested to me that some of the drugs that are circulated in venues in the city also tend to make people more inclined to love one another than fight one another. There is no doubt that there are manufactured drugs like ice and crack that are inconsistent in their recipes — people do not know what they are taking or do not know what they are mixed with — that are creating very belligerent and aggressive behaviours, and they are certainly associated with much of the level of increased crime.

Mr Dalla-Riva touched on the issue of knives and the knife amnesty that the government has put in place. The knife amnesty to me is a joke. I do not know if it was tracked down by the Rumour File on 3AW — it comes on at just after 7 o'clock, and I am half asleep at that hour of the morning; I was actually driving yesterday, so if I was half asleep, it is even worse! — but yesterday on the Rumour File there was a suggestion that at a particular venue that I did not quite pick up, but I understood it to be one of the courts, a whole lot of weapons and potential weapons had been confiscated at the front desk as people went into the court, including a significant number of knives over a relatively short period. I think something like 60 knives were confiscated over no more than three months. Those knives were taken off these people as they entered this building — as I said, I am pretty sure it was a court building — and do you know what? They were given a receipt so that as they left the building they could get their knife back! That apparently occurs in our court system. Apart from anything else in relation to the knife amnesty, if you are encouraged to hand over your knife with a bit of gentle persuasion from somebody, it is not too big an effort to replace it. It might cost you another

\$10, \$15 or \$25, but you would not have to walk very far to replace the knife that you had just handed in.

Mr Koch — Just around the corner.

Mr ATKINSON — To basically any shop. Just around the corner, as Mr Koch says. The knife amnesty is an absolute joke. The government's strategies on drugs are a joke. I think we have reached almost a point of denial. We talk often in this place about spin doctoring, but we reached a real low point this week, and I was disappointed with the Chief Commissioner of Police, Mr Overland, who I hold in reasonable regard. The spin doctors had given him a line to run in the last week or so, and the line was, 'Crime is not too bad in the city, because if you measure it as a proportion against population and compare what it was 10 years ago with what it is today, the crime rate is actually down. Serious crime is down on a ratio of violent crime to population'. That is cold comfort to the people who are injured and the people who are hospitalised by vicious attacks. Frankly the statistics are an absolute nonsense, because the population increase in the city of Melbourne is largely a much older demographic that is not really involved in most of the attacks that are under scrutiny and are actually occurring.

17:15 It is a nonsense to use this to try to say there is not really a problem here. This government really needs to develop a much stronger strategy against drugs if it is going to make any difference to the crime statistics in Victoria.

There ought to be an automatic doubling of the penalty applicable to anybody involved in one of these attacks if the attack is undertaken by more than one person; that should not be negotiable. What we ought to be saying is that if two people gang up on another — and in some instances we have 3, 4, 5 or more people ganging up and causing significant damage to a person — and are going to act in that cowardly way, even if their excuse is they are stoked on drugs, there ought to be repercussions. As an absolute minimum, if more than one person is involved in an assault, the penalty should be doubled — and that should not be negotiable.

It is not only a matter of the number of police who are sent out on the street as there may well be issues in the composition of our police force. There has been a definite attempt in recent years through an affirmative action program to try to recruit a lot more policewomen. They have a very significant and good role in policing in this state but they are not much of a contest against a gang of 3, 4, or 5 fellows, especially when they are under-equipped by the government.

There is a need to address the way police are equipped, there is a need to address who is out on some of these patrols, and there is a need in our recruitment of police to start looking at getting more men with a bit of physicality coming through. Perhaps there is a need to look at having dogs on some patrols. There is always an opportunity to start to address some of these incidents to give people a greater sense of community safety.

This is an important motion; the statistics are alarming. They are not some sort of invention of the opposition, of the media or of anybody else, they are alarming statistics. The statistics are increasing at a time when the ratio of police to population in this state is falling and is the lowest in Australia, despite the government's claims about where it is going in terms of increasing police numbers. We are now seeing unnecessary violent crime spreading throughout suburban areas as well as the city. Perhaps some of them are sort of 'me too' attacks, but in a sense that suggests the government and police strategies to combat this problem need to be reviewed.

A couple of weeks ago in Mitcham, right in the heart of the electorate I share with Mr Tee, Mr Leane, Mrs Kronberg and Mr Dalla-Riva, there was a violent incident involving police who tried to make an arrest and were attacked by some individuals. We have not really seen much of that in the past, because people tended to have a bit more respect and to recognise that the police have some authority. Now we have some real problems, and the government must look at that authority issue.

It must look at its manpower issues, but, as I said, it also needs to look at addressing the drugs issue and perhaps also reviewing penalties, things such as home detention and the response of magistrates, even using the suite of penalties already available, because we simply have to do something to stem the increasing tide of violence and disrespect that some people seem to have, which is already affecting the attitude of some people towards venturing into the city, particularly at night or on weekends. That has economic consequences for many small businesses and entertainment venues and so forth which people have always used responsibly but which are now under threat because of perceptions that we need to address urgently.

This is an appropriate motion, and I hope it will enjoy the support of the house.

Mr TEE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I must say that I was somewhat disappointed when I read this motion. I thought it was shallow — that is probably the best word I can think of. That is a pity because this is a very

important issue that demands the engagement of this house, but not in the sort of superficial and almost trivial way this motion tries to treat the issue. It makes me wonder where did it go wrong; why did we end up with this lacklustre motion? What was Mr Dalla-Riva thinking when he drafted it?

I suspect part of the issue goes back to the opposition and the lessons it learnt when the community responded to the changes the Kennett government introduced, and the community did respond when the Kennett government closed police stations and slashed police resources. The opposition saw how the electorate responded when crime rose by 10 per cent under the Kennett government. It is clear that crime is an important issue; it is an important matter that impacts on people's lives.

17:22 Sadly, the opposition has learnt nothing. The best it can do after all this time is bowl up this motion. It is almost as if the opposition says 'This is an important issue so we had better tick the box and talk about violent crime; we had better show a degree of interest'. All they do with this half-hearted attempt is run the risk of not being taken seriously. It becomes a hollow gong. No matter how desperate the opposition is, people will not take any notice of it because it talks about or keeps saying the word 'crime'.

What this motion lacks is an alternative vision. It lacks a way forward or policy, ideas and engagement with the issue. There is no vision — and no amount of posturing will change that. No amount of jumping up and down and going on about it will change the fact that there is a lack of vision, lack of policy, lack of a way forward and lack of engagement with what is an important issue.

The other thing the motion lacks in that sense is a failure to recognise the amount of work that has been done since the former Kennett government was in office. There is a failure to recognise the work this government has done and what the police are doing. It is a slap in the face for the police out there who have worked hard over the years to turn around what was an appalling record. The government has turned the situation around so that where we had local police working effectively with one hand tied behind their backs now they are a world-class police force. The government has resourced and equipped them and the results are there to be seen.

This motion does not acknowledge the mistakes of the Kennett government. It does not acknowledge the work this government has done. It does not acknowledge the work that is done by Victoria Police and nor does it provide a way forward. There is no alternative or one

idea for building on that work done in the community on a day-to-day basis.

This is a motion based in hope rather than substance. There is the hope that the opposition will get some traction on the issue by using the word 'crime' through a throwaway, lazy motion rather than trying to address the issue. The reality is that if you go out into the community or talk to the police you will see the impact of the efforts that are being made to turn the situation around. Mr Dalla-Riva need only visit Eastern Metropolitan Region, as Mr Atkinson indicated, and talk to police in Whitehorse and he will see that the crime rate has fallen by more than 7 per cent in the last 12 months and that assaults have fallen by 5 per cent. If he went to Manningham he would see that crime rates have fallen by nearly 40 per cent and that crime is on the way down in his own electorate.

I read an article in the *Australian* on Friday, 11 September, which has the heading 'It's not a jungle out there, police can prove it'. The report states:

Police statistics provided exclusively to the *Australian* show that while the population ... has increased ... the number of assaults recorded in the city has risen at a much slower rate.

When the population growth is taken into account, the chance of a resident being attacked in the inner city today is lower than it was in 2002 or 2003, and —

this is the killer —

about half what it was in 2000.

Victorian Deputy Commissioner of Police, Kieran Walshe, is quoted also in the report, which states further:

... the potential for a city resident to be attacked is far, far less than it was.

The report goes on to talk about the work that is being done by this government to arm police with extended powers to search anyone. The response from the deputy commissioner was that:

... police were confident that with the new powers flagged for introduction before the end of the year, the per capita assault rate in Melbourne would continue to be pushed down.

Prior to drafting his next motion, Mr Dalla-Riva should look at what is happening in his electorate and in the rest of the community and then engage with the issue. The flaw in the motion is that it does not deal with the reality that crime rates have come down. Instead the motion contains unsubstantiated allegations.

The reason that the motion will fail whether here or in the community is because the electorate understands the

difference between form and substance. The electorate has seen what happens when you have a government that cares and puts police on our streets. The electorate knows which political party took those resources away and it knows who brought them back and no half-baked motion will change that reality.

17:30 If members of the opposition have a view, an idea or a policy and want to add to the work that is being done, and if they acknowledge the changes and make a contribution, then let us have a debate along those lines. We should have a genuine debate, but let us not dish up this nonsense. Let us not pretend to have a degree of interest.

As I said, the reality is that crime is a challenge, and this house owes it to the community to work for the benefit of the community. The community deserves better than this cynical motion, which is about trying to get an issue, trying to get traction and trying to get votes simply by throwing around the word 'crime'. The opposition has used hollow words, but hollow words do not make one iota of difference. The electorate understands that actions speak louder than words, and this motion has nothing but words.

If members of the opposition were genuine and cared about serious crime, they would do some work. They would talk to their local communities and to police, and they would get out into communities to learn and understand what the government has achieved. They would see what the government has delivered, and they would understand how the resources committed by the government are working.

I would urge members of the opposition to get out there and talk to people, to try to understand what is going on. Then, when they have an informed position, they can come back to the chamber where we could have an informed debate around ideas. We could have a debate where members of the opposition add value and make a contribution. Until then, the opposition will continue to remain irrelevant, ill-informed and ignored, because this motion really is a waste of everyone's time.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — If ever the people of Victoria wanted to know why the Brumby government is sailing close to the rocks, all they had to do is listen to the contribution the house heard from Mr Tee a few moments ago. Mr Tee got up in this house and said, 'This motion is shallow'. Obviously he has not had his house broken into recently; obviously he has not had his car stolen recently; obviously he has not been bashed recently, like so many Victorians. They would not think this motion is shallow; they would think this motion is very important.

The house heard from Mr Tee the sort of arrogance that Victorians do not like. Clearly, 10 years down the track the Labor Party has forgotten what arrogance can do to a government. Some 10 years down the track it has forgotten that arrogance can destroy a government, and I know that better than most. There are no two ways about that!

Mr Viney — Not as well as I do!

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr FINN — Mr Viney did a lot better out of it than I did, I can tell you!

Ms Huppert got up and said we were fearmongering and putting the fear of God into people. We do not have to do that; people are scared in their own homes in Melbourne and parts of Victoria. What sort of a government allows that to happen? The people of Victoria will tell you that the sort of government that allows that to happen is the sort of government that should be defeated at the next election, because a government that allows people to be scared in their own homes is the sort of government that has completely failed in its responsibilities to the people of Victoria.

It would be a truism to say that we desperately need more police on the streets of Melbourne and the many regional centres throughout Victoria. I am glad to say that I do not get out and about too often in the wee small hours these days, but on the occasions I have been around the streets of Melbourne at 1 o'clock or 2 o'clock in the morning, I have been quite horrified at what I have seen.

In years gone by I may have frequented the odd nightclub and may well have partaken of a refreshing ale on a warm night, but in those days there was none of the ludicrous, out-of-control behaviour that we see on our streets today. It is quite extraordinary. I do not get out during those hours very often now, but I have been stunned when I have witnessed that sort of behaviour. What has stunned me even more is that you very rarely see a policeman, neither for love nor money. That is the problem.

I may have mentioned in this house a time when I visited Brisbane with my 11-year-old daughter for a wedding a few months ago. We were walking down one of the streets of Brisbane when she said, 'Dad, do you know the difference between here and Melbourne?'. I said, 'It is warmer'. She said, 'Yes, it is, but the big difference is they have police on the streets here'. This was an 11-year-old taking note of the fact that police were on the streets of Brisbane, because she had never seen them on the streets of Melbourne. I

think that is an indictment on this government and the way the Victorian police force has been handled over the past decade.

Nine years ago this government sold Victoria Police completely down the drain. The day the then Bracks government appointed Christine Nixon as Chief Commissioner of Police was the day that government sold every Victorian policeman and policewoman down the drain completely. It was the day the Labor Party publicly declared for all to hear and see that its members no longer cared about policing. Indeed they no longer cared about law and order in this state.

During Christine Nixon's nine years as chief commissioner we saw nothing about policing, law and order, and protecting the community. It was all about a wild social experiment, and we are now seeing the results of that experiment — and we can judge very clearly that that experiment has failed very miserably indeed.

During that wild social experiment we saw hundreds of police — good, hardworking, committed police — walk out the door. Police threw their arms up in the air and said, 'We cannot handle this any more'. These were police who had committed their lives to defending our community and protecting people in their homes, on the streets and in the community generally. They just gave up. They said, 'I cannot put up with this anymore'.

I remember being told that in one week alone last year, more than 1000 years of experience walked out the door. Victoria Police lost more than 1000 years of experience in just one week because of then chief commissioner Nixon. This government can say what it likes about how it is committed to law and order and to police in this state, but its actions speak louder than words. I invite members opposite to go out and speak to policemen and policewomen on the streets — if they can find one on the streets. Better still, they could go to a police station; they might find one there.

17:40 Members of the government should go out and speak to those men and women on the thin blue line; they should ask them how their morale is, how their stress levels are and how they are coping. They will find out very quickly that Victoria Police is in a total, unmitigated mess. That is something of which none of us should be proud or happy about.

We heard during the time of the former chief commissioner her point-blank refusal to even mention the word 'gang' at a time when gangs were — and they still are — roaming the streets. I know that is the case in

my area; from my own office I can see gangs roaming the streets of Sunshine. Last Friday night I was working in my office until about 11.00 p.m., and I could hear them outside. I have to say I was a little wary of leaving my office to go to my car — and this was in suburban Sunshine. Yet the former commissioner would tell us, 'There are no gangs', even though we now have video footage from a wide number of places of gangs kicking the living suitcases out of poor victims who had absolutely no hope of defending themselves.

I suppose it is no surprise to any of us to learn that the police have been treated in this way. The Labor Party in Victoria and in other states has never had any time for the police. If you go back through the history of the Labor Party, you will find leaders of the Labor Party and other individuals very prominent in the party who hate the police, who hate authority and who hate law and order.

Mr Leane — That is a bit rough!

Mr FINN — I hear Mr Leane chortling away to himself over there — poor demented swine! — but I say to him: if he really wants to know the history of his own party, he should go back and have a look at people like Jim Cairns. I am sure, Acting President, you would remember in the streets of Melbourne not all that long ago what Jim Cairns used to do to the police. So I would invite Mr Leane and other members to examine closely the history of their own party in regard to police and law and order.

Mr Scheffer — Wasn't Jim Cairns a policeman?

Mr FINN — He was a policeman to start with; my word he was, but when they turn rogue, they turn rogue! They do not muck around! If you want someone who really hates a Catholic, find an ex-Catholic. Jim Cairns was causing riots in the streets and soiling students and all sorts of assorted communists on the streets of Melbourne onto police. If you want to go back to those anti-Vietnam days, that was all inspired by Jim Cairns. The fact that he was a policeman before he moved in — —

Mr Dalla-Riva interjected.

Mr FINN — It is not where you start; it is where you finish, and that is where he finished. If you want to find out where the ALP gets its contempt for police, and law and order, just look at the history of the ALP and of the Labor movement in this state and in this country.

There are some on the other side — and we have heard them today — who will tell us that everything is hunky

dory, that there is no crime in this state, that we have it all under control, that on 18 September 1999 everything was turned around and that it has never looked back. Unfortunately the facts say otherwise. In my area, and out in the western suburbs, we are actually facing a crime wave. That is not something anybody in the ALP is interested in or aware of, because when you talk about the Labor Party you are talking about a group of individuals who do not care about the western suburbs — unless there is a job in it for them, in which case they do care.

The welfare of and what is good for the people of the western suburbs are not on Labor's radar at all and never have been. 'Keep them down, keep them poor and they will keep voting for us' is the attitude of the Labor Party in this state.

I have been very concerned for a significant time about some of the crime statistics in the western suburbs. I would like to go through the local government areas in my electorate of Western Metropolitan Region. You might be interested in this yourself, Acting President.

In the city of Hume the assault rate is up 13.8 per cent; aggravated burglary, up 39.1 per cent; deception, up 18.9 per cent; shop theft, up 17.8 per cent; the cultivation, manufacture and trafficking of drugs, up 21.8 per cent; justice procedures offences, up 14.9 per cent; and harassment, up an extraordinary 209.3 per cent.

If we move on to the infamous local government area of Brimbank, we see that non-rape sexual offences are up by 25.7 per cent; abduction and kidnapping, by 77.8 per cent; arson, by 8.9 per cent; aggravated burglary, by 43.2 per cent; the cultivation, manufacture and trafficking of drugs, by 26.5 per cent; the possession and use of drugs, by 37.7 per cent; going equipped to steal offences, by 39.1 per cent; regulated public order offences, by 150 per cent; weapons and explosives offences, by 35.5 per cent; behaviour in public offences, by 47.1 per cent; and other offences, by 66.1 per cent.

17:47 The government says there is no crime problem here in Melbourne and no crime problem in Victoria.

We then go to Hobsons Bay, which is a great place. Williamstown, Altona and places down that way are very pleasant places indeed. The homicide rate there is up 100 per cent; rape is up 38.5 per cent, robbery is up 25.4 per cent; abduction and kidnapping are up 28.6 per cent; aggravated burglary is up 10 per cent; the cultivation, manufacture and trafficking of drugs is up 45.6 per cent; going equipped to steal is up 66.7 per

cent; justice procedures are up 30.9 per cent; weapons and explosives offences are up 38.5 per cent; and behaviour in public offences are up 69 per cent.

We then go down to Maribyrnong next door, where non-rape sexual charges are up 35.6 per cent and assault is up 20.7 per cent. Abduction and kidnapping in Maribyrnong is up an extraordinary 400 per cent —

Mr Leane interjected.

Mr FINN — Mr Leane might find all this very amusing, but he would not find it amusing if he lived in the western suburbs. If he showed any interest in the people who live in the western suburbs, he would not find this even mildly amusing, because I can assure him it is not. Property damage in Maribyrnong has seen a 13.6 per cent increase; handling of stolen goods is up 99.6 per cent; shop stealing is up 49.6 per cent; the cultivation, manufacturing and trafficking of drugs is up 59.8 per cent; the possession or use of drugs is up 51 per cent; going equipped to steal is up 13.6 per cent; justice procedures are up 99.2 per cent; weapons and explosives offences are up 43.8 per cent; harassment is up 127.3 per cent; and behaviour in public offences are up 145.7 per cent.

Moving on to Melton, rape charges are up by 22.2 per cent, robbery is up 78.9 per cent, assault is up 8.8 per cent and abduction and kidnapping are up 20 per cent. Arson has seen a 50.9 increase, general burglary is up 15.7 per cent, deception is up 17.7 per cent and handling stolen goods is up 21.2 per cent. Weapons and explosives charges are up 43 per cent, harassment is up 9.7 per cent and behaviour in public offences are up 15 per cent.

Moving along to Wyndham, the homicide rate is up 40 per cent, the rape rate is up 17.1 per cent, robbery is up 62 per cent, assault is up 36.7 per cent, arson is up 18.8 per cent, property damage is up 9.5 per cent, aggravated burglary is up 23.7 per cent, deception is up 89.4 per cent, handling of stolen goods is up 37.4 per cent, theft — that is shop stealing — is up 10.7 per cent, other general theft is up 46.9 per cent, and in justice procedures there is an increase of 40.6 per cent. Harassment is up 20.5 per cent, and behaviour in public offences are up 32.3 per cent. I am sure you will agree, President, that these are figures that none of us can be at all pleased with.

In Moreland homicides increased by 133.3 per cent, non-rape sexual charges were up 16.2 per cent, robbery was up 33.8 per cent, abduction and kidnapping were up 120 per cent, aggravated burglary was up 60.3 per

cent, shop stealing was up 42.7 per cent, harassment was up 178.6 per cent and behaviour in public offences were up 8.1 per cent — and even an 8.1 per cent increase is relatively mild in comparison with some of the increases we have seen.

Finally, I move to Moonee Valley, and this is something I am sure the Minister for Planning will find particularly interesting now that he is starting to take some interest in what happens around the Moonee Valley area. The homicide rate there is up by a staggering 700 per cent. That is truly shocking, whatever way you want to use that word. The burglary rate has seen a 36.2 per cent increase; shop stealing is up 23.5 per cent; the cultivation, manufacture and trafficking of drugs are up 25.8 per cent; and behaviour in public offences are up 91.1 per cent. I am not joking when I say we have a crime wave in the western suburbs.

Mr Viney interjected.

Mr FINN — Mr Viney might think I am joking. As he sits chortling Mr Viney might think it is amusing, but those of us who live in the western suburbs do not find it amusing at all. To tell the truth those of us who live in the western suburbs find it very alarming and straight-out scary. What do we have from the government as a response to those crime figures?

Mrs Peulich — Head in the sand?

Mr FINN — At best, Mrs Peulich, we have indifference, but usually it is total contempt. For example, over a long period down in Werribee we have seen a battle by locals, including local police officers, to get sufficient police numbers in the Wyndham area, which the last time I checked was the fastest growing municipality in Australia. They have been battling for years to get sufficient numbers of police down there. They were promised another full-time police station, which they most certainly need. The trouble is there are not the police to man it, so it is not going to be full-time; I understand it is only going to be open during the day. I assume that a lot of crime is committed after hours, so I suppose the crims will just have to take up a nine-to-five job.

We have seen police taken from Footscray and from Williamstown to fill holes in other parts of the west. We in the western suburbs do not want all these recycled police; we want new police. We do not want to take police from our neighbours. We do not want to see police taken from Footscray and placed in Werribee or police taken from Williamstown and placed in

Footscray. We do not want to see that. We need new police and more police.

The Sunshine police station would have to be one of the busiest police stations in the state. I do not know how it copes. My sympathy is with the police officers who work in and out of the Sunshine police station. They have a hell of a job. They have a dreadful job, and they are getting no support from this government. They are getting no support from a government that just does not care about law and order, particularly in the western suburbs. To make matters worse we have seen from this government police chiefs — people who used to be real police who knew what policing was about — replaced by spin doctors. We have seen them replaced by politicians in their own right. We have seen chief commissioners who get up and just parrot the government line. The government knows what it is doing when it appoints these senior police who will always do what the government tells them to do.

I could talk about the alcohol problem, which I think actually has more to do with the drug problem on our streets and in our nightclubs and so forth. When I was a lad — and I can still remember it — a few of us had a sip from time to time, but we did not go on the rampage. We did not try to go and rip off somebody's head. We did not try to kick them to death. There was none of that sort of thing, but then again we did not take some of the drugs that are prevalent in our nightclubs now. Until such time as we embark on a campaign of deliberately cracking down — of zero tolerance — on the people who manufacture and sell these drugs to our young people the problem we have is not going to be solved and it will only get worse. I say to the government that as a society we need to get fair dinkum about this, to crack down on these drug dealers and to show them that we will not tolerate their behaviour here in Melbourne or in Victoria. It is just not on.

On Friday, as I said this morning, we commemorate here the 10th anniversary of the defeat of the Liberals. You would not imagine that because, according to the government, it is all Jeff Kennett's fault. Everything is Jeff Kennett's fault. He has not been in office for 10 years, but it is all Jeff Kennett's fault. After 10 years, Labor has left us one legacy, and I will be interested to see if Mr Viney or anybody else on the other side gets up and takes a bow as a result of this legacy. That legacy is that Victoria is a very dangerous and very scary place to live.

Earlier this year I walked out onto the front steps of Parliament House at about 11 o'clock one night after my wife had rung and requested money — not for the first time. I stood at the top of the stairs and looked

down Bourke Street, debating in my mind whether I was game enough to walk one block to the auto teller, take out a few hundred dollars and walk back. I thought about it for a few minutes, and I went to my car, got in and drove down. That is Melbourne in 2009 after 10 years of Labor. That is the Labor legacy: people are too scared to walk the streets of Melbourne. In a lot of cases people are too scared to live in their own homes. Is Labor proud of this? Is Labor proud of what it has done to Victoria after 10 miserable, long years? That is Labor's legacy. That is Labor's shame.

Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria) — At the outset it is probably appropriate that I declare that my wife is a solicitor who works in criminal law for victims of crime. It is appropriate that I make that clear as a particular interest I might have in this matter. I must say that when I am engaged in a conversation with a minister that might result in me smiling, it is a cheap shot for Mr Finn to suggest that somehow I am laughing about the issue of crime. I do not plan to declare my own experience in any detailed kind of way, but I was a victim of crime in my childhood, and I take the matter pretty seriously. I am not here to trivialise it, and I do not trivialise or mock it. Crime is all too prevalent in our community, and we need to do everything we can as legislators, community leaders and people involved in our community to minimise crime. I suspect we will never wipe it out — it seems to be part of the human condition — but we need to work together on it.

What I heard from Mr Finn and Mr Dalla-Riva in his introductory remarks were attempts to, you might say, politicise the issue of crime in our state. I suppose there is a political element to some of the issues associated with crime, but there is no value in suggesting that one side or the other is uninterested in the issue of crime. I have never suggested that members of the Liberal Party are not interested in the issue of crime. I respect their legitimate concerns, but we might have different approaches to how we deal with these things.

One of the things that distinguished us on this side from the government 10 years ago was that we took the view that one of the prerequisites for reducing the crime rate in the state was to catch the crooks, and that in order to catch them you had to have enough police. A clear demarcation between the then Kennett government that Mr Finn acknowledged in his contribution was very arrogant and the then Labor opposition and the thing that distinguished them was that our policy was to employ more police and that government's policy had been to reduce them.

To that end, the government has increased the number of police by 1400 since we were elected, and we are delivering an additional 350 police in this term of office. On top of those existing commitments, another 120 police have been committed to further assist police in tackling violent crime and some public order issues that have certainly been very public, particularly around the central business district. It is very difficult for any of us here to say whether the incidence of crime outside bars and nightclubs and so on is worse or better today than it was 10 years ago or when I was a kid. When I was a teenager in Clayton you did not go to Springy rock, because you were from Clayton and you took your life in your hands if you went there. These are the things that we know have been taking place for a considerable time.

People absolutely ought to be able to walk the streets in safety. I do not think there is a member of this house who would disagree with the position Mr Finn took when he said that we ought to be able to feel safe when we walk the streets. I have heard someone say in this debate — I think it was Mr Dalla-Riva, but I do not mean to misquote him — that we ought to take a lesson out of New York's book. I would still prefer to walk the streets of Melbourne than the streets of New York at 1 o'clock or 2 o'clock in the morning. When you get out of the train at Grand Central station in New York, you see that the police have submachine guns on their shoulders. That is the state of the situation in New York. I like the kind of environment we have in Melbourne, and I hope we do not get to a situation where our police have to have submachine guns on their shoulders.

We need to acknowledge that the issue of violent crime in the streets of Melbourne has a long history. We can all quote statistics, but I want to quote something else. I want to quote from a play written some time ago that is instructive. By way of background, it is a play about a bloke taking his then girlfriend to see *Romeo and Juliet* and constructing the Shakespeare's story in the Australian vernacular. The poem goes:

This Romeo 'e's lurkin' wiv a crew —
 A dead tough crowd o' crooks — called Montague.
 'is cliner's push — wot's nicknamed Capulet —
 They 'as 'em set.
 Fair narks they are, jist like them back-street clicks,
 Ixcep' they fights wiv skewers 'stid o' bricks.
 Wot's in a name? Wot's in a string o' words?
 They scraps in ole Verona wiv the'r swords,
 An' never give a bloke a stray dog's chance,
 An' that's Romance.
 But when they deals it out wiv bricks an' boots
 In Little Lon., they're low, degraded broots.
 Wot's jist plain stoush wiv us, right 'ere to — day,

Is 'valler' if yer fur enough away.
Some time, some writer bloke will do the trick
Wiv Ginger Mick,
Of Spadger's Lane.
'E'll be a Romeo,
When 'e's bin dead five 'undred years or so.

That, talking about the 'scraps in Little Lon', was *The Sentimental Bloke, The Play*. It was written by C. J. Dennis and was first published at page 47 of *The Bulletin* of 16 July 1914. It is absolutely my favourite poem, it is sensational, and I love the whole book.

My point is this: we have been facing crime in the streets of Melbourne, in the central business district, right back to Ginger Mick and the Sentimental Bloke, right back to 1914, just before the outbreak of the First World War, so let us be sensible about this debate.

There is crime on the streets of Melbourne, and it has been getting significant publicity recently because clearly there has been a link between people abusing alcohol and perhaps other substances — people abusing alcohol and maybe other substances —

Mr Finn — 'Maybe'?

Mr VINEY — I do not know, Mr Finn. I assume that there are other substances that are probably abused, but I suspect that alcohol is a pretty significant contributor to it. There are some other contributors but I do not know the extent of it. I would say that the way to tackle this problem is being dealt with by the government's strategies. In C. J. Dennis' time I imagine the government of the day dealt with Ginger Mick and his mates in Little Lonsdale Street in the way that they used to deal with it in those days. In this era we are dealing with it with the appropriate strategies of today — that is, dealing with alcohol, dealing with substance abuse, and policing strategies.

The government has put in place strategies that are about ensuring there is more responsible service of alcohol, ensuring that there are consequences for proprietors who do not serve alcohol in the appropriate way, and ensuring also that there are sufficient police on the streets of Melbourne, whether it be in Little Lonsdale Street or King Street, to deal with those problems.

Mr Finn — Or Werribee.

Mr VINEY — Or Werribee, indeed, or Warragul, or Morwell, or in Bairnsdale in my electorate, or anywhere in the state of Victoria — making sure that there are sufficient police to deal with those problems.

Mr Finn — Why haven't you done it?

Mr VINEY — Mr Finn, we have been doing it.

Mr Finn — You have not. Go out and talk to people.

Mr VINEY — Mr Finn, when you were in the Kennett government you cut 1000 police out of the Victoria police force. I acknowledge that you were prepared to get up here and say that the government was arrogant and appropriately lost; you have actually said that in your contribution. That is a great acknowledgement, and I congratulate you for it, but our response has not been the arrogant response of the Kennett government.

Mr Finn — You are going down the same path, though.

Mr VINEY — Our response has been to say, 'Here is a problem' and we have put in 1400 additional police.

Mr Finn — Where are they? They are not on the streets.

Mr VINEY — We have now increased the police budget to \$1.89 billion, which is a record budget. We have put in an additional 120 police officers over and above those commitments of the additional 1400 and the 350 that we committed to for this term. We have seen dozens of police stations around Victoria upgraded. We have police numbers restored to where they needed to be 10 years ago, and we are moving on with the additional commitments that we have made.

We have made announcements in relation to alcohol-related violence, that relate to additional police powers, new offences in relation to weapons offences, additional powers and penalties in relation to liquor licensing; and we have introduced a Victorian alcohol action plan and a public awareness plan. So, Mr Finn, it is not correct to say that we have not been doing anything about it.

We have been comprehensively responding and, as I said, just as in C. J. Dennis' time when he wrote *The Play* as part of *The Sentimental Bloke* series in 1914, when that was first published; just as the government of the day would have had to deal with the problems of the day, of people using 'bricks an' boots in Little Lon', this government is dealing with the problems we have got which in some instances are far worse, involving weapons and so on. We have to deal with those in the current environment, whether they be in King Street or Little Lonsdale Street in Melbourne, in the western suburbs as raised by Mr Finn, or in my electorate of Eastern Victoria Region.

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I also rise to support the motion before the chamber by Mr Dalla-Riva:

That this house —

- (1) expresses its concern at the Brumby government's inadequate response to the growing levels of violent crime in Victoria and calls on the Premier, in conjunction with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, to accept responsibility for this situation and the violence on our streets; and
- (2) notes that on 29 July 2009 this house referred these issues to the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee, which is to report by 30 August 2010.

In representing South Eastern Metropolitan Region I join in Mr Finn's declaration to this chamber that his region is suffering a crime wave, and indeed this is also happening across my electorate.

18:15 On a daily basis we read in the media about some of the most violent offences that have occurred: sometimes on the train, sometimes around railway stations, on the street, sometimes involving gangs, sometimes by a particular racial group, but we know that the issue of gang violence is something that the former Chief Commissioner of Police wanted to underplay — —

Mr Finn — You couldn't talk about it, or even mention the word 'gangs'.

Mrs PEULICH — Yes. These issues have not really been addressed, despite the hyperbole, the claims and the public relations (PR) that we hear from the government. When there is an exposé of some concern in a local paper, some media PR person is trotted out to say, 'There really is no concern about crime. The only reason why there has been an increase is because the police have been even more vigilant' or, 'There has been a special program' or, 'People have reported rapes or domestic violence many years after the event'. I am sorry, that does not fully explain the rise in the crimes statistics, certainly not in South Eastern Metropolitan Region; it does not explain the incidence of rising levels of violence in our streets, not just in the CBD — and many of those would also involve constituents from South Eastern Metropolitan Region — but also in suburban streets.

There a range of measures that the government has failed to take. I will come back to those responsibilities that fall within the role of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. First and foremost, we have heard a lot said about the influence of alcohol-fuelled violence. Whilst I have seen an ugly drunk from time to time — probably too often — many of them are not necessarily always on the street. I am astonished that

this government has failed to understand; research or establish the exact cause of that sort of level of violence on the streets, which is all too visible.

Recently I was crossing a street in front of Parliament House. A young woman was driving responsibly and completely within the law, waiting to turn at the lights. A group of young men, probably well under 18 years of age came past. We cannot assume that they had not imbibed alcohol, because it is possible for an older person to purchase alcohol and for that alcohol to be brought from home and consumed on the train or whatever. Without pause, the group turned around and tried to rock and bang on the car. The female driver was terrified. I would have been terrified had I been in her position. I could not believe that in broad daylight at around 5.30 p.m. on a Friday evening, this sort of behaviour could occur. It really took me by surprise.

I am not surprised that there has been a progressive decline in respect for the law. That is the greatest concern, and as policy-makers we have got to understand why there has been a decline in respect for the law. What role do parents play?

An honourable member — Overnight!

Mrs PEULICH — The litany of failures will take far longer than that! What role have parents played in cultivating a lack of respect for other people, and in particular a lack of respect for the law? What role does the conduct and behaviour of police officers on the street play, in particular those who move around in groups, a measure they have had to move to for safety reasons?

What impact does that have in inciting a more violent or more aggressive reaction? I have seen it myself, and it is most unfortunate. I recall walking down the street in Mordialloc around the DFO (direct factory outlet) complex. A group of teenagers was being a little boisterous but were not drunk, They were from private schools — not that they would exonerate them from playing up.

A father who had picked them up was walking them to the car to take them to wherever they needed to go. Another fellow had misbehaved. Two police officers stopped the car. They roughed up the person at the head of the queue, who was not really related to that group. Unfortunately the language that came out of the mouth of that police officer made my hair curl. More importantly, the father who was walking the group of teenagers — because he was the designated driver and had to pick them up — tried to intervene to get a bit of

calm but was then shown disrespect by the police officers. That is not acceptable.

The lives of police officers are on the line all the time; they are often in threatening and hostile situations, and I sympathise with the tasks they perform. They do the very best they can with the limited available resources, but the public has got to be treated with some degree of respect. Even when breaches occur, there have got to be lines that cannot be crossed. Why is it so? Perhaps this decline in standards is linked to the type of recruitment process we now have, with people of smaller stature recruited into the police force. I am not saying that they should not be recruited; I am just questioning the type of job they might do. I understand from my police friends many of the people recruited — that is, in terms of their physical stature — undergo a much higher component of assertiveness training.

I watch my fair share of American films — *CSI* and all of those crime shows. If that is the sort of assertiveness training that our police force is doing, then I am sorry, it is probably not a direction I want to see happen. I would much rather see police officers the size of, say, Minister Madden or a 6 foot 4 inches burley police sergeant patrolling those streets because that sort of physical and visible presence is very important.

18:22 Members heard Mr Atkinson talk about the influence of alcohol and a study of the effect of taking a cocktail of alcohol and drugs. This is an issue that I am certainly very interested in and very dissatisfied with the government's progress on.

There is the issue of police training, police recruitment and the number of police. The Police Association has been fairly forthcoming on the shortages at various police stations in local government areas. Despite the claims of this government that there have been record increases in the number of police there is documented evidence showing that the number of policing hours on the street is actually lower now than it was when there was a Liberal government in office. So what is going wrong? Clearly it is an underresourced police force. Lots of problems have not been addressed, and this government has failed to take any serious measures to actually address those.

Violence is certainly out of control. An analysis of Victoria Police crime statistics undertaken by the Victorian Liberal and National parties shows that violence in suburban Melbourne has been growing at a much faster rate than violence in the city centre — not that I am downplaying the importance of getting on top of that issue. Violent crime in Victoria has grown by 60 per cent since 2000 to 31 301 assaults per year.

Labor has allowed the number of total violent crimes to increase from 31 372 in 2000 to 42 949 last year.

Under Labor 9 local government areas have had an increase in assaults of more than 100 per cent since the year 2000, 10 local government areas in Melbourne have had double the increase in assaults that the CBD (central business district) has suffered since the year 2000, and last year 18 local government areas in Melbourne had the highest level of either assault, violent crime or both in the last decade, including four local government areas that I represent: Casey, Dandenong, Frankston and Monash. In Casey we have seen a 132.6 per cent rise in assaults from 2000–01 to 2008–09. Greater Dandenong has had an increase of 100.4 per cent and Frankston has had an increase of 82.7 per cent. These increases are greater than the rise in the increase in assaults in Melbourne, which was 44 per cent.

Women and the elderly are now twice as likely to be assaulted as they were 10 years ago. This is the legacy and failing of this government. Access to food and shelter and safety are basic human rights that clearly this government has clearly neglected. Not only have there been more assaults, but the anecdotal evidence is that assaults were much more violent, and surgeons at various Melbourne hospitals have noted the increase in assault cases where victims are left with acquired brain injuries.

As I mentioned earlier, part of the reason for the increase in violent crime is the diminishing visibility of police in the community and, who knows, maybe even the centralisation of smaller police shops into larger complexes, which somehow seem to gobble up police. All too often police are rarely to be seen coming out of those. The coalition has been calling for Labor to invest in more police on the beat in the places where our children are growing up because if we do not do that, we obviously risk an entire generation thinking that violence is normal and becoming desensitised to violence.

There are the roles of the media, parenting and education and the increasing culture of underreporting crime. People consider it is just useless to report crime because the police are not interested. The police actually often set up hurdles to people reporting crime. I have had a personal experience of this and I have certainly heard of a number of friends having gone through the same experience. All these are reasons why people are losing faith in authority. This needs to be addressed.

The issue of underreporting has been established, but let me give just one example. This actually happened a few years ago, and I have mentioned it before. One Sunday night, as he was trying to buy some cream, my next-door neighbour, who was stone-cold sober, was assaulted in the CBD by a person who was high as a kite — not on alcohol, but drugs. He hit him, the incident was reported and the police did attend. They actually attended at my home, which is where we were comforting the young man. However, although he was invited to look at mug shots, he was never allowed to actually make a statement, and therefore that incident never became a statistic. That sort of massaging of statistics is deplorable and has to be reviewed.

Under Labor, assaults have increased 57 per cent from 1999–2000 to 2007–08 and overall violent crime has increased 36 per cent during the same period. Since 2002, however, police patrols have been cut by Labor by 20 per cent, from 1.9 million hours in 2002–03 to 1.5 million hours in 2007–08. Here we are, despite the claim that the government is increasing police numbers, with actually fewer police patrols, with a cut of 20 per cent from 2002–03 to 2007–08. That is one-fifth less police visibility and presence on the streets than there was in 2002–03 at the start of the Bracks and now Brumby Labor governments.

In Monash, since 1999 police numbers have decreased by 3.32 full-time positions, despite a 21 per cent increase in reported violent crimes since 2000–01. In fact in Monash since 2000–01 we have seen a 36.8 per cent increase in rape offences, a 21.2 per cent increase in sexual assaults and a 33.6 per cent increase in assault offences. Yet the member for Mount Waverley in the other place, Ms Morand, who is also the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, said that the Liberal Party was misleading the Monash community and that crime is down in Monash. An ordinary punter might believe that, because they would expect a member of Parliament to be honest.

20:00 **Sitting suspended 6.30 p.m. until 8.03 p.m.**

Mrs PEULICH — Before the break I was talking about the misrepresentations of the crime figures in the Mount Waverley electorate by the local member and the deceptive claim being made by the government that crime has decreased since 2000–01 when in fact violent crime has dramatically increased over the life of the Labor government. Monash is suffering more violence today than when Labor came to power. The Victorian coalition and the community believe that there is a strong connection between police officers in local communities — that is, their visibility — and violence,

and until there is more permanent police visibility in our suburbs assaults will continue to get worse.

A very serious matter, however, is the issue of the fudging and underreporting of the crime statistics. The Ombudsman's report into Victoria Police's crime statistics concluded that crimes, especially assaults, are being significantly underreported and that clear-up rates are being overestimated; this has very much slipped beneath the radar.

The Ombudsman stated that:

The gap between police statistics and the everyday experience of the community was borne out by an examination of calls to 000 seeking police assistance.

He considered that:

closer examination is required to determine why many crime events identified in the CAD system have no record on LEAP —

that is, identified in the computer-aided dispatch system but not recorded on the law enforcement assistance program database —

even though an offender may have been apprehended and an offence reported.

I spoke earlier about local crime not being reported as a way of massaging and fudging those figures. That is unacceptable.

The issue of increasing violence is very serious. In Casey, for example, rape has increased by nearly 120 per cent in three years. Crimes against the person have increased by nearly 26 per cent in three years. Behaviour in public offences are up by nearly 112 per cent in one year. The total crime rate has increased by 9.64 per cent in three years.

In Greater Dandenong crimes against the person have increased by 41.56 per cent in four years. Drug possession and use are up by 22.86 per cent in two years. Total crime is up by 8.22 per cent in four years.

In Kingston the spin doctors are out in a fairly substantial way. In particular let me say that I think the amount of advertising that is purchased by the government and various government authorities in local newspapers creates a difficulty, because newspapers then tend to be a little more reluctant to report on serious community issues as they may risk losing government advertising. For example, the issue of Kingston's crime rate increasing by 23 per cent in one year has really not been subjected to sufficient scrutiny. Crimes against the person have increased by 8.08 per

cent in one year. Regulated public order is up by 113.64 per cent in one year as well.

In Frankston rape is up by nearly 113 per cent in three years. Crimes against the person are up by nearly 11 per cent in two years. Harassment is up by nearly 129 per cent in three years. Total crime is up by 17.33 per cent in four years. I have already spoken about Monash, but I will just remind the house that crimes against the person are up by 12.02 per cent in four years, with total crime up by 7.74 per cent in one year.

Clearly the spin does not take away the reality, and as Mr Finn pointed out, the reality is there is a crime wave that has not been dealt with by this government through sufficient investigation of the contributing factors and also factors relevant to policing.

In August 2008 the Cranbourne *Journal* spoke with RMIT crime and justice expert Michael Benes, who revealed through his studies that only 28 to 35 per cent of crime is reported to authorities, meaning the statistics only reflect crime that is detected, reported and recorded. Clearly this is a very murky area that needs to be addressed as a matter of priority.

In closing I will just say that recently the opposition released a school violence policy. It called for tougher penalties for crimes committed on school grounds or against staff and students by allowing principals to take the appropriate action. This has not been welcomed by the Premier, and dare I say there has been an absence of dealing with a growing culture of bullying and violence in schools on the part of this government. This is where these problems manifest themselves in those early days and can grow and become problems for society generally. The Minister for Education has failed to get a handle on this. The government has a duty of care towards its students. For example, the cyberbullying which has led to a number of suicides is an indication that this government has just not got it right.

We have said that we need to invest in professional development for teachers to help maintain discipline in schools as well as give school principals greater powers to deal with these matters. Victorian teachers need help in dealing with difficult, disruptive and violent students, as do parents. The coalition has announced that it will establish a \$2 million professional development program to help train teachers to be conducted by local and international experts in non-violent dispute resolution. This world best practice professional development will give teachers additional training and support to establish and maintain discipline in the classroom. This is crucial if we are going to stem the increase in violent behaviour in the community.

In closing, there are a range of issues which show that this government has lost its battle against increased violence in the community. It is played out on a daily basis. The amount of crime and violence involving our young people, women and children in schools shows that the legacy of this government is a very disappointing one. This motion provides an opportunity and hopefully an impetus for the government to get its act together and address some of these issues rather than just focus on fudging figures and running its public relations and spin department, which is not going to change those crime stats over time.

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — It is really disturbing that this motion before the house has to be brought to this chamber. The fact that this government has been in power for 10 years — and I know that government members have been out celebrating that fact tonight — is an indictment, not on the longevity of the government but on what this government has not done. I could give a litany of examples in water, education, health, transport and a whole range of other areas, but today we are dealing with crime, which affects the total community in which we live. Specifically, it is a major issue for me in the Southern Metropolitan Region, particularly in the areas in and around Southbank and Chapel Street, Acland Street and Fitzroy Street. These are major areas of concern. It would appear that now we are living in a community in which someone, most probably a young person, leaves home to go out for a night's entertainment and ends up in a coma on life support. What type of community are we living in? 20:10

The crime statistics are murky. We get crime statistics for our local areas, and I have been known to quote those statistics in this chamber only to be told they are incorrect. This is a matter which it is vitally important to get right. How are we to make any changes to the system unless we can be open and transparent about exactly what is happening? Every day we bring up an issue about which there is something in the papers. I have a whole range of paper cuttings here. I will not to read from them all; just the headlines are enough.

An issue of the *Sunday Herald Sun* in April this year carried the headline, 'An ugly cocktail'. It also had the headline 'Victim tells of torment over attack'. Another headline in the special investigation into violent venues undertaken by that paper reads 'In pubs and clubs — Sex crimes soar'. The *Sunday Herald Sun* of 23 August had the headline 'Cops under siege' and the report was that the police are concerned. Further into that paper there are the headlines 'Anzac Day booze ban' and 'Police boost patrol numbers. In the *Herald Sun* of 22 August there are 'Judge's plea to stop' and 'Attacks

surge across Victoria'. On the front page of the *Herald Sun* of Friday, 21 August there is a damning indictment, with photographs of several prominent Victorians saying 'Enough'. Another *Herald Sun* article reports that people are saying they have had enough and carries the headline, 'Give thugs the toughest lesson' and it lists the top 10 areas for assaults. Other headlines read '65 crimes but no jail' and 'Teen's life of crime'.

Why is this happening? What is wrong with our community? Where is it going to stop? I believe it is going to stop when we have a greater police presence. We have to look at both ends of the spectrum. We need a greater police presence out on the street, but we also have to go to the other end and look at what are the causes of these types of incidents.

I am a member of the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee, which looked into recidivism by children who commit violent crimes. We submitted our report to Parliament in June. I encourage people to read it and look at the statistics and trends. It is a very comprehensive report and I have spoken to it on many occasions. Much of what was said in the report is reflected in the headlines I quoted a moment ago. This Parliament, thanks to the upper house, has given another reference to the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee to look into the reasons why this government has not done enough to stem violent crime in this state.

Through the various inquiries conducted by the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee it is staggering to learn that there is an enormous rise in the trend of drug use and assault against the person. This is where the trend is coming from. The figures for petty crime in and around people's homes and a number of those types of crimes are tending to stay static, but in my area particularly crime against the person is on the rise. The police have identified a number of other areas of crime that are also rising and are of major concern. One is the number of very young women, committing violent crimes. These are girls in their early teens. They are out there with knives and other assault weapons attacking other people. Recently we heard that a young woman killed an 89-year-old man on a Friday afternoon at 3.00 o'clock on a Friday afternoon in a suburban street in Ashburton. What is happening to our community?

The other issue police tell me they have a major concern about is the huge increase in the use of blunt instruments — for example, baseball bats — and people being kicked when they are down. In years gone by a blow to the head when a person was down was just not acceptable; it was an underwritten code that just was not violated. But today no-one cares, and this is

what we have seen. Many of us saw the very vivid visions of the assault in Hungry Jack's on the corner of Chapel Street and Commercial Road in my electorate. It was horrifying and chilling to see what had happened.

It is all very well for us to talk about problems, but we have to talk about some solutions as well. We have a new Deputy Commissioner of Police. His name is Sir Ken Jones, and he is featured in a huge article in the Focus section of the *Age* of Monday, 14 September. He talked to the reporter about coming from England and coming with a lot of solutions and a lot of concerns. He talked about a number of other issues which are things we need to address. He is reported as saying that he suspects some businesses will be reluctant to change if we look into the licensing laws and the reasons for alcohol-fuelled violence and drug-fuelled violence. He talked about some behaviour as being unacceptable and nobody tackling this behaviour.

Members of the Liberal Party really believe in looking at this issue. I have some tangible examples of how an additional police presence really works on the streets in my electorate.

For example, in Glen Huntly Road several years ago we found that young people aged 13 and 14 were getting off the train and throwing bricks through the windows of houses and shops in the Glen Huntly shopping centre, doing graffiti and terrorising people in that centre. That was unacceptable and frightening for the residents and the shop traders. They eventually brought in police horses so the perpetrators of the crimes started to have dialogue with the police, who were very visible on their horses, and started to break down some of this violence. These kids eventually moved on. God knows where they went to but they moved on and were no longer in Glen Huntly.

20:17

I have been extremely critical of the use of Hummer vehicles in Prahran; those enormous vehicles were being used in Chapel Street and Commercial Road on a weekend. They were supposed to be a deterrent but my personal opinion was that the police would have been far better off on bicycles so that they could be seen easily and could trace any perpetrators of crimes. However, I have spoken at length with the police in my area, and they say the Hummers were an enormous success. I stand corrected in my view of them. They were badged as police vehicles but the police did not actually buy them; they were donated to them.

These violent kids were into glassing. I remind members what glassing is: it is breaking a bottle and using the jagged, broken end of the bottle to smash it

into someone's face. The incidence of these violent crimes started to dissipate with the very visible police presence.

These are two examples of police on the beat, a visible police presence and an increased number of police. This is exactly what Mr Dalla-Riva in his contribution was calling for and what so many other members have been saying. We need to resource the police better. This government is recalcitrant with the numbers of police. Under the last Chief Commissioner of Police, Christine Nixon, the police had a range of erroneous departments like the gay and lesbian group. There is probably a place for them but those officers are needed out on the street. We do not need them behind a computer because they need to be out on the street with a clear police presence, to give the community a sense of security and to make people feel they can have a safe and enjoyable night out.

Many people speak to me about zero tolerance. People say it has worked in New York and that we should be looking at it. It is something that needs to be part of the debate and it is a debate that we need to have urgently.

At the other end of the spectrum — the Liberal Party has been particularly good at these types of approaches — we have to look into the parenting of young children. We have to look at how these young children are being brought up. We must ensure that they go to school. We need to give responsibility to the parents for their upbringing because frankly, I do not think it is acceptable to have 14 and 15-year olds on the street at 4 o'clock in the morning. Someone has to take responsibility for these children. Someone has to make certain that they are disciplined and given responsibility.

The Brumby Labor government has had 10 long years to fix this problem. Melbourne is no longer the safest city in this country. People do not want to come to Victoria because they find it an unsafe place to be. The Indian community is concerned about bashings and we are getting a poor image in the international community. People say to me now that it is safer on the streets of New York than it is on the streets of Southern Metropolitan Region, and I agree with them.

I commend Mr Dalla-Riva for his motion. He has seen firsthand many of the instances of violence. He knows full well that additional police funding and an additional police presence on the streets is something that this government has not done well enough. Shame on it!

Mr DALLA-RIVA (Eastern Metropolitan) — Having put this notice of motion on the notice paper a few weeks ago, I am pleased that the house is now concluding this debate. It is a simple motion in the sense that it is expressing concern about the Brumby Labor government's inadequate response to the growing levels of violent crime in Victoria. It calls on the Premier and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to accept responsibility for the violence on our streets.

Speaker after speaker in the debate has talked about violence. Ms Lovell told of her concerns in Bendigo. She referred to the significant amount of violence that is occurring in that area and the fact that people are frightened to be in those areas. Mrs Coote talked about the issues in Prahran and what confronts them in those areas. Mr Finn talked about issues in Western Metropolitan Region and referred to the increasing violence of crime and the noticeable lack and capacity of police to deal with it. Mr Atkinson and Mrs Peulich spoke about the increase in crime in their areas.

I indicated in opening the debate the significant increase in the continuation of violent crime. I raised again the significant growth of violent crime. I referred to police statistics of 31 000 to 43 000. We have seen an increase in the number of assaults by a stranger — that was one of the most telling of police statistics in 1998–99, when there were 1400 assaults; but in the recent financial year there were 4500 assaults. We know that businesses have been affected.

We know about the significant impact it is having on the Indian community and on the students who have come to Australia to undertake tertiary education. Ms Mikakos, Ms Huppert, Mr Tee and Mr Viney talked about what happened under the Kennett government. I am staggered that government members talk about something that occurred almost 20 years ago and that these are the problems of the Kennett government. As we head into September 2009 and 10 years of this Labor government, it is still blaming everyone else but itself. This government has a responsibility to deal with the violence on our streets. Speaker after speaker in this debate has spoken on this issue, and one member even spoke as a victim of crime. As a former copper who has dealt with victims of crime, I know that it never leaves them. I felt that sentiment in Mr Viney's contribution, and I appreciate the fact that he raised it tonight.

This is not a motion that condemns; it is about expressing concern.

Mr Viney — You used the term 'inadequate response'.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — It is an inadequate response. We have seen page after page of newspaper articles about this, and we have heard from members on this side and even from the other side that they are trying to understand the amount of violence on the streets. Violent crime has become rampant and out of control. Until the government accepts that that is the case, we are going to have the government's head continually in the sand, which is what I said at the start. The government's head is in the sand and its butt is clearly aimed at the sky. Whilst that happens we will continue to have these problems.

I urge all members on this side of the chamber to support the motion, and I urge members on the government side to support the motion. This sensible motion acknowledges the seriousness of violent crime on our streets, in our houses and in our suburbs. Unless the government is serious about addressing this problem, nothing will ever be done. I ask honourable members to support the motion.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mrs Peulich) — Order! The question is:

That the motion be agreed to.

Mr Dalla-Riva — The ayes have it.

Mr Viney — The noes have it.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mrs Peulich) — Order! I think the ayes have it. Is a division required?

Mr Viney — Yes.

Mr Dalla-Riva — Yes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mrs Peulich) — Order! Ring the bells!

Bells rung.

Mr Viney — On a point of order, Acting President, I would be interested in getting a ruling on what occurs when you call that the ayes have it and someone calls for a division. My understanding is that there has been a precedent in the Senate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mrs Peulich) — Order! Stop the division. Turn the bells off.

Mr Viney — My understanding is that there is a precedent in the Senate which says that someone who calls for a division when the Chair has called it their way is somewhat compromised. I wish I could recall the precedent right now, but my recollection is that the precedent was that the person who called for the

division is required to vote the opposite way. I am intrigued to know how this can now occur. You called 'The ayes have it' and Mr Dalla-Riva called for a division. I am a bit intrigued as to whether that now means Mr Dalla-Riva has to vote no.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mrs Peulich) — Order! I advise Mr Viney that my call was challenged by a no, and if there is one voice calling a no, a division is required. That is the reason I called the division.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 14

Atkinson, Mr
Coote, Mrs
Dalla-Riva, Mr
Davis, Mr D.
Davis, Mr P.
Finn, Mr
Hall, Mr

Koch, Mr
Kronberg, Mrs
Lovell, Ms (*Teller*)
O'Donohue, Mr
Peulich, Mrs
Rich-Phillips, Mr
Vogels, Mr (*Teller*)

Noes, 17

Broad, Ms
Eideh, Mr
Elasmar, Mr
Huppert, Ms
Jennings, Mr
Leane, Mr
Lenders, Mr
Madden, Mr
Mikakos, Ms

Pakula, Mr
Scheffer, Mr
Smith, Mr
Somyurek, Mr (*Teller*)
Tee, Mr
Theophanous, Mr
Tierney, Ms (*Teller*)
Viney, Mr

Pairs

Drum, Mr
Guy, Mr
Petrovich, Mrs

Darveniza, Ms
Pulford, Ms
Kavanagh, Mr

Motion negatived.

WATER: STORMWATER RECYCLING

Mr HALL (Eastern Victoria) — I move:

That this house calls on the Minister for Environment and Climate Change to explain —

- (1) why the government has made little effort to utilise the 300 000 megalitres or more of waste water being dumped along the coast each year; and
- (2) why more effort has not been made to harvest the 250 000 megalitres of stormwater that falls on Melbourne's roofs, roads and footpaths each year.

In moving this motion I sincerely hope that the government respond in a positive fashion, because it is my earnest belief that we should be doing more to utilise what is a very valuable source of additional water for Melbourne's water supplies — that being in

the greater use of treated water and also stormwater for recycling purposes.

I unashamedly admit that over the last couple of years I have been a strong campaigner on this particular issue, and there are many instances in this chamber and outside it on which I have called upon the government to look at utilising alternative — or one might describe them non-traditional — sources of water to supplement water supplies.

This would apply not only to Melbourne, might I add, but also other parts of Victoria. Some parts of Victoria are doing a better job than others in utilising alternative water supplies, and I think Melbourne and some other centres could pick up their game there. I do not think I can be accused of being a Johnny-come-lately or an opportunist on this matter; as I have said I have consistently made efforts to promote this particular cause.

On 19 September 2007 I moved a motion in this house, supported by both sides, to require the Environment and Natural Resources Committee (ENRC) of the Parliament to inquire into alternative options to supplement Melbourne's water supply needs into the future. I am pleased to say that that parliamentary committee has now completed its inquiry, the report of which was tabled in June. It is a very worthwhile document to which I will refer in the course of my contribution to this debate this evening.

In April 2008 I introduced a private members bill in this chamber — the Victorian Water Substitution Target Bill — but was very disappointed the government did not facilitate debate on it because of a technical reason it claimed to have encountered. I challenged the government to take up its option to introduce an equivalent bill in the lower house; it never did. But it is interesting — and I will come to this later during the course of my contribution — that some of the recommendations of the ENRC were in line exactly with what I was trying to achieve in that private members bill. I will draw the house's attention to the provisions of that report, which supported the objectives of that private members bill.

Thus, as I said, Acting President, I do not think anybody could accuse me of being suddenly opportunistic on this matter, given the history I have recited over a number of years in terms of my trying to promote greater use of alternative water supplies to supplement Melbourne's water supply and that of other areas of Victoria.

It is true, I am the first to admit, that some of my motivation in some of the efforts I have made over the last few years has been prompted by this government's intransigence in terms of looking at alternative water supplies and the practice it has adopted instead of seeking to transfer into the Melbourne metropolitan area more and more water from catchments other than Melbourne's.

People have said, 'What is wrong with that?'. Members of this house and people outside have said it is not the water of one region of Victoria and that alone: we should be distributing that water fairly across the state of Victoria, because we benefit from the presence and viability of every region of Victoria, not just one.

I agree with that point, but I make this comment in response. Already, for example, the Gippsland catchment contributes about 60 per cent of Melbourne's water through the Thomson catchment. Let me make it clear from the start that I for one would not want to see Melbourne run out of water; nor, I think, would any member in this place. If Melbourne desperately needed water — if Melburnians were dying of thirst, for example — I would happily share the water resources we have in this state. But before that happens I want to see demonstrated a commitment by this government or by whoever is in government beyond November 2010 for Melbourne and every region of Victoria to live within its means.

More can be done in regard to that, particularly given the potential of alternative water supplies for Melbourne, which I will talk about during the course of my contribution tonight. Given there is significant potential to supplement water supplies by other means, I am totally opposed to the further transference of water from catchments other than Melbourne's to satisfy and top up Melbourne's water needs.

Anybody who has an interest in water in this state would know we are living in parched times. It is true that Melbourne's water supplies are down, but equally every other water supply in Victoria is feeling the stress of low rainfall levels. We have to do something more drastic than simply take and channel water from the north, east or west of the state to Melbourne. We have to make sure we are doing everything possible to live within our own means.

That is why I have moved this motion. I do not believe this government is doing enough to enable Melbourne to live within its means. Moreover, I think there are opportunities for supplementation of Melbourne's water supplies that are being missed, and that situation needs to be rectified.

20:42 One of the things that reinforced my resolve to move this motion today was the action taken by the Minister for Water just last week to remove an additional 10 billion litres of water from the Thomson River, to supplement Melbourne's water supply. The minister released a press release last week to that effect, and it has been the subject of much commentary in the Gippsland region.

I am sure that people who have bothered to follow the water issues in this state would be well aware of the minister's press release of 8 September where, under the guise of encouraging Melburnians to increase their water conservation efforts, there is a by-line almost towards the end of the press release, which says:

Mr Holding said as a further contingency, Melbourne would receive an additional 10 billion litres of water from the Thomson River.

Along with many — in fact, a great number — of my constituents in Gippsland I feel rather strongly about that particular comment because on 3 October 2006 the then Minister for Water put out a press release commenting on Victoria's water flows and stressed rivers in Victoria. The then minister, Mr Thwaites, said:

... environmental flows were being returned to the stressed Thomson River in Gippsland — which will also help the health of the Gippsland Lakes, which are economically, socially and environmentally important for the region.

He said:

These flows are part of a commitment by the Victorian government to return 10 billion litres to the river as the first stage of meeting recommendations from the Thomson Macalister Environmental Flows Task Force, following scientific advice.

Those were the minister's words. Not only has that 10 billion litres promised by Mr Thwaites not been delivered but beyond that, a further 10 billion litres is now to be taken from further environmental flows along an already stressed river. That is what irks the people of the east of Victoria, and that is what should irk people right across Victoria, because all Victorians benefit from the beauty of the Gippsland Lakes. Without the 20 billion litres of environmental flows down the Thomson, not only the river but also the Gippsland Lakes will be affected. I repeat and say quite readily that part of the motivation for my moving this motion was the announcement by the Minister for Water just last week.

I might add that the announcement comes on top of a number of broken promises in respect of environmental flows. The chamber discussed this some weeks ago, when a disallowance motion in respect of a bulk

entitlement for the Eildon-Goulburn Weir was debated. Indeed, it was put on the record very clearly, and not disputed by the government, that some of the 75 000 megalitres from the north-south pipeline was water previously promised by the government for the Murray and the Snowy rivers.

What we are seeing in respect of the attempted top-ups of Melbourne's water supply through the north-south pipeline, and now by taking further water from environmental flows out of the Thomson River, is the environment suffering, which, as I said, is part of the motivation for my motion.

Since I formulated the motion, the *Age* ran an excellent editorial on 14 September. It was headed 'Thomson water grab a measure of policy failure'. A subheading reads 'The refusal to tap major alternative sources has left us all vulnerable'. In part the editorial says:

For a decade, the government has resisted calls to greatly increase use of recycled waste water and stormwater, even after storages plunged from 2005 onwards. Indeed, it has stubbornly and stupidly stuck to former premier Steve Bracks' pledge that dam levels would not be boosted by recycled waste water. Hundreds of billions of litres are available to be treated to a completely safe, drinkable standard — as has long been done in much of the developed world -but are instead still running out to sea.

And the editorial goes on. I will not quote it in full, but I could. It talks about the stupidity of the decision to take additional environmental flow water out of the Thomson and about the stupidity of not making use of alternative water supplies. Indeed it is probably a very concise summary of my motion.

I want to move on and talk about exactly what the current situation is in Melbourne, and it is not much different to when I spoke about it in 2007 and 2008, when I moved the two respective motions that I referred to earlier. The 10 year average of Melbourne's water consumption is currently around 470 000 megalitres a year — and that is not my figure, it is the figure on page 18 of the ENRC's report *Inquiry into Melbourne's Future Water Supply*, for those members who are interested.

That document predicts also that by 2055, Melbourne's demand for water could be as much as between 540 000 megalitres and 656 000 megalitres, meaning a deficit of about 200 000 megalitres. Those figures are presented by the all-party parliamentary committee, so I do not expect there will be a dispute about them.

The government says it intends to make up the difference — that is, to satisfy Melbourne's future demands — by a combination of about

150 000 megalitres or more from a desalination plant, 75 000 megalitres from the north–south pipeline, and an additional 15 000 megalitres transferred from the Tarago Reservoir. That diversion of 15 000 megalitres has already occurred; it is taking place now.

Those three figures in total more than accommodate what Melbourne's deficit needs are up to 2055, but they ignore the significant potential to harvest additional water supplies from treated and reused waste water and also from stormwater harvesting. Waste water volumes generated by Melbourne's water use is estimated in the report by the all-party parliamentary committee to be 330 000 megalitres per year, which figure is on page 168 of the ENRC report.

Melbourne's water consumption is about 470 000 megalitres; it generates 330 000 megalitres of waste water. In other words, about two-thirds of the water in the system comes out at the bottom of the system as waste water, but very little of that — at the very best, again according to the ENRC report, 62 000 megalitres or about 20 per cent of that — is treated and reused. Most of that re-use is at the plant itself or for a limited agriculture and recreational purpose in areas like Werribee and along the Mornington Peninsula.

Almost 3000 000 megalitres of primary treated water goes out to sea every year via either the Gunnamatta outfall and Boags Rock or into Port Phillip Bay via the western treatment plant. I would argue very strongly that when Melbourne requires additional water, we should be looking to utilise much more of that 300 000 megalitres that is currently dumped at sea. Moreover, at page 117 of the ENRC report it states that:

Between 400 and 550 000 megalitres of stormwater runs off Melbourne's urban catchment annually.

20:52 Yes, some of it would go directly from soil or grassy areas into rivers and streams, but it is estimated that at least half of that, around about 250 000 megalitres, falls on Melbourne's roads, parks and groups. Consequently only about 1 gigalitre, or 1000 megalitres, of the 250 000 megalitres — or, if you put it in percentage terms, about 2.25 per cent — of stormwater, is captured by way of rainwater tanks and the rest ultimately ends up in Port Phillip Bay.

If you just look at the stormwater that falls on impervious surfaces — roads, roofs and footpaths — something like 249 000 megalitres is potentially capable of catchment, treatment and transfer for use in water supplies, and there are up to 300 000 megalitres of water available for re-use as treated water to supplement water supplies in Melbourne. If you look at

the report, you will note that as much water falls in Melbourne's catchment as Melbourne utilises in any one year. It is possible that all of Melbourne's water needs could be achieved simply by capturing much of that which falls in Melbourne's catchments alone. There would be no need to transfer much of the water from other catchments to Melbourne.

I want to talk about a couple of aspects of the ENRC report. As I said, this is an all-party parliamentary committee report. As it is chaired by a Labor member and Labor members constitute the majority, it is a useful document for me to base my arguments upon, because I do not think members of the government would dispute a report on some of these matters by their own colleagues.

On some of the issues arising from this report, I quote from page 6, where it states:

... some submissions expressed concern about environmental flow allocations being deferred and made conditional on the level of Melbourne's water storage levels and water restrictions. The committee was advised that the health of the Yarra and Thomson catchments is under increasing stress

There is no doubt about that. It also states:

Melbourne produces a similar or greater volume of stormwater run-off than its total annual water use and therefore considerable opportunities exist to increase the capture of rainwater and stormwater;

stormwater harvesting can reduce pollution entering and degrading Melbourne's waterways;

...

there is significant potential for Melbourne's wastewater treatment plants to increase the volume of recycled water produced ...

The report also make some observations and comments about the use of recycled water for indirect potable water re-use.

I want to mention a couple of other aspects of this report. One of the interesting observations the report makes is that 10 per cent of Melbourne's water use is unaccounted for — that is, we do not know where it goes. There is a 10 per cent difference between what goes in at the top and what comes out of the bottom, and we are not quite sure what happens to it, apart from what the report states on page 49:

Up to 7 per cent of Melbourne's water is lost through broken pipes and leaks.

If you wanted to make efficiency improvements, a good starting point would be to look at what can be saved through leaks, cracks and broken pipes.

Chapters 4 and 5 of this report are particularly relevant to this motion. Chapter 4 is headed ‘Stormwater and rainwater — harvesting, storage and use’. Some of the findings of the report confirm what I have already said:

Between 400 and 550 gigitalitres of stormwater runs off Melbourne’s urban catchment annually. This is a similar or greater volume than the total annual mains water use of the city.

The committee also found that:

There is significant potential to harvest stormwater within Melbourne’s urban catchment. However, currently less than 0.25 per cent of the resource is used.

Finding 4.4 is damning for the government. It says:

A statewide urban stormwater strategy was to be developed by 2007 to promote the use of stormwater. The strategy has not been completed.

This report is six months old, and to this day that strategy has still not been completed. That is almost criminal, given the fact that Melbourne’s stormwater harvesting potential is in total more than Melbourne uses in any one year. At the very least one would expect that there would be some urgency in finalising a stormwater strategy, but that simply has not occurred. The government should at the very least feel embarrassed about that fact, given the importance of water to this state.

Chapter 5 is headed ‘The re-use of treated wastewater’. Finding 5.1 is:

There are a significant number of opportunities to offset demand for potable water by increasing the use of recycled water. These opportunities include both small and large-scale projects such as sewer mining and stormwater recycling.

Finding 5.3 is:

The majority of submissions received by the committee recognised the importance of recycling treated wastewater in order to offset potable water consumption and advocated the greater use of recycled water.

There is vast potential to make use of recycled water. The studies undertaken by the government itself indicate that an upgrade of the eastern treatment plant would yield something like 130 000 megalitres available for use as first-class quality recycled water in some way or other. The announcement of the upgrade of the eastern treatment plant dates back to 2002 when the government first announced it, and it still has not been completed. When the government can commission and complete a north–south pipeline within a 12-month period, I cannot for the life of me understand why an upgrade of the eastern treatment plant cannot be completed in a period of seven years. It

was first mentioned in 2002, and we are now in 2009 and still not close to the completion of that project. It is shameful.

I want to mention particularly recommendations 5.1 and 5.2 of the ENRC report. Recommendation 5.1 is:

The Victorian government set enforceable water recycling and re-use targets. The primary focus should be to replace the demand for current potable water use.

Recommendation 5.2 is:

The Victorian government establish new recycling and re-use targets — 50 per cent by 2012 and 70 per cent by 2015. An increased target would reduce demand for potable water, minimise discharges to receiving bodies and promote the importance and value of water conservation and efficiency.

I smile when I read those recommendations and compare them to the objectives of the private members bill I introduced, because the objectives of the Victorian Water Substitution Target Bill were to:

- (a) reduce potable water use;
- (b) encourage the substitution of potable water with alternative water supplies including recycled water, treated storm water and rain water;
- (c) encourage investment, employment and technology development in industries that supply goods and services which reduce the use of potable water.

The objectives of that private members bill and the recommendations of the ENRC, a committee dominated by government members, are no different. The recommendations seek to establish mandatory targets of water re-use, exactly as did my private members bill of a couple of years ago, but the government flatly refused to even debate it in this house let alone introduce it as its own bill. It is appalling that this government has the hide to sit behind recommendations in the ENRC report when less than two years ago it flatly rejected the efforts of a member of an opposing party to do exactly what government members of the ENRC suggest should be done.

I could go on and on about this matter but the whole point is simply that rather than extracting more water from already stressed rivers in Victoria, the simplistic solution the government turns to is to transfer water from those regions back to Melbourne when there are significant opportunities to supplement water supply in Melbourne by greater use of recycled water and stormwater capture. Victoria has enough stressed rivers and storages: the Thomson is one, the Murray is another, we know that the level of water storages in this state are well down; the Thomson stands at about 16 per cent but so does Eildon, so does Hume; another

major storage at Eppalock is at about 5 per cent or 6 per cent; the Cairn Curran and others are far less; so we have a problem in this state.

I lament that this government is doing practically nothing to increase the volume and use of those alternative ways to supplement water supplies in Melbourne and in other parts of the state.

The area represented by Mr O'Donohue, Mr Phil Davis and me; and also Mr Viney and Mr Scheffer from the government benches — that is, Eastern Victoria Region — has some examples of significant re-use of treated water. The Gippsland Water Factory is one example, and I am quite happy to support it, despite the fact that Gippsland water customers, of which I am one, are paying for significant recycling opportunities in terms of the Gippsland Water Factory. But that will recycle and re-use at least 25 per cent of wastewater generated out of the Latrobe Valley area. Yes, it is a costly exercise, but we know that environmentally it is the right thing to do.

Environmentally the right thing to do is to utilise more of Melbourne's wastewater, and to use it as a replacement for some potable water options. The right thing to do is to harvest more stormwater and use it in the system. We are saying that there is a cost factor associated with that but when you weigh that against the environmental cost factor of taking more water out of our rivers and out of the Gippsland Lakes, it does not add up.

This government needs to do the right thing by all Victorians. It needs to do the right thing by people who live in the north of Victoria — that is, not to take anything more from the parched, driest area of the state.

The government needs to do the right thing by not taking more water out of the Gippsland catchment. The right thing is to utilise more recycled water, the right thing is to harvest more stormwater that falls on Melbourne's catchments, to have plenty to satisfy its own needs. The government is not doing that, and for that I am sure the people of Victoria will be very critical of it.

There is no doubt that water is going to be the most significant issue at the next election and the government is making a bad mistake by suggesting that it can solve all its problems simply by taking water from the north of the state through the north-south pipeline or rely on a desalination plant, again in a regional area of Victoria, to supply Melbourne's water needs. It is shameful and the government stands condemned for not doing what is the right and the obvious thing to do — that is, to

make more use of treated, recycled water and to make more use of stormwater harvesting within the Melbourne catchment area.

Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria) — I start by conceding to Mr Hall that he is not a Johnny-come-lately on the issue of recycled water, as he said at the outset of his contribution. In fact, Mr Hall and his party were very vocal on the issue of recycled water in the lead-up to the last election The Nationals, including Mr Hall, were against it and ran a campaign in the Latrobe Valley that said 'Melbourne is stealing Gippsland's water and sending back its poo'.

Mr Lenders — Is that a parliamentary quote?

Mr VINEY — I am not sure whether it is parliamentary, but it is a direct quote from the campaign of The Nationals in the last election. Not only that, I can advise the house that The Nationals and the Liberal Party not only ran leaflets across the seats of Narracan and Morwell to that effect in the last election but Mr Hall's party's website had a campaign against the Gippsland Water Factory, criticising it for exactly the same thing, a process of recycling water, making unreasonable — and by its success, now proven to be untrue — allegations about the Gippsland Water Factory.

Certainly he is not a Johnny-come-lately on the issue of recycled water, because he and The Nationals were against it, just like they have been against the desalination plant, the northern irrigation project and recycled water. The only thing we know they support is a dam on the Mitchell River.

Not only did The Nationals indicate support for additional dams and a damming of the Mitchell River in its campaigns up in the northern irrigation project against the north-south pipeline, but from the minority report, the very report quoted here by Mr Hall tonight — the Environment and Natural Resources Committee report into water, on which committee I happen to be a member and so I know the report reasonably well — the bit that I did not have anything to do with preparing was the minority report drafted by the member for Evelyn in the other place, Christine Fyffe; Donna Petrovich, MLC, and the member for Swan Hill, Peter Walsh, The Nationals' member and its spokesman on water and environment — —

Mr Lenders — On rural water, not urban water.

Mr VINEY — Yes, rural water.

In their own minority report committee members say that they do not:

... support the recommendation that there be no additional water storage capacity constructed to supplement Melbourne's water supply.

Mr Drum interjected — What is wrong with that?

Mr VINEY — What is wrong with that is that the Mitchell River is the only available catchment in Victoria that is not currently dammed apart from, I think, some capacity in the Otways. The Nationals campaigned against the north-south pipeline and the northern irrigation project up in northern Victoria to protect their seats up there. They have been running a campaign that Victoria should dam the Mitchell River. The only river that could be dammed that would produce any substantial water for Victoria would be the Mitchell.

Mr P. Davis — So you want to dam the Mitchell; is that what you are saying?

Mr VINEY — You know, Mr Davis, well and truly that I have been campaigning against — —

Mr P. Davis — Now we know what your game is!

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Leane) — Order!

Mr VINEY — Good try, Mr Davis. Mr Davis knows damn well that for months and years in this chamber I have been arguing against the damming of the Mitchell River because it will destroy the Gippsland Lakes. Mr Davis knows that very well. I have been publicly on the record as saying that. There is no point in constructing dams on any other catchment because they are already dammed. The member knows very well that I do not support the damming of the Mitchell River and that the opposition's position has been quite hypocritical. On the one hand it protects seats in northern Victoria saying that Victoria should dam the Mitchell River, and on the other hand over in Gippsland we have had others saying that it should not happen.

Mr Lenders — Senator Hanson-Young!

Mr VINEY — Who said it? It was on the website of the people against the north-south pipeline. That is where it was. What is more, it was proposed in a debate — —

Mr P. Davis — Is that an opposition website?

Mr VINEY — It was a National-sponsored website. What is more, it was proposed by members in the other chamber in the last sitting week, and here in the minority report of the Liberals and Nationals it says that we should create another dam. There is the evidence

that that is what the plan is. Frankly the contribution from Mr Hall was selective in its use of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee report into water. There is a considerable section of the report in chapter 5 that looks at recycling at the eastern treatment plant. If Mr Hall had read that report — and I think he has; I think he is probably reasonably well informed but selectively chose not to look at this element — he would see that there is a massive upgrade occurring in the eastern treatment plant. It has already occurred and will continue to occur in the western treatment plant.

Those upgrades will result in a number of things. There will be a significant increase in the amount of recycled water and treated water that will become available to be used as recycled water. There is a lot of work that needs to be done on how that water can be used. The campaign by The Nationals in the Latrobe Valley was vociferous in its attack on government members there about even daring to consider how that water might be used in the power industry to replace potable water use there. There was absolutely no policy integrity in that campaign. For base political reasons a scare campaign was run in those two electorates on the issue of water. Mr Hall is smiling because he knows very well that that is the case. We know The Nationals will take any position it can to cover sectional interests in — —

Mr Lenders — You have had more positions than the *Kama Sutra*!

Mr VINEY — That may be so, Mr Lenders, but the campaign about Melbourne stealing Gippsland's water that The Nationals ran in the last campaign, supported by the Liberal Party, particularly in the seat of Narracan, was a campaign used extensively against Craig Ingram, the member for Gippsland East in the other house. They were campaigns that had no policy integrity but were about base politics. The water debate is far more significant than that. As I have said in this house before, there are a number of strategies to deal with the lack of rainfall. Given that all of our catchments except the Mitchell River catchment are already dammed — —

Mr P. Davis — You want to dam the Mitchell. We know your game!

Mr VINEY — Mr Davis's record on this stuff would be admirable if it was not part of the extraordinary hypocrisy of his party. I know that Mr Davis, like me, is opposed to the damming of the Mitchell River. I know that Mr Davis is opposed to it.

Mr P. Davis interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Leane) — Order! I ask Mr Davis to come to order. The Hansard reporters are struggling to record proceedings; at least show them some respect.

21:17 **Mr VINEY** — I know that Mr Philip Davis, like me, is opposed to the damming of the Mitchell River. I know that he, like me, recognises that any such proposal would be disastrous for the Gippsland Lakes and ultimately disastrous for the economy of Gippsland. He and I share that view. I recognise that but the problem that he has is that that view is not consistently held by the coalition. He has people in his coalition in the northern part of Victoria who do want to dam the Mitchell River.

Given the circumstance that all our dams are way below capacity, there is no point in constructing more dams on any of those catchments. The existing dams are not full, so that would be a pointless exercise. If we accept that we are likely to be in a long-term lower rainfall scenario in Victoria, and I believe that is the case, then there are some fairly stark choices that we have in Victoria.

Mr P. Davis — Why don't you make them? This is fascinating.

Mr VINEY — We have been making them. This is my very point, Mr Davis.

Mr P. Davis — The whole point of the next election.

Mr VINEY — There are three choices or three things we can do.

Mr P. Davis — Just get on with it!

Mr VINEY — We can use less water. Victorians are now using 40 per cent less water than they were, and that is a great testament to the effort of Victorians. I think it is also a response to a number of factors. One is Victorians recognising the circumstance we are in, and the second is the government having put in place strategies to try to reduce the amount of water people are using — campaigns and other initiatives the government has taken on pricing and strategies around Victorians reducing the amount of water they are using. I am very proud of the effort Victorians have made in that regard. As simple as the current 130 campaign —

Mr Hall — 155.

Mr VINEY — 155, I am sorry.

Mr P. Davis — Are you pre-empting an announcement?

Mr VINEY — I will tell you why I confused it, Mr Davis. I recently did an analysis of my own household's use, and it was 130 litres. I was just trying to recall exactly what the target was. We have got our own household down to 130, which I think is a pretty good effort on the part of everyone in the house.

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Leane) — Order!

Mr VINEY — I cannot claim that I am the greatest of the members of my household in my wisdom about water use, but I am sure there is a great effort by the others in my household. There is a great campaign running in that regard. So first we need to use less water.

The second thing we need to do is re-use more. I absolutely concur with the sentiment of what Mr Hall was raising. I simply say that I would like that sentiment to have been reflected in other public campaigns that have been run by his party. I think that the strategies we have in place in terms of the increased use of water from the eastern treatment plant and the western treatment plant are the correct strategies. We are also, of course encouraging households that do put water tanks or grey water systems into their houses to connect and reticulate those back into the house for various household uses. That is where the real subsidies are. I am currently renovating a property that we will be moving into, hopefully, by the end of the year. We are putting in water tanks which are connected back into the systems for the house on that property. I think many other Victorians are doing that, and that is a very good thing.

The third area that we need to look at is creating some water. The government's strategy in that area has been to initiate two major projects. One is the desalination plant, which will create some water that is not rain dependent, to try to provide some drought-proofing for Victoria. The second major project is the northern irrigation project. This is consistent with what the government did in its first term. When it first came to government, it initiated the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline, a project that from my recollection was not supported by the opposition and certainly had not been attempted in the previous Kennett government period.

The northern irrigation project is a remarkable project because it brings together a whole group of people from different parts of the state with a common interest. It

brings together people who are concerned about the environmental flows of the rivers and the irrigators who have specific needs and it brings into that the people of Melbourne, in terms of recognising everyone has a responsibility in this project, to both fund and share it. I thought it was an absolute shame that this house disallowed that sharing of the water — —

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr VINEY — Because it was a great example of how Victorians can come together, Mr Barber.

Mr Barber — You should have read the bulk entitlement document more closely. I read it very closely.

Mr VINEY — You should think about your opposition to that because I think it was quite appalling. It is a good example of bringing Victorians together for the common good on the issue of water. Victorians in Melbourne were prepared to pay for a project that was going to be delivering water not only to them but to the rivers and the irrigators, and the irrigators were accepting some of that responsibility. This is a project about creating water. The loss of water in the northern irrigation system each year is double the amount of water that Melbourne uses each year.

21:25 This project is about bringing together all those interest groups and stakeholders in water for this state. It is a project where there was to be a sharing of the cost and the benefit. It was a shameful decision of this house to disallow that sharing of the water. It is the sort of decision that will drive Victorians against one another on the issue of water, and people should think very carefully about conducting this debate in a divisive way.

Mr Hall raised issues about the Thomson River. A direct and natural consequence of the decision of this house to indicate that that water should not be shared is that more water will be required from Gippsland.

Mr P. Davis — Do you understand the concept of integrated catchment management, Mr Viney?

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Leane) — Order!

Mr VINEY — Mr Davis, I am not here to answer your questions while I am trying to make a contribution to the debate. You will get your turn.

Mr P. Davis — I will, Mr Viney.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Leane) — Order!

Mr VINEY — I will construct my contribution exactly the way I choose, Mr Davis. The natural consequence of regions of Victoria saying that other regions cannot have their water is that it will increase the divisions in our community over what is an increasingly precious resource. A direct and natural consequence of the decision of this house to disallow the sharing of that water from the northern irrigation project — a great project being contributed to by all Victorians and being shared equitably between irrigators, the environment and Melburnians — is that there will be increasing demand on the water from other regions.

Mr Lenders — Not just from there, but the Dandenongs, the Mornington Peninsula and Mr Hall's electorate as well.

Mr VINEY — Indeed, and there will be increasing pressure on the water in Gippsland to substitute. It may well be that members of The Nationals up in northern Victoria do not care about the pressure that might be put on Gippslanders; they care only about holding those seats up in northern Victoria. That may well be their political modus operandi on this. We need to bring to this debate a view that this is a valuable community and environmental resource that needs to be treated as a collective resource, paid for and shared collectively.

In relation to Mr Hall's motion, I have to say that the government is really perplexed by a motion such as this calling on the Minister for Environment and Climate Change to explain. There are a number of opportunities to ask for an explanation from the minister. The minister sits in this house, right there. He is the Deputy Leader of the Government in this house. He sits two seats away from me and next to the Leader of the Government beside me here. There is an opportunity to ask him a question, or a series of questions, in question time. In fact, the opposition could ask every question of every question time for an entire week or month or year, if they wished, on the matter of water. There is also an opportunity for the opposition to raise a matter for the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, the Deputy Leader of the Government, in the adjournment debate. There are plenty of opportunities for these matters to be raised.

Mr Hall — But there are opportunities in general business.

Mr VINEY — Well, you are not asking him to spend any time discussing it in general business, Mr Hall.

Mr Lenders — You are asking him to explain!

Mr VINEY — Mr Hall is not asking the minister to spend any time whatsoever in general business. The motion is asking him to explain. Presumably, Mr Hall is asking him to come in here at some time in the future to make an explanation. We say to Mr Hall that there is question time. The opposition gets five questions a day; some days, four.

Mr Lenders — Some days, six.

Mr VINEY — And some days, six; that is right. There are about 15 opportunities a week to ask Mr Jennings a question in question time, and I think there are another six or seven opportunities in the adjournment debate.

Mr Lenders — Unlimited!

Mr VINEY — Unlimited; that is correct. There are plenty of opportunities to bring him in. We will not oppose the motion, because the motion is simply calling on the minister to explain.

Mr Lenders — It is another wasted Wednesday, Mr Viney.

Mr VINEY — It is another Wednesday when we have spent the entire day debating political point-scoring motions. We have actually spent only about 4 or 5 hours on government legislation so far this week and we will not get back to it until after lunch tomorrow.

Mr Lenders — You would get better debate in the Nar Nar Goon darts club!

Mr VINEY — Well, not when I am speaking. I would say that the government will oppose this motion. The motion is a bit meaningless. What is there to oppose? You cannot oppose something that is absolutely meaningless. There are ample opportunities for the opposition to ask about these matters in question time or the adjournment debate. We have had endless debates on the issue of water.

I finish by saying that Mr Hall was absolutely correct when he said that he is not a Johnny-come-lately to the issue of recycled water. I will remember and will continue to remind him of the fact that up to the last election, The Nationals and he — and I believe it may even have been on his website — criticised the

recycling of water at the Gippsland Water Factory and campaigned against recycled water coming into Gippsland or the Latrobe Valley. It is a case of their position until today being ‘We’re against recycled water; we’re against the desalination plant; and we’re against the north–south pipeline and the northern irrigation project’. We on this side of the house struggle to understand what The Nationals are for.

Mr Lenders — Big white cars.

Mr VINEY — They proved that, Mr Lenders. In 1992 they had the opportunity to stand up for country Victoria but for seven years they chose the white cars of office, so I guess we know that they like white cars. What I will say is this: Mr Hall is not a Johnny-come-lately to the issue of recycled water. He campaigned against it up until the last election. He has been campaigning on the issue of recycled water but he has hit the road to Damascus.

Mr Lenders — Or the road to Traralgon.

Mr VINEY — Or the road to Traralgon, as you say, Mr Lenders. I would say, ‘Welcome on board, Mr Hall, to the issues fronting us. Welcome on board to the fact that we have climate change’. This motion is coming from a member of the party that opposed the VRET (Victorian renewable energy target) scheme and has expressed complete disinterest in and scepticism about the issue of climate change. For members of that party to now come in and say, ‘Yes, we’re on board with recycled water’, that is great. I am really pleased The Nationals are on board with recycled water. I am really pleased that they are going to get behind what we are doing at the eastern treatment plant. I am really pleased that they are going to get behind what we are doing at the western treatment plant. I am really pleased that they will now probably even get behind the Gippsland Water Factory recycling water in Gippsland. That is fantastic news.

What I say is: get on board to the difficult task of trying to work out, when we invest in deciding where the water from the eastern treatment plant is going to go and how it is going to be used. I say also: stop these disgraceful political campaigns, that are nothing more than base politics, about Melbourne stealing Gippsland’s water and sending back its poo.

They were exactly the words they used. I was at numerous public meetings where those words were used, for example, by Mr Nixon in the Gippsland East campaign at the Maffra town hall just six months before the election. It was a campaign that then ran into the seat of Morwell and into the seat of Narracan.

Mr Hall has been on about recycled water for some time, but he has been against it until today.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr P. DAVIS (Eastern Victoria).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

**ALPINE RESORT AREAS REVIEW,
ELECTRIC CARS, CARBON POLLUTION
REDUCTION SCHEME, CROWN CASINO,
CLEARWAYS and RENEWABLE ENERGY
FEED-IN TARIFFS: PRODUCTION OF
DOCUMENTS**

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

4. That this house —
 - (1) notes the refusal of the government to comply fully with the resolution of the Council of 3 June 2009 to table documents relating to the review of the alpine resort areas under claims of executive privilege;
 - (2) is of the firm opinion that the Council is fully entitled to scrutinise the activities of the executive and demands accountability for all aspects of executive behaviour;
 - (3) rejects the Government's claim that the release of the *Mt Baw Baw Alpine Resort Management Board Corporate Plan 2007-2010* would be prejudicial to the public interest;
 - (4) accordingly, censures the Leader of the Government as the representative of the government in the Council for the government's failure to fully comply with the Council's resolution of 3 June 2009; and
 - (5) demands that the Leader of the Government comply fully with the resolution of the Council of 3 June 2009 and lodge the *Mt Baw Baw Alpine Resort Management Board Corporate Plan 2007-2010* with the Clerk by 12 noon on Tuesday, 13 October 2009.

I also move:

5. That this house —
 - (1) notes the failure of the government to comply with the resolution of the Council of 6 May 2009 to table documents concerning the company 'Better Place';
 - (2) is of the firm opinion that the Council is fully entitled to scrutinise the activities of the executive and demands accountability for all aspects of executive behaviour;
 - (3) accordingly, censures the Leader of the Government as the representative of the government in the Council for the government's failure to fully comply with the Council's resolution of 6 May 2009; and

- (4) demands that the Leader of the Government comply fully with the resolution of the Council of 6 May 2009 and lodge all documents with the Clerk by 12 noon on Tuesday, 13 October 2009.

I also move:

6. That this house —
 - (1) notes the failure of the government to comply with the resolution of the Council of 29 July 2009 to table documents relating to the examination of carbon trading institutions and carbon trading institutes;
 - (2) is of the firm opinion that the Council is fully entitled to scrutinise the activities of the executive and demands accountability for all aspects of executive behaviour;
 - (3) accordingly, censures the Leader of the Government as the representative of the government in the Council for the government's failure to fully comply with the Council's resolution of 29 July 2009; and
 - (4) demands that the Leader of the Government comply fully with the resolution of the Council of 29 July 2009 and lodge all documents with the Clerk by 12 noon on Tuesday, 13 October 2009.

I also move:

7. That this house —
 - (1) notes the ongoing failure of the government to fully comply with the resolution of the Council of 24 June 2009 to table all documents relating to the extension of licence for the number of gaming tables at Crown Casino, including the failure of the government to even produce a schedule of relevant documents;
 - (2) is of the firm opinion that the Council is fully entitled to scrutinise the activities of the executive and demands accountability for all aspects of executive behaviour;
 - (3) accordingly, censures the Leader of the Government as the representative of the government in the Council for the government's failure to fully comply with the Council's resolution of 24 June 2009; and
 - (4) demands that the Leader of the Government comply fully with the resolution of the Council of 24 June 2009 and lodge all remaining documents with the Clerk by 12 noon on Tuesday, 13 October 2009.

I also move:

8. That this house —
 - (1) notes the refusal of the government to comply fully with the resolution of the Council of 1 April 2009 to table documents relating to the Victorian government's policy on extending clearway times;
 - (2) is of the firm opinion that the Council is fully entitled to scrutinise the activities of the executive and demands accountability for all aspects of executive behaviour;

- (3) rejects the government's claim that the release of documents listed in the schedule attached to correspondence to the Clerk of the Legislative Council by the Attorney-General and numbered 1, 2, 9, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 26 would 'reveal confidential legal advice', or that documents numbered 4, 5, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 22, 23, 24, 25, 35, 36, 37, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 54, 58, 61, 62 and 63 would 'reveal high-level confidential deliberative processes of the Executive government, or otherwise genuinely jeopardise the necessary relationship of confidentiality between a minister and a 'government officer', or that documents numbered 6, 10 and 60 would 'reveal high-level confidential deliberative processes of the executive government, or otherwise genuinely jeopardise the necessary relationship of confidentiality between a minister and a government officer and would reveal confidential legal advice', or that documents numbered 3, 8, 17, 27, 32, 33, 38, 39, and 40 would 'reveal high-level confidential deliberative processes of the executive government', or that documents numbered 28 and 29 would 'prejudice a dispute resolution process' or that documents numbered 30 and 31 would 'prejudice public safety and enforcement of laws' or that documents numbered 53, 55, 56, 57 and 59 would 'reveal deliberations of cabinet', or that the document numbered 52 would 'reveal high level confidential deliberative processes of the executive government, or otherwise genuinely jeopardise the necessary relationship of confidentiality between a minister and a government officer and would reveal deliberations of cabinet';
- (4) accordingly, censures the Leader of the Government as the representative of the government in the Council for the government's failure to fully comply with the Council's resolution of 1 April 2009; and
- (5) demands that the Leader of the Government comply fully with the resolution of the Council of 1 April 2009 and lodge the following documents as detailed on the schedule attached to the Attorney-General's letter with the Clerk by 12 noon on Tuesday, 13 October 2009 —
- document listed as number 1, 'Brief to Minister for Roads and Ports (undated)';
- document listed as number 2, 'Memorandum of advice to VicRoads (undated)';
- document listed as number 3, 'Briefing on Keeping Melbourne Moving (17 April 2009)';
- document listed as number 4, 'Brief to Minister for Roads and Ports (29 August 2008)';
- document listed as number 5, 'Brief to Minister for Roads and Ports (17 June 2008)';
- document listed as number 6, 'Brief to Minister for Roads and Ports (undated)';
- document listed as number 7, 'Brief to Minister for Roads and Ports (12 November 2008)';
- document listed as number 8, 'Report by Meyrick and Associates (2008)';
- document listed as number 9, 'Letter from the Victorian Government Solicitors Office (VGSO) to Department of Infrastructure (27 March 2008)';
- document listed as number 10, 'Brief to Minister for Roads and Ports (31 March 2008)';
- document listed as number 11, 'Email from VicRoads to the office of the Minister for Roads and Ports (15 April 2008)';
- document listed as number 12, 'Brief to Minister for Roads and Ports (9 May 2008)';
- document listed as number 13, 'Ministerial briefing (23 May 2008)';
- document listed as number 14, 'Brief to Minister for Roads and Ports (21 May 2008)';
- document listed as number 15, 'Memorandum of Advice to Department of Transport (DOT) (4 June 2008)';
- document listed as number 16, 'Brief to Minister for Roads and Ports (5 June 2008)';
- document listed as number 17, 'Email from DOT to Auspoll (22 July 2007)';
- document listed as number 18, 'Brief to Minister for Roads and Ports (12 September 2008)';
- document listed as number 19, 'Memorandum of advice to VicRoads (29 September 2008)';
- document listed as number 20, 'Legal advice from VicRoads (13 October 2008)';
- document listed as number 21, 'Email from VicRoads to the office of the Minister for Roads and Ports (14 October 2008)';
- document listed as number 22, 'Brief to Minister for Roads and Ports (3 October 2008)';
- document listed as number 23, 'Brief to Minister for Roads and Ports (9 November 2008)';
- document listed as number 24, 'Brief to Minister for Roads and Ports (9 December 2008)';
- document listed as number 25, 'Brief to Minister for Roads and Ports (29 February 2009)';
- document listed as number 26, 'Brief to Minister for Roads and Ports (31 December 2008)';
- document listed as number 27, 'Email from VicRoads to DOT (5 January 2009)';
- document listed as number 28, 'Letter from VicRoads to DOT (19 January 2009)';
- document listed as number 29, 'Letter from Moreland City Council to DOT (2 February 2009)';

document listed as number 30, 'Brief to Minister for Roads and Ports (10 February 2009)';

document listed as number 31, 'Brief to Minister for Roads and Ports (18 February 2009)';

document listed as number 32, 'Letter from VicRoads to DOT (5 March 2009)';

document listed as number 33, 'Internal DOT email with attachment (2 November 2007)';

document listed as number 34, 'Email from Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) to DOT (1 February 2008)';

document listed as number 35, 'Brief to Minister for Roads and Ports (9 September 2008)';

document listed as number 36, 'Brief to Minister for Local Government (17 June 2008)';

document listed as number 37, 'Brief to Minister for Local Government (24 July 2008)';

document listed as number 38, 'Email from Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) to VicRoads (1 September 2008)';

document listed as number 39, 'Email from VicRoads to DPCD (3 September 2008)';

document listed as number 40, 'Email from VicRoads to DPCD (4 September 2008)';

document listed as number 41, 'Internal DPCD email with attachment (5 September 2008)';

document listed as number 42, 'Email chain from DPCD to VicRoads (25 September 2008)';

document listed as number 43, 'Brief to Minister for Local Government (1 October 2008)';

document listed as number 44, 'Brief to Minister for Local Government (22 October 2008)';

document listed as number 45, 'Internal DPCD email with attachment (5 November 2008)';

document listed as number 46, 'Brief to Minister for Local Government (28 November 2008)';

document listed as number 47, 'Ministerial Debrief (5 December 2008)';

document listed as number 48, 'Brief to Minister for Local Government (21 January 2009)';

document listed as number 49, 'Brief to Minister for Local Government (17 February 2009)';

document listed number 50, 'Brief to Minister for Local Government (5 March 2009)';

document listed as number 51, 'Brief to Minister for Local Government (24 March 2009)';

document listed as number 52, 'Brief to Premier (19 February 2008)';

document listed as number 53, 'Brief to Premier (25 January 2008)';

document listed as number 54, 'Project Review Committee business case (25 January 2008)';

document listed as number 55, 'Brief to Premier (15 January 2008)';

document listed as number 56, 'Brief to Premier (11 January 2008)';

document listed as number 57, 'Brief to Premier (28 December 2007)';

document listed as number 58, 'Brief to Minister for Roads and Ports (9 November 2007)';

document listed as number 59, 'Brief to Premier (23 November 2007)';

document listed as number 60, 'Brief to Premier (13 August 2008)';

document listed as number 61, 'Email from DOT to DPC (26 May 2008)';

document listed as number 62, 'Brief to Premier (17 August 2007)'; and

document listed as number 63, 'Brief to Premier (30 March 2009).

I also move:

9. That this House —
 - (1) notes the refusal of the government to comply fully with the resolution of the Council of 11 March 2009 to table documents relating to solar or other renewable energy feed in electricity tariffs on the grounds of executive privilege;
 - (2) is of the firm opinion that the Council is fully entitled to scrutinise the activities of the executive and demands accountability for all aspects of executive behaviour;
 - (3) rejects the government's claim that the release of documents listed in the schedule attached to correspondence to the Clerk of the Legislative Council by the Attorney-General and numbered 9, 15, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44 and 63 'would reveal high-level confidential deliberative processes of the executive government or otherwise genuinely jeopardise the necessary relationship of confidentiality between a minister and 'government officer', or that the release of document 16 'would reveal confidential legal advice and prejudice intergovernmental relations', or that the release of documents 11, 12, 13 and 14 'would reveal the deliberative processes of cabinet, and high-level confidential deliberative process of the executive government or otherwise genuinely jeopardise the necessary relationship of confidentiality between a minister and a government officer', or that the release of document 58 'would reveal information obtained by the

executive government on the basis that it would be kept confidential', and that these matters provide an adequate excuse for the non-provision of these documents by the government;

- (4) accordingly, censures the Leader of the Government as the representative of the government in the Council for the government's failure to fully comply with the Council's resolution of 11 March 2009; and
- (5) demands that the Leader of the Government comply fully with the resolution of the Council of 11 March 2009 and lodge the following documents as detailed on the schedule attached to the Attorney-General's letter with the Clerk by 12 noon on Tuesday, 13 October 2009 —

document listed as number 9, 'Brief to Minister for Energy and Resources (16 April 2008)';

document listed as number 11, 'Brief to office of the Minister for Energy and Resources considering cabinet submission (Doc 5)';

document listed as number 12, 'Briefing to Minister for Energy and Resources considering cabinet deliberations (10 October 2008)';

document listed as number 13, 'Briefing to office of the Minister for Energy and Resources on cabinet deliberations (15 October 2008)';

document listed as number 14, 'Briefing to office of the Minister for Energy and Resources on cabinet deliberations (28 October 2008)';

document listed as number 15, 'Briefing to office of the Minister for Energy and Resources (18 November 2008)';

document listed as number 16, 'Brief to Minister for Energy and Resources (21 November 2008)';

document listed as number 17, 'Briefing to the office of the Minister for Energy and Resources (15 December 2008)';

document listed as number 38, 'Brief to Minister for Energy and Resources (6 June 2007)';

document listed as number 39, 'Brief to minister for environment, water and climate change (6 June 2007)';

document listed as number 40, 'Brief to Minister for Environment and Climate Change (2 October 2007)';

document listed as number 41, 'Brief to Minister for Environment and Climate Change (31 January 2008)';

document listed as number 42, 'Brief to Premier (16 October 2007)';

document listed as number 43, 'Brief to Premier (9 November 2007)';

document listed as number 44, 'Brief to Premier (19 December 2007)';

document listed as number 58, 'Briefing by DIIRD';

document listed as number 63, 'Brief to Treasurer (6 February 2008)'; and

resource documents, assessments and analysis used in the preparation of document listed as number six, 'Business Impact Assessment prepared for and considered by cabinet'.

By order of the Council, this will be a cognate debate. The motions relate to documents this chamber has sought under sessional order 21. These important motions relate to a series of different matters where documents have been sought by the chamber on my motion.

They relate to the set of documents that the chamber sought in terms of the alpine resorts. Motion 4 specifically singles out the failure of the government to provide the Mount Baw Baw Alpine Resort Management Board Corporate Plan 2007–2010. It is extraordinary that the government would regard that document and its release as prejudicial to the public interest or that there is any reasonable immunity that would apply to that document.

Mr Lenders — On a point of order, Acting President, I believe Mr David Davis is reading from a speech, an issue he drew to the attention of the Acting President just yesterday. I ask you to rule upon him reading slavishly from notes.

Mr D. Davis — On the point of order, Acting President, I do not have a speech in front of me to read from.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Leane) — Order! Mr David Davis had only just started speaking and I was not paying attention to him at the time, so I will let him carry on.

Mr D. DAVIS — If you are going to do that, you have to at least have someone who is reading a speech; that is the point — unlike Mr Scheffer who does read his speeches.

Mr Viney — Mrs Petrovich today, Mr Vogels and plenty of others. Do not start down that path.

Mr D. DAVIS — If he is going to slavishly read it, we will.

Mr Viney — Well, pull your own people up.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Leane) — Order! Mr Viney!

Mr D. DAVIS — Spare me, through the President! Motion 5 deals with the Better Place documents which have not been provided as they ought to have been. The government indicated it would provide them but they have not been provided, and they ought to be provided.

Motion 6 deals with carbon trading institutions. The government has not provided those documents and it ought to have provided them. I know the government is sensitive about its loss of carbon trading institutions to Brisbane, but that ought not to prevent it from discharging its obligations to the chamber under that sessional order.

Motion 7 relates to matters around Crown Casino. I know that the Leader of the Government is very sensitive on this matter. I know that he tried to gazump the chamber by releasing documents ahead of time. He thought that it was sufficient to stick 13 documents on a website, but what we still do not have from the Leader of the Government in this case is a full reckoning of this matter, a full list of documents.

We know that certain documents that were sought are not in the government's possession, and they relate to social impact studies and the like. But there are other documents that were sought in the order that have not been provided, and nor has the government provided a list of documents it has sought to keep from the chamber. In the first instance, the government ought to provide the list. We can have a debate about documents if there are documents on the list that it thinks ought to remain secret. If that is its proposal for some of those documents, it ought to just provide the list, and we can have a sensible debate about that.

Motion 8 relates to a whole series of documents on clearway times, and the list of these is extensive. Again the government has sought to block access to key documents, briefings to ministers that ought to properly be in the public domain, internal emails it claims are internal emails between departments, notes and a whole range of advice to departments that ought sensibly to be matters in the public domain that would inform public debate on this significant government policy that will impact on communities and businesses.

In the case of motion 9, the government's renewable energy list on feed-in tariffs, these documents ought to have been provided at a much earlier point. They would have been helpful to the chamber when it was debating the recent bill. We did get some documents, and a number of them were significant. I have to say that in

terms of informing debate in the chamber and in the community a number of those documents were highly significant. But there are further documents that again ought to be in the public domain.

It is beyond me why the government will not provide them. It either has something to cover up or hide, or it is just being bloody-minded, if I can use that expression, in this case.

These are a series of document motions seeking clear understandings from the government as to either why documents are not provided or provided. If there are cases where the government can make legitimate points — and I accept, for example, that on the casino issue there might be some documents that ought not to be in the public domain — I wait to see the list and have the debate with the government, but it needs to provide the list first.

This approach by the government of trying to block and obfuscate to try and slow progress on key things is problematic, and the chamber should send a very clear message that it thinks the Leader of Government has not done enough to bring this process forward.

If the Leader of the Government has specific reasons in relation to one or other of these motions as to why he or the government cannot provide these documents, he should be more direct with the chamber. Some of these matters go back a considerable period of time, and it is important that the chamber, in my view, sends a very clear message to the Leader of the Government and the government as a whole. The community wants these documents in the public domain. Interest groups and community groups that wish to debate a number of these topics should have access to the documents through this chamber — through a chamber that is prepared to stand up and demand these documents from the government for the sake of the community.

21:42

Mr VINEY (Eastern Victoria) — As I have said many times before, it would not be a Wednesday without a documents debate.

Mr Barber — Give us the documents, and that will be the end of the debate.

Mr VINEY — The government has supplied heaps of documents. I will go through them. Mr David Davis is very confused about the status of documents, and what I urge him to do is to go to the papers office and ask for the production of documents register. It comprises 14 A3 pages listing every request for all the documents that have been asked for and the correspondence that has been provided by the

government in relation to each set and in relation to specific documents requested. They are all there.

This is a serious series of motions before the house because they propose to censure the Leader of the Government for doing his job. I propose to respond to these issues because, as I say, it is a serious and significant matter. As I have said before, the censure of the Leader of the Government is a very serious process of the chamber. I believe Mr Davis has done the house a great disservice in the way he has presented this.

In relation to the first matter relating to the alpine resort areas request a copious number of documents were requested and a significant number of documents were provided. In fact 109 documents were provided. I propose to read them into the record:

- (1) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from president, Arrabri Ski Club Incorporated (29 February 2008);
- (2) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards (29 February 2008);
- (3) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards (29 February 2008);
- (4) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards (28 February 2008);
- (5) Letter in support of submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards made by the Falls Creek Alpine Association 25 February 2008 (29 February 2008);
- (6) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from Mystic Mountains Tourism (29 February 2008);
- (7) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards (28 February 2008);
- (8) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards (28 February 2008);
- (9) Letter in support of submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards made by the Falls Creek Alpine Association 25 February 2008 (28 February 2008);
- (10) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from chief executive officer, Mansfield Shire Council (27 February 2008);
- (11) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from secretary, Mount Buller Ratepayers Association (28 February 2008);
- (12) Email in support of submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards made by the Falls Creek Alpine Association 25 February 2008 (28 February 2008);

- (13) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from general manager, Pulitano Bus Group (28 February 2008);
- (14) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from secretary, Victorian High Country Huts Association (28 February 2008);
- (15) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from president, Falls Creek Alpine Association (25 February 2008);
- (16) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from secretary, Hangman's Drop Ski Club (27 February 2008);
- (17) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards (27 February 2008);

Mr D. Davis — On a point of order, President, there are two key points to this point of order. The first is that this motion is about the documents not provided. The minister is reading a list of the documents provided. The second point is that the minister is slavishly reading from a list and that is out of order.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I make the point that Mr Viney is not a minister.

Mr VINEY — On the point of order, President, as I said at the outset the motion proposes to censure the Leader of the Government for the failure to provide documents. I believe Mr Davis was not clear in his contribution that a significant number of documents have been provided. It is my view that it is appropriate to demonstrate to the house that these documents have been provided under the order.

The PRESIDENT — Order! There are two points of order, but the reality is that Mr Viney is the lead speaker on this matter and is making a point regarding the documents and the issue in a way that I think is consistent with his role. I do not believe there is a point of order, and therefore I rule it out.

Mr VINEY — I continue:

- (18) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from president, Australian Alpine Club (12 February 2008);
- (19) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from Kalyna Ski Club (7 February 2008);
- (20) Letter and submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from chairperson, Mount Baw Baw Alpine Resort Management Board (28 February 2008) — note: attachment 3 is subject to a claim of executive privilege;

- 21:50
- (21) Letter in support of submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards made by the Falls Creek Alpine Association 25 February 2008, from chairman, BSM Ski Co-Operative (29 February 2008);
 - (22) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from vice-president, Leeton Alpine Sports Club (undated);
 - (23) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from Falls Creek Chamber of Commerce (28 February 2008);
 - (24) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards (undated);
 - (25) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from honorary secretary, Hotham Ski Association Include (29 February 2008);
 - (26) Email Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards (29 February 2008) (attachment 9 was not provided to the SSA);
 - (27) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from manager Diana Alpine Lodge Pty Ltd (28 February 2008);
 - (28) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from Victorian National Parks Association (29 February 2008);
 - (29) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from secretary, Mount Baw Baw Ski Club Include (28 February 2008);
 - (30) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from Falls Creek Country Club (3 March 2008);
 - (31) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from Pretty Valley Alpine (28 February 2008);
 - (32) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from chairperson, Mount Baw Baw Association (9 February 2008);
 - (33) Letter in support of submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards made by the Falls Creek Alpine Association 25 February 2008, from secretary, Falls Creek Co-Operative Society (29 February 2008);
 - (34) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from director, Hotham Management Pty Ltd (29 February 2008);
 - (35) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from president, Mount Hotham Chamber of Commerce (29 February 2008);
 - (36) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from managing director, The Man Hotel (29 February 2008);
 - (37) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from First National Real Estate (29 February 2008);
 - (38) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from the Emergency Services Commissioner (29 February 2008);
 - (39) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from partner, Nevin Lenne and Gross, barristers and solicitors (11 February 2008);
 - (40) Letter in support of submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards made by the Falls Creek Alpine Association 25 February 2008, from honorary secretary, Camber Ski Club (28 February 2008);
 - (41) Letter re submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards, from acting chief executive, Parks Victoria (22 February 2008);
 - (42) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards (22 February 2008);
 - (43) Letter re submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from chief executive, VicRoads (11 February 2008);
 - (44) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from Halleys Lodge Apartments (6 February 2008);
 - (45) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from acting chief executive, CFA (5 March 2008);
 - (46) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from chairman, Australian Alpine Club (28 February 2008);
 - (47) Letter in support of submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards made by the Falls Creek Alpine Association 25 February 2008, from Secretary, Langrenn Ski Club (28 February 2008);
 - (48) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from chairman, Mount Buller Chamber of Commerce (28 February 2008);
 - (49) Letter in support of submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards made by the Falls Creek Alpine Association 25 February 2008 (28 February 2008);
 - (50) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from chairman, Alpine Resorts Co-ordinating Council to Commissioner (5 March 2008);
 - (51) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from general manager, Mount Buller Ski Lifts (28 February 2008);
 - (52) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards (28 February 2008);

- (53) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards (28 February 2008);
- (54) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from secretary, Ski Cross Country Victoria Incorporated (28 February 2008);
- (55) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from chairman and chief executive officer, Mount Buller & Mount Stirling Resort Management (28 February 2008);
- (56) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from executive director, Australian Ski Areas Association (7 March 2008);
- (57) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from chairperson, Mount Hotham Alpine Resort Management Board to Commissioner (29 February 2008);
- (58) Letter in support of submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards made by the Falls Creek Alpine Association 25 February 2008, from secretary, Riverina Alpine Ski Club (28 February 2008);
- (59) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from chief executive officer, Australian Alpine Enterprises Pty Ltd (13 March 2008);
- (60) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from acting chairman, Falls Creek Alpine Resort Management Board (17 March 2008);
- (61) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from secretary, Australian Ski Patrol Association (22 March 2008);
- (62) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from chief executive officer, Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry (5 March 2008);
- (63) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from chief executive officer, Alpine shire (14 March 2008);
- (64) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from chief executive, Tourism Victoria (2 April 2008);
- (65) Submission to SSA review of alpine resort area management boards from manager, Victorian Network on Recreation and Disability, 'Access above 5000 ft Taskgroup' (4 June 2008);
- (66) Agenda for the SSA review of Alpine Resort Areas Reference Group meeting (13 March 2008);
- (67) Minutes of the SSA Review of Alpine Resort Areas Reference Group meeting (13 March 2008);
- (68) Agenda for the SSA Review of Alpine Resort Areas Reference Group meeting (30 April 2008);
- (69) Minutes of the SSA Review of Alpine Resort Areas Reference Group meeting (30 April 2008);

(70) Agenda for the SSA Review of Alpine Resort Areas Reference Group meeting (3 June 2008); and

(71) Minutes of the SSA Review of Alpine Resort Areas Reference Group meeting (3 June 2008).

The only document that was not provided was the Mount Baw Baw Alpine Resort management board corporate plan for 2007–10, which is attachment 3 to item 20 that I have just read. This document was provided to the State Services Authority for the purposes of its review on the basis that it would be kept confidential. Therefore as a commercial document that had a commercial-in-confidence nature and the confidential nature of the document reinforced by section 53(6) of the Alpine Resorts (Management) Act 1997 was the reason given by the Attorney-General, and the letter dated to the Legislative Council on 29 July 2009 as the reason that that document was not provided.

Mr Lenders — So reasons were given, were they, Mr Viney?

Mr VINEY — Reasons were given, Mr Lenders.

Mr Lenders — And most of the documents were submitted?

Mr VINEY — All documents, Mr Lenders, were submitted in relation to this matter, except one which breached commercial confidentiality as is required under the Alpine Resorts (Management) Act 1997.

Mr Lenders — What is Mr Davis's problem?

Mr VINEY — Some 70-odd documents were provided; 1 was not.

Mr Lenders — One in 70?

Mr VINEY — That is correct, Mr Lenders. Out of 70-odd documents, only 1 was not provided. I would hardly think that is an appropriate matter over which to censure the Leader of the Government in relation to the failure to provide that document.

When we come motion 5 relating to Better Place, the Council has been provided with two letters by the Attorney-General — one of 4 June, and a second of 29 July. In both instances it was advised that this request was a voluminous request and that consideration was still being given to it, the documents were being searched for, and each document then had to be assessed and that matter was still in process.

A letter dated 29 July from the Attorney-General was received in this house and indicated that the matter was

still in process. It would be a bit rich to censure the Leader of the Government. With the second motion, only one document has not been provided. For the second motion, which relates to Better Place, the process is still in place.

The next document relates to motion 6, which relates to the carbon trading institutions and the carbon trading institutes. Again, on a letter to the Council dated 11 August — only a month ago — the Council was advised that, again, considerable research was needed to find the documents involved and that that matter was still in process.

There had been no refusal in relation to any documents for either that matter or the matter on Better Place. It is simply that more time is required for the work to be done: firstly, to find the documents; and secondly, to assess whether or not they could be released. Work is still being done on those matters, so how on earth could this house censure the Leader of the Government when processes are still under way — —

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

22:00

PLANNING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

Introduction

Received from Assembly.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I wish to remind the house that a bill of this nature was introduced, debated and the second reading negatived in this chamber in June this year. A standing order of this house in effect states that we cannot within six months of the same session debate two bills of similar content. Standing order 7.06 states:

No question will be proposed in the Council which is the same in substance as any question which has been resolved during the previous six months in the same session.

I note that this bill has been slightly amended, but in substance in my view it is still the same. I therefore indicate that I cannot accept a motion for the first reading of this bill at this stage. I do note, however, that earlier today the government gave notice of a motion for the suspension of standing order 7.06 in relation to this bill. Until that motion is moved and decided on by the house, this bill cannot proceed any further.

VICTORIAN RENEWABLE ENERGY AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction and first reading

Received from Assembly.

Read first time for Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Minister for Industry and Trade) on motion of Mr Lenders.

VALUATION OF LAND AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction and first reading

Received from Assembly.

Read first time for Mr JENNINGS (Minister for Environment and Climate Change) on motion of Mr Lenders.

ADJOURNMENT

The PRESIDENT — Order! The question is:

That the house do now adjourn.

Child care: regulations

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — My adjournment issue is for the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development and regards the new Children's Services Regulations 2009 and the impact they will have on the cost of providing children's services in Victoria. The review of the children's services regulations was a long, drawn-out process that was ultimately conducted in haste due to the government's incompetence. The government had known since it came to power in 1999 that the Children's Services Regulations 1998 would sunset in May 2008. But this lazy government failed to do the work necessary to meet that deadline and had to extend the 1998 regulations for a further 12 months.

The minister then embarked on a frantic program to develop a new set of regulations and produce a regulatory impact statement (RIS) within a few months. The new regulations provide for changes that include improved staff-child ratios and increased qualifications for child-care workers. These changes have been welcomed by the child-care sector and parents as measures to improve the quality of child care in Victoria, which is an outcome we all aspire to.

However, it is also the government's responsibility to ensure that a balance is achieved that provides the

highest level of care possible at a cost that is still affordable to the average family. One of the purposes of producing an RIS is to establish the cost impact of the additional regulation; therefore it is essential that the RIS is accurate. From the moment Minister Morand released the RIS, questions were being raised by child-care providers regarding the accuracy of the projected costs involved. The child-care centres Association of Victoria has written to the minister several times regarding this matter, and in my opinion the minister has not given it a fair hearing on this important issue.

The Victorian RIS states that the expected increase in cost of the provision of children's services under the new regulations will be \$278.3 million over 10 years. However, the commonwealth is also conducting a review of early childhood education and care, and as part of this review an independent analysis produced by Access Economics projects the increased cost of the provision of services in Victoria under the 2009 regulations will be \$503.8 million over the next 10 years — almost double what the Victorian government project in its RIS. These increased costs have the potential to price child care out of the reach of the average Victorian family.

My request of the minister is that she commission an independent audit of the cost impact of the Children's Services Regulations 2009 to establish the true cost these changes will have on the provision of children's services in Victoria, and that she work with the commonwealth to make sure that child-care supplements are increased so that child care is not priced out of the reach of the average Victorian family due to flawed cost projections resulting from the Victorian government's incompetence and rush to produce an RIS in a relatively short time frame because it had failed to renew the regulations on time and was forced to conduct the review in haste.

Gaming: Echuca Workers and Services Club

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Gaming, Mr Robinson, and it has to do with the Echuca Workers and Services Club in relation to its request to the VCGR (Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation) to have its annual profit readjusted. The club is to be assessed on this year's profit in respect of the future purchase — after pre-allocation — of gaming machines going forward. As I said, the pre-allocation of gaming machines will go on this current year's profit, but this year's profit had been spiked by the fact that the Moama Bowling Club, which is less than 4 or 5 minutes away, had a major fire this year, so patronage

came across the river and spiked up general revenue and profit of the Echuca workers club to an atypical level.

Now that the Moama Bowling Club is back in full operation, the Echuca Workers and Services Club's profits have returned back to what they were prior to the Moama Bowling Club fire. However, the VCGR's determination of how much the Echuca Workers and Services Club is going to pay for the entitlements for the 40 machines going forward — for the next 10 years — means the club is going to have to pay an additional \$200 000 for its machines over and above what it should pay and would have paid if this abnormal spike in profit due to the fire across the road had been taken into consideration.

The VCGR (Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation) simply refuses to adjust the rules. I think it would be a good option for the Treasurer to get involved, but ultimately the Minister for Gaming will have carriage of these decisions. The VCGR does not believe it has flexibility within the rules to make this common-sense adjustment. I therefore call on the minister to exert his influence over this decision.

22:07

Effectively, this will see \$200 000 taken out of the Echuca community and sent to the coffers here in Spring Street. The government is able to do the right thing, or it can simply sit on its hands and let the \$200 000 be taken out of the Echuca community, from the Echuca Workers and Services Club which has to pay for an abnormal spike that was not part of its usual trading profits. All the figures are available for either the minister, the VCGR or the Treasurer to look at and check out on a month-by-month basis. They show that from the day after the fires the club had an abnormal spike. That spike maintained its level until the new building opened across the road at the Moama Bowling Club. There has been a gradual decrease back to the pre-fire profits at the workers club. I hope the minister takes these figures into account.

Asbestos: reporting

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Consumer Affairs. It relates to the issue of asbestos in private and public housing. Asbestos has been called the silent killer and it continues to be a hidden hazard in approximately 400 000 Victorian dwellings built before 1990. The recent revelations about the use of asbestos in hessian carpet backing and suburban driveways and the impact of asbestos in bushfire-ravaged areas highlight the serious public health hazard that asbestos in situ in the built environment still poses.

Every year in Australia around 800 people die from mesothelioma, a deadly cancer caused by exposure to asbestos. This is a national tragedy of epic proportions. Another 1200 people contract other asbestos-related diseases which, whilst not necessarily deadly, cause great pain and suffering and affect whole families. Despite this, many Victorians still seem to be unaware of the presence of asbestos in their homes and continue to embark on minor home renovations uninformed and unprotected. Home renovations are a passionate pastime for many Victorians. Five years ago Victorians spent nearly \$7 billion on home renovations.

People in asbestos research bodies, support and information groups, trade unions and medical bodies working in these areas are increasingly concerned that asbestos deaths from non-work-related exposures are reaching epidemic proportions. Not-for-profit groups working in this area report a continuing stream of phone calls from householders who are worried that their families may have been inadvertently exposed to asbestos during a home renovation. Their greatest fear is for young children, and the absence of reliable predictive tests only further increases their anxiety.

People in these organisations are of the opinion that education and information are urgently required to prevent future deaths from mesothelioma and other asbestos-related diseases. I agree with that, and I think the government could do much more in this area. This may be best achieved by enacting legislation that requires the vendor of a home to provide a statement indicating the presence or otherwise of asbestos in that building at the point of sale or lease. A visual inspection by an asbestos hygienist or auditor would usually be sufficient, and would be a one-off cost in the order of \$200. Over time, this process would have the effect of educating and protecting householders in private and public dwellings. The report could be made part of a section 32 sale document administered by the Department of Consumer Affairs.

My request to the Minister is that he looks at ways in which regulations affecting the sale and lease of homes in Victoria may be amended to require sellers and lessors to provide an asbestos status report at the point of sale or lease.

Mental health and community services: western Victoria

Mr KOCH (Western Victoria) — My issue is for the Minister for Mental Health and Community Services and relates to the chronic lack of mental health and community facilities throughout the state, particularly in western Victoria. People living with

mental illness cannot access appropriate care, the disabled are inappropriately housed and the neglect of abused children is increasing. The minister recently asserted that the Brumby government is struggling to keep up with the number of child abuse cases reported, with up to 60 per cent of cases in some areas of the state not being investigated. In a recent 3AW radio interview on the 5 August the minister was asked if the current system was, and I quote, 'stuffed'. Her response was, 'Absolutely'. This, of course, is outrageous.

During the same interview the minister agreed that the Brumby government is not dealing properly with child abuse cases, and that the level of service offered to abused children is unacceptable. However, the minister was unable to inform Victorians how or when these services would be improved. By her own admission the minister and the Labor government have failed to achieve positive outcomes for the most vulnerable people in our community.

In Geelong there are fewer mental health beds than anywhere else in country Victoria. According to the May budget the region will benefit by a further eight mental health beds. However, this remains well short of Geelong's requirements. More than 250 people in Geelong languish on a waiting list for disability accommodation, and not all abused children in the Barwon south-west region are being placed in foster care. In the last three years the number of foster carers in this region has fallen from 2267 to 1000.

In Ballarat more than 100 people with a disability have been identified as needing immediate support. Like those in Geelong they have been left waiting. More than 30 per cent of abused children have not been allocated a case worker, and there are not enough carers to take in those requiring foster care. The smokescreen created by the Premier, designed to take the heat off the minister, has been to announce a name change for the Department of Human Services without changing a single process or adding a single service.

My request is for the minister to start taking her portfolio seriously. She must review the current inadequate services in order to accommodate the known needs of the mentally ill, those requiring disability accommodation, child abuse victims and children requiring foster care. Victorians demand the adequacy of these vital services, not the continual spin that has been designed by the Department of Human Services to mislead the community into believing something is actually being done.

Mount Martha: beach renourishment

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, and it relates to the health of the Mount Martha North Beach which has been in a degraded state since storms in 2000. The beach has lost a lot of sand, and at that time approximately 40 beach boxes were lost and significant cliff erosion also occurred. In or about 2006 or 2007 a group was formed to attempt to rectify this situation.

In early 2007 I was contacted by the Mount Martha North Beach group. It engaged with the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council and the Department of Sustainability and Environment to try to identify what could be done to improve the quality of the beach, rehabilitate it and stop any further cliff erosion. After significant work by the group and the council, on 9 July a commitment in the sum of \$250 000 was made by the Department of Sustainability and Environment to allow works to be completed. The funding was to facilitate beach renourishment and, erosion control and improve beach access. Following the announcement, the hope of users of the beach was that works would be completed by the upcoming 2009–10 summer. Unfortunately, this will not occur as works are yet to begin. To be fair to the department, I understand the project has proved to be more complicated than originally anticipated. However, it is now more than 14 months since the funding announcement was made, and it is still not clear when works will commence, and indeed when they will be completed.

I therefore ask the minister to take charge of the situation, and work with the Mount Martha North Beach group, the council and other interested parties so the announcements made more than 14 months ago now are implemented and, ideally, so the rectification works can be concluded before the summer of 2010–11.

provides some effective options for dealing with this issue.

A lack of security of tenure for residents is at the core of the issue, because residents feel they are unable to speak out on other issues for fear of eviction. Indeed I am told that residents consulted by the Housing for the Aged Action Group in developing a response to the options paper must remain anonymous. They fear even being involved in these consultations could be enough to risk their tenancy.

The Housing for the Aged Action Group prefers option 4 from the options paper — that is, the creation of a new and separate act to govern the operation of residential parks and villages. They also suggest positive amendments as part of their campaign for housing justice. I applaud Housing for the Aged Action Group for its work in campaigning for law reform for residential parks and villages. I commend its submission on the options paper, which has been developed through extensive and difficult consultation, to the minister.

My request of the minister is that he move swiftly to provide security of tenure for those living in residential parks and villages and develop new legislation to deliver justice and rights regarding something we all hold dear — that is, our homes.

Youth: hospitality industry training

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Skills and Workforce Participation and is about an organisation called HEAT (Hospitality, Education and Training) in Southern Metropolitan Region. It is housed in a former school in Pickles Street, South Melbourne.

This is a collaborative program administered by St Kilda Youth Services, the Inner Eastern Local Learning and Employment Network, the City of Port Philip, William Angliss TAFE, Victoria Police and in particular Senior Sergeant Tim Hansen, philanthropic trusts such as the Buckland trust, ANZ Trustees, the National Australia Bank (NAB) and hospitality industry representatives including Luke Mangan, Guy Grossi, Iain Hewitson, Ian Curley and Adrian Richardson.

This is a basic training program aimed at getting youth back into mainstream society run by a really impressive group of people. It is a diversionary program much like the Ropes program that is so successful for first offenders.

Mr Tee — It is a great program.

Consumer affairs: residential parks

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is addressed to the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Mr Robinson. People living in residential parks, particularly retirees, do not enjoy the same rights and comforts that many of us take for granted. The government's *Options Paper — Tenancy Policy Framework For Residential Parks* thankfully recognises this and seeks to address many problems within the sector. The options paper identifies security of tenure as a key issue for residential park tenants and

Mrs COOTE — It is a great program indeed. The children involved in this have perhaps not been offenders but are heading in a difficult direction, and this program is to give them a sense of fulfilment and an opportunity to complete a course that gives them the skills to go further.

When I went to visit I came across a young person called Tookey, who was just terrific. It is a 14-week course, and he was doing the cooking segment at William Angliss TAFE. On a regular basis functions are held at the school, where a dining room is put up to serve people, particularly from the NAB which has a very good relationship with the group and does some of its corporate things there. It is a fabulous course that gives these young people enormous self-esteem. I found this young man's views on the success of the program and what he was expecting out of it to be very interesting. The administrators were excellent and full of enthusiasm.

I was very pleased to see that both the federal and the state governments have put funding into the program, and the Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, was recently there stuffing a chook. The current round of funding is due to run out in 2010, and the steering committee is looking for a new way to find a sustainable solution for the long-term viability of this program. My request of the minister is that he assist the steering committee and appoint experts in the area to develop some innovative and sustainable long-term funding options.

Burke Road North—Lower Heidelberg Road, Ivanhoe East: pedestrian crossing

Mr GUY (Northern Metropolitan) — I raise an issue for the Minister for Roads and Ports that concerns the absolute necessity for a safe pedestrian crossing at the roundabout at the Burke Road North—Maltravers Road—Lower Heidelberg Road—Keam Street intersection in Ivanhoe East. As can be heard from the number of streets I have named, this is a seriously busy roundabout and one that is now coping with a large amount of traffic on a daily basis.

The Burke Road North link from the Eastern Freeway to Lower Heidelberg Road has been for some time the main access point to the Eastern Freeway and further to the city for a lot of people in the north-eastern suburbs. Thus the number of vehicle movements along this stretch of road is exceptionally high, and as the population grows in suburbs further north such as Laurimar, Plenty and Mernda, many of these people will also use this link to the Eastern Freeway via Burke Road North to travel to the city.

Residents who live between Burke Road North and The Boulevard are stranded. Because of the lack of a pedestrian crossing there is no safe access point for them, their children or elderly residents to cross Burke Road North to access local schools, the East Ivanhoe shops, local churches or simply to cross the road to see friends. Anyone familiar with this road will know that it is winding, the corners are sharp and it is not safe to cross on foot in many locations. There is an urgent need for a signalled pedestrian crossing.

This issue has been raised a number of times by the local ward councillor Jenny Mulholland. Cr Mulholland and I met with residents on the previous Friday, and Cr Mulholland has met with them on a number of occasions and understands the locals' concerns that while the local Labor member has had 13 years to solve this problem, it seems that nothing has happened.

Cr Mulholland, who is an excellent and proactive councillor on Banyule City Council, recently arranged a meeting with me and a dozen or so concerned locals who told me of their concerns about the traffic levels on Burke Road North and the fact that their children cannot cross safely to simply go to school. Fearing for their children's safety, many now drive them the less than 1 kilometre to school to avoid them having to cross this road.

Further, it is also interesting that the member for Ivanhoe in the Assembly boasted in a recent mail-out to many thousands of people in the electorate about obtaining funding for signalled pedestrian lights on the other side of the Heidelberg Road cutting near Devon Street, which bizarrely will take some eight months to complete. Today in the state of Victoria it is astounding that it takes eight months to install traffic lights.

My adjournment issue is very simple and should not take eight months to fix. I ask the roads minister to immediately scope and install new pedestrian traffic lights along Burke Road North so that local people can feel safe about their children and families crossing this busy road at all times of the day.

Shire of Pyrenees: suicide intervention program

Mr VOGELS (Western Victoria) — I raise an issue for the Minister for Mental Health who is also the Minister for Community Services and the Minister for Senior Victorians, Lisa Neville. It concerns the prevention of suicide. Last Thursday evening, 10 September, I attended the launch at Avoca of the suicide awareness program known as CORES (Community Response to Eliminating Suicide).

Following the deaths of five residents over the previous 18 months the Avoca community has decided that action needs to be taken to prevent more suicides occurring and has turned to CORES, which has a proven track record in preventing suicide tragedies in many rural communities across Australia.

The group's modus operandi is to set up a suicide intervention program by training local volunteer participants who enrol in and complete a one-day course. This allows the volunteers to be much more aware of the issues facing their friends and families and to notice the tell-tale signs which can indicate depression. Once people are trained these signals can be picked up much more readily as people become more aware. It has been proved that recognising the symptoms early can prevent suicide. The launch was attended by all the councillors and the chief executive officer of the Pyrenees Shire Council. However, for this program to be successful it needs core funding.

The action I seek from the minister is that she provide 50 per cent of the set-up costs for this excellent program.

22:27 I was told this would be approximately \$17 500, which is a pittance compared to the alternatives. Life is precious and a suicide intervention program under the community response to eliminating suicide model would save lives.

Small business: defence submission

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Industry and Trade. I have been approached by a consortium of small manufacturing companies in Dandenong seeking my assistance with a submission it is making to the Department of Defence defence support group in response to a request for a proposal for the LAND 121 protected mobility vehicle program which is currently up for tender through the Department of Defence. This group of manufacturers in Dandenong consists of small to medium enterprises and they are concerned about their capacity to compete on a level playing field with the larger bidders for this contract, which is supposed to be for a vehicle manufactured and supported in Australia. They are particularly concerned about their capacity to compete on a level playing field with bids from the United States of America, given that the Department of Defence has already indicated that it has entered into a formal agreement with United States companies in terms of the development of technology for this vehicle.

I recognise that in line with the form for adjournment matters it would not be appropriate to ask the Minister for Industry and Trade to intervene with his federal counterpart and with the Defence Materiel Organisation to ensure that these companies in Dandenong have their bid treated on a level basis. I am sure that the minister will use his own judgement in deciding whether to do that, but I seek from the minister his urgent intervention in this matter.

The request for a proposal was initially due to close tomorrow. It has now been extended to 30 September, still only two weeks away. I seek from the Minister for Industry and Trade his urgent intervention through his department where I understand there is expertise in the defence procurement area to ensure that his department is able to assist this consortium to put together a complying submission for this proposal that will stand up to a level playing field assessment of the capability of the manufacturing companies in the South Eastern Metropolitan Region.

Medical practitioners: regional and rural Victoria

Mr P. DAVIS (Eastern Victoria) — The matter I raise is for the attention of the Minister for Health. I take the opportunity to point out for his attention a situation that absolutely refutes his repeated claims that the government is effectively addressing the shortage of doctors in country Victoria, and in East Gippsland in particular. Country Victoria has an acute shortage of general practitioners, and country people face not only lengthy waits for consultations but are often unable to see a doctor in the case of an emergency. The 77 000 people living in the area covered by the East Gippsland Division of General Practice — the area from Sale, Heyfield and Maffra to the state border and including remote townships in the alps — have one GP for every 1227 patients. This is well above the state average of 1 doctor to 1007 patients, and I suggest the situation is fairly typical in all the more distant regions in the state.

This general position that people in the regions are forced to live with is pretty unacceptable. When it comes to the need to see a doctor in an emergency, and often these are cases where worrying symptoms appear in young children, families are finding it increasingly difficult to get a prompt consultation. At Sale, for example, it is impossible, even in an emergency, to get an appointment with a GP, short of a waiting period of about three weeks.

I have had cases brought to my attention recently. One was of a distraught mother of a 15-month-old girl who

had previously suffered pneumonia and at night began showing signs of a severely congested chest. The mother was unable to get access to a GP and was repeatedly told to resort to visiting the hospital emergency department. But, as she accepted, it is not the proper role of an emergency department to fill the gap in general practice. This situation persists, it is worsening and heading towards a crisis in health services for centres such as Sale and regions such as East Gippsland as a whole. I therefore ask the minister to act with urgency to secure more GPs for Sale to answer the immediate problem being experienced there, and implement a broader strategy that will lift the doctor-patient ratio in country regions to the statewide average.

Responses

Mr LENDERS (Treasurer) — I have written responses to matters raised by four members on previous adjournment debates.

There were 11 items raised by members during the adjournment debate this evening, and I will refer those to the appropriate ministers.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned 10.32 p.m.