

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY- EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Thursday, 12 February 2015

(Extract from book 2)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

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FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION**

Speaker:

The Hon. TELMO LANGUILLER

Deputy Speaker:

Mr D. A. NARDELLA

Acting Speakers:

Mr Angus, Mr Blackwood, Mr Carbines, Mr Crisp, Mr Dixon, Ms Edwards, Ms Halfpenny,
Ms Kilkenny, Mr McCurdy, Ms McLeish, Mr Pearson, Ms Ryall, Ms Thomas,
Mr Thompson, Ms Thomson, Ms Ward and Mr Watt.

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier:

The Hon. D. M. ANDREWS

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier:

The Hon. J. A. MERLINO

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. M. J. GUY

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Deputy Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. D. J. HODGETT

Leader of The Nationals:

The Hon. P. L. WALSH

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Ms S. RYAN

Heads of parliamentary departments

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

Council — Acting Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr A. Young

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Allan, Ms Jacinta Marie	Bendigo East	ALP	McGuire, Mr Frank	Broadmeadows	ALP
Andrews, Mr Daniel Michael	Mulgrave	ALP	McLeish, Ms Lucinda Gaye	Eildon	LP
Angus, Mr Neil Andrew Warwick	Forest Hill	LP	Merlino, Mr James Anthony	Monbulk	ALP
Asher, Ms Louise	Brighton	LP	Morris, Mr David Charles	Mornington	LP
Battin, Mr Bradley William	Gembrook	LP	Mulder, Mr Terence Wynn	Polwarth	LP
Blackwood, Mr Gary John	Narracan	LP	Naphthine, Dr Denis Vincent	South-West Coast	LP
Blandthorn, Ms Elizabeth Anne	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Nardella, Mr Donato Antonio	Melton	ALP
Brooks, Mr Colin William	Bundoora	ALP	Neville, Ms Lisa Mary	Bellarine	ALP
Bull, Mr Joshua Michael	Sunbury	ALP	Noonan, Mr Wade Matthew	Williamstown	ALP
Bull, Mr Timothy Owen	Gippsland East	Nats	Northe, Mr Russell John	Morwell	Nats
Burgess, Mr Neale Ronald	Hastings	LP	O'Brien, Mr Michael Anthony	Malvern	LP
Carbines, Mr Anthony Richard	Ivanhoe	ALP	Pakula, Mr Martin Philip	Keysborough	ALP
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Crisp, Mr Peter Laurence	Mildura	Nats	Perera, Mr Jude	Cranbourne	ALP
D'Ambrosio, Ms Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Pesutto, Mr John	Hawthorn	LP
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Dixon, Mr Martin Francis	Nepean	LP	Richardson, Ms Fiona Catherine Alison	Northcote	ALP
Donnellan, Mr Luke Anthony	Narre Warren North	ALP	Ryall, Ms Deanne Sharon	Ringwood	LP
Edbrooke, Mr Paul Andrew	Frankston	ALP	Ryan, Mr Peter Julian ¹	Gippsland South	Nats
Edwards, Ms Janice Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Ryan, Ms Stephanie Maureen	Euroa	Nats
Eren, Mr John Hamdi	Lara	ALP	Sandell, Ms Ellen	Melbourne	Greens
Foley, Mr Martin Peter	Albert Park	ALP	Scott, Mr Robin David	Preston	ALP
Fyffe, Mrs Christine Anne	Evelyn	LP	Sheed, Ms Suzanna	Shepparton	Ind
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Gidley, Mr Michael Xavier Charles	Mount Waverley	LP	Smith, Mr Timothy Colin	Kew	LP
Graley, Ms Judith Ann	Narre Warren South	ALP	Southwick, Mr David James	Caulfield	LP
Green, Ms Danielle Louise	Yan Yean	ALP	Spence, Ms Rosalind Louise	Yuroke	ALP
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Halfpenny, Ms Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Staley, Ms Louise Eileen	Ripon	LP
Hennessy, Ms Jill	Altona	ALP	Suleyman, Ms Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Hibbins, Mr Samuel Peter	Prahran	Greens	Thomas, Ms Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Hodgett, Mr David John	Croydon	LP	Thompson, Mr Murray Hamilton Ross	Sandringham	LP
Howard, Mr Geoffrey Kemp	Buninyong	ALP	Thomson, Ms Marsha Rose	Footscray	ALP
Hutchins, Ms Natalie Maree Sykes	Sydenham	ALP	Tilley, Mr William John	Benambra	LP
Kairouz, Ms Marlene	Kororoit	ALP	Victoria, Ms Heidi	Bayswater	LP
Katos, Mr Andrew	South Barwon	LP	Wakeling, Mr Nicholas	Ferntree Gully	LP
Kealy, Ms Emma Jayne	Lowan	Nats	Walsh, Mr Peter Lindsay	Murray Plains	Nats
Kilkenny, Ms Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Ward, Ms Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Knight, Ms Sharon Patricia	Wendouree	ALP	Watt, Mr Graham Travis	Burwood	LP
Languiller, Mr Telmo Ramon	Tarneit	ALP	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Rowville	LP
Lim, Mr Muy Hong	Clarinda	ALP	Williams, Ms Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
McCurdy, Mr Timothy Logan	Ovens Valley	Nats	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP

¹ Resigned 2 February 2015

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

ALP — Labor Party; Greens — The Greens;
Ind — Independent; LP — Liberal Party; Nats — The Nationals.

Joint committees

Environment and Natural Resources Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Battin, Ms Halfpenny, Mr McCurdy, Mr Richardson and Ms Ward. (*Council*): Mr Ramsay and Ms Symes.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr J. Bull, Ms Blandthorn, Mr Dimopoulos, Ms Kealy, Ms Kilkenny and Mr Pesutto. (*Council*): Mr Dalla-Riva.

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Thursday, 12 February 2015

The SPEAKER (Hon. Telmo Languiller) took the chair at 9.33 a.m. and read the prayer.

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Speaker, I seek your guidance on a ruling that was made yesterday. I preface this by referencing standing order 29(1), ‘Lack of quorum in the house’, which states:

If a member draws attention to the lack of a quorum when the house is sitting, the Chair must count the members present and, if there is no quorum, the procedure is as follows:

- (a) the bells are rung with the doors unlocked ...

I also refer to chapter 23 of *Rulings from the Chair*, which refers to a ruling by Acting Speaker Morris as follows:

Exercising discretion not to ring the bells. Where a quorum had been called and a number of other quorums had already been called that day, the Chair exercised discretion in accordance with previous rulings not to ring the bells.

Yesterday I called the esteemed Deputy Speaker’s attention to the state of the house. I note that up to that point only one quorum had been called during the day, and that quorum had been called, in my estimation, at least 45 minutes prior to my calling the Chair’s attention to the state of the house.

I seek your guidance, Speaker, as to what would constitute ‘a number’ of quorums already being called during the day, whether a second quorum called in a day would be ruled out of order or whether the Chair would in future exercise his discretion to call a quorum. At what point would the Chair rule that an excessive number of quorums had been called, given the fact that yesterday only two quorums had been called for that day?

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, obviously you will review what happened yesterday and report back accordingly, but I would urge the member for Burwood to perhaps be more cautious in the future as he has just exposed the tactics of the opposition in the Parliament, which are to block and frustrate the government’s legislative agenda through repeated callings for quorums. There were a significant number of members in the Parliament yesterday, yet the opposition chose to call a quorum in the afternoon. I think it is quite right for the Deputy Speaker to use his discretion in that way. I think he applied his discretion appropriately.

The member for Burwood has just exposed, in the first week of Parliament, the tactics that are going to be used by the opposition. Members opposite are not serious

about the passage of legislation; they would rather block the passage of legislation that is going to create jobs and opportunities in Victoria. The opposition prefers to undertake parliamentary theatrics, like it is doing in the upper house and here, instead of being serious about the legislative program of this place.

Mr Clark — On the point of order, Speaker, I support the honourable member for Burwood. It is a longstanding expectation and requirement that a quorum be present in the chamber and that a quorum be formed when attention is drawn to the lack of a quorum. It is a bit rich for the Leader of the House to be complaining about this matter, because I am sure when she was in opposition she would have been arguing that it is the responsibility of the government to form a quorum by doing its job and being present in the house when matters are being debated. It has been a longstanding practice that if members of the government or members of the house more generally consistently fail in that responsibility, the Chair’s attention can be drawn to the state of the house.

On the occasion yesterday which the honourable member referred to there was a second drawing of the Chair’s attention to the state of the house some considerable amount of time after the first call for a quorum. Clearly it is a question of discretion and judgement, and there are a series of rulings set out on page 168 of *Rulings from the Chair*. I think the accommodation that has been arrived at by evolution over recent parliaments has been a relatively sensible one. It is not something that is done frivolously, persistently or disruptively, but if it is clear that after an elapsed time the Parliament has failed to present a quorum, attention can be drawn to that fact.

I submit to you, Speaker, that the ruling by the Deputy Speaker yesterday, with respect to the Deputy Speaker, was taking the Chair’s discretion in this regard far beyond what has occurred previously. I submit to you that regarding what happened yesterday, Speaker, you perhaps get some information about practices that have been followed in previous times and give some guidance to the house as to how these provisions should operate.

The SPEAKER — Order! I will review this matter, the point of order made by the member for Burwood and the points of order made by other members. I will have a discussion with our very able Deputy Speaker and get back to the house.

NOTICES OF MOTION**Members having given notices of motion:**

The SPEAKER — Order! I am advised that we did not receive the second and third notices of motion by the member for Melbourne, so we cannot proceed with them.

PETITIONS**Following petition presented to house:****Hunter–Monbulk roads, Mount Evelyn**

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of residents of the Yarra Ranges draws the attention of the Legislative Assembly to the high number of crashes on a sweeping bend near the intersection of Hunter and Monbulk roads, Mount Evelyn, which recently claimed the life of a young probationary driver.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly investigate and install anything necessary to reduce the risk of further fatal or serious crashes on this dangerous section of road.

By Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) (380 signatures).

Tabled.

Ordered that petition be considered next day on motion of Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn).

PARTNERSHIPS VICTORIA**Ravenhall prison project**

Mr NOONAN (Minister for Corrections), by leave, presented project summary.

Tabled.

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE**Statute Law Repeals Bill 2014**

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) presented report, together with appendix.

Tabled.

Ordered to be published.

COUNTY COURT OF VICTORIA**Report 2013–14**

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) presented report by command of the Governor.

Tabled.

DOCUMENTS**Tabled by Clerk:**

Auditor-General:

Portfolio Departments and Associated Entities: Results of the 2013–14 Audits — Ordered to be published

Water Entities: Results of the 2013–14 Audits — Ordered to be published

Ombudsman — Investigation into an incident of alleged excessive force used by authorised officers, together with a DVD — Report ordered to be published.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Adjournment**

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until Tuesday, 24 February 2015.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS**Nagambie ambulance services**

Ms RYAN (Euroa) — I rise to place on record the dire need for a permanent ambulance presence in Nagambie. The increasing urgency of the town's situation was highlighted earlier this year when a boat exploded, injuring seven people, including six children. The youngest of the children, a four-year-old boy, suffered burns to his face, while a man suffered burns to his entire body and had to be airlifted to the Alfred hospital.

Nagambie is a growing community and over five months of the year the town's population swells dramatically. Since 2004 the town has been serviced by a dedicated community emergency response team — an interim measure designed to precede a dedicated ambulance service. Many in the community have told of how they owe their lives to the amazing efforts of those volunteers. But despite a concerted recruiting

effort, the number of volunteers has dwindled from 30 to 11.

Before the election the then shadow Minister for Regional and Rural Development indicated that Labor would watch any announcement by the coalition with interest. While Labor may have been interested and it may have made promises to fix the so-called ambulance crisis, it has not cared enough to fix the crisis in Nagambie. The coalition committed to locate two paramedics in Nagambie as well as an ambulance community officer. Regrettably, no such commitment was forthcoming from Labor. I urge the Labor government to meet with the Nagambie Ambulance Service Community Alliance — a group of local residents that has sought to find a constructive solution to this problem.

Australia Day

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water) — It is with pleasure that I take this opportunity to congratulate a number of people who have received 2015 Australia Day honours.

Firstly, three people from the electorate of Bellarine received the Medal of the Order of Australia: Pamela Kinsman for her service to young people, Brian Jenkins for his lifetime service to the print media and the community, and Mike Jackson for his contribution to the performing arts.

I also congratulate two other people whom I have had the personal pleasure of working with over many years in the wider Geelong region. Frank Costa received a very much deserved Officer of the Order of Australia award for his distinguished services to the community of Geelong, while Ross Synot received a Medal of the Order of Australia for his contribution to sport and his community.

Andy Gillham and Rachel Dawkins

Ms NEVILLE — In my ministerial capacity I congratulate Andy Gillham of Traralgon and Rachel Dawkins of Valencia Creek on receiving the Australian Fire Service Medal for their contributions to emergency services work and management.

Australia Day

Ms NEVILLE — Finally, I would also like to congratulate the recipients of the Borough of Queenscliffe Australia Day awards. Citizen of the Year went to Jane Wager, someone with whom I have had the pleasure of working for many years. The award is very much deserved. Huw Joyce was awarded the

Young Citizen of the Year. Sea All Dolphin Swims, the 1st Queenscliff Sea Scouts, and the Queenscliff Bowling, Tennis & Croquet Association also received awards. I once again congratulate all these people and organisations and thank them for the wonderful contributions they have made.

Alpine National Park cattle grazing

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) — It was a pleasure to meet with the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria recently and discuss the Wonnangatta Agreement. I challenge the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water to read the contract that the Andrews government has torn up on ideology rather than allowing the science to be completed. The contract not only looked at bushfires and fuel reduction but allowed our culture and heritage to live on. It also allowed Aboriginal people to pass on their thousands of years of experience on the land.

Wonnangatta has a proud history that dates back well and truly before white settlement — a history of true land management that protected and encouraged wildlife at a time when the area abounded with native flora and fauna. The Gunaikurnai understand that the land management skills of thousands of years ago will eventually be gone unless contracts like this to manage the land are continued. In the US state of New Mexico traditional owners, government departments and cowboys work in collaboration for the best outcomes. Why can the Andrews government not see this? We have much to learn about land management from the Indigenous people. The contract was ensuring that this knowledge was not lost to academic desktop studies from university graduates who have never really experienced life in the high country.

The presence of mountain cattlemen and cattle in the high country is about more than just fuel reduction; they are a living and breathing part of our heritage. The symbolic use of the movie *The Man from Snowy River* at the opening ceremony of the Sydney Olympic Games reflected our proud history. When the minister and many opposite talk about protecting our heritage and culture, they are talking about saving Craig's Hut. When we on this side talk about saving our culture and heritage, we are talking about saving Craig.

Kostas Nikolopoulos

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) — I rise to pay tribute to a great Victorian and a great Australian, Kostas Nikolopoulos, who passed away last month after a short illness. Kostas was an outstanding

contributor to public affairs and the Greek-Australian community. He always put the community first.

Kostas arrived in Australia on the same ship as my parents in 1971, and he has been a part of my life since I was young. He worked for SBS and the *Neos Kosmos* newspaper for over 35 years, and during that time he interviewed countless politicians, dignitaries and regular everyday people. Kostas brought life to his stories, and he was at his best promoting the wonderful cultural contributions that Greek Australians have made to our community.

As a journalist of the highest integrity, Kostas has effectively documented the life and times of the Greek-Australian community over the last four decades. Conversely, his work in recording the diverse Australian culture and bringing it to Greeks in their native language has helped forge closer community ties.

I know how well regarded Kostas was across both sides of politics, in the community and in every other aspect of his life. He had amazing intelligence and a genuine respect.

Personally, he provided me with great advice and counsel. The warmth and friendship he extended to me and my family was truly incredible. Kostas was a remarkable human being, and his work for our community is immeasurable.

I pay my deepest sympathies to his family — to his son, Niko, and his wife, Effie — but also to the broader community who loved Kostas so much.

Cr David Cooper

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — The Knox community recently lost a great soul with the sudden passing of Knox City Council councillor and former mayor David Cooper. Cr Cooper was a passionate advocate for the people of Knox, particularly those in Wantirna South. I was privileged to work alongside Cr Cooper during my time as a Knox councillor, and I know his dedication and passion for the Knox community will be sorely missed. I extend my sincere condolences to his wife, Tracy, and the Cooper family at this difficult time.

Australia Day

Mr WAKELING — I was privileged to attend the Knox City Council Australia Day awards on Australia Day. I extend my congratulations to the many deserving award winners and thank them on behalf of

the Knox community for their dedication to our community.

Citizen of the Year was awarded to Stephen Barrington, pastor at the Foothills Community Church. Young Citizen of the Year was awarded to Nathan Rose of the 2nd Wantirna Scout Group. Volunteer of the Year was awarded to Phillip Thorne, who is involved with the Knox Little Athletics Centre. The Local Heroes were named as Graham Hansen of the Knox Historical Society and Harley Mackie, who is a student at Wantirna College.

I would also like to congratulate award nominees Shaun Beovich, Graham Billing, Judi Rosevear and Gordon Veerasawmy, along with Hurtle Lupton, who is a former member of this house.

Mark Conner

Mr WAKELING — I extend my sincere congratulations to senior minister Mark Conner of the CityLife Church in Wantirna South, who recently celebrated 20 years in his role with the church. It is the biggest church in Melbourne's eastern suburbs.

Knox Festival of Tennis

Mr WAKELING — I congratulate all 14 tennis clubs that recently participated in the Knox Festival of Tennis open day. It was a fantastic event, and I had the privilege, with my family, to attend the Windermere, Mountain Gate and Knox Gardens tennis clubs. My congratulations go to all involved.

Alzheimer's disease

Ms THOMSON (Footscray) — Douтта Galla Aged Services operates in my electorate and also in the local government areas of Brimbank, Moonee Valley, Melbourne and Greater Shepparton. It has raised concerns with me through the chair of its board of directors, Bruce Mildenhall, about the outrageous decision by the federal government to cut services to Alzheimer's by \$100 million and to replace that with a measly \$54 million to provide Alzheimer's advice services. This is not what these services require.

I will acknowledge some statistics from Alzheimer's Australia that were provided to me by Bruce Mildenhall. Each week there are more than 1800 new cases of dementia in Australia — approximately 1 new case every 6 minutes, and that is expected to grow to 7400 new cases each week by 2050.

The \$54 million is for an advice service, but there are plenty of organisations already providing advice in

relation to Alzheimer's. The \$100 million funded real services to assist people coping with Alzheimer's. I urge the federal government to refund it.

West Wimmera Country Women's Association

Ms KEALY (Lowan) — I recently attended the West Wimmera Country Women's Association (CWA) annual general meeting. Representatives from the branches of Boorang, Drung South, Dimboola, Horsham, Horsham Evening, May Branch Horsham, Nhill Twilight, Kaniva and Serviceton shared stories of their commitment to building a strong network of country women. Their support of community is epitomised by their generous and timely donations to the local area following the Grampians fires of 2014.

I congratulate and thank the hardworking women of the West Wimmera CWA for their commitment to improving the lives of women in rural and regional Victoria and for the loyal support they provide to our local communities.

Teach for Australia

Ms KEALY — Teach for Australia recently celebrated the fifth anniversary of its partnership with schools in the Lowan electorate, including schools in Horsham, Warracknabeal and Dimboola, along with Murtoa College.

The impact of Teach for Australia in providing high-quality educators to rural and regional Victoria is significant. As an example, the Horsham College year 12 business studies and accounting class, which was taught by a Teach for Australia associate, achieved a score in the top 10 per cent of the state, with the overall average of students in the class being in the top 25 per cent. I congratulate Teach for Australia and the local partnership schools on providing this valuable pathway for professionals to transition to education. It is making a real difference in closing the gap on access to high-quality education in rural and regional Victoria.

Nhill Karen community

Ms KEALY — The Nhill Karen community recently celebrated Karen new year, showcasing the fantastic culture and amazing spirit of the Karen people. Over 500 community members were treated to entertainment, including storytelling, traditional singing and dancing, including the very impressive bamboo dance. Following the ceremony a delicious banquet prepared by the Karen community was enjoyed by all. I thank the Karen people for all they have added to the rich culture and spirit of community in Nhill.

Hon. Lynne Janice Kosky

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — I rise to add my voice to those that have already paid tribute to the Honourable Lynne Janice Kosky, whose passing is so keenly felt by many of us in this chamber. As one of my constituents, former school principal and Daylesford Secondary College school council president Lorraine Hayes, said, Lynne was the best education minister we have ever had.

I worked for Lynne in her private office and later as a public servant with responsibility for coordinating consultation for the development of the *Blueprint for Government Schools*. The blueprint, released in 2003, was groundbreaking not only for the reforms it initiated — including the introduction of the Victorian essential learning standards to replace the inflexible curriculum and standards framework, the Student Resource Package to replace the cumbersome and opaque School Global Budget, and a host of initiatives to build school leadership capacity and classroom practice — but also for the way that it was developed in full consultation with principals, teachers, parents and students through the Better Schools website. It is because of this type of innovation and preparedness to reach out and engage with the teaching profession, parents and students that Lynne is so well respected and well remembered by Victoria's education community.

On behalf of Lynne's first team of advisors — those who were there in 1999 — Jen McKinley and Steve Herbert in the other place, I pay tribute to Lynne's incredible reformist zeal.

Parkmore Primary School

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) — Last week I had the great pleasure of attending Parkmore Primary School to present school leadership badges and afterwards attend a welcome morning tea. I congratulate all the school leaders on their appointments and wish them and their fellow students, school principal Mr Andrew Popov and all the school staff well for the 2015 year.

St James Primary School

Mr ANGUS — Earlier this week I had the great pleasure of attending St James Primary School in my electorate to present badges to the school leaders, including school captains, house and other captains, student representative council members and year 6 leaders. I congratulate all the school leaders on their appointments and wish them and their fellow students, school principal Mr Andrew Mullaly and all the school staff well for the 2015 year, particularly following the

school community's difficult start to the year owing to the extensive storm damage suffered by the school last month.

East–west link

Mr ANGUS — The state Labor government stands condemned for its commitment to tear up the east–west link contract. This reckless and totally irresponsible act will have serious and ongoing consequences for all Victorians for years to come, not only in terms of the 3700 direct jobs that will be lost on this project but also because of the message it sends to the business community, both local and international.

What business or consortium in the world would, from now on, dare to enter into a perfectly legitimate and binding contract with the state of Victoria? With the overarching threat of a Labor government tearing up a contract just because it does not like the project it covers, no organisation would want to do business with the Victorian government. The damage to Victoria's international reputation will be untold and will undoubtedly result in lost future opportunities and jobs for Victorians.

The international business reputation of Victoria has been trashed by an incoming Labor government within weeks of it being elected. The Labor government should recognise its mistake and proceed with the east–west link project — a project that will provide enormous benefits to the state, including to residents in my electorate of Forest Hill.

John Martin McQuilten

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — Today I want to reflect on the passing of John McQuilten, MLC, a former upper house member for Ballarat Province, on 2 January 2014. John was a person of great energy, great love and great camaraderie and a person with whom I spent many hours on the back balcony having a lovely drink. He was very much a person who made you feel special, a person who was always optimistic and a person who was so generous in his assessment of everyone else.

John was also a pioneer of winemaking in the Maryborough region and the surrounding areas. He was also a great lover of poetry, and I want to read out one of his poems. It is called *The Dead Tree*:

The dead tree stands
Silent
Amongst the living
A testament to a life
That was

A silent witness to the wind
The rain
The inevitability

Lastly, he was a loving husband to Rosa; the father of two beautiful men, Martin and Gordon; and a grandpa to Ngatia. I will miss him greatly.

Shepparton rail services

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — A major platform of my election campaign was to call for effective passenger rail services for the Shepparton district. Shepparton remains the only major regional centre that lacks the infrastructure to connect to high-speed rail. The technology is available to connect Shepparton to Melbourne in just under 2 hours, just as our neighbours in marginal seats are connected.

We need a regular, reliable and rapid train service. We know the benefits that it will bring to our community; we have seen the benefits it has brought to towns such as Bendigo, Ballarat Geelong and Traralgon. Shepparton currently has 4 passenger rail services to and from Melbourne each weekday, while Bendigo has 20. Our fourth train service was introduced one month before the election. It leaves Shepparton at 5.15 a.m. This alone is a poor response to what has been identified as a need of our area for years.

SheppRAILS, a local community group, was established in 2011 calling for better train services and the investment in infrastructure needed to make this happen. After years in the wilderness, when it comes to substantial infrastructure spending the people of the Shepparton electorate have stood up and are demanding a better deal. They are demanding equity in infrastructure spending. We do not need more surveys, more reference groups, more inquiries or more reasons for delay. The people of the Shepparton electorate are tired of taking the scraps from the table. There have been years of inaction. I am pleased to see that other local politicians are now getting on board and starting to advocate for improved rail services, although I wonder where they have been until now. The people of my electorate are seeking significant infrastructure investment. I invite the Premier and the Minister for Public Transport to visit my electorate.

Harry Gordon

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) — Australian journalism has lost a lion with the death of Harry Gordon. War correspondent, Olympic historian, gifted journalist and author, Harry Gordon always delivered insight and empathy. Harry was eloquent and inspirational. He could be critical, but he would make

his point without being cruel. He brought intellectual curiosity and enduring enthusiasm. Noted author and journalist Les Carlyon put it succinctly: ‘Harry was 89 going on 17’. As editor of the *Sun*, Harry launched the groundbreaking campaign to Declare War on 1034 when Victoria’s road toll topped 1000 in 1969. The campaign was seminal in Victoria’s international leadership in reducing generations of road deaths and trauma, with road deaths having since been cut by two-thirds.

At Harry’s memorial service, fittingly at his beloved MCG, Carlyon identified Harry Gordon’s words in newspapers and books as his ‘true legacy’ because of the way they touched the readers. He described John Landy extending his hand to help a fallen Ron Clarke as ‘a senseless piece of chivalry, but it was one of the finest actions in the history of sport’. Of the 1956 Olympics in Melbourne he said:

... it was as if the city had been brushed by a certain magic. Nothing before or since ... has evoked such sheer emotional involvement from the whole community.

I pass on my condolences to Harry’s friends, who would more than fill the MCG, and his family, especially his son, Michael, who has followed his father’s career path in his own inimitable style. Vale Harry.

Caulfield Park Sports Club

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) — It was a great pleasure to welcome to players and guests to Caulfield on 1 February for the opening ceremony of the Petanque Federation of Australia’s international Australian open doubles tournament. I was joined by the president of the federation, Joe Corcoran, and the president of the Caulfield Park Sports Club, Brian Rosenberg, at what was a great event at the club. The tournament took place on the fantastic new petanque piste, which I am proud to say was funded as part of a \$350 000 investment by the previous coalition government. It is a great privilege to be the member for Caulfield, particularly as Caulfield is home to community organisations such as the Caulfield Park Sports Club and its 270-plus members and because it is such a warm, social and active community.

New Zealand RSL sub-branch

Mr SOUTHWICK — On 1 February I had the pleasure of visiting the Caulfield RSL to attend the New Zealand RSL sub-branch annual Waitangi Day celebration with the New Zealand Consul General, Daniel Taylor. The day started with a formal Maori greeting followed by the haka. I wish to thank Danny

Allen, the president of the New Zealand RSL sub-branch; Sandra Ash, the secretary; and Colin Bradley, the event organiser, for a great day.

Pride March

Mr SOUTHWICK — It was a pleasure to join many other Victorians, colleagues and Caulfield youth movement members on Sunday, 1 February, at the annual Pride March. I congratulate Bryce Kenny, the head of politics and activism at Habonim Dror Melbourne, for his efforts in organising a strong delegation from Habo, in which I was a proud participant. I would also like to congratulate Michael Barnett for his role in coordinating the attendance of the group. Although some in the progressive youth movements such as Habonim Dror Melbourne, Hashomer Hatzair Australia, Netzer and SKIF, who were all there on the day, may not share all my Liberal values, I can assure them that as a local member I am always prepared to listen, support and encourage their community involvement.

Luke Batty

Ms RICHARDSON (Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence) — A year ago today we were all horrified to learn of the tragic death of a young boy in Melbourne’s south-east. We learnt that while attending cricket practice he had been fatally attacked by someone he knew, and someone he loved. Today we remember Luke Batty. Luke was a bright light in many lives. He was sensitive and loving; a growing boy who adored his sport. He was a good kid, and in the photos of his freckled, golden-haired youth, we saw someone familiar. We all mourned him and brooded over the senseless nature of his death. And while nothing we can say or do will bring him back, Luke’s death made us all pause and reflect.

Through this tragedy we have come to know his mother, Rosie, a courageous woman who amidst her own grief has managed to give a voice to the voiceless. I have had the honour of working with Rosie as we prepare for our royal commission into family violence, and talking with someone as remarkable as her brings everything into sharp focus.

I must say the hardest part of meeting Rosie face to face was knowing that there were countless more silenced women and children standing behind her clear and uncompromising voice. We can do more, and we must. We cannot promise that every woman and child will be safe in our society, but we must try. We owe it to Luke.

Australia Day

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — I rise to pay tribute to those everyday heroes who make our communities strong and whom we recognise on Australia Day. There are a number of award winners within my electorate, some of whom I will pay tribute to this morning. Ivana Blekic was our Young Citizen of the Year at Irymple. I was one of the guest speakers, and I enjoyed the breakfast put on by the Irymple Lions Club. Ivana's contribution has been to make it fashionable for young people to be involved in community service. I pay tribute to Irymple's Citizens of the Year, Richard Ballard, for his long service to the Irymple Country Fire Authority and other community organisations, and Owen Lloyd, a long-time horticulturalist and community leader.

In Merbein Vaughan Stirrat was the Senior Citizen of the Year. Those who know Vaughan know she has taught music to numerous generations, directed everything from school plays to major concerts and made a significant contribution to culture in our community. Gloria Wall, Merbein's Citizen of the Year, is one of those go-to people — if you want something done, see a busy person. Gloria is that person.

Michael Hellwege, Mildura's Citizen of the Year, is the local State Emergency Service controller and has looked after our community in some extremely difficult periods. That is when it counts most, when the chips are down, and these people coordinate volunteers to look after the community.

Everywhere in my electorate on Australia Day there were people having barbecues and celebrating our nation and local life.

Frankston Waterfront Festival

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) — I rise to draw attention to the wonderful event that Frankston City Council arranges every year called the Frankston Waterfront Festival. It is our city's annual celebration of this iconic space, bayside location and relaxed lifestyle. It includes activities such as paddleboarding, skimboarding, dancing and bands. Over two exciting days the festival brings family and friends together, as well as bringing lots of tourists to Frankston. I commend the Frankston City Council for its commitment to this successful event, which puts Frankston on display to the wider community as the fun, friendly bayside city that it is. I also invite my parliamentary colleagues from both sides of the house to attend next year and enjoy this weekend along with thousands of other people.

Frankston transit precinct

Mr EDBROOKE — The Frankston Waterfront Festival was also a great opportunity to discuss the Frankston transit precinct project with Frankston community members, who are very excited about and look forward to being part of the development process.

Hastings electorate emergency services

Mr BURGESS (Hastings) — In just a few days in early January my electorate was hit by a raging fire and then a wild storm. On 3 January a fire destroyed 120 hectares of Hastings, and only days later a severe storm struck Somerville, Tyabb and surrounding communities, causing flooding, damaging buildings and bringing trees down onto roads, cars and homes. Around 300 firefighters fought the Hastings blaze, halting its run so close to homes that it melted curtains and singed furniture.

The fire destroyed a timber yard, severely damaged Warringine Reserve and parts of the Hastings foreshore boardwalk and was on the brink of destroying hundreds of homes in Hastings and Crib Point. I witnessed the devastation of the fire as well as the incredible heroics of my community's local Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteers when I visited the area soon after.

On 7 January at least 60 buildings were damaged and more than 200 homes lost power following wild weather that struck the Somerville and Tyabb areas. The historic Somerville Mechanics Institute Hall suffered so much damage it is still under repair.

On behalf of the community I commend our local CFA, State Emergency Service and police and a variety of volunteers for their brave and tireless work and for yet again putting themselves between our community and devastation.

Cranbourne South Primary School

Mr BURGESS — I ask the Minister for Education to visit the Cranbourne South community and remove the sentence he placed on its primary school shortly before last year's election. The minister announced that a Labor government would close the school, forcing families to send their children to a school in another community. The coalition committed to providing \$600 000 to rectify the school's many maintenance issues, in particular the shocking condition of the toilet facilities, and to begin the work required to build a new school at Botanic Ridge. A community's school is too important to play politics with.

Wendy Cahill

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) — I rise today to acknowledge the exceptional achievement of Pascoe Vale constituent Dr Wendy Cahill. On Australia Day Dr Cahill was made a Member of the Order of Australia in recognition of her outstanding service to education, professional standards development and improved outcomes for students and their teachers. Dr Cahill received her award for her service to education through the Catholic Education Office.

Dr Cahill worked as principal of St Thomas More Primary School in Hadfield, which is in the electorate of Pascoe Vale. She has been recognised for her work as deputy chair for primary schools in the Catholic Education Office and as head of the professional development program for Catholic schools. Dr Cahill was head of iNet Australia, an organisation which focuses on linking Australian principals with fellow educators across the globe. She has recently returned to familiar terrain at the University of Melbourne as a senior fellow at the faculty of education. Dr Cahill was previously the director of academic leadership at the University of Melbourne, a position that saw her work closely with deans and heads of department to deliver a suite of programs aimed at improving the university's academic standards and offerings.

Dr Cahill has a distinguished career in education. She has a great depth of expertise, and many hundreds of students and families, both in our community of Pascoe Vale and beyond, have been the beneficiaries of her profound commitment to ensuring that students and staff are assisted and supported in their educational endeavours. It is a particularly pertinent time for this Parliament to note the achievements of Dr Cahill. The Labor government has introduced the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Funding of Non-Government Schools) Bill 2014. Labor will legislate for 25 per cent linked recurrent funding for Catholic schools.

Ripon electorate drought relief

Ms STALEY (Ripon) — Today I want to talk about drought in the electorate of Ripon. One of my constituents, Stephen Poole of Berrimal, is typical. He was featured in the *Herald Sun* yesterday standing in dams that are now only dustbowls as a result of a consecutive number of the driest years on record. He tells me, 'Frosting coupled with lack of rain has been a double whammy. There's never been anything like it'. This is a creeping, silent drought, coming on the back of a very promising start to the season last April. It is truly terrible throughout much of my electorate and is

made worse by new rules that preclude many from access to normal drought assistance.

There is a major anomaly in drought relief assessment. The maps used to define a 20-year rainfall deficit event alter with rainfall on a monthly basis. This creates a serious problem for Victorian croppers like those in Ripon. If it rains in December or summer, all it does is cause the weeds to grow. No crops are in the ground then. Yet this rain has been enough to knock some out of eligibility for drought relief. For Victorian grain growers like myself, the only rain that counts is rain that falls from April through to October. As Victorian Farmers Federation president Peter Tuohy told me yesterday, 'We need to combine weather maps with on-ground circumstances'. I call on the government to join my advocacy for a change in drought relief assessment to consider Victoria's specific circumstances.

Lost Dogs Home

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — I would like to acknowledge the great work done by Kae Norman and Di McNiff from Rescued with Love, people who are committed to improving animal safety. I know this issue is very important to the member for Pascoe Vale. I recently attended a candlelight vigil at the Lost Dogs Home and met with many people who are deeply concerned about the high kill rates at the Lost Dogs Home. Numerous people came up to me repeatedly during the vigil to express their concerns about the plight of the animals that end up at the Lost Dogs Home.

Kae has played a pivotal role in the last decade addressing animal welfare at the Lost Dogs Home, and Kae and all those present at the candlelight vigil were obviously delighted when the Minister for Agriculture announced an investigation into the Lost Dogs Home. Now that investigation is ongoing and we are awaiting the findings. But I did want to make an observation that Kae and Di's passion for animal welfare is unsurpassed, and I remain hopeful that through tackling the scourge of puppy farms and by working together collaboratively we might be able to ensure that those animals that find themselves in animal shelters receive the very best of care while they are waiting to be rehomed.

Ashwood School

Mr WATT (Burwood) — During the last election the then shadow minister, now Minister for Education, talked about Victoria being the education state. It appears to me that the current government and former opposition forgot to cast an eye over the electorate of

Burwood. One of the schools in my electorate in need of assistance is Ashwood School, a school with an array of students with varying needs. The school's facilities do not meet modern standards, so much so that the school is now using facilities outside the school premises. Local business has provided space in a warehouse so that some students can attend class there. It has become such an issue for the school. How can students expect to get a decent learning outcome when they do not have decent funding for their school? The former coalition government committed \$1 million to the school for an upgrade so the school could have modern facilities for students with special needs. I call on the government to look after the most vulnerable in our community, particularly those in need in the electorate of Burwood, the students of Ashwood School.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Sessional orders

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Ryall) — Order! Before I call the Leader of the House to speak to the motion, I will make a statement.

Because the motion is long, and there may be amendments to it, the Speaker has decided, with the concurrence of the house, that we will treat the debate like a bill being considered in detail. If members have amendments to move, the Speaker asks them to announce that at the start of the overall debate and request that they be circulated, as is the case for circulating amendments during a second-reading debate. Members with amendments will then need to formally move the amendments when speaking to the motion, but all members may speak to the motion and amendments once circulated.

After the general debate has been concluded, the house will deal with each proposed sessional order. As each is called on, the Chair will put the question for any relevant amendment moved to the motion. The Chair will then put the question for each of the sessional orders moved by the Leader of the House. When all the orders have been called, considered and dealt with, the Chair will put the appropriate question, 'That the motion be agreed to' or 'That the motion as amended be agreed to'. I invite members to stand, and their amendments will be circulated.

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — I advise the house of amendments to the motion and request that they be circulated.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — I advise the house of amendments to the motion and request that they be circulated.

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) — I advise the house of amendments to the motion and request that they be circulated.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I now call on the Leader of the House to move and speak to the motion and move her amendments.

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — I move:

That the following sessional orders be adopted, to come into operation with immediate effect:

1. Days and times of meeting

Unless otherwise ordered, the house will meet each Tuesday at 12.00 p.m., and each Wednesday and Thursday at 9.30 a.m.

2. Incorporation of statements of compatibility

A statement of compatibility tabled under section 28 of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 will be incorporated in *Hansard*, without leave being required.

3. Interruption of business for adjournment

Standing order 32 be suspended and the following to apply:

(1) Subject to paragraphs (2) and (3), the Speaker will interrupt the business before the house at:

(a) 7.00 p.m. each sitting Tuesday and Wednesday;

(b) 5.00 p.m. on any other sitting day.

(2) If a division is taking place when the time for the interruption arises, the division will be completed and the result announced. If the division is on a closure motion, and the motion is agreed to, the question or questions then required to be put to close the issue before the house will also be dealt with. The Speaker will then interrupt business.

(3) If the time for the interruption arises:

(a) at the same time as the completion time set by the government business program; or

(b) after the interruption for the completion time of the government business program, but before all business on the program has been dealt with —

all business on the government business program will be completed first. The Speaker will then interrupt business for the adjournment.

- (4) After the interruption:
- (a) before a motion for the adjournment is proposed by the Speaker, a minister may move that the sitting be continued. That motion must be put immediately without amendment or debate. If it is agreed to, the house will resume debate at the point at which it had been interrupted; or
- (b) if a motion is not moved, the Speaker will immediately propose the question 'That the house now adjourns'. Any business under discussion and any other business not concluded at the time of the adjournment will be listed on the notice paper for the next sitting day. Any member speaking at the time of the interruption may, when debate resumes, continue his or her speech.
4. Condolence motions
- Where a condolence motion occurs under standing order 42(1)(a), the house may adjourn for a period of 1 hour at the conclusion of the motion.
5. Who may ask oral questions without notice
- Only non-government members may ask questions without notice under standing order 55.
6. Supplementary questions without notice
- (1) At the conclusion of each answer to an oral question without notice, the questioning member may ask the responding minister a supplementary question to elucidate or clarify the answer.
- (2) Supplementary questions must actually and accurately relate to the original question and must relate to or arise from the answer.
7. Ministers statements
- After each oral question without notice and any related supplementary questions, any minister may seek the call to make a statement of up to 2 minutes to advise the house of new government initiatives, projects and achievements.
8. Time limits on answers under standing order 55 and sessional order
- The time limit for the answer to each oral question is 3 minutes, and for the answer to each supplementary question is 1 minute.
9. Constituency questions
- (1) At the conclusion of oral questions without notice and ministers statements, five government members and five non-government members may ask ministers oral questions relating to constituency matters.
- (2) Replies to constituency questions must be given in writing within 30 days by delivering a reply to the Clerk. A copy must be given to the member who asked the question, and printed in *Hansard*.
10. Duration of question time
- Standing order 55(2) is suspended and the following to apply:
- Question time will last until five oral questions and related supplementary questions have been answered, and up to five ministers' statements have been made.
11. Content of answers
- (1) Standing order 58(1)(a) be suspended and all answers to questions must be direct, factual, succinct and relevant.
- (2) The Speaker may determine that an answer to an oral question without notice or supplementary oral question is not responsive to the question, and may accordingly direct the minister to provide a written response to the question and lodge it with the Speaker by 2.00 p.m. on the next sitting day. A copy of any written response provided under this sessional order must be given to the member who asked the question and printed in *Hansard*.
- (3) The Speaker will determine the adequacy of a written response to a question provided under this sessional order. The Speaker may determine that a written response does not appropriately answer the question and may direct that the minister provide another written response by 2.00 p.m. the next sitting day. The Speaker will forward the written response to the member who asked the question, and a copy printed in *Hansard*.
12. Answers to questions on notice
- A reply to a question on notice delivered to the Clerk under standing order 54(3) must be submitted within 30 days.
13. Notices of motion
- Standing orders 140(1) and 141 be suspended and the following to apply:
- (1) A member may only move a motion to discuss a subject if he or she has given notice of that motion on a previous sitting day.
- (2) Copies of all notices, whether to be given verbally or in writing, must be provided to the clerks at the table before notices are called on by the Speaker.
- (3) All notices given by ministers must be verbal.
- (4) Verbal notices must be read to the house. They can only be given before the house proceeds to the business of the day as set out in the notice paper.
- (5) All notices, except notices given under paragraph (6) given by members who are not ministers, must be given in writing. Members may give notice by lodging a copy with the clerks in accordance with paragraph (2).

- (6) A motion by a member expressing no confidence in the Premier and ministers, in the terms set out in section 8A of the Constitution Act 1975, may only be given verbally or, where a member seeks to move the motion during formal business by leave, and leave is refused, the member may give notice of that motion.
- (7) The Clerk must notify the Speaker of a notice of a motion by a member to disallow a statutory rule to which standing order 151 applies, and the Speaker will report details to the house at the first convenient opportunity.

14. Responses to adjournment matters

If the minister responsible is not present in the house to respond to issues raised by members under standing order 33, the minister will provide a written response to the member who raised the matter within 30 days.

15. Second-reading speeches incorporated in *Hansard*

A second-reading speech for a bill being introduced by a member or minister will be incorporated into *Hansard* at the request of the member or minister, with the following exceptions:

- (1) Where the speech contains a statement under section 85(5)(c) of the Constitution Act 1975, that statement must be delivered verbally to the house.
- (2) Where a speech contains a statement under section 31(1)(c) of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 must be delivered verbally to the house.

16. Time limit for lead speakers

For the purposes of standing order 131, and subject to any agreement to the contrary, additional time provided for the lead speaker of any other party does not apply where such a party has advised the Speaker that it is in a coalition arrangement with another party.'

The people of Victoria expect us in this place to work very hard for them. They look to this Parliament to be a functioning place, a place where we get business done, where we get legislation debated and passed, constituency matters raised, issues considered. Most importantly, they look to see that we are a properly functioning Parliament. This approach was sorely lacking over the past four years, with this place being characterised under the former failed Liberal-Nationals government as a place of chaos and crisis.

The Andrews Labor government wants to make changes to help restore trust and respect in our Parliament. We believe Parliament should be the home of democracy and honesty. Under the Liberals and The Nationals, some days were like episodes of *Keystone Cops*, and some days it was like they were being bad impersonators of *House of Cards*.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms ALLAN — Absolutely! It was just such a shambles. Under the Andrews Labor government we want to raise the standards of behaviour. We want to restore faith in our Parliament. We also want the operation of Parliament to be more efficient and focused on outcomes and on delivering for the people of Victoria. That is at the heart of the sessional order changes. We made commitments before the November 2014 election to make a range of changes to the sessional orders and the standing orders. This is the first tranche of delivering on those commitments. I gave notice of this motion on the very first day of this Parliament so we could have these changes enacted as soon as possible to make sure we can get on with lifting the standards of this place, restoring decency, restoring honesty and getting rid of the chaos and the circus of the last four years.

I now turn to the changes that are proposed in the motion and the amendments I have circulated. I will not go through them all line by line. I will focus on some of the more significant changes that we are proposing to the sessional orders.

I start with question time. We are making significant changes to question time because, as one former commentator put it, question time in Parliament has become a farce. We all remember that comment from failed former Liberal Premier Ted Baillieu, the former member for Hawthorn. We all remember that he made the comment in the lead-up to the November 2010 state election. He said:

... I think any visitor to Parliament now would know that Dorothy Dixers are really a waste of time, and they will know that ministers never answer ...

He also said:

I believe the standing orders should be changed. I believe there should be widespread reform of Parliament in order to engage the community and in order for our democracy to work effectively.

We should not be surprised that, just as on so many other measures, so many other election commitments and so many other policy areas, the failed former Liberal-Nationals coalition did not, over its four years in government from 2010 to 2014, make any changes to bring about those commitments made by the former Liberal Premier. The coalition government failed to reform question time and it failed to abolish Dorothy Dixers, and it has taken an Andrews Labor government to do that. We are going to get on with it, as I said, at the earliest possible opportunity and make significant reforms to question time.

Our proposed sessional orders will remove the practice of Dorothy Dixers questions. That is something that should be welcomed, not only by the public but also by members in this place. Some of us have been here for a long time and some for a short time, but we know it is a procedure and a practice that does not add any value to the operation of Parliament. We will abolish Dorothy Dixers, but we will go one step further than that. In getting rid of Dorothy Dixers we are going to introduce supplementary questions, which is a practice that has been used in the Legislative Council, the Senate and other parliaments around the country for some time, and we will bring that reform into this place as well. Questions without notice will now only be the province of members of opposition parties, minor parties and Independents. The member will be able to ask their question, the minister will respond for 3 minutes and then the member will have the opportunity to ask a supplementary question, placing the government under further scrutiny and making the government even more accountable through the practice of question time. I would have thought this is something that most opposition members would welcome, but I think we are going to hear from the opposition a different view about how question time should operate.

Critically, we are also going to give the Speaker the power to declare that a minister has not answered a question. I do not want to reflect on the Chair, and I will not, but we have seen on occasions in the past, not under the previous Speaker but perhaps under some of her predecessors, that the standards put in place were just woeful. We want to make sure that the Speaker has the power to declare that a minister has not answered a question. That will be a challenge for us in government. It is not going to make our lives easier in any way; it is about making us accountable. It is about making the government of the day, from whatever side of Parliament or whatever side of politics, accountable.

Some of the further changes resulting from getting rid of Dorothy Dixers and making the government more accountable through question time include the introduction of ministerial statements, ensuring that the community and the Parliament have the opportunity to hear from ministers in a short update of no more than 2 minutes on current, important policy matters in their portfolio areas. Again, this will make sure that ministers are providing information to the Parliament and making them accountable to the community.

We also want to make sure that we are not removing the opportunity for members of Parliament — in this case, particularly government members — the right to raise issues relating to their constituents during question time, so we are introducing a new mechanism around

constituency questions. Ten questions will be set aside. Members will only be able to ask one question per day, in which they will be able to raise matters relating to their local communities, again enhancing and strengthening the voice of members of Parliament as representatives of their local communities and then requiring ministers to answer those questions within 30 days.

The other significant change that we are making to question time — and this is being brought about through the amendments that have just been circulated — is we are changing the time of day that question time is going to be held. As the amendments indicate, we are proposing that question time be held at midday on Tuesdays, and on Wednesdays and Thursdays we are proposing that question time be at 11.00 a.m.

When I first came into this place in 1999, the standing orders of the day had Parliament starting at 10 o'clock in the morning — a nice, leisurely start — and question time was the first item of business. It is in the hands of the house as to what time of day question time is going to be held. Some people might prefer the afternoon; some people might prefer the morning. This goes to the question of sitting hours, which I will touch on in a moment. We feel that now is the time to bring question time forward. It can address the matters of the day, which I am sure the opposition will be keen to press upon us — that is, if they have been able to organise themselves into some sort of collective being over there. We know that the Liberals and The Nationals are still sorting themselves out. If they can work themselves into some sort of collective being — —

Mr Walsh interjected.

Ms ALLAN — How is your car, Walshie? If they can get themselves together, question time will be at midday on Tuesdays and at 11.00 a.m. on Wednesdays and Thursdays. I think this is worth supporting — obviously I do; I have circulated the amendments in my name — and I would hope that the Liberals, The Nationals, the Greens and the Independent would also see that this is worth supporting.

This goes to the next point around making this Parliament a more modern and effective workplace, which goes to the other issue of changing the sitting hours of the Parliament through the sessional orders. We were here until quarter to 11 or 11 o'clock last night. I do not think that serves the Parliament well — —

Mr Walsh interjected.

Ms ALLAN — The member for Murray Plains ought to be very careful where he is going. He is not contributing to the debate at all so he might want to be quiet.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms ALLAN — I would not talk about your side letter. The sitting hours of this place need to be made more modern and efficient. It makes us better members of Parliament. It means the staff can operate more effectively. It does not help us and it does not help the communities we represent or the state of Victoria if we are here until 11 o'clock at night. It does not make for good decision-making practices. It certainly does not make for good behaviour on occasion, as we have seen displayed in the past.

I think this is again a reform that is well worth supporting. I would hope that members opposite would support it, because this is in effect a not dissimilar proposal to the one that was considered by the sitting hours committee, of which I was a member during the last Parliament. I would hope that those opposite would support these changes to sitting hours.

There is no reduction in debating time made through these changes. Parliament starting earlier on a Tuesday, sitting through the day and adjourning at 7.00 p.m. on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and at 5.00 p.m. on Thursdays means that there is no reduction to debating time, but it will make for a better and more productive Parliament.

It also recognises that the face of Parliament has changed in recent times. Fifteen or 20 years ago, Parliament was not made up of the diverse representation it is today. We have more women, we have more younger members, we have people with children, we have people with care responsibilities, we have people who want to make sure that they spend a bit of time with the people they love and who love them back. We have to recognise that we work better when we acknowledge that people come to this place as human beings with a range of family responsibilities.

We have talked about this a bit. I know there are members on both sides of the Parliament who believe in this quite passionately. I am really proud that it is an Andrews Labor government that is making these changes to sitting hours. It is a practice already in place in many other parliaments around the country. We have been a bit slow to respond here in Victoria, but we are going to do this.

Yesterday I got the news that my nearly 14-month-old son had started to walk — a fantastic milestone. I was

in Parliament, I was at work, I was not there to see it, but it is those sorts of milestones that we want to make sure we do not miss out on. We do not want to miss out on all the milestones in the lives of our families, whether it be our children, grandchildren, parents or other family members. We want to be sure that we can be there to celebrate those milestones. I look forward to seeing my son tonight and celebrating. I want all members of Parliament to have those opportunities because then they will come back to work the next day happier, more productive people, and that is a good thing.

The next significant change that is being made through these sessional orders is the changes to notices of motion. I think it is fair to say that neither side has been perfect on this practice in the past; I am quite prepared to acknowledge that. But I think we should be adult enough to recognise that the practice of five verbal notices of motion from either side on each sitting day has become a ridiculous farce. I am not saying government members are perfect; I am definitely not saying that. I think it has been a practice that has been stretched to its maximum political opportunity in the past. It is just a waste of time. It adds no value to the political or policy debate; it adds no value to what we do as a Parliament. None of those motions ever get debated or brought on. Many of them got ruled out of order. I know Speakers of all persuasions in the past have tried to curtail the practice as best they could. We are now getting rid of those oral notices of motion altogether.

I am quite disappointed to see that through its amendments the opposition wants to keep this practice. The opposition is not fair dinkum about making this a better Parliament. It wants to keep this ridiculous practice of having oral notices of motion that, as I said, add very little by way of political or policy debate for the people of Victoria. Opposition members have lost sight of the fact that we are here to serve the community of Victoria and not their own narrow political interests. They have lost sight of that; they lost sight of that when they were in government and it is quite clear they want to continue down that path now that they are in opposition.

I do not think there would have been uniformity on this view in the Liberal-Nationals party room; I really do not. I know there are members on both sides of the house who think this is a waste of time and I am sure they will be pleased to see that Labor is moving to abolish oral notices of motion.

The other change I am very pleased to make, and it is a shame that the member for Brighton is not here to

celebrate the moment with me, is the incorporating of second-reading speeches into *Hansard*. I want to pay credit to the member for Brighton because this was a change she put in place by way of practice in the previous Parliament. We are now entrenching it in the sessional orders.

This is again just a common-sense change. It frees up debating time and recognises that the world has moved on. People can access information through technology like computers, iPads and all sorts of different devices. You do not need ministers standing up and laboriously reading a speech word for word that everyone has in their hands or can access electronically. I am very pleased to see the incorporation of second-reading speeches into *Hansard*, and I think we saw yesterday how well that worked when we were able to rattle through eight second-reading speeches in about 20 minutes. It means the information is out there and we can get on with the matters of debate.

I will finish by making a few comments about the amendments that have been circulated by the opposition and the non-government parties. Through these amendments we are seeing that we have a bit of a coalition of the pretenders and the contenders on the other side of the house. In reference to the opposition's amendments, I have already spoken about how it wants to cling on to that useless practice of the verbal giving of notices of motion. It serves no real purpose in the Parliament.

However, what is absolutely astonishing is that the opposition is not supporting our proposal for question time reform but wants to put in place its own changes — changes it failed to make on every single sitting day for the four years it was in government. For four long years on any single sitting day members of the former government could have walked into this place and said they would deliver on their Premier's commitment. On any sitting day throughout those four years they could have kept former Premier Ted Baillieu's election commitment and gotten rid of Dorothy Dixers — the very practice he called a waste of time. The opposition, when in government, was so hopeless at organising itself that it could not even make those changes, but now it wants to do something different. Four years later it thinks it might like to do it but does not want to support what we are doing. We made it very clear before the election campaign that we wanted to make these changes. The sessional orders we have outlined today are absolutely in line with the reforms announced before the 2014 state election.

I want to make a brief comment on the amendments circulated by the Greens. I note that they have

circulated a reasoned amendment to have this whole kit and caboodle pushed off to be considered by the Standing Orders Committee. We made a commitment to a broader review of the standing orders, and that is something that will be worked through once the Standing Orders Committee has been established. We do not support the amendments put forward by the Greens because this is something that will be done over the course of this term of Parliament.

We spelt out during the election that we would make these changes, and we have the capacity to do so straightaway. We do not want to wait any longer than is necessary to make these changes to modernise and reform the Parliament and to make it a functioning and effective place of debate and policy consideration. That is why we are not supporting the amendments put forward by the Greens. It is something that will be done down the track, but we want to make sure that the changes we want to see implemented — and they are changes that can be implemented through the mechanism of the sessional orders — are made straightaway.

As I said, we spelt out during the election campaign that we would move to clean up the conduct of the Parliament. We said we would make the government more accountable and Parliament's time more productive. We are doing this through these changes to the sessional orders, but it is clear from the amendments proposed by the opposition that it does not support this. Members opposite want the circus to continue. I do not know why; it did not serve them very well when they were in government. I do not see why they would want to see it continue in opposition.

This week the opposition has already demonstrated that it has learnt nothing from what happened over the past four years. All members opposite are interested in doing is wasting the Parliament's time by blocking the progress of government legislation — legislation for which we have a very clear mandate and obligation to deliver on, particularly the Back to Work Bill. The opposition wants to cling on to the past, which should come as no surprise given that opposition members are the conservatives of this place. They are not fans of change. They do not like change on the other side of the house; they want to cling on to the past and do not want to see the Parliament become a more productive place. They do not want to see governments become more accountable, and it is astonishing that we are making this argument — because we are the government. We want to make Parliament a more productive place and a place where governments are held to account.

We want to restore the dignity of this place. The Andrews Labor government wants to raise the standards of behaviour, and this is something that all members of this place should aspire to achieve. That is why I am calling on all members of this place to support the sessional orders that have been put forward by the government today because it is the first step, and a big step, towards making this place more reflective of modern workplaces. These are changes that recognise that members of Parliament have many responsibilities and accountabilities. The new sessional orders will mean that the government will be held to account through various changes, and they will create a better Parliament that is a more productive place of debate and policy discussion. That is something we should all embrace and welcome, and I urge members opposite to support it.

I will now move the amendments I circulated earlier. I move:

Sessional order 7

1. After 'minister' omit 'make' and insert 'may'.

Sessional order 8

2. Heading, omit all the words after 'answers' and insert 'and questions'.
3. At the start of line one, insert '(1) The time limit for each oral question, supplementary question and constituency question is 1 minute.
(2)'.

Sessional order 9

4. Paragraph (1), after 'five non-government members may ask' delete 'ministers oral questions' and insert 'one oral question each to ministers'.

Sessional order 11

5. Paragraph (3), after 'copy' insert 'will be'.

Sessional order 15

6. Paragraph (2), after 31 omit '(l)(c)' and insert '(5)'.
7. Paragraph (2), after '2006' insert 'that statement'.
8. New sessional order AA — Order of business
 - (1) So much of standing orders as provide for question time to be held at 2.00 p.m. on sitting days other than Tuesdays is suspended to allow for question time to be held at 11.00 a.m. on those days.
 - (2) In standing order no. 55, for '2.00 p.m.', wherever occurring, read '11.00 a.m.'.
 - (3) So much of standing order nos 36, 38, 39 and 41 be suspended so as to enable the following order of business on:

Wednesdays
 Formal business
 Disallowance motions
 Statements by members
 Statements on parliamentary committee reports
 Government business
 Question time (11.00 a.m.)
 Matter of public importance or grievance debate
 Government business continued
 General business

Thursdays (and Fridays)
 Formal business
 Statements by members
 Government business
 Question time (11.00 a.m.)
 Government business continued
 General business

- (4) In standing order 39(9) for 'statements on parliamentary committee reports under standing order 41' read 'government business'.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — What a way to run a government and what a way to bring these measures to the Parliament. What disarray the government has found itself in within just a few short weeks of coming to office. Here we have a government that went to the election with a raft of proposals to reform the operation of Parliament. On the first day of sitting this week it brought in a bunch of sessional orders it claimed would deliver on those commitments, yet as late as last night we had the government suddenly informing the opposition, the minor parties and the Independent member of further dramatic changes to the operation of this Parliament without any advance notice and without alterations being canvassed by the Standing Orders Committee.

The government just decided that it would change when question time operates. It decided to change the hours of sitting from 2 o'clock to 12 o'clock on a Tuesday and have question time at 11 o'clock on any other day. It was a case of saying, 'We think it is a good idea, so let's just get on with it'.

How on earth can you expect the community to take seriously the way the government intends to manage this Parliament and the changes that the government is proposing to bring into operation when it cannot even work out for itself until the very last minute exactly what it wants to do about question time? That comes on top of the fundamental objection that this side of the house has to these sessional orders in the form that they have been introduced, which is that they are a farce and a sham and do not deliver on the government's own election commitments.

Parliament is supposed to be about accountability to the community and about debating and deciding on reforms

and other measures that are going to make life better for Victorians. Sessional orders are supposed to supplement standing orders in order to help the Parliament operate more effectively. We have had these amendments to sessional orders brought to the Parliament on the back of promises the then opposition made to reform Parliament, but instead of introducing sensible sessional orders, the government is introducing sessional orders that will make a mockery of the Victorian Parliament. They will make the way our question time operates, as far as I can ascertain, unique in the Western world. We will no longer have question time; we will have question and statement time. We will no longer have a question time which holds the executive to account. We will have a question time in which questions are interrupted by ministerial statements. That is in stark contrast to what the Labor Party told the community prior to the election. I quote from its own media release of 16 October:

Labor's 11-point plan to reform Parliament will abolish 'Dorothy Dixers', a stage-managed practice whereby ministers pre-prepare questions and rehearse answers for the purposes of grandstanding.

Further on, the media release states:

Time limits for answers during question time will also be reduced, to discourage political grandstanding and allow for more questions during the 60-minute period.

In other words, the Labor Party told the community that it would have a longer question time with more questions, but what the government is delivering is a shorter question time with fewer questions. It told the community it would be abolishing pre-prepared grandstanding by ministers, and instead what it is doing is simply cutting the number of questions in half and replacing pre-prepared answers with pre-prepared statements. In other words, what it is doing is giving the Parliament Dorothy Dixers without the questions. That is a long way away from what any reasonable Victorian reading the Labor Party's pre-election policies would have expected it to do. On this side of the house what we are saying is: if you are fair dinkum in saying you are going to abolish Dorothy Dixers, then let us do it. Let us not have government members asking questions —

Mr Pakula interjected.

Mr CLARK — Let us have question time when non-government members ask the questions. If we do so, we will not have Dorothy Dixers and we will not have pre-prepared grandstanding by ministers. We will have a question time which consists of genuine questions. That is what that side of the house promised

the community. Let us hold that side of the house to account, and let it deliver on that.

The Attorney-General says, 'What about ministerial statements?' Certainly the Labor Party told the community it was going to have ministerial statements. What it did not tell the community was that those statements were going to be interspersed with questions — that the Labor Party was going to break up question time and turn it into question and statement time. If you read literally the sessional order introduced by the minister, it would allow one non-government question and a supplementary question and then up to 17 ministerial statements.

Ms Allan interjected.

Mr CLARK — The Leader of the House has told me that is not the intention and it is only intended to have one statement interspersed with each question, but that is bad enough. What we are saying is, sure, let us give effect to the Labor Party's ministers statements, but let us put them in the order of business, where they ought to be. Let us put them in conjunction with members statements. Let us have them in that period of time. Let us start with the five ministers statements that the government wants and then have members statements. Let us not turn question time into a farce. Let us not make Victoria unique in the Westminster system by not having a proper question time but instead having a question and statement time. Let us put ministers statements where they should be, in conjunction with members statements.

The question time that we have had in Victoria up to now has been similar in structure to the operation of most Australian states and the commonwealth. Westminster has a different system with separate Prime Minister's question time and a much more intense process than we have anywhere in Australia. However, it is not as though Victorian question time has been out of line with other jurisdictions. As I say, if the Labor Party is going to genuinely deliver to the community on what it led the community to believe would be delivered on in terms of abolishing Dorothy Dixers, let it do that. That is what the amendments put forward by the coalition will do.

More generally in relation to the sessional orders, the Leader of the House spoke about changes to sitting times. These changes are similar to potential changes to sitting times that were being negotiated by the honourable member for Brighton when she was Leader of the House in terms of not having the house sit into the evening and commencing earlier in the day. We are happy to give those a go and see how they turn out. I

put on record the indication that the Leader of the House has given to me that it is the intention of the government as part of these changes that the house will not break for lunch, so that after we start the day on noon on Tuesdays we will sit through without a lunch break, and that will provide additional sitting time. Likewise, as I understand it, we will sit through the lunchbreaks on Wednesdays and Thursdays, which seems a sensible move. Let us give these sitting hours a go and see how they turn out. We are also prepared to see how most of the other changes in the new sessional orders turn out.

However, I want to say a few words about oral notices of motion. As the Leader of the House has said, our amendments would retain that practice. The Leader of the House has said oral notices are a farce, that they do not actually go anywhere and that therefore they ought to be abolished. This goes to the question of what is the role of a modern Parliament. The Leader of the House rightly said that there are other ways in which communication can take place. These days information is more readily accessed. Indeed we know that a minister of the Crown may believe he need not answer questions because members can resort to Google to find the information they need. Google and the internet are important innovations. The internet provides the capacity to have documents available on social media and elsewhere, and this informs debate.

The Victorian Parliament was a pioneer in the introduction of an integrated system for the introduction of bills and the digitisation of statutes. The Victorian Parliament was a trailblazer in this area, and that system still serves the community well. There is certainly an opportunity and indeed a need to consider how parliamentary practices can be informed, revised and improved in line with the greater availability of technology. There is probably a range of options that the Standing Orders Committee could consider. I have suggested to the house on other occasions that there is an opportunity for members to use written or visual material as an adjunct to debate.

However, at the end of the day there is the very important question of why we come together in the one chamber to sit and face each other and conduct an oral debate. Why not have a virtual Parliament, where we all sit in our electorate offices and come in on Skype? Why do we have any oral exchange? Why not have a blog debate or a Twitter debate, where we all hop on Twitter and put out our points of view? I know some honourable members are already enthusiastic about doing this.

We come together in this place and engage in an old-fashioned exchange of views because that is an effective means of communication. Notices of motion, which only take a few seconds each to be given, have evolved as a means by which points of view can be succinctly expressed by members. They can get that point across quickly not only to their colleagues or the other side of the house but also to the broader community.

In the entire period I have been in this house one of the trends has been that debate has become more compressed. To some extent that is sensible and to some extent it is regrettable. The 90-second statements were quite an innovation for this Parliament when they were first brought here, and at the time they were viewed with some scepticism. However, I have to say that they worked out well. Similarly notices of motion were hardly ever given when some members here today first entered this Parliament. They have evolved into a practice. The sessional orders limit them to a total of 10, and in that context they have provided a way in which members can get a quick point of view across at the start of the day. We believe that notices of motion should be retained unless or until a more effective way of achieving the same objective is achieved.

Let me conclude by referring to this dramatic change that has sprung up at the last minute from the government. I and other non-government members found out about it at around 10 o'clock last night. It is the government's proposal to change the time at which question time takes place from a standard 2 o'clock every sitting day to 12 o'clock on Tuesdays and 11 o'clock on Wednesdays and Thursdays. The Leader of the House has given us virtually no coherent explanation of why this has been proposed other than to say it used to happen in the past and so why not do it again now?

This is one of the changes in practice that has evolved over recent decades that is in fact operating for the better. The Leader of the House referred to the fact that up until a bit more than a decade ago question time was always the first item of business, which meant that it took place at 2 o'clock on Tuesdays and 10 o'clock on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Question time has been changed to a standard time each sitting day, and I have to say that that has worked out very well. It has meant that not only members and ministers, but also and more importantly the community and the media, know that this is the time of day at which question time will take place, and they can orient themselves around it. For no good reason, or no articulated reason, at the very last minute the government has said, 'We want to change'.

You have to ask why the government wants to introduce this change. Is it because it has been pummelled at every question time we have had in the house so far? Is it because ministers have been whitefaced standing at the dispatch box, struggling to answer questions? Does the government think it is going to get some advantage by retreating from a 2 o'clock question time? Is it hoping to escape scrutiny? Is it hoping the press will turn up late for a while so it will not be properly held to account? Is it hoping that a bit of confusion will give it a some cover under which it can get away with its inadequacies? Speaking of people who have been whitefaced at the dispatch box, the Minister for Roads and Road Safety has just entered the chamber.

We have no decent explanation as to why this change is being proposed, and it does look half baked and ill considered. From the Let me give one example of the running of a sitting day. From the running sheet that has been put together to illustrate how this would work, the sitting on a Wednesday would start at 9.30 a.m., there would then be about 15 minutes worth of formal business, 30 minutes of members statements and then we would have 30 minutes of statements on committees. On my reckoning, that would take us to about 10.45 a.m. We would then go on to government business, and 15 minutes later we would interrupt it and move on to question time. Why would you have this short block of 15 minutes? It does not make sense. No logical reason has been put forward for changing question time in this way.

There is no explanation as to why this change has been rushed through at the last moment. You would have thought the government would have had plenty of time to think about all of this, to deliver on its election commitments and to frame its resolution before bringing them to the Parliament in December. We are therefore very concerned about this proposed change to question time and do not believe that any change to the time at which questions without notice commence should be made until any proposition has been carefully canvassed, the pros and cons have been looked at and the whole Parliament has some idea as to what the rationale is and what benefits can be expected from changing a practice that has served this Parliament well.

There are a range of measures that we believe should be implemented to change the sessional orders. I formally move:

Sessional order 7

1. Omit 'After each oral question without notice and any related supplementary questions, any minister' and

insert 'Immediately before statements by members each sitting day up to five ministers'.

Sessional order 10

2. After 'until' omit 'five' and insert '10'.
3. Omit ', and up to five ministers statements have been made'.

Sessional order 13

4. Delete this sessional order and insert —

'13 Giving notice

Standing Order 140(1) be suspended and the following to apply:

- (1) A member may only move a motion to discuss a subject if he or she has given notice of that motion on a previous sitting day.
- (2) Copies of all notices, whether to be given orally or in writing, must be provided to the clerks at the table before notices are called on by the Speaker.
- (3) Oral notices must be read to the house. They can only be given before the house proceeds to the business of the day as set out in the notice paper.
- (4) All notices given by ministers must be oral.
- (5) A maximum overall total of 10 general business oral notices may be given each sitting day, 5 from government backbenchers collectively and 5 from non-government members collectively. Non-government notices will be apportioned between members on a pro-rata basis, according to the non-government representation in the house.
- (6) In addition to notices given under paragraph (5), members may give written notice by lodging a copy, identified as a written notice, with the clerks in accordance with paragraph (2). Members are not entitled to also give such notices orally.
- (7) A motion by a member expressing no confidence in the Premier and ministers, in the terms set out in section 8A of the Constitution Act 1975, may only be given orally under paragraph (5) or, where a member seeks to move the motion during formal business by leave, and leave is refused, the member may give notice of that motion despite the provisions of paragraph (5).
- (8) Except where a member has given notice under paragraph (5), the Clerk must notify the Speaker of a notice of a motion by a member to disallow a statutory rule to which standing order 151 applies, and the Speaker will report details to the house at the first convenient opportunity.'

I conclude by reiterating the key point I made at the outset — that yet again this government has failed to deliver on one of its election promises. We had the broken promise about the release of the east–west link contract, the broken promise about tearing up the contract without paying compensation, the broken promise about the shovel-ready West Gate distributor and the broken promise about delivering on the metro rail tunnel, and now we have the broken promise about a range of reforms to the Parliament. In particular we have the broken promise about having longer question time with more questions — it will be replaced with a shorter question time with fewer questions — and we have the broken promise about abolishing ministerial pre-prepared grandstanding in this chamber. For all those reasons we believe the sessional orders brought to this house by the Leader of the House are gravely defective and need dramatic amendment.

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — These sessional orders are about governments holding themselves to standards. Before the 2010 election the then Baillieu opposition set very high standards for itself and failed to meet any of them. Before the 2014 election the Andrews opposition set very high standards for itself and for the Parliament. In the submission of these sessional orders we are holding ourselves to the standards that we set for ourselves before the last election.

The member for Box Hill stands here today, having been a key player in the failure of the former government to hold itself to the standards it set for itself, and says that the decision of the new government to actually implement sessional orders which deliver on our commitments is not good enough. He now seeks to hold us to a standard that is not a standard that we set for ourselves and not a standard that the coalition set for itself when it was last in government but a whole new standard beyond anything it set for itself and beyond anything we committed to set for ourselves. It shows the hypocrisy of the current opposition and former government, having comprehensively broken and failed to deliver on its commitments to be an open, transparent and accountable government over the four years when it last had the chance. It now seeks to hold to the fire the feet of the new government despite the fact that it is implementing in full the commitment that it gave to the Victorian people at the last election.

This is about the much wider rubric of transparency. It is worth giving the member for Box Hill a brief history lesson about transparency and accountability, given the things the coalition said it would do in government. The coalition promised to be transparent and accountable when it was last in government. It promised to deliver a

New South Wales-style IBAC. It promised an FOI system which was about ‘Ask and you shall receive’ and an FOI commissioner who could review all decisions of government departments and could set enforceable standards. It promised a government advertising review panel. It promised follow-the-dollar powers for the Auditor-General and it promised no more Dorothy Dixers. It did not deliver on any of those commitments — not one of them.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr PAKULA — No, you did not — not one of them.

What did we get? Did we get a New South Wales-style IBAC? No, we did not. Did the Auditor-General get follow-the-dollar powers? No, he did not. Did the FOI commissioner get the ability to look at all decisions of government departments? No, she did not. Does she set enforceable standards? No, it was the member for Box Hill, as the former Attorney-General, who gave himself the power to set those standards. None of those commitments were delivered. Instead, what did we get in FOI? We got Don Coulson in the Premier’s office. We got no review of ministerial office decisions, no review of cabinet in confidence and no review of departmental heads’ decisions by the FOI commissioner. Did we get an independent advertising review panel? No, we did not. We got a couple of bureaucrats in the Department of Premier and Cabinet making decisions internally. Then we got that outrageous, disgraceful waste of money in advertising the government’s east–west link and Moving Victoria project. Not only was it an enormous waste of money, it was a complete failure — —

Mr Clark interjected.

Mr PAKULA — The member for Box Hill said there was a dramatic reduction. We will see when the annual report is released. But let me simply say that not only was it an outrageous, scandalous waste of money but it was not reviewed by an independent panel and it was totally useless — a totally useless advertising campaign, the proof of which is evidenced by where the respective parties are sitting right now.

In terms of the Parliament, what did we get? Did we get the ban on Dorothy Dixers that former Premier Baillieu promised? Instead we got the farcical scenes of the 57th Parliament.

Mr R. Smith interjected.

Mr PAKULA — The member for Warrandyte is a very angry man; I wonder what he had for breakfast.

The former government made a massive suite of promises in regard to transparency and accountability and reform of the Parliament, and delivered on none of them. I will make a concession to the member for Box Hill: it may have delivered partially on some of them. It is a big concession from me. It did create an office that was called the office of the FOI commissioner. It did not do the things it said it would do, but it created the office. It did create an IBAC. It was not the type of IBAC the then government said it would be, but at least it had the title.

What are we promising? We promised more authority for the Speaker. How many times have we come in here over the years and had Speakers, both Labor and Liberal, say, 'You know I cannot tell a minister how to answer a question'. I thought it would have been a welcome change to give more authority to the Speaker when the Speaker believes a minister has been non-responsive. It is not a provision the former government would ever have subjected itself to, but it is one that we are prepared to subject ourselves to.

We said we would shorten the time for answers to avoid the situation of ministers just going on for 4 minutes, and we have shortened the time for answers. We said we would provide for supplementary questions, as has been in place in the other house for years. I came from there, and they are nothing to be afraid of. It means that opposition members, who until now have had 5 questions, will in effect have 10 questions — that is, 5 questions and 5 supplementary questions. But the member for Box Hill said, 'Not good enough'.

The member for Box Hill talked quite rightly about debate, but verbal notices of motion are not debate. They are an embarrassment. They embarrass us and bring the Parliament into disrepute. The media pack thinks they are a complete farce. They are not a form of debate. They are 10 minutes of members of Parliament just throwing mud at each other. There is nothing in a verbal notice of motion that cannot be provided in a written notice of motion.

In terms of ministerial statements, in our election commitment we said that we would bring in ministers statements. The best the member for Box Hill can come up with is to say, 'But you didn't say in your election policy exactly where they would go'. The member for Box Hill may be disappointed about where they are placed in the running order, but there was a commitment to bring them in and this is the delivery of that commitment.

In terms of more family-friendly sitting hours, I think most members should be pleased about that. We will be more productive, and I am convinced we will get more done than when we had members sitting here into the wee hours of the night.

We are bringing in constituency questions because we recognise that, even though government members will not be able to ask questions during question time, there is still a place for both government and non-government members to raise matters on behalf of their constituency outside the adjournment and members statement processes.

Lastly, I will go to the palaver that is being raised by the member for Box Hill about the timing of question time and how it is some kind of outrageous injustice that the time for question time has been changed. As the member for Box Hill knows, I am a former member of the Legislative Council. I was in the Legislative Council during the 56th Parliament when the timing of question time was changed from 2 o'clock to 12 noon on a motion moved by the then Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council, Mr Philip Davis, with the support of the opposition's then and now coalition partners, the Greens. That was passed, and no particular explanation was provided. No particular justification was provided for why Mr Philip Davis decided in the 56th Parliament that question time in the Legislative Council should be at noon rather than at 2.00 p.m. That is a situation which, by the way, abides today. Whether question time is at 2.00 p.m., 12.00 p.m. or 11.00 a.m., we adapt. We adapted in the Legislative Council, and we will adapt in the Legislative Assembly.

The changes being moved by the Leader of the Government today are a massive improvement on the sessional orders that have been in place until now. They are the acquittal of our election policies, and they are a demonstration of how this government is prepared to hold itself to higher standards than any government has ever previously done.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — I rise to join the debate on the sessional orders motion. It was interesting to listen to the member for Bendigo East and to note her ability to try to rewrite history, as she does very often in this place. When I think of the history of debate on this matter during my time in this place, in former Speaker Madigan's time a working group was formed to try to come up with more family-friendly hours in this place. It generally had some support around the chamber, but the then Labor government of the day chose to do nothing about that.

So this is not actually about the new Labor government having a Road to Damascus moment where it is actually going to do this, because it had the opportunity to do something about this when it was in government last time — but it fell at the first hurdle. The government says it is doing this now because our side of the house did not do it when we were in government. Labor had its chance as well, and it fell — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr WALSH — Labor is pretty good at rewriting history, as I said. There was a working group in the last Parliament, which the member for Bendigo East was on, that looked at this particular issue. She talked about the outcomes out of that working group. As I understand it, she went back to her party to get support across the chamber to do something. The Labor Party was going to oppose that particular thing. Twice it has been tested, and it has failed previously. Let us not have government members think they are suddenly the saints in this particular situation.

I take exception to some of the comments made by the member for Keysborough, who talked about standards. Standards are something that are demonstrated by people through their actions, not what they say. I remind the member for Keysborough that there is a difference between ministers statements and ministerial statements. A ministerial statement is debated by the house, whereas the ministers statement that is being proposed will be a 2-minute speech about whatever they choose to speak about. There is no understanding as to how the Speaker will rule on the content of that or how it will apply to the particular debate at the time. Some guidance is going to be needed for the Speaker as to how that is going to work in terms of the content.

If you think about the changes that are being proposed to question time, by interspersing ministers statements with questions without notice, the Victorian public — the people in the gallery that the member for Keysborough seems so fixated on in terms of what they think of the Parliament — will see through what the government is proposing in this situation and realise that Dorothy Dixers are being reinserted into question time under another name. I say to the member for Keysborough that people will see through that. The government's talk about having standards will fall again because its members' actions will show that they are not serious about that particular issue.

If I look back on my time here, I can remember bemoaning the fact to the then Minister for Health, the now Premier, when we did not believe he was answering questions in question time. He was very

forceful in saying, 'It's called question time. It's not called answer time'. We have already seen that in the few days we have spent sitting with this new Labor government. Those opposite are still treating it as question time, not answer time. I do not see how these sessional orders will effect any major change when it comes to ministers answering questions.

Mr Pakula — OLV — you didn't answer any of ours.

Mr WALSH — I answered all those questions. When it comes to the lecture we have had around standards, I think it will come down to the actions of the government. It will come down to whether those opposite are going to walk the talk — that is, whether they are sincere about doing anything — or whether they are just all show in this particular debate.

I firmly believe in and support the amendments put forward by the member for Box Hill. Anyone who is serious about getting rid of Dorothy Dixers and having question time work properly would, as the member for Box Hill has proposed, put the ministers statements at a different time in the parliamentary sitting schedule. If those opposite did so, it would mean they were serious about the reform of question time. The way it is structured at the moment indicates that they are not serious. They are just shifting the deck chairs around at question time to, in effect, leave it as it was and have Dorothy Dixers by — —

Mr Pakula — You don't want the sups?

Mr WALSH — We do not want ministers statements in the middle of question time. It will make a mockery of the government's commitment to getting rid of Dorothy Dixers. The public of Victoria, particularly the press gallery that those opposite seem so fixated on trying to impress, will see through what the government is talking about.

Regarding the other issues that have been raised around notices of motion and other opportunities to speak in this place, the sense I got from the debate was that the Labor government of the day thinks it is a nuisance when members of the opposition get up to speak. Those opposite would like to eventually shut down Parliament so that people do not get the opportunity to speak. The Westminster system has been going for hundreds of years, and people have been coming to this place for over 100 years to speak on behalf of their communities. Members of our community elect us to come to Parliament to stand up and speak on their behalf. The more opportunity we give people to speak about issues in their electorate or issues that are of concern to their

constituents, the better. Notices of motion do that. They are an opportunity for members on both sides of the house to raise issues that they feel should be debated by this house. They are on the notice paper. They are an opportunity for members to be a champion of and a voice for their communities.

My sense of the debate so far is that those on the government benches think Parliament is a nuisance. They do not want to give anyone any more opportunity than they have to give them to speak on behalf of their constituents. However, to speak on behalf of constituents is why we are sent here.

There has been confusion on the other side around the issue of a ministers statement versus a ministerial statement. My understanding from the standing orders is that there is a formal process around a ministerial statement. A ministers statement is a different thing, and that is what is being inserted into question time. The other side needs to be very clear about what it is trying to achieve with regard to these particular things. It is clear, however, that it wants to reintroduce Dorothy Dixers by another name. I firmly believe this is another issue that we will add to the list of broken promises. The list is mounting.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr WALSH — Members on the government benches are laughing about the fact that the list of broken promises is growing. We had the now Premier in opposition saying there would be no compensation paid on the east–west link contracts. Up to a week before the election — —

Mr O'Brien interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Malvern is out of his place. He will not interject from out of his place.

Mr WALSH — This is just another thing to add to the list of broken promises. As I was saying before I was rudely interrupted by the government benches, the then opposition leader said there would be no compensation paid. He said, ‘We will not tear up contracts’. He claimed that to do so would be a sovereign risk and that no responsible government would tear up contracts. What is he doing now? He is tearing up a contract. He said the contracts were not worth the paper they were written on. Now there is discussion about whether there will be compensation, because perhaps they are worth the paper they are written on.

There is a long list of broken promises. I firmly believe that having ministers statements inserted into question time is an absolute break of a promise and a break of faith with the people of Victoria, as are a whole range of things that this new government is doing. People are going to see through that and see it for what it is. It is not about increasing standards. Standards are something you put in place and reinforce by your actions. You do not reinforce them with words in this place; it is about action. If the government were sincere about improving Parliament and improving question time, it would put the ministers statements in another place in the parliamentary time cycle, as the member for Box Hill has proposed. I support his amendments.

Ms GARRETT (Minister for Emergency Services) — We have had a fair amount of cheek coming from those opposite. We have had lectures about the reforming of Parliament, about an open and accountable question time and about what everyone was going to do. We all recall that fine debate prior to the 2010 election when the then leader of the Liberal Party, Ted Baillieu, waxed lyrical about all that was going to change in Parliament, including the abolition of Dorothy Dixers, and about how this was going to be a place of accountability, transparency and genuine debate. What did it become? It became an absolute farce. It was chaos from go to whoa. The Parliament was constantly in uproar. Nobody knew what the government of the day was doing.

Mr Watt interjected.

Ms GARRETT — I am so glad the member for Burwood is interjecting. It is fantastic. The Parliament descended into chaos very quickly. Despite the descent into chaos, the then government failed repeatedly and often to implement any of the changes it said it would. Instead — and those newer members of this house will not have had to suffer this — those of us who were here for the four years witnessed the excruciating ritual every question time where the Dorothy Dixer was asked by some very nervous member of the backbench. We heard, ‘Thank you so much “insert member here” for your interest in “said topic”’. Given its record, the government appeared to have no interest whatsoever in whatever that topic happened to be. That was what the Parliament was.

I am very proud of the Leader of the House, and I am very proud of the Premier, that in the first full week of this Parliament we are debating the new sessional orders, which will transform and modernise the Parliament. Some members opposite do not really like to think of themselves as being in the 21st century, but that does not mean that the sessional orders need to

remain in the 1950s. What we are doing here today is reflecting a modern and diverse Parliament.

This raft of changes will transform the Parliament, and I will start by talking about question time. The Leader of The Nationals was quite fulsome in his contribution about the ministers statements. As I think the Attorney-General quite rightly interjected at the time, what we learnt from the responses of the Leader of The Nationals to some of the questions he was asked in the last term of Parliament is exactly why we are making these changes. We want to make sure this place is what it should be, which is a place where genuine debate happens in our democracy. We are elected here to tackle the big issues, to be open and accountable and to have those discussions. Members on both sides of the chamber know this place works best when there is genuine debate and when we bring the diverse views of our community here and engage in a contest of ideas. But that contest of ideas can only happen when the sessional orders provide for it.

In question time we will introduce a supplementary question, which is a huge reform to this chamber. It gives the opposition and other parties a chance to go back — —

Mr Walsh interjected.

Ms GARRETT — You know all about not answering questions. A second question will be able to be asked — —

Mr Walsh interjected.

Ms GARRETT — I am sure you use Google all the time. A supplementary question will be asked of ministers, taking the standard of openness and transparency higher. Second-reading speeches will be incorporated so that time is not sucked up. We will remove the nonsensical and useless notices of motion that are not about genuine debate and that do not reflect what the community expects of us in this place, which is a discussion of ideas. That means throwing a policy down on the table and letting everybody have their say about it. Notices of motion will be gone, which will give more genuine time to debate issues. A lot of the grandstanding that has been going on by members of the opposition will be cut out. In just two days we have seen notices of motion which would make the public's hair curl.

Mrs Fyffe interjected.

Ms GARRETT — I was never big on notices of motion. I saw their place as being in the dustbin, which is where they will be. It is important, particularly on this

day, that we acknowledge that the changes to the hours are very important to ensure that not only do we have good quality and genuine debate and that we pack in the same amount of work during better hours, but that the changes reflect the diversity of who sits in this house and the changes in the roles of both men and women in our community. As many members who were here before would recall, about three years ago I was six months pregnant. No doubt Max would have been kicking me, as he would whenever I got particularly feisty, and I know the Leader of the House experienced the same thing. But to be honest, being heavily pregnant and having to walk down the chook house stairs at 11 o'clock at night in the rain was not a ton of fun. I am happy to admit that I am one of those women who do not really enjoy pregnancy. I was not eating strawberries and watermelon. I was not 100 per cent for most of the time, and having to be here at 11 o'clock at night, climbing the stairs and sitting in these chairs when you would have to say that much of the debate was not necessarily at its peak was not much fun. Of course I had two kids at home as well, so they were pretty happy if I got home early.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms GARRETT — I know — poor me! There is a change in how our community works generally. A lot of families have both parents working. I note the member for Ivanhoe is in the chamber. His wife had their child at the same time as I had Max. She is a lawyer, and for him to get home at a decent hour so she can continue her job and her busy work schedule is equally as important. I am very proud that we are making these key changes to the sessional orders. They will transform this place into what it is supposed to be, a place which provides for high-functioning, genuine debate with no grandstanding and no nonsense and with ministers answering not just one question but a supplementary question as well. We will not waste time on second-reading speeches that go for 1000 years; people can view them because they are circulated.

Importantly this motion delivers on another commitment made by the Andrews Labor government, which is in stark contrast to those who sat on the Treasury benches in the previous term. Coalition members made lofty promises about the reform of Parliament and spouted words about Dorothy Dixers. They said, 'This is a new era of Parliament'. I do not think we have seen in our history a more chaotic mess than we saw under the previous mob. I do not think we saw less action taken on delivering an open and accountable Parliament. The previous government had a great opportunity to change things. Not only did it refuse to do it, but it let the place become an absolute

circus. The community lost confidence in this important chamber as the focus and centre of our democracy. That is part of the reason why those who occupied the government benches now sit opposite, and they need to take responsibility for that. I am proud of the Leader of the House for showing such leadership with these changes, and I am very proud of the Premier. I commend the new sessional orders to the house.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) — What an absolute farce. What a joke, after four years of Labor banging on about how it was going to do things differently. Labor had four years to actually prepare something, bring it here and demonstrate some transparency, and at 11 o'clock last night it produced amendments to its own changes. The government could not get it right and had to do a last-minute change to the so-called transparent sessional orders. This is what we can expect from this government in the future. It claims to be a progressive government, a government that wants to ensure that there is transparency and accountability, but the public will be able to see through this government.

I suggest that with the googling that has gone on to understand what transparency is all about, the government has unfortunately hit the wrong button. There is no accountability and openness here; there is something you can see right through. It is transparent in nature, yes, because it is very clear what this mob is up to: reducing the opportunity to be accountable in this chamber, reducing the opportunity for the opposition to provide the necessary scrutiny and accountability, and ultimately reducing the opportunity to ensure that members of the government are held properly to account and that the Victorian public has the chance to get the best possible government.

The government claimed to want to get rid of Dorothy Dixers. This was going to be the big kicker. It is interesting that there is a removal of Dorothy Dixers and an introduction of ministers statements — so in fact we will now call Dorothy Dixers ministers statements. It is the same thing. Ministers will have the opportunity to stand up, and instead of somebody asking them a Dorothy Dixer, they will ask their own Dorothy Dixer. Ministers will have their own Dorothy Dixers — their chance to get up, ask themselves a question and then provide an answer.

It is really interesting to look at what the sessional orders are all about. We have just been handed the last-minute amendments from 11 o'clock last night regarding the actual time at which question time will take place. There is a deliberate attempt by this government to ensure that the gallery is able to hear these Dorothy Dixer minister statements. This is to get

more information, more spin, out. We will need to get used to that. There will be so much spin, as there has already been from the government, that it will absolutely spin this place out of control. Time and again we have seen it. We have seen it with the ripping up of east-west link and with everything the government has had a go at. Yesterday the Minister for Roads and Road Safety talked about shovel-ready projects when the government does not even have any plans in place. The Dorothy Dixers will continue in this house. They will not have been removed by this government; they will have been replaced by ministers statement Dorothy Dixers. It is a name change, and that is all it is.

In reference to the family-friendly hours of the house, it is very important that we look at this — and I agree we should be doing it. But it is ironic that it comes from this government, the so-called government of the people, which is all about standing up for union rights. If any other workplace threatened their workers with extended hours, the government would be up there claiming that that was wrong and that it would protest and do whatever it could to stand up for workers. But what is the government doing here? It is proposing that we have a 9.30 a.m. start and an 8.00 p.m. finish without a lunch break or any break in between. What workplace would have extended hours with no breaks?

Ms Allan — Are you looking about not having lunch?

Mr SOUTHWICK — We hear from members opposite that we are looking about not having lunch. I would be very interested to see how many of their union buddies would be happy that we have no lunch.

Let us be frank as to what this is all about: it is about trying to squeeze everything in to reduce the overall hours for debate. That is all this is about. If the government were serious about family-friendly hours, it would throw on another day. It would ensure that we would be in here on a Friday or a Monday, but that is not what the government is serious about. Ultimately it is trying to reduce the hours — the time to be accountable and the time for us to press the case to show just what a hopeless government this is and will be.

It is very interesting that the government would want to get rid of notices of motion, but at the same time allow for notices of motion from the government when it comes to government business. The government can ask something when it comes to notices of motion but the opposition cannot. I would like to say that notices of motion, first thing in the morning, are often the chance for members to get up and raise very important points.

Let us face it: there are probably not many other times during the day when members are in the chamber and able to talk about something important to them. Yet this government says, 'No, we want to do away with notices of motion'.

Ms Allan — No, we're not doing away with notices of motion.

Mr SOUTHWICK — No, it wants to do away with our oral notices of motion but not with its own. It is all right for the government to be able to bring something up in an oral notice, but we are not able to do an oral notice on our side.

Ms Allan — No — ministers. Get it right.

Mr SOUTHWICK — Oh, ministers — of course! — just like the ministerial Dorothy Dixers which the government will continue with under its proposed changes.

I give an example of a notice of motion raised orally just yesterday by the member for Gippsland East:

To move that this house recognises how well received and successful the Regional Growth Fund was for rural and regional Victoria, delivering an enormous number of projects and significant investment right across rural Victoria, and calls on the current government to commit to an equal level of investment into the regions.

I do not think that is a farce. I think that is a very important part of this Parliament. There are a number of standing and sessional orders that are equally important in the efficient running of this Parliament. But the government wants to do away with oral notices. Government members do not want to be held accountable; they do not want to provide the house with the opportunity of holding them up to scrutiny at the beginning of the day. They want to control what we do, when we do it, how we do it and ensure that there are very carefully prescribed things in place, with ministerial verbal notices and ministerial members statements which in fact just equate to the Dorothy Dixers they are claiming to get rid of. This is an absolute joke. Members of this government promised transparency. They had four years to put together a plan and introduce reform to show the people of Victoria that things would be different, yet they come into this place with a series of changes that are nothing more than a joke.

The sessional orders are not what they are purported to be. The sessional orders are full of spin and full of things that probably equate to the shovel-ready projects government members claim to have. These are shovel-ready sessional orders. That is what they are.

The government changed them last night. Government members had months to prepare and in the last 24 hours they have been saying, 'No, we don't actually have a plan. We are going to change it around, mix it up a bit and see what we can do'. Unfortunately that is what the people of Victoria need to be prepared for, because this government has started very poorly. These sessional orders are absolutely nothing like they are purported to be. There is no transparency here. The only transparency is the stuff we can see right through.

I commend the member for Box Hill's amendments; they are very important amendments. If we are serious about doing something in this chamber to ensure there is transparency, we will take up the amendments that have been proposed by the member for Box Hill and stop the rubbish, stop what has been proposed by this government and get on with it and make sure that this is truly a house that can be accountable, transparent and make some important reforms for Victoria.

Mr NARDELLA (Melton) — Speaker, this is the first time I have risen to speak in this Parliament, and I want to congratulate you on your appointment as Speaker.

In Canberra we have had the Prime Minister of Australia, the Honourable Tony Abbott, knighting people. I will take the initiative here. I will start knighting people today. I am going to knight the honourable member for Caulfield and call him Sir Lunchalot, because it is the loss of the meal break that he opposes in the new sessional orders. He and his colleagues on the other side of the house only want to go into the dining room and shove food down their throats, instead of coming into this place and working for the people of Victoria. They should be working not just for the marginal seats and their own seats but for every single Victorian, regardless of where they live, regardless of the margin in their electorate and regardless of who they vote for, just like Labor members do.

These sessional orders are about democracy. If members have been here for a while, they would know that I have talked about democracy quite often over the years. One of the things about democracy is giving members the opportunity and the right to speak and to raise issues for their constituents, and for organisations and community groups. That is what these sessional orders will do. They will provide more opportunity for every single member of this house to raise those issues within the Parliament. If it were not for the Labor Party, under the conservatives and the Tories on the other side of this chamber, along with their coalition mates, The Nationals and the Greens, there would be no change. I

have been in this place under the old standing orders where there was half an hour for question time on Tuesdays.

Ms Allan interjected.

Mr NARDELLA — Do you remember? A half an hour! This meant the opposition got to ask about three questions.

Ms Allan — If you were lucky.

Mr NARDELLA — If you were lucky! I will come back to that. Then on the Wednesday and Thursday the opposition got 15 minutes. So on Tuesday, if you were lucky, you would get three questions; and then on the Wednesday or Thursday the opposition would be lucky to get one question. I was in the gallery when the Honourable Jeff Kennett was in this chamber as the Premier of the state. At the time we had the Minister for Intergraph. Do members remember her? Do they remember the Minister for Intergraph? It was Marie Tehan. She was on her feet during a time when there was very limited question time, and she stopped and looked down at Premier Kennett and said, ‘Do you want me to keep on going?’. He looked at her, nodded his head and said yes, because that then denied the opposition the time to ask any further questions. That is what the conservatives, the Tories and their coalition mates want to go back to.

When Labor was elected it put in place reforms that have transformed this Parliament, and I supported those reforms. We put in place reforms so that every single member of this house can make a statement. For 90 seconds they can talk about and raise issues for their constituency. That is a reform that we put in, not the conservatives, the Tories and their political mates in coalition. Labor brought that in. In 1999 we altered the standing orders to allow five questions from the opposition every single sitting day. Those opposite did not bring that in. They were happy to keep the old standing orders to make sure that the opposition and other members never had their say in this place. We brought in a standard where there would be at least 50 days every year that this Parliament would sit.

That did not occur under the Tories — the Libs and Nats. Some may remember — I remember; I was here in the 1990s — that in this Parliament they consistently sat for 35 days a year — 35 days! Now they want to come in here and talk about democracy and about going to lunch. They do not want to talk about the real issues of this Parliament and of the people of Victoria; they want to look after their own guts. I like my guts and I like eating — people can see that — but the people of

Victoria, including the people of Melton, come first. If we have to make that sacrifice, I say to members on the other side of the house: you take some time and go and get some lunch.

Mr Southwick — On a point of order, Speaker, the member is referring to a comment I made earlier about the extended hours and the lack of a lunchbreak. I was referring to staff having lunch and being able to take a break. It is absolutely out of order that the member for Melton would infer that I was worried about my own belly. I take — —

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

Mr NARDELLA — Now let us talk about some other things — for example, second-reading speeches. A situation arose at the beginning of the last Parliament where we tried to make some changes to the sessional orders. Ultimately the member for Brighton managed to get the reform to have second-reading speeches incorporated in *Hansard* through on her own side. That was revolutionary for the Liberals. I appreciate the fact that the member for Brighton got this reform through. However, an argument against that reform was put forward by the member for Kew at the time, Andrew McIntosh. He said, ‘No. We like sitting down and listening to second-reading speeches because we like them being read to us. It means that we will actually read it’.

Ms Green — A bedtime story.

Mr NARDELLA — It is absolutely like bedtime stories. This spurious argument is just like the other spurious arguments against these changes that are being put to the house at the moment by the opposition, even though these changes would benefit opposition members. It is stupid that they do not understand that these changes are good for them. They have been opposed to ministerial statements — —

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Speaker, I ask the member to withdraw that comment. I am not sure it is in order to call members of Parliament, particularly those on this side, stupid.

Mr NARDELLA — I withdraw. The morons on the other side of the house — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Melton!

Mr NARDELLA — I withdraw that as well. The honourable members on the other side of the house cannot think very quickly on their feet.

One of the reasons for making ministerial statements between questions without notice from the opposition is so that opposition members can think on their feet. If there need to be changes to the questions they put together and type out, opposition members will have time to amend their questions. Opposition members do not understand this; they just want to go from one question to the next like robots. They are just robots.

Mr Watt interjected.

Mr NARDELLA — Does the member for Burwood want to oppose that too? These robots just get questions and read them. They cannot change, and that is what this opposition is about. Its members cannot change because they do not know how to change. Even when a situation arises in which we try to benefit the opposition, its members still do not get it. They are that dumb and that stupid that they just do not get it.

I turn to notices of motion and ask members to have a look at the notice paper. Some 179 notices of motion were given on 23 December last year. What a waste of time! What a waste of this house's time! There is no debate on them. This chamber should be about debating the real issues that affect every Victorian.

I support the changes. They will bring real reform to this Parliament.

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) — I note the passionate contributions of members to this debate on the sessional orders. Some significant and welcome changes to the sessional orders have been put forward; however, others can be improved on. Therefore I will move a reasoned amendment. I move:

That all words after 'That' be omitted with a view of inserting in their place the words:

'this house refuses to agree to the question that the sessional orders be agreed to until the Standing Orders Committee has reviewed the proposed sessional orders and any other opportunities to improve procedures of the house.'

I think it is important for the Standing Orders Committee and for this house to reflect on the changed nature of this house. For the first time in over 50 years four parties are represented in this house, plus there is an Independent — a welcome change for some but not so welcome for others. It is important that we get the standing and sessional orders right to reflect the needs of the crossbenchers.

There is the glaring omission of a provision for general business and non-government business to take precedence, which occurs in all other states and in the

federal Parliament, and an inability for general business motions and private members bills to be debated. This affects not just those on the crossbench but also opposition members and government backbenchers, who I note in the federal Parliament often use private members bills to progress critical issues.

Now I note on the government side that we have heard notices of motion described as 'pointless', 'useless' and 'grandstanding'. I suggest that they would be none of those things if we got to actually debate them and vote on them. We are in a situation where notices of motion can be given orally or in written form, and private members bills can be introduced, but they will never be debated or voted on. The standard we need to hold to in the sessional orders, rather than continually saying, 'You lot did it in opposition' or 'You put this up in government and this did not happen', is that we need to apply the old-fashioned pub test. I am not sure there are too many watering holes in Melbourne where they are debating the sessional orders, but if you tried to explain to the average person that we read out notices of motion, put them on the notice paper and then they sit there but we never do anything about it, I think you would find that it would fail the test.

The Greens were elected to this Parliament with a legislative agenda, and it would reflect the will of the voters for us to be able to put forward that legislative agenda and for it to be debated in this house. I also suggest that given that we have had amendments to the motion to make changes to the sessional orders circulated by the government in the last 12 hours, and, merits aside, the fact that the amendments have been circulated so quickly and so close to this debate, indicates that a more thorough review is required.

I move the following amendments to the proposed sessional orders:

Sessional order 13

1. Delete this sessional order and insert —

'13 Giving notice

Standing order 140(1) be suspended and the following to apply:

- (1) A member may only move a motion to discuss a subject if he or she has given notice of that motion on a previous sitting day.
- (2) Copies of all notices, whether to be given orally or in writing, must be provided to the clerks at the table before notices are called on by the Speaker.
- (3) Oral notices must be read to the house. They can only be given before the house proceeds to the business of the day as set out in the notice paper.

- (4) All notices given by ministers must be oral.
- (5) The maximum overall time allowed for members who are not ministers to give oral notices is 15 minutes. Notices will be apportioned between members on a pro rata basis, according to representation in the house.
- (6) In addition to notices given under paragraph (5), members may give written notice by lodging a copy, identified as a written notice, with the clerks in accordance with paragraph (2). Members are not entitled to also give such notices orally.
- (7) A motion by a member expressing no confidence in the Premier and ministers, in the terms set out in section 8A of the Constitution Act 1975, may only be given orally under paragraph (5) or, where a member seeks to move the motion during formal business by leave, and leave is refused, the member may give notice of that motion despite the provisions of paragraph (5).
- (8) Except where a member has given notice under paragraph (5), the Clerk must notify the Speaker of a notice of a motion by a member to disallow a statutory rule to which standing order 151 applies, and the Speaker will report details to the house at the first convenient opportunity.

Sessional order 14

2. Omit 'member who raised the matter' and insert 'Clerk'.
3. After 'days,' insert 'A copy must be given to the member who raised the matter, and printed in *Hansard*.'

There are two modest, reasonable amendments designed to retain the ability of members to read out motions and include an overall time limit on speaking with the call apportioned according to the representation in the house. Obviously, to prevent repeats of what we saw on the opening day when 100-odd notices of motion were read, and to save the staff of the member for Burwood from having to go to all that effort to put them up again, I suggest that notices of motion would not be pointless, useless or grandstanding if this house got the chance to debate and vote on them.

Our amendment to sessional order 14 is a modest proposal to have responses to adjournments provided by ministers incorporated into *Hansard* rather than members just being given a written response. That would be a fair and modest proposal that would add to the transparency and accountability of this house.

Now I will touch on the amendments put forward by the opposition. I share its concerns that question time will now be punctuated with ministerial statements and that that does not truly reflect a commitment to remove Dorothy Dixers from question time. On the subject of its other amendment, I accept that the inclusion of

supplementary questions in question time has increased the overall number of questions but I also welcome the chance to ask more questions, as any non-government member should.

Finally, I welcome the changes to the timing of the program in this house. It is appropriate in terms of the timing of the adjournment debate. We will support the government's amendments in that order.

Ms RICHARDSON (Minister for Women) — I am truly baffled by the approach of the members opposite. I am perhaps not surprised, but I am somewhat baffled by the tactics those members have chosen to adopt as part of this debate, because their opposing the changes that have been put forward by the Labor government, and particularly by the Leader of the House, gives us an opportunity to shine a light on what has happened in the past with respect to sessional orders. It has also given us, as the member for Melton has well and truly done, a comprehensive history and understanding of what has happened with respect to sessional orders in the past.

We all know that a former Premier, Ted Baillieu, talked a big game when it came to sessional orders and what he planned to do with respect to the Parliament. We all know that none of those changes was implemented by the coalition members opposite when they were sitting on this side of the house. I am no student of the history of the Parliament, unlike the Deputy Speaker, the member for Melton, and I am not going to propose that I am anything like the Leader of The Nationals, who was a wannabe student of history. The truth is that when sensible changes were proposed by Labor, even in opposition, it was largely frustrated with respect to prosecuting those changes. The member for Brighton in fact led a charge from among her parliamentary colleagues to try to bring about change. They were baby steps, but nonetheless even those changes were opposed by the coalition members opposite when they were in government.

In my view, when we look at the changes being proposed in any light, we can conclude that members opposite should be thanking the Labor government for bringing these changes into the Parliament because it will provide so many more opportunities for the opposition members to do their jobs and hold the government to account. The change that will give the Speaker greater authority to bring ministers to book when it comes to answering questions is a good thing. I would have thought members opposite would welcome that change. If that kind of change had been in place when coalition members were last on this side of the chamber, it might have brought the coalition ministers to account more quickly, and it might then have given

the coalition the opportunity to be more competitive in the lead-up to the November 2014 election.

Having shorter answers from ministers is a good thing. With respect to the number of questions, it is very important that we note that we are going from 5 questions to 10 questions, because every question will have a supplementary question and will give opposition members the opportunity to follow up any answer from a minister.

The introduction of ministers statements was an election commitment, and although the timing and placement of those may not be to the liking of the opposition, question time is when there is most focus from the media, obviously, but also from the public. Most people tune in at question time, so having ministers statements at that time is a very sensible and worthy move, as was proposed by the Leader of the House.

In relation to family-friendly sitting hours, who in my book has ever said it better than the late, great Lynne Kosky? In May 1999 she said:

It is incumbent upon this Parliament to set the scene for other workplaces around the state.

She made her argument very clearly and eloquently at that time. Unfortunately at that time she was met by the then member for Forest Hill, Mr Richardson — no relation of mine, I hasten to add in bold, italics et cetera — who in reply said:

She is obviously having difficulty in dealing with the environment here. If she finds it too tough, she is in the wrong job.

He then went on to suggest that she ‘go home, have a Bex, a cup of tea and a nice lie down or whatever it is she needs for whatever her problem is’.

With that remark by the then member for Forest Hill we truly see these changes in the light they need to be seen because getting a work-life balance is critically important for all members in this house. As the Leader of the House said, having an opportunity to spend time with your family is one thing, but then being able to turn up to work the next day and be productive is what we should actually be doing.

We always focus on MPs when we think about sitting hours, but there are so many other people who are connected and who support this Parliament day in, day out. I do not think any member of the public would care if one of us smacked into the back of a tram on the way home because we were travelling home at midnight, but I think the public would very much care — as should

we — about the people who are working to support this Parliament and keep it running. Their working hours matter to the Labor Party, and they should matter to every member in this house, so I commend these changes. I am sure that other members from Parliaments past — in particular Lynne Kosky — would well and truly commend the changes that have been proposed before this Parliament.

It is also worth making the point that there is actually no change to the number of contact hours that will be experienced by the Parliament. In fact the decision to allow the incorporation of bills and second-reading speeches will enable more time to debate legislation, which again is something I would have thought members opposite would welcome as opposed to the approach they are taking today.

With respect to the reading of notices of motion for backbenchers, having watched the last Parliament in particular and the way in which most notices of motion would descend into a bit of a farce, I would have thought members of the opposition would have been very keen to see these changes. We often saw former government backbenchers slide into a bit of a mess when it came to notices of motion; they would often drag in interest groups from outside the Parliament as part of their tactics. There was pointscoreing across the chamber and the like. It was not pretty, and it did not enhance any of us in this place. I would think that members opposite would think that getting rid of the opportunity for their own backbenchers to slide in the way they did when in government — when they tried to out-grandstand each other almost — is actually a good thing; it is a good measure which members opposite should embrace and welcome.

In conclusion, I noted that the member for Box Hill, who is now back in the house, raised the introduction of 90-second statements, saying that these were now regarded as very much a good thing. He made the point that when Labor brought in those changes, they were regarded somewhat sceptically, but they are now seen as a good thing. Can I put it to the member for Box Hill that it is my view — and that of every member on this side of the house — that, similarly, in time these changes will be regarded in very much the same way and that even he in time will take the opportunity to say, ‘Well done’, and to thank the Labor Party for bringing forward these changes through the sessional orders, because they will make a difference not just to members of Parliament in this place but to the people who are working in this place, and that is a good thing. It is good for debate, it is good for transparency, and I commend these sessional orders changes to the house.

Mr O'BRIEN (Malvern) — I rise to speak on the motion moved by the member for Bendigo East. When I heard the member for Bendigo East start her contribution by talking about the need for better procedures and standards in this house, all I could think of was, 'Isn't that the pot calling the kettle black?'. Because the very worst behaviour I have seen not just in the last Parliament but right across my time in Parliament lies at the feet of the member for Bendigo East during the last Parliament. Who of us here who sat in the Parliament during that time could ever forget the member for Bendigo East on her feet, at the dispatch box, screaming at the then Speaker, 'Be a man!'. It was an absolute low light of parliamentary standards in this place. To now have the member for Bendigo East come into this chamber and parade about as the saviour of parliamentary standards is so hypocritical as to make me sick; it really is. She was disgraceful in her conduct as manager of opposition business. She is not here to save parliamentary standards; she is here to condemn them for the Labor Party's base political interests, as she has always done.

We heard the Minister for Emergency Services say that we are going to see an end to grandstanding because the Labor Party is going to abolish Dorothy Dixers. As the members for Box Hill, Murray Plains and Caulfield have pointed out, Labor is not abolishing the Dorothy Dixers whatsoever. What we are going to get instead is a 2-minute rant — the 2-minute hate, the 2-minute trumpet blowing. That is what we are going to be getting. At least with a Dorothy Dixers, the question that is asked circumscribes the answer to an extent. You can actually raise a point of order against the minister answering a Dorothy if they stray beyond the confines of the question they were asked. Who is to say what the confines will be if a minister can get up and talk about — and I refer to proposed sessional order 7:

... make a statement of up to 2 minutes to advise the house of new government initiatives, projects and achievements.

We will get 2 minutes of ministers chest thumping, puffing themselves out, blowing their own trumpet, telling us how good they are. Gee, that will be such an improvement on Dorothy Dixers; what an improvement that will be. The question is: does it even have to relate to government business? It is a pretty good question. Does this 2-minute trumpet blowing have to relate to government business? Will a minister be able to talk about the crescent of the moon? Can a minister talk about anything they like? Who knows?

So far from being a positive reform for this Parliament, this is simply a case of the government not thinking its own ministers have the wit to be able to answer a

Dorothy Dixers within the rules of the house; that is all this is about. We heard the Minister for Emergency Services say, 'No grandstanding'. We will put her to the test; we will put her to the test and we will see whether there will be no grandstanding during these 2-minute ministerial statements.

I am also very concerned about the fact that the Labor Party is seeking to shut down oral notices of motion for everyone except for ministers. I have to remind the Labor Party: this is the Parliament; this is the legislature. This chamber is supposed to keep the executive accountable. The executive is not supposed to be privileged over every other member of the Parliament, yet that is exactly what these sessional orders do. They provide the executive with a privilege that nobody else gets. This is just another example of where this Labor Party government is arrogantly drunk on power even in its very first months. Its members are arrogantly breaking promises, defying the will of the Legislative Council and trying to stop themselves from being scrutinised.

We heard the Attorney-General — of all people — get up and talk about how terrific this is, yet you would think that the Attorney-General, as first law officer, might understand something about the separation of powers. You might expect him to understand that the Parliament is not the executive and that the two are actually separate. It is important to differentiate between the cabinet table and the parliamentary chamber. There is absolutely no reason for ministers to have special privileges in this place.

Why should a minister be able to issue an oral notice of motion but a member of the opposition or the Greens or even a Labor Party backbencher be unable to do so? It is disgraceful. It is about shutting down debate. Labor literally does not want other voices to be heard. That is what this is all about. 'We do not want your voices heard because you are not ministers in the Labor government. We do not want to hear you'. That is exactly what this is about, and it is appalling.

No case has been made by the Leader of the House for the changing of the timing of question time. The change was slipped out in the dead of last night — along with attempts to correct some of the typos, which shows how poorly thought through the sessional orders are — with no explanation. We have seen so many ministers get to their feet in this chamber, yet not one of them has explained how it advances democracy to have question time at 11 o'clock instead of the traditional time of 2 o'clock. Is it just a case of ministers being worried that the more time members of Parliament have to

engage with matters and prepare questions, the less able they are to answer them? I suspect that is the case.

I support the amendments circulated by the honourable member for Box Hill. These proposals by the government and its members are not about enhancing the operation of the Parliament; they are about protecting ministers and shutting down voices they do not want to hear. It is a disgrace.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I will now deal with each sessional order proposed in the Leader of the House's motion, as detailed on the notice paper. I will also deal with the amendments to the proposed sessional orders moved by the Leader of the House, the member for Box Hill and the member for Prahran, followed by the new sessional order proposed by the Leader of the House. The member for Prahran's reasoned amendment will be considered after all proposed sessional orders and related amendments have been considered.

Sessional orders 1 to 6 agreed to.

Sessional order 7

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the House and the member for Box Hill have both moved amendments to sessional order 7. As the member for Box Hill's amendment 1 affects the text first, I will put it first. The question is:

That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question.

House divided on omission (members in favour no):

<i>Ayes, 45</i>	
Allan, Ms	Kilkenny, Ms
Andrews, Mr	Knight, Ms
Blandthorn, Ms	Lim, Mr
Brooks, Mr	McGuire, Mr
Bull, Mr J.	Merlino, Mr
Carbines, Mr	Nardella, Mr
Carroll, Mr	Neville, Ms
Couzens, Ms	Noonan, Mr
D'Ambrosio, Ms	Pakula, Mr
Dimopoulos, Mr	Pallas, Mr
Donnellan, Mr	Pearson, Mr
Edbrooke, Mr	Richardson, Mr
Edwards, Ms	Richardson, Ms
Eren, Mr	Scott, Mr
Foley, Mr	Sheed, Ms
Garrett, Ms	Spence, Ms
Graley, Ms	Staikos, Mr
Green, Ms	Suleyman, Ms
Halfpenny, Ms	Thomas, Ms
Hennessy, Ms	Thomson, Ms
Howard, Mr	Ward, Ms
Hutchins, Ms	Williams, Ms
Kairouz, Ms	

Noes, 37

Angus, Mr	Northe, Mr
Battin, Mr	O'Brien, Mr
Bull, Mr T.	Paynter, Mr
Burgess, Mr	Pesutto, Mr
Clark, Mr	Ryall, Ms
Crisp, Mr	Ryan, Ms
Dixon, Mr	Sandell, Ms
Fyffe, Mrs	Smith, Mr R.
Gidley, Mr	Smith, Mr T.
Guy, Mr	Southwick, Mr
Hibbins, Mr	Staley, Ms
Hodgett, Mr	Thompson, Mr
Katos, Mr	Tilley, Mr
Kealy, Ms	Victoria, Ms
McCurdy, Mr	Wakeling, Mr
McLeish, Ms	Walsh, Mr
Morris, Mr	Watt, Mr
Mulder, Mr	Wells, Mr
Napthine, Dr	

Amendment defeated.

Ms Allan's amendment 1 agreed to; amended sessional order agreed to.

Sessional order 8

Ms Allan's amendments 2 and 3 agreed to; amended sessional order agreed to.

Sessional order 9

Ms Allan's amendment 4 agreed to; amended sessional order agreed to.

Sessional order 10

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member for Box Hill has moved amendments 2 and 3 to the proposed sessional order. The question is:

That amendment 2 be agreed to.

House divided on amendment:

<i>Ayes, 38</i>	
Angus, Mr	Northe, Mr
Battin, Mr	O'Brien, Mr
Bull, Mr T.	Paynter, Mr
Burgess, Mr	Pesutto, Mr
Clark, Mr	Ryall, Ms
Crisp, Mr	Ryan, Ms
Dixon, Mr	Sandell, Ms
Fyffe, Mrs	Sheed, Ms
Gidley, Mr	Smith, Mr R.
Guy, Mr	Smith, Mr T.
Hibbins, Mr	Southwick, Mr
Hodgett, Mr	Staley, Ms
Katos, Mr	Thompson, Mr
Kealy, Ms	Tilley, Mr
McCurdy, Mr	Victoria, Ms
McLeish, Ms	Wakeling, Mr
Morris, Mr	Walsh, Mr

Mulder, Mr
Naphthine, Dr

Watt, Mr
Wells, Mr

Noes, 43

Allan, Ms
Andrews, Mr
Blandthorn, Ms
Brooks, Mr
Bull, Mr J.
Carbines, Mr
Carroll, Mr
Couzens, Ms
D' Ambrosio, Ms
Dimopoulos, Mr
Donnellan, Mr
Edbrooke, Mr
Edwards, Ms
Eren, Mr
Foley, Mr
Garrett, Ms
Gralely, Ms
Green, Ms
Halfpenny, Ms
Hennessy, Ms
Howard, Mr
Hutchins, Ms

Kairouz, Ms
Kilkenny, Ms
Knight, Ms
Lim, Mr
McGuire, Mr
Merlino, Mr
Neville, Ms
Noonan, Mr
Pakula, Mr
Pallas, Mr
Pearson, Mr
Richardson, Mr
Richardson, Ms
Scott, Mr
Spence, Ms
Staikos, Mr
Suleyman, Ms
Thomas, Ms
Thomson, Ms
Ward, Ms
Williams, Ms

Brooks, Mr
Bull, Mr J.
Carbines, Mr
Carroll, Mr
Couzens, Ms
D' Ambrosio, Ms
Dimopoulos, Mr
Donnellan, Mr
Edbrooke, Mr
Edwards, Ms
Eren, Mr
Foley, Mr
Garrett, Ms
Gralely, Ms
Green, Ms
Halfpenny, Ms
Hennessy, Ms
Howard, Mr
Hutchins, Ms

Lim, Mr
McGuire, Mr
Merlino, Mr
Neville, Ms
Noonan, Mr
Pakula, Mr
Pallas, Mr
Pearson, Mr
Richardson, Mr
Richardson, Ms
Scott, Mr
Spence, Ms
Staikos, Mr
Suleyman, Ms
Thomas, Ms
Thomson, Ms
Ward, Ms
Williams, Ms

Noes, 38

Angus, Mr
Battin, Mr
Bull, Mr T.
Burgess, Mr
Clark, Mr
Crisp, Mr
Dixon, Mr
Fyffe, Mrs
Gidley, Mr
Guy, Mr
Hibbins, Mr
Hodgett, Mr
Katos, Mr
Kealy, Ms
McCurdy, Mr
McLeish, Ms
Morris, Mr
Mulder, Mr
Naphthine, Dr

Northe, Mr
O'Brien, Mr
Paynter, Mr
Pesutto, Mr
Ryall, Ms
Ryan, Ms
Sandell, Ms
Sheed, Ms
Smith, Mr R.
Smith, Mr T.
Southwick, Mr
Staley, Ms
Thompson, Mr
Tilley, Mr
Victoria, Ms
Wakeling, Mr
Walsh, Mr
Watt, Mr
Wells, Mr

Amendment defeated.

Mr Clark's amendment 3 defeated; sessional order agreed to.

Sessional order 11

Ms Allan's amendment 5 agreed to; amended sessional order agreed to; sessional order 12 agreed to.

Sessional order 13

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The members for Box Hill and Prahran have both moved amendments to this sessional order. Both members seek to omit the sessional order as proposed and insert alternative words. I will therefore test the member for Box Hill's amendment 4 and the member for Prahran's amendment 1 on the question that the words proposed to be omitted stand part. If the house agrees to omit the sessional order as proposed, I will then deal with the words proposed to be inserted by the members. Members supporting the omission of the sessional order as proposed should vote no. The question is:

That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question.

House divided on omission (members in favour vote no):

Ayes, 43

Allan, Ms
Andrews, Mr
Blandthorn, Ms

Kairouz, Ms
Kilkenny, Ms
Knight, Ms

Question agreed to.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! As the house has not agreed to omit the words, the members are not able to propose their alternative sets of words to be inserted.

Amendments defeated.

Sessional order agreed to.

Sessional order 14

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member for Prahran has moved amendments 2 and 3 to the proposed sessional order. The question is that amendment 2 be agreed to.

House divided on amendment:

Ayes, 38

Angus, Mr
Battin, Mr

Northe, Mr
O'Brien, Mr

Bull, Mr T.
Burgess, Mr
Clark, Mr
Crisp, Mr
Dixon, Mr
Fyffe, Mrs
Gidley, Mr
Guy, Mr
Hibbins, Mr
Hodgett, Mr
Katos, Mr
Kealy, Ms
McCurdy, Mr
McLeish, Ms
Morris, Mr
Mulder, Mr
Napthine, Dr

Paynter, Mr
Pesutto, Mr
Ryall, Ms
Ryan, Ms
Sandell, Ms
Sheed, Ms
Smith, Mr R.
Smith, Mr T.
Southwick, Mr
Staley, Ms
Thompson, Mr
Tilley, Mr
Victoria, Ms
Wakeling, Mr
Walsh, Mr
Watt, Mr
Wells, Mr

Noes, 43

Allan, Ms
Andrews, Mr
Blandthorn, Ms
Brooks, Mr
Bull, Mr J.
Carbines, Mr
Carroll, Mr
Couzens, Ms
D'Ambrosio, Ms
Dimopoulos, Mr
Donnellan, Mr
Edbrooke, Mr
Edwards, Ms
Eren, Mr
Foley, Mr
Garrett, Ms
Graley, Ms
Green, Ms
Halfpenny, Ms
Hennessy, Ms
Howard, Mr
Hutchins, Ms

Kairouz, Ms
Kilkenny, Ms
Knight, Ms
Lim, Mr
McGuire, Mr
Merlino, Mr
Neville, Ms
Noonan, Mr
Pakula, Mr
Pallas, Mr
Pearson, Mr
Richardson, Mr
Richardson, Ms
Scott, Mr
Spence, Ms
Staikos, Mr
Suleyman, Ms
Thomas, Ms
Thomson, Ms
Ward, Ms
Williams, Ms

Amendment defeated.

Mr Hibbins amendment 3 defeated; sessional order agreed to.

Sessional order 15

Ms Allan's amendments 6 and 7 agreed to.

Amended sessional order agreed to; sessional order 16 agreed to.

New sessional order AA

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the House has moved a new sessional order AA in relation to the order of business. The question is:

That new sessional order AA be agreed to.

House divided on question:*Ayes, 46*

Allan, Ms
Andrews, Mr
Blandthorn, Ms
Brooks, Mr
Bull, Mr J.
Carbines, Mr
Carroll, Mr
Couzens, Ms
D'Ambrosio, Ms
Dimopoulos, Mr
Donnellan, Mr
Edbrooke, Mr
Edwards, Ms
Eren, Mr
Foley, Mr
Garrett, Ms
Graley, Ms
Green, Ms
Halfpenny, Ms
Hennessy, Ms
Hibbins, Mr
Howard, Mr
Hutchins, Ms

Kairouz, Ms
Kilkenny, Ms
Knight, Ms
Lim, Mr
McGuire, Mr
Merlino, Mr
Neville, Ms
Noonan, Mr
Pakula, Mr
Pallas, Mr
Pearson, Mr
Richardson, Mr
Richardson, Ms
Sandell, Ms
Scott, Mr
Sheed, Ms
Spence, Ms
Staikos, Mr
Suleyman, Ms
Thomas, Ms
Thomson, Ms
Ward, Ms
Williams, Ms

Noes, 35

Angus, Mr
Battin, Mr
Bull, Mr T.
Burgess, Mr
Clark, Mr
Crisp, Mr
Dixon, Mr
Fyffe, Mrs
Gidley, Mr
Guy, Mr
Hodgett, Mr
Katos, Mr
Kealy, Ms
McCurdy, Mr
McLeish, Ms
Morris, Mr
Mulder, Mr
Napthine, Dr

Northe, Mr
O'Brien, Mr
Paynter, Mr
Pesutto, Mr
Ryall, Ms
Ryan, Ms
Smith, Mr R.
Smith, Mr T.
Southwick, Mr
Staley, Ms
Thompson, Mr
Tilley, Mr
Victoria, Ms
Wakeling, Mr
Walsh, Mr
Watt, Mr
Wells, Mr

Question agreed to.

New sessional order agreed to.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! That concludes the consideration of the sessional orders and the amendments moved. The member for Prahran has moved a reasoned amendment to the question that the motion be agreed to, as detailed in the printed amendment in the hands of members. Before considering the final question on the motion, the house must deal with the member for Prahran's reasoned amendment.

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran) — I will speak briefly. I reaffirm the commitment that this is a new situation in this house, in which four parties are now represented. It

is completely appropriate that we send these sessional orders to the Standing Orders Committee so that it can better reflect on how it can appropriately deal with the fact there are now four parties represented in this house.

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — I will make just a few observations on the amendment that has been put by the member for Prahran. I appreciate the work that has been done by members of Parliament on all sides in terms of how this sessional orders debate has been conducted. There has obviously been a lot of detail circulated. I can understand that some newer members of the Parliament coming into the chamber — —

Mr Guy interjected.

Ms ALLAN — I thank the Leader of the Opposition. We are all settling into new roles and practices. This has been a very helpful debate. It has given us the opportunity to consider how we want this Parliament to work collectively. As we know, the destiny of each chamber is in its own hands. What we have determined today is something we should be very proud of. We are making sure that this is a more modern workplace and that it has reasonable sitting hours for members of Parliament. I do not think it means that those of us from country Victoria will get to go home of an evening to our real homes, but it is a bit more civilised. It will make sure that we operate much more effectively. I anticipate that it will result in much more vigorous debate. It might raise the standards of debate. I am sure the member for Polwarth is particularly looking forward to raising the standards of debate from his position on the other side of the chamber.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms ALLAN — Did I wake him up? I apologise to the member for Polwarth, the former Minister for Roads and Minister for Public Transport; I did not mean to do that.

I only skimmed over it in the course of the debate earlier, so I want to spend a couple of moments on why we are not supporting the amendment proposed by the Greens. The position that was just put by the member for Prahran indicating that there is more diversity in this chamber is a valid point. I have sat in this chamber when there have been three Independent members and have worked through processes and procedures to accommodate appropriate speaking, debating and representing opportunities for those members.

I think it is appropriate that the Standing Orders Committee examine a range of matters. On 16 October

2014 we in opposition committed to ensuring as much. We made a commitment to review standing orders and to look at a range of things. We genuinely believe it is important to do so, because many of us in this place lived through the farce of the last two years where the minority government of the day very clearly did not have the confidence of the Parliament. It did not have the confidence to test the numbers on the floor of the Parliament. There were limitations around that, but that is probably a conversation for another day.

Over the last two years this place became a circus. It was riven by chaos, riven by crisis and riven by dysfunction as a result of the Liberal-Nationals government not being able to manage its legislative program, not being able to manage its ministers and not being able to manage its own members of Parliament. Who can forget the former member for Frankston? He was a creature of the Liberal Party. He was the Liberal Party's man. The party embraced him, preselected him and ran him in the seat of Frankston. The Parliament of the past four years was riven by that chaos and crisis.

We do want to see genuine reform, which is why we have brought forward the sessional order changes at the earliest opportunity. It has been disappointing that on the way through there have been a few knockers and blockers.

Mr Hodgett interjected.

Ms ALLAN — It is interesting that the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party says that he is hungry. His colleague the member for Caulfield put a most persuasive argument that we could not possibly sit through the lunch break. Professor Lunalot from Caulfield could not possibly sit through the lunch break. He absolutely could not.

Mr Southwick — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I am sure the many union members would be appalled at the fact that the member is not standing up for her members. Many of the staff and attendants in this chamber will not be able to have their lunch breaks. I take personal offence to the comment the member just made, and I ask her to withdraw it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member takes offence to the comments made by the minister. I ask the minister to withdraw them and continue with her contribution.

Ms ALLAN — I withdraw.

We have no problems with the staff; I am sure they are sophisticated and intelligent enough to work out their lunch rosters, and I would hope that the opposition

whips are too. I am sure they can put in place a roster, which will mean that one member will be sitting in the chamber and the other member will be able to pop upstairs to get his toasted ham and cheese sandwich. I am sure it can be worked out. We are all intelligent people, and I am sure a simple lunchtime roster can be put in place. Indeed, I would be delighted to write the roster for the member for Caulfield. I would be delighted to put in place a house duty roster for the opposition if it so desires. If it needs a helping hand from us, we are more than happy to be of assistance, because that is what being in government is all about. Being in government is about reaching out and giving a helping hand to those who need it on the way through.

I may be straying just a little bit from the motion of the member for Prahran, and he may be wondering what on earth this is all about.

Mr Walsh interjected.

Ms ALLAN — This is my last chance; I have got to get them in.

Mr Walsh interjected.

Ms ALLAN — I am sure there will be many more opportunities. We are keen to have conversations with all representatives. I was a member of the Standing Orders Committee in the last Parliament. It was — —

An honourable member interjected.

Ms ALLAN — Goodness; it is Thursday. I am looking forward to having conversations with representatives. The Standing Orders Committee will be made up of cross-party representatives, and if the Independent wants to come and join in the fun, I am sure she will be welcome as well. It will examine the standing orders and the rules.

Mr Hodgett interjected.

Ms ALLAN — It is not just the ladies who bring a plate, is it?

Mr Hodgett interjected.

Ms ALLAN — No. We want to make sure that the rules — —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! Now is an appropriate time to break for lunch.

Sitting suspended 1.00 p.m. until 2.03 p.m.

Business interrupted under standing orders.

RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

Unparliamentary language

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Mornington by way of a point of order requested that I review whether the Minister for Roads and Road Safety had used an inappropriate word when responding to a question without notice yesterday. I reviewed the *Hansard* record, which did not shed any light on the matter. I subsequently listened to the recording of yesterday's proceedings, and it was quite clear that the minister had used the word alleged by the member for Mornington to have been used. I agree that the language used by the minister was inappropriate. This morning I called the minister to my chambers to discuss the issue. He agreed that it was inappropriate to use such a word in the house, apologised for his action and indicated that he would be more careful with his language in the future. I have accepted the minister's apology and assurance that he will not use such language in the house again.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER — Order! I wish to take this opportunity to welcome His Excellency Haralambos Dafaranos, the Greek ambassador to Australia, and Miss Christina Simantiraki, Consul General of Greece. I say on behalf of all members: καλώς ορίσατε.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, I again offer leave to the government to table the full east-west link contract. Leave is offered to the government to table that contract now.

Election commitments

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. On 17 December the minister told the media that the Linking Melbourne Authority would be kept, so I ask: Minister, how can Victorians believe a word you say when a month later you have broken your word?

The SPEAKER — Order! I will give the Leader of the Opposition the opportunity to rephrase his question, but I remind him that this issue was discussed yesterday. The same ruling applies to the Leader of the Opposition. I invite the Leader of the Opposition to ask his question through the Chair.

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety.

Through the Chair, I ask the minister: is it government policy for the Labor Party and the roads minister to break every one of their election policies just two months from the election?

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Let me be very clear: we will keep every promise we have put forward to the Victorian public. We will not be breaking our promises like the previous government did. If we have indicated that we will undertake a project, like the West Gate distributor — —

Ms Ryall — On a point of order, Speaker, standing order 58 requires the minister to be factual and succinct. I pose that there was no fact in what he has already said, and I would ask — —

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

Mr DONNELLAN — In relation to the Linking Melbourne Authority, it is a large authority and it is a quality authority which delivers projects on time and on money. It is an institution we set up to deliver Peninsula Link and EastLink, and it did a marvellous job. Further to that, the previous government asked the authority to undertake work on the east–west link, which it undertook. In terms of the dodgy business case that was put forward, which was requested by the government, it included many figures like the 80 000 to 100 000 cars per day.

Mr R. Smith — My point of order, Speaker, goes to relevance. The question was not about the east–west link contract. It was about the sacked workers from the Linking Melbourne Authority, who were sacked subsequent — —

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

Mr R. Smith interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the member for Warrandyte.

Mr DONNELLAN — The idea put forward by the roads minister, which was not part of the original question but which I will address anyway for the sake of those people who are — —

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, I know the Minister for Roads and Road Safety may be confused, but he is the roads minister, not me.

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order. The minister will continue to answer the question as directed.

Mr DONNELLAN — Let me be very clear: the policies we put forward and the infrastructure we promise to deliver will be delivered. We will keep our promises. We are not like those in the Liberal Party who promise the world and deliver nothing over four years.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister has finished answering the question.

TAFE funding

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — My question is to the Premier — —

Mr R. Smith interjected.

Questions interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Member for Warrandyte

The SPEAKER — Order! I will not accept the member for Warrandyte reflecting on the Chair. I ask the member for Warrandyte withdraw from the chamber for half an hour.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Warrandyte knows full well that the member is not to challenge the ruling of the Chair. I ask the member for Warrandyte to withdraw from the chamber for half an hour.

Honourable member for Warrandyte withdrew from chamber.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

TAFE funding

Questions resumed.

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier update the house as to how the government is investing in our TAFE system to make sure that the next generation of students and workers get the best start?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I thank the member for Macedon for her question and for the passionate advocacy she provides for young people who need

skills and opportunities, indeed for all of her constituents, and for the fact that she knows, as every member of this government does, that jobs start with skills. If you undermine our TAFE system, you undermine the opportunities and the reaching of the full potential of every single Victorian. As members of this government know — and indeed as a clear majority of the people of this great state clearly know — every Victorian who is blocked or who is inhibited from reaching their full potential stops our state reaching its potential.

That is exactly why the member for Macedon and indeed every member on this side the house fought for four long years against the biggest cutbacks to TAFE that this state has ever seen. Three thousand jobs were lost in our TAFE institutes. Hundreds of courses were cut — gone for good! — and all of the skills they were to provide were lost to our economy, to individuals, to our community and to the potential of our state. Campuses were closed. Fees were skyrocketing.

So many young Victorians were left behind, abandoned by a previous government — those who sit opposite — the members of which fail to realise even today that jobs start with skills and that every young person is entitled to have their pathway and their journey and the reaching of their full potential supported in Victoria — and most of all in this state. But describing the wreckage that was left by those opposite is not what is needed. We need to get on and make sure that we deliver on our commitments, and that is exactly what we have been doing.

I am delighted to be able to tell the member for Macedon that we have brought forward TAFE funding. We are not waiting until the new financial year, we are not waiting until 1 July, but instead we are getting on with this from day one, making sure that we put people first and reinvest in TAFE. We are not just repairing the damage of those opposite but building TAFE up to be bigger and better than it has ever been.

For Bendigo Kangan TAFE there is \$7.8 million in capital funding and \$2 million in recurrent funding; for Federation Training in Gippsland, a \$2.5 million boost; for GOTAFE in Shepparton, a \$1.3 million boost; and for Melbourne Polytechnic, a \$4 million dollar boost. For the South West TAFE — no doubt the member for South-West Coast will be interested to see this; he has never been anywhere near a TAFE funding boost! — there is a \$4 million boost. There are not cutbacks and closures but more money for more opportunity — something that those opposite know so little about.

Speaker, you need not simply take the word of members of the government for this. Have a look at the news clippings over such a long period of time: ‘Taking to the streets — Baillieu braces for regional backlash’, that was in terms of TAFE cutbacks; ‘Bush backlash builds over cuts’ — absolutely it did; and ‘TAFE cuts hit schools’. I can keep going: ‘TAFE funding in crisis’; and the *Shepparton News* wrote, after the change of government following the work of the former Minister for Higher Education and Skills in the other place and the allocation of the funding that I have just gone through, ‘TAFE lifeline’.

Standing in stark contrast is a government that recognises that jobs start with skills and that no Victorian — least of all a country Victorian — ever benefited from a state government cutback. We know that, we understand that, and that is why we will keep delivering on our commitments not just to repair the damage of those opposite but to make TAFE bigger and better for the future. They are our values, that is what we took to the election, that is our mandate and that is our commitment.

Port of Hastings Development Authority

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) — My question is to the Minister for Ports. The minister said that there would be no changes to the Port of Hastings Development Authority until after Infrastructure Victoria assessed the merits of it, so I ask: what does the minister have to say to the 70 port authority workers who have just been sacked following the breaking of yet another promise?

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Ports) — I thank the member for his question, but I totally reject the premise of the question. He is simply wrong. Seventy people are not being sacked at the Port of Hastings Development Authority — full stop. They are contractors on short-term contracts, and those contracts are finishing. It is typical scaremongering by the Liberal Party. They had many years to get on with the job of delivering infrastructure. They failed over four years, and again —

Ms Ryall — On a point of order, Speaker, the standing orders are very clear — standing order 110 in relation to relevance and standing order 58 on debating the question. I ask you to uphold the standing orders in relation to this, to bring the minister back to answering the question and to stop the debate.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, the Minister for Ports was being entirely relevant to the question that was asked. The question that was asked went to the employment of staff at the port of Hastings

and an allegation in the question by the Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party. It is entirely relevant and within the standing orders for the minister, in answering that question, to demonstrate how the shadow Minister for Ports is wrong in his allegation. That is entirely consistent and entirely in accordance with answering the question. I would have thought that the minister providing information to the house would have been something the opposition would have appreciated. The minister is being entirely consistent, and I ask you to rule the point of order out of order.

The SPEAKER — Order! I uphold the point of order on the basis that the minister is referring to the opposition. The minister will come back to answering the question.

Mr DONNELLAN — As I quite clearly indicated to the Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party, he is simply wrong — full stop. People are not being sacked at the Port of Hastings Development Authority — full stop. Let me be very clear: we will not be lectured to by a group of people who sacked alone 500 staff at VicRoads and thousands of other public servants. These crocodile tears which have suddenly appeared — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Has the minister finished answering the question?

Mr DONNELLAN — Yes.

Country Fire Authority Fiskville facility

Mr HOWARD (Buninyong) — My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services. Can the minister update the house on the recently released report about contamination of the CFA facility at Fiskville?

Ms GARRETT (Minister for Emergency Services) — I thank the member for his question and for his long-term commitment to the issues at Fiskville, which is in his area. I know that the member is extremely proud that he is part of a government that acted immediately to address the disturbing issues that were revealed at the training site at Fiskville during the previous government's term.

In the first week of this government the Premier and I announced that there would be a parliamentary inquiry established into all aspects of Fiskville from the 1970s until today. We established that inquiry at the first available opportunity when Parliament sat prior to Christmas. I inform members of this house that this was done because of disturbing reports of unsafe practices

for decades — contaminated water being used in fire training, reports of a toxic sludge in the dams, chemical waste being stored underground and shocking chemicals being used in fire training.

Unfortunately the former government kept its head in the sand. Reports were dragged out and kept secret. There was evidence of senior management still using contaminated water when it knew it was contaminated; Environment Protection Authority Victoria was issuing clean-up notices; people were struggling to get information through FOI; WorkSafe was looking at it, but that went on for years; and the government was not dealing with firefighters directly, it was not dealing with the union that represented them and it was not dealing with the families of firefighters.

During this time we lost people along the way, and I pay tribute in particular to Brian Potter and others who stood firm on this issue and wanted to expose it. I also recognise the investigative work of Ruth Lamperd and Stephen Drill at the *Herald Sun*. On 10 December 2014 Ruth Lamperd wrote tellingly:

For years fireys complained of serious skin irritations and gastro illnesses after training at Fiskville.

...

Why was nobody who trained at Fiskville told the recycled water they were using was contaminated with a harmful bacteria ...

She also wrote:

And in three years of talk and pleading with politicians, no action resulted in change.

Politics stood in the way of open and honest response. Firefighters continued to die from work-related cancers, uncompensated. Families have been left hanging.

That is going to change under the Andrews Labor government.

I inform members of this house that this inquiry will be comprehensive. It will be open, it will haul before it the people who need to give evidence before the Victorian people and, most importantly, it will give firefighters and their families the answers they deserve and the justice they deserve.

The inquiry will be led by the member for Thomastown, who did outstanding work during the inquiry into sexual abuse. We very much look forward to making sure that we get to the bottom of what happened at Fiskville, not just in the 1970s and 1980s but right up to today. We will get to the bottom of what senior management did at Fiskville, and we will give

the firefighters and their families the answers they deserve.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister's time has expired.

Regional and rural road funding

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Given that before the election Labor promised to make country roads safer, I ask: why has Labor scrapped the vitally important \$160 million Country Roads and Bridges Fund, which is solely focused on local road safety, replacing it with nothing and breaking this key election promise to country Victoria?

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — I thank the Leader of The Nationals for his question. As I noted in the last budget, the previous government failed to renew funding for that program, full stop. That is pretty disappointing coming from a group of people who were supposedly committed to delivering for their regional communities. They comprehensively failed to do so.

Ms Ryall — On a point of order, Speaker, attacking the opposition is not the role of a minister during question time. In terms of attacking the opposition, we heard this raised as a point of order time and again by the Leader of the House when she was manager of opposition business. I ask that you call the minister back to answering the question and prevent him from attacking the opposition.

Ms Allan — On the point of order raised by the member for Ringwood, Speaker, which is indeed similar to points of order I have made previously, the minister in answering the question was providing information that was indeed factual — that there was no money in the forward budget for this program. The question went to why this program was scrapped. The program was not scrapped by this government; it was scrapped by the former government. The minister was being entirely relevant.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the House knows that a point of order is not an opportunity to repeat the question or enter into debate. There is no point of order, but I ask the minister to come back to answering the question.

Mr DONNELLAN — As I indicated to the Leader of The Nationals, it was a lapsing program which you failed to renew, full stop. Let me be very clear —

The SPEAKER — Order! I am very confident that today the minister will speak through the Chair.

Mr DONNELLAN — The minister will speak through the Chair, hopefully, and he will stop misbehaving.

At the end of the day, we have a commitment of \$1 billion for regional roads. It is a specific commitment to deliver to those communities what the previous government failed to deliver. If you look at the road resurfacing figure for regional roads in the last budget, from 2010 there was a reduction of 60 per cent in the amount of road resurfacing that the previous government undertook.

It is incredibly rich for the Leader of The Nationals to get up and talk about what he delivered to his regional communities. He comprehensively failed to deliver. Reducing the resurfacing rate, as the previous government did, left regional roads in a terrible state, and it would be worthwhile for the Leader of The Nationals to look at the key performance indicators in the budget and reflect on why his members are sitting over there and we are sitting over here — because he failed in his job.

Alpine National Park cattle grazing

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) — My question is to the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water. Can the minister update the house on the action taken to preserve Victoria's national parks?

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water) — I thank the member for St Albans for her question, and I know she has a very strong passion for our national parks. In fact everyone on this side of the house has very strong passion for national parks — for protecting and enhancing them and ensuring that all Victorians can enjoy our national parks.

This is in stark contrast to those members opposite. In four years they did enormous damage in our national parks, from plans to allow massive private development and 99-year leases in our national parks to the signing of a contract — on the eve of caretaker mode — for Point Nepean, against community wishes.

The previous government gutted Parks Victoria's budget. We saw massive job losses but also an inability to actually maintain our national park assets over that four-year period. Despite the worsening state of our national parks, it then started charging visitors to go there for their pleasure. It decided that our Alpine National Park should become a beef farm by

reintroducing cattle to the high country under the guise of a so-called scientific trial.

Let us be very clear: in 2005 this Parliament passed legislation that took cattle out of the high country. In fact we paid out the licences to all those licence-holders, so a whole lot of people received a whole lot of money when this Parliament voted to take cattle out of the high country. The Parliament did that because the science was absolutely clear. In fact the science has been clear for decades: cattle do enormous damage to our environment and they also have absolutely no impact on reducing fire risks. That is why back in the 1950s and 1960s all governments across Australia took cattle out of our high country and national parks, including the Snowy Mountains National Park.

But the former so-called environment minister — who is unfortunately not with us at the moment — was not one to be swayed by the overwhelming scientific evidence. In fact he was not swayed by the fact that scientific evidence had been collected over decades and decades. He was not swayed by the fact that there was clear evidence showing massive environmental degradation caused by cattle grazing, and nor was he swayed by the evidence that cattle played no part in reducing fuel loads. No, instead the member for Warrandyte decided to conduct his own scientific trial.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms NEVILLE — Those opposite bleat all the time that we should have kept that scientific trial going. Let me be very clear: there was no scientific trial. In fact not a single scientist would put their name to this. No scientists were added. In fact perhaps the government could have enlisted the member for Caulfield, an adjunct professor; he might have been able to help us out here.

Mr Merlino interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Deputy Premier will stop interjecting.

Ms NEVILLE — Upon coming to government, I went looking for the scientific data that had been collected during the first phases of this so-called trial. I asked where that work was. Where was the meticulously detailed record of where the cattle had been, which bushes had they been eating, which were the craggy ravines they were using where there were fuel loads? Where was all that evidence? It did not exist. There was not one document, not one report — no file was anywhere to be seen. This was a sham. We saw it for what it was — a loophole by which the

coalition could once again treat our national parks as paddocks. We will be closing this loophole through this Parliament.

We made it clear back in 2011 that an Andrews Labor government would remove the cattle from the high country. Victorians voted for this, and we have delivered it.

Hazelwood power station

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) — My question is to the Minister for Energy and Resources. Given that the Australian energy operator has identified that up to 3100 megawatts of brown coal generation is no longer needed in Victoria, will the current Labor government follow through on the Brumby Labor government's promise in 2010 to shut Hazelwood power station, which is one of the dirtiest power stations in the world?

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Energy and Resources) — I thank the member for Melbourne for her question, welcome her to the chamber and congratulate her on her first question. I also acknowledge the fine work of her predecessor, Jennifer Kanis.

Mr Edbrooke interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the member for Frankston.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — The Greens might think it is easy to shut down a base-load power station overnight, but the reality is that it is not an easy fix. There are certain economic realities that need to be considered. I assure everyone — and I do not think anyone could be in any doubt about this — that we on this side of the house understand and accept that climate change is real. We also understand and accept that Victoria, and indeed the country, need to move to a different energy mix. That is a given. It is only Labor governments — both state and federal — that have ever made any significant moves to act on climate change and actively pursue a change to our energy mix.

We only need look at the facts, which speak very clearly. It was only a Labor government in Victoria that activated a clear mechanism to reduce carbon emissions from our polluting industries. That is what we have done. We actually activated a renewable energy program to help reduce energy emissions and change the energy mix in Victoria. Now we also focus on reducing energy consumption. When we talk about a cleaner environment, when we talk about a cleaner energy mix, we cannot forget the fact that we also need

to look at ways of reducing demand for our energy supplies. That is fundamentally important.

I remind the house that it was those opposite who decided to put in place a motion to shut down the Victorian energy efficiency scheme. They did that in favour of large-scale polluting generators. That was their modus operandi; that was their motivation. This side of the house was very clear that if elected we would defend and save the Victorian energy efficiency scheme, and that is what we will do. We will stand by every Victorian who wants reduce their energy consumption because they want to save on their bills, because they want to do that for the benefit of both their environment and their future. But we will also have a very clear agenda in place through our renewable energy plan which will change the energy mix in Victoria. We have a proud record of doing just that.

In fact it is only a Labor government — in fact the previous Labor government — that has the runs on the board. We will not let Victoria down. We will once again lead the country when it comes to changing our energy mix, reducing our energy consumption and ensuring that the future is cleaner, brighter, healthier and safer for every single Victorian, and we will take the community with us.

Local government rates

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) — My question is to the Minister for Local Government. Can the minister update the house on what the government is doing to provide a fair go for Victorian ratepayers, and is she aware of any other policies?

Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Local Government) — I will just take the opportunity to congratulate you on your election, Speaker. I would also like to thank the member for Pascoe Vale for her very important question and acknowledge the great speech she made in the chamber last night.

The Andrews government was very proud to take a fairer local government rates policy to the election. This is a new system that will put an end to the massive council increases in rates that we have seen in previous years. Those rates thrived under the previous government, which refused to take this issue on. Instead its members put their heads in the sand and did not take note of the effects on the household cost of living, which was very much affected by those severe increases in some pockets across the state.

We are not just talking about 3 or 4 per cent increases. Over the last three years we have seen 8, 9 and 10 per

cent increases consistently in some councils. Unfortunately we even had one council, the Golden Plains shire, that averaged a 15 increase in one year. Ratepayers could rightfully ask the question, ‘What is going on and what is the government doing?’. I am proud that we took up the mantle on this and developed some very good policy in this area to take to the election.

I have been overwhelmed over the summer period by the number of emails and calls that have come into my office from ratepayers across the state congratulating us on our policy and asking us to get to work straightaway in implementing it. That is exactly what we are doing. We are delivering on our promises. We have gone out there and recommitted to this fantastic policy. I have been at the table with many councils, the Municipal Association of Victoria and the Victorian Local Governance Association discussing the policy and how we are going to implement this campaign. We have an open door, unlike the previous government, and we are willing to talk about the implementation.

We have asked the Essential Services Commission Victoria to oversee this and have a look at some considerations that may need to be given to some councils in developing this policy, including any extraordinary circumstances such as natural disasters that need to be taken into consideration when setting the percentage on the rates in a forward process; what other sources of income are available to councils; the continued maintenance of essential council services; and finally, the effects on councils of the commonwealth government’s grant cuts, its lack of commitment shown and the freeze applied to the indexation of services.

This will be a new, fairer rates capping system that will allow councils to continue to raise revenue to deliver essential services, not the dodgy artworks or the tin cows up trees that we have seen over the last few years. We are delivering on our promises, and we are proud of this policy.

East–west link

Mr O’BRIEN (Malvern) — My question is to the Treasurer. I note that Labor promised to release the east–west link contract in its first week in government and has not; Labor pledged the contract was not worth the paper it is written on, yet the government is avoiding having this tested by the courts; and Labor said no compensation would be payable for ripping up the contract, yet the government is now negotiating how much will be paid. I ask: why should any

Victorian believe anything this Treasurer has to say regarding the east–west link?

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I thank the member for Malvern for his question, or should I say the hand that signed the paper? The hand that signed this side deal!

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I accept some level of interjection, but I should be able to hear the answer from the Treasurer. I ask government members and opposition members to help.

Mr PALLAS — Let that letter live in infamy. It was a letter, signed by an official of the Crown, that said that if the state of Victoria acts in an illegal fashion, the state nonetheless guarantees a contract — a contract that was certainly front and centre of the public debate and front and centre of legal advice rendered by the opposition at the time, with some of the most eminent legal thinkers in this nation, which brought into question the lawfulness and the appropriateness of contracting. Let us not forget that when this so-called dodgy side letter was signed — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr PALLAS — The question went directly to when this material would be released. Let me be clear: we gave an undertaking to the people of Victoria that all of this material would be released. It will be. To take the words of another great Labor statesman, ‘We are going to do you slowly, mate’.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition knows that he should not interject while the Speaker is on his feet. I also warn Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, who equally knows that he should not interject when the Speaker is on his feet.

Ms Ryall — On a point of order, Speaker, members cannot attack the opposition. Question time is not an opportunity to attack the opposition. In addition the specifics of the question were not being responded to. I ask you to draw the member back to answering the specifics of the question and ask him not to attack the opposition.

The SPEAKER — Order! I uphold the point of order. I ask the Treasurer to come back to answering the question.

Mr PALLAS — Unwinding the damage, the arrogance and the insolence that has been inflicted upon the people of Victoria by those opposite will take time — make no mistake — but we are unreservedly, implacably and unswervingly committed to making sure not only that we clean up the mess of the previous government but also that we expose to the people of Victoria the level of impropriety and inappropriateness by revealing every document in all of its gory detail to the people of Victoria.

We will, as we go through that process, make sure Victorians know exactly what risk the previous government exposed them to. Our words before the last election were clear — —

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, in the Treasurer’s answer he has said that the government intends to release the east–west link contract. I again offer him leave to — —

The SPEAKER — Order! That is not a point of order.

Mr PALLAS — We will take — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I require members to be silent during the Treasurer’s response.

Mr PALLAS — The opposition is sport in this process. It has certainly trashed its reputation in terms of economic responsibility to the people of Victoria. We will take whatever time is necessary to protect the Victorian public’s position. We will take whatever time is necessary to expose to the Victorian people the entirety of the outrage that was inflicted upon them by those opposite. There will be document after document, let me assure members. There will be enough material to sink the opposition to the deepest depths of depression for as long as it takes, because this was a fraud that — —

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, this is — to use a Paul Keating analogy again — like being slapped with a wet lettuce!

The SPEAKER — Order! It is Thursday, but I do not uphold the point of order.

Mrs Fyffe — On a point of order, Speaker, I realise that you were distracted and did not see, but the member for Frankston was making a gesture that was offensive and threatening to the opposition. I ask you to counsel him. I realise he is a new member, but he did repeat the gesture. I find it offensive and demeaning to

the position that I hold in this chamber that he would gesture like that to me and to other members on this side. I ask you to counsel him most seriously.

The SPEAKER — Order! If there was a gesture that a member found offensive, I ask the member for Frankston to withdraw and apologise.

Mr Edbrooke — I certainly withdraw that gesture.

Mr R. Smith interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not require the member for Warrandyte to advise the Chair. The member for Frankston will apologise.

Mr Edbrooke — I certainly apologise if anyone was offended by that action.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair thanks the member for Frankston.

Mr PALLAS — In conclusion, let me be clear to Victorians and to members of this place: we are dealing with respect and responsibility. Those contractors entered into those arrangements, no matter how dodgy they were. Let me be very clear about this: we are going to protect the taxpayers interests and Victoria's interests every step of the way, unlike those opposite who try at every opportunity to undermine the state's interests.

The people of Victoria definitely deserve to see exactly what went on here, but Victorians deserve something more than that. They deserve a government which puts their interests first, which respects the mandate given by the people of Victoria and which will make sure that when it goes about delivering the infrastructure that Victorians desperately need, it will not be fitted up with an uneconomic, ridiculous idea that is nothing short of a riot. As a government, we are committed to extracting ourselves from the morass of nonsense and from the dodgy dealings that those opposite inflicted upon Victorians.

Harness Racing Victoria

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) — My question is to the Minister for Racing. Can the minister update the house about the recently announced audit of Harness Racing Victoria?

Mr PAKULA (Minister for Racing) — I thank the member for Oakleigh for his question, and I congratulate him on the outstanding inaugural speech he made yesterday in this place. I say to members that they should take note of this question, because it will be

very useful to know about at branch trivia nights in years to come: the last Dorothy Dixier in the Legislative Assembly was about an audit of Harness Racing Victoria (HRV).

Prior to the election I announced that an Andrews Labor government would conduct an audit of Harness Racing Victoria. That audit was necessitated by four years of absolute neglect of this code by the former government and in particular by the member for South-West Coast. I announced that audit on 7 January. It is going to be conducted by Dale Monteith, an outstandingly experienced racing administrator. He is the former CEO of both the Victoria Racing Club and the Melbourne Racing Club. He is held in enormous regard across the industry, and his appointment has been almost universally welcomed.

The report will be provided to me by the end of March, and it will look at the code from top to bottom. It will look at governance, market share, the board's expertise and skills, debts and liabilities, infrastructure, income streams, administrative duplication and very importantly it will look at integrity services, particularly the attraction and retention of stewards.

The audit is all about providing HRV and the government with recommendations about making harness racing stronger, and it is about ensuring a stronger code. It is necessary because over the last four years there have consistently been concerns raised with me by owners, trainers, breeders and other stakeholders, and those concerns reached a crescendo in the last 12 months.

I have raised those concerns in various forums, including at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee budget estimates hearings with the former Minister for Racing, who coincidentally also happened to be the former Premier and so had an unprecedented ability to deal with these sorts of matters. Whenever matters of harness racing were raised with him, his attitude hovered somewhere between indifference and sneering contempt. It seems that over all the time that this code has been struggling, the member for South-West Coast, as the former Minister for Racing, was more interested in playing spin the bottle with Colin McKenna down in Warrnambool or swanning around under the big top at the May races at his specially convened Liberal Party fundraisers.

Events in this code since November, since the change of government, whether they have occurred in Mildura or in Ballarat at the Ballarat Cup, have simply highlighted the need for this review. It is long overdue, and it is critical in maintaining stakeholder confidence

in harness racing. I acknowledge that this is a challenging process and a challenging time for the board and management of HRV. I thank them for their participation in this review, for their cooperation with it and for their acknowledgement that it has the capacity to make harness racing so much stronger.

Like many members of this chamber I grew up at a time when names like Gammalite, Paleface Adios, Pure Steel and Maori's Idol were household names. It is a long way back to that place for the code, but it can be so much better and so much stronger than it is today. The shame is that it has taken so long to address the issues in this code, despite the former minister having had four years to do something, and despite the fact that he, in his capacity as Premier, had more influence than any racing minister ever had.

The SPEAKER — Order! Question time has concluded.

Mr Morris — On a point of order, Speaker, I refer to your report back to the house at the commencement of question time on my point of order yesterday, and I thank you for your prompt response to the house. In the course of your response you indicated that you reviewed the *Hansard* transcript and that that really did not throw much light on the subject, yet on page 48 of *Daily Hansard* of yesterday the words 'bugger all' clearly appear.

This raises a question about the inconsistency between your earlier response to the house and *Daily Hansard*. Given that inconsistency, it may well be that Hansard, after you had reviewed the tape, simply reconsidered what the final version of the transcript would be, but equally the *Hansard* record may have been altered by some other influence. I seek your investigation of that matter as to how the *Hansard* transcript came to be altered, from the *Hansard* you reviewed to today's *Daily Hansard*.

The SPEAKER — Order! I will take the point of order on notice, and I will come back to the house and report on it.

Mr Donnellan — On the point of order, Speaker, if there is an implication that I have gone and spoken to Hansard staff and asked them to alter the record, that is not true. I wish to clarify that: I have not sought anything of Hansard.

The SPEAKER — Order! I have indicated the action I will take. I will review this matter and come back to the house. I appreciate the minister wishing to shed some light on it, but I have made my ruling on the subject.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Sessional orders

Debate resumed.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — I wish to indicate that the coalition parties will be supporting the reasoned amendment moved by the member for Prahran, and we will do so for two reasons. First of all because the sessional orders that have been moved by the government are a fraud, a sham and a failure to deliver on the election promises they made for the reasons I indicated previously. We heard the Leader of the House giving a lecture to the house immediately prior to the luncheon break about parliamentary standards, and it hardly needs me to point out the complete hypocrisy of this given that in the previous Parliament the now Leader of the House and the then opposition were the spoilers and the wreckers — they deliberately set out to filibuster in the Parliament and to defeat legislation that they actually supported simply to show that they could throw their weight around together with their best mate the former member for Frankston.

So the Leader of the House has no standing whatsoever to come to this place and lecture the Parliament on parliamentary standards. For the reasons that have already been demonstrated in this debate, we have already seen that the Labor Party is failing to deliver on the commitments it made. Instead of delivering a longer question time with more questions it is delivering a shorter question time with fewer questions. Based on what we already know about what is in the sessional orders that this house is being asked to accept, the opposition believes that many parts of them are gravely flawed.

We are certainly prepared to go along with a number of provisions in the sessional orders, but those relating to question time — the sham that means the Victorian Parliament will no longer have a question time in line with Westminster parliaments around the world but will have some hybrid, mongrel question and statement time — is reason enough for us to believe that the sessional orders, in the form that has now been arrived at, should not be agreed to by the house. It is far preferable that they be referred to the Standing Orders Committee, as the member for Prahran is proposing.

The second reason for supporting the reasoned amendment is that we have seen just in the last 24 hours or so very good reason to believe that what has not yet been ascertained about the contents of the orders is just as worrying as what has been ascertained. We have seen the rushed decision to change question time

without any proper explanation. We have heard no proper explanation of how the house is expected to operate in any sensible manner on a Wednesday given the sequence of business that is being proposed.

If we wanted any confirmation of that, we only have to consider what the Leader of the House resorted to immediately before the lunch break. While we were pondering whether it was simply her spleen, bile and humbug that was leading her to engage in the diatribe she was delivering to the house, it became apparent that another reason she was doing so was probably in order to filibuster the debate. It seems to me that had the sessional orders been agreed to prior to the then scheduled lunch break in accordance with the terms with which they were moved, they would have come into operation with immediate effect with the consequence that there would have been no question time today. If I am wrong in that conclusion, those opposite can explain it, but it seems to be yet another indication of the flawed, half-baked and ill-considered manner in which these sessional orders have been brought to the house at the last minute.

The Leader of the House hopped to her feet and held forth at great length through to the luncheon break before question time. The only conclusion that one can draw is that had that not been the case, because the preface to her motion was that the sessional orders would come into operation with immediate effect, it would have operated to preclude question time.

Indeed we will have a similar issue later today. If the member for Prahran's reasoned amendment is not supported and the sessional orders are agreed to, it would appear that they will come into immediate operation, with the consequence that the house will sit through until 5 o'clock today. That would probably be welcome, because there are many members on this side of the house who want to make contributions. In the debate on the government business program we warned the government that we were running out of time and that there were bills we wanted to have considered in detail, so sitting through to 5 o'clock would be welcome. Assuming that will be the case, it is yet another indication of the ill-considered and half-baked way in which the sessional orders were put together and brought to the house by the Leader of the House. All I can say is heaven help the people of Victoria if the Leader of the House runs the trains the way she is attempting to run this house. For all those reasons, we support the reasoned amendment moved by the member for Prahran.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The question is that the words proposed to be omitted stand part of

the question. Members supporting the member for Prahran's amendment should vote no.

House divided on omission (members in favour vote no):

Ayes, 42

Allan, Ms	Kilkenny, Ms
Blandthorn, Ms	Knight, Ms
Brooks, Mr	Lim, Mr
Bull, Mr J.	McGuire, Mr
Carbines, Mr	Merlino, Mr
Carroll, Mr	Neville, Ms
Couzens, Ms	Noonan, Mr
D'Ambrosio, Ms	Pakula, Mr
Dimopoulos, Mr	Pallas, Mr
Donnellan, Mr	Pearson, Mr
Edbrooke, Mr	Richardson, Mr
Edwards, Ms	Richardson, Ms
Eren, Mr	Scott, Mr
Foley, Mr	Sheed, Ms
Garrett, Ms	Spence, Ms
Graley, Ms	Staikos, Mr
Green, Ms	Suleyman, Ms
Halfpenny, Ms	Thomas, Ms
Hennessy, Ms	Thomson, Ms
Hutchins, Ms	Ward, Ms
Kairouz, Ms	Williams, Ms

Noes, 36

Angus, Mr	Napthine, Dr
Battin, Mr	Northe, Mr
Bull, Mr T.	O'Brien, Mr
Burgess, Mr	Paynter, Mr
Clark, Mr	Pesutto, Mr
Crisp, Mr	Ryall, Ms
Dixon, Mr	Ryan, Ms
Fyffe, Mrs	Sandell, Ms
Gidley, Mr	Smith, Mr R.
Guy, Mr	Smith, Mr T.
Hibbins, Mr	Southwick, Mr
Hodgett, Mr	Staley, Ms
Katos, Mr	Thompson, Mr
Kealy, Ms	Tilley, Mr
McCurdy, Mr	Victoria, Ms
McLeish, Ms	Wakeling, Mr
Morris, Mr	Walsh, Mr
Mulder, Mr	Wells, Mr

Amendment defeated.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The final question is that the motion moved by the Leader of the House be agreed to with amendments.

House divided on amended motion:

Ayes, 44

Allan, Ms	Kilkenny, Ms
Blandthorn, Ms	Knight, Ms
Brooks, Mr	Lim, Mr
Bull, Mr J.	McGuire, Mr
Carbines, Mr	Merlino, Mr
Carroll, Mr	Neville, Ms
Couzens, Ms	Noonan, Mr

D' Ambrosio, Ms	Pakula, Mr
Dimopoulos, Mr	Pallas, Mr
Donnellan, Mr	Pearson, Mr
Edbrooke, Mr	Richardson, Mr
Edwards, Ms	Richardson, Ms
Eren, Mr	Sandell, Ms
Foley, Mr	Scott, Mr
Garrett, Ms	Sheed, Ms
Graley, Ms	Spence, Ms
Green, Ms	Staikos, Mr
Halfpenny, Ms	Suleyman, Ms
Hennessy, Ms	Thomas, Ms
Hibbins, Mr	Thomas, Ms
Hutchins, Ms	Ward, Ms
Kairouz, Ms	Williams, Ms

Noes, 34

Angus, Mr	Naphine, Dr
Battin, Mr	Northe, Mr
Bull, Mr T.	O'Brien, Mr
Burgess, Mr	Paynter, Mr
Clark, Mr	Pesutto, Mr
Crisp, Mr	Ryall, Ms
Dixon, Mr	Ryan, Ms
Fyffe, Mrs	Smith, Mr R.
Gidley, Mr	Smith, Mr T.
Guy, Mr	Southwick, Mr
Hodgett, Mr	Staley, Ms
Katos, Mr	Thompson, Mr
Kealy, Ms	Tilley, Mr
McCurdy, Mr	Victoria, Ms
McLeish, Ms	Wakeling, Mr
Morris, Mr	Walsh, Mr
Mulder, Mr	Wells, Mr

Amended motion agreed to.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I remind the house that in accordance with the motion just agreed to, the sessional orders come into operation immediately.

WRONGS AMENDMENT (ASBESTOS RELATED CLAIMS) BILL 2014

Second reading

Debate resumed from 11 February; motion of Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).

Mr PESUTTO (Hawthorn) — It gives me great pleasure to speak on the Wrongs Amendment (Asbestos Related Claims) Bill 2014. The coalition supports this bill. It is an important bill which deals with an important subject. Over the years asbestos-related conditions in our community have caused great pain for sufferers and equally great pain for the families and friends of sufferers. One of the great difficulties with this area of health is that it is often difficult to form early diagnoses of these conditions. Often sufferers of asbestos-related conditions do not feel symptoms for many decades.

Research shows that it can take as long as five decades for sufferers to realise they have an asbestos-related condition and receive an appropriate diagnosis. However, by then the options for and prospects of treatment are often very limited. That is the great pain in this area of public health. Those who suffer from these conditions are not diagnosed until it is far too late for surgical intervention that will achieve much. This bill deals with that important topic.

The bill will amend the Wrongs Act 1958. It is necessary to exempt claimants with asbestos-related conditions from having to show that they have a significant injury in legal proceedings in which they are seeking damages for non-economic loss. I am happy to say that this bill follows changes the coalition government introduced late last year by way of regulation a few days before the caretaker period commenced on 4 November.

This is a bill which, I am happy to say, the coalition would have introduced had it won the election last November. Claimants will welcome this bill and, I think, take some comfort from the fact that it will proceed quickly through Parliament with bipartisan support. It is worth providing all those affected by the savage nature of asbestos-related conditions with some of the history that has led to this debate and some information about why this bill and the regulations we introduced last year are so important.

To understand the chronology of this matter it is necessary to go back about 11 years to a time when we had just seen the collapse of HIH Insurance, Ansett and other insurance companies. They focused the attention of Australian governments on tort reform. Members of this house may recall that in 2003 the then government, led by the then Premier, the Honourable Steve Bracks, introduced the Wrongs and Limitation of Actions Acts (Insurance Reform) Bill 2003. It was that bill that first introduced the significant injury threshold in the form of section 28LE of the Wrongs Act 1958. In the second-reading speech on the 2003 bill then Premier Steve Bracks said in May 2003:

After careful consideration of all the arguments and of the impact on all members of the community, the government has decided to implement a threshold for access to general damages — that is, damages for non-economic loss.

Later in that speech he said:

Section 28LE restricts the recovery of damages for non-economic loss in proceedings to persons who have suffered significant injury.

The reason for the restriction on the courts' ability to award damages for non-economic loss is to restrict the cost to the community of claims for minor injuries through establishing a

more reasonable balance between the impact on victims of injuries caused through another's negligence and the amount of damages they receive.

These 2003 changes to the Wrongs Act included some exclusions from the significant injury threshold — for example, they excluded intentional acts causing injury, sexual assaults, transport accidents and workplace accidents. It is interesting, however, that the Wrongs and Limitation of Actions Acts (Insurance Reform) Bill 2003 did not address asbestos conditions other than in relation to limitation periods. That meant that except for the issue of delay, when victims may have discovered their conditions very late, the significant injury threshold applied to sufferers of asbestos-related conditions, at least in terms of the language of the bill that the then Premier introduced.

As a consequence of the bill that was introduced by the then Premier by way of second reading in 2003 those changes did not exempt asbestos-related conditions from the significant injury threshold. For over a decade no-one thought there needed to be an exemption. Asbestos sufferers who brought legal proceedings for damages, including non-economic loss, were assumed not to have to comply with the significant injury threshold contained in section 28LE of the Wrongs Act, as introduced by the 2003 amendments — that is, in legal proceedings asbestos sufferers were not thought to have to undergo the sometimes time-consuming and exacting medical assessment procedures necessary to ascertain whether they had suffered a significant injury.

Generally the parties to such proceedings would take it as a given that a plaintiff suffering an asbestos-related condition had a significant injury. Under these arrangements it was just as well that claimants were thought not to have to undergo a significant injury assessment. Such assessments can take several months to complete. In asbestos cases this can mean the difference between a plaintiff living to the conclusion of a trial and the possibility of receiving damages and compensation that may go some way to dealing with the loss and damage they have suffered and a plaintiff never seeing the conclusion of the trial, which may have started before their condition deteriorated.

So many claimants over the years in many courts, not just in Victoria but around the world, have not lived long enough to see their cases come to trial and to achieve the possibility of compensation. That was the assumption for around 11 years. Parties bringing proceedings would simply proceed to the trial of their cases without ever having to go through those processes. But that all changed in the middle of last year, and that involved a decision of the Supreme Court of Victoria, which made it clear that despite the practice

over many years asbestos sufferers seeking damages for non-economic loss did have to satisfy the significant threshold before they could recover damages for non-economic loss.

The relevant Supreme Court decision was that of Her Honour Justice Williams in *Multari v. Amaca Pty Ltd and Another* in June last year. In the Multari case Mr Giuseppe Multari claimed to have become aware that he was suffering lung disease in about 2011. He commenced legal proceedings on 10 May 2013. In his pleadings in his action he claimed to have contracted asbestos-related conditions, including lung disease, that related to the conduct of the two defendants, Amaca, which I mentioned, and the second defendant, Seltsam Pty Ltd. He alleged negligence by them in supplying and distributing asbestos products, which Mr Multari used when he was constructing his family home in the mid-1960s and in the course of his employment as a carpenter during the period 1965 to 1970 or thereabouts and then over a longer period from 1970 until about 31 August 1985, during which time he was self-employed plying his carpentry skills. The claim included allegations by way of injuries as follows: asbestos-related lung disease, asbestosis, pleural plaques, shortness of breath, reduced lung function, reduced life expectancy, anxiety, depression and psychological suffering.

Mr Multari passed away in June 2013, some five weeks after he commenced legal proceedings, but his legal action was continued by the executors of his estate, who claimed that Mr Multari died as a result of a dust-related disease, and they maintained the proceeding that Mr Multari had commenced under section 29 of the Administration and Probate Act 1958. Additionally they claimed damages on behalf of Mr Multari's dependent widow under part III of the Wrongs Act 1958. The trial of Mr Multari's case commenced on 5 June 2014, about one year after he had died, and continued on 6 and 10 June 2014.

Interestingly — and what forms the kernel of this matter — the second defendant, Seltsam, sought and obtained leave on the first day of the trial to amend the defence it had filed and served in the proceedings to plead for the first time that Mr Multari's action could not continue and that Mr Multari and his executors could not pursue the case to recover damages for non-economic loss, because Mr Multari had not obtained a significant injury assessment. They said that until that process had been undertaken by a medical panel the action could not be brought. It relied on part VBA of the Wrongs Act, which as I explained earlier the then government, led by Premier Steve Bracks,

introduced in 2003. Some 11 years later the impact of those amendments was brought home in this case.

After all evidence had concluded and submissions had been made Her Honour Justice Williams delivered her judgement, during which she wrote that she was persuaded that section 28LE of the Wrongs Act:

... would require the plaintiffs to establish before the trial that the alleged injury is 'significant injury'.

You can imagine what a surprise that would have been to many practitioners in this field of practice and stakeholders who had long assumed that there was no necessity to seek a significant injury assessment and certificate. That is normally what results from a successful process for a plaintiff: they are given a certificate which is produced and then they can continue or, if the action has been stalled, resume it to proceed to trial.

In the course of her judgement Her Honour referred to the second-reading speech, which I referred to earlier, delivered by the then Premier Steve Bracks. She said:

The second-reading speech in relation to the Wrongs and Limitation of Actions Acts (Insurance Reform) Bill inserting part VBA is also replete with references to the pre-trial nature of the process under the new part, supporting a conclusion that the statutory purpose of section 28LE was to introduce a preliminary process. For instance, the government was said by Premier Bracks to have 'decided to implement a threshold for access to general damages'; the threshold was also to act as 'a gateway for a court to determine whether damages for non-economic loss can be awarded to a plaintiff'. Indeed, the Premier went on to say that the bill set out 'pre-litigation procedures that enable claimants and respondents to determine whether a claimant's injuries will entitle him or her to recover general damages'.

It was in response to the Multari case that the then Attorney-General, the member for Box Hill, moved quickly to develop regulations to remedy this outcome. I pay tribute to the former Attorney-General for the quick work he undertook not only on this issue but also in relation to other issues he addressed while he was the Attorney-General of the state. On 30 October 2014 the previous government introduced the Wrongs (Part VBA) (Asbestos Related Claims) Regulations 2014 to exclude claims in proceedings for damages for asbestos-related conditions from the operation of part VBA of the Wrongs Act.

The regulations commenced on 30 October 2014 and mean that anybody bringing an action on or after that date is able to proceed to trial. But as people will understand, it was not possible for those regulations to operate retrospectively. At the time the Attorney-General announced that if re-elected, the coalition would introduce legislation to address the

problem and to ensure that anybody who had an existing legal proceeding would be able to commence that proceeding and pursue it to trial without the need to obtain a significant injury certificate if they had an asbestos-related condition.

We believe the bill is faithful to the commitment we made prior to the election, and once again I want to record the coalition's thanks for the great work undertaken by the then Attorney-General, and also the work of the members for Narracan and Morwell, who have both demonstrated a genuine commitment to assisting and working with communities where asbestos issues are quite pronounced, such as in the Latrobe Valley and Gippsland areas. I am very pleased to say the opposition is supporting the bill, and I commend it to the house.

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie) — It is my pleasure to rise to speak in the debate on the Wrongs Amendment (Asbestos Related Claims) Bill 2014. In following the member for Hawthorn, I acknowledge the coalition's support of this change and its long history in this area. I also understand that the previous government intended to pass this legislation to ensure that sufferers of asbestos-related conditions would be exempt from the provisions of the Wrongs Act 1958.

This legislation is very important. People who suffer asbestos-related conditions are in enormous pain and suffering. I want to make it clear that this bill will not affect claimants whose injuries arose from their employment and who are able to claim compensation under the Workplace Injury and Compensation Act 2013.

The Wrongs Act limits claims for damages for pain and suffering to those claimants who can demonstrate that they have suffered a significant injury. Part VBA of the Wrongs Act sets out the process for demonstrating that an injury is significant. This process involves several steps. First, the claimant must obtain a certificate of assessment from an approved medical practitioner. Second, the claimant must serve the certificate on the defendant. Then, when the defendant disputes the level of injury, the defendant can refer the matter to Medical Panels Victoria for determination. This process can take several months.

In most cases for damages under the Wrongs Act, the process set out in part VBA of the Wrongs Act is important. The process is designed to ensure that only those claimants with a significant injury are able to claim damages for pain and suffering. However, when a claimant has mesothelioma or asbestosis it is self-evident that the injuries are significant. In most

cases these conditions are fatal, and the claimant's health often deteriorates very rapidly. Requiring a claimant to go through the significant injury test, so to speak, takes up valuable time, and often it is valuable time the claimant does not have. We all see on the nightly news the health impacts that asbestos-related conditions have, and it is important for the Victorian Parliament to speed the process up in any way it can.

The Andrews Labor government is very proud to introduce this legislation, which will require and clarify that sufferers of asbestos-related conditions, which are defined as asbestosis, mesothelioma, asbestos-induced carcinoma and asbestos-related pleural disease, do not need to comply with the formal procedures for showing that they have suffered a significant injury. This legislation will operate retrospectively so that any claims that are already afoot before the legislation commences are also exempt from the need to demonstrate significant injury, except where the claim has been finally determined or settled prior to commencement of the legislation. In doing so, when enacted the bill will supersede the earlier Wrongs (Part VBA) (Asbestos Related Claims) Regulations 2014 which only operated with prospective effect.

It is hoped that this legislation will assist claimants and their families to access compensation very soon. There has been lots of commentary on the Wrongs Act, and the previous member for Hawthorn alluded to this. This piece of legislation is discussed in an article in the November 2014 *Law Institute Journal*. The article makes reference to what happened almost 11 years ago, when amendments were first made to the Wrongs Act to introduce compensation limits and thresholds for certain personal injury actions including public liability and medical negligence claims. On 30 May 2013, the Victorian Treasurer directed the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission to conduct an inquiry into the operation of this act.

In many respects this is where we are today, looking to improve the lives of Victorians and make the Wrongs Act operate as efficiently and seamlessly as possible. I am very proud that the Attorney-General has introduced this legislation. He is removing unnecessary technical barriers which take time that, unfortunately, many sufferers of asbestos-related conditions do not have. It is great and compassionate legislation that will fix an existing problem and alleviate the hardship of people who are already enduring unimaginable suffering. It will allow people to get on with their lives and to have very important claims settled as soon as possible.

I wish this very important legislation a speedy passage. I welcome the opposition's bipartisan support for it. It is important legislation. It affects the lives of people who are suffering and do not have much time left. It is important that it be passed speedily, and I welcome the opposition's further comments on it. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) — It is a great pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak briefly on the Wrongs Amendment (Asbestos Related Claims) Bill 2014. It is good that in this place there is bipartisan support on some pieces of legislation, and we make it very clear that the coalition is supportive of this legislation.

Asbestos has been and unfortunately still is a scourge on many of our communities. My community of the Latrobe Valley has suffered much from having asbestos in the industrial areas of Morwell and surrounds, but to this day a large number of residential properties still have asbestos in them. It is something we certainly need to be very cognisant of and careful about. As the member for Niddrie and the member for Hawthorn articulated in their contributions, the consequence of being in contact with asbestos is that people can suffer from awful, insidious diseases that prolong suffering. Unfortunately, particularly in my region, we have seen many people fall victim to asbestos-related diseases. There is much work that needs to be done in that regard.

This legislation is in response to a Supreme Court case that was heard in June last year. I commend the then Attorney-General, who is in the chamber at the moment, for his great work in making sure that this anomaly within the act was addressed, firstly, by way of regulation and now by way of legislation. I repeat that we as a coalition are pleased to support this.

I do not want to speak for long, because what needs to be said has already been said, but I want to commend GARDS, which is Asbestos Council of Victoria Gippsland Asbestos Related Disease Support Inc. Anybody who knows of GARDS would know Vicki Hamilton and her team. I think every member of Parliament would well know of her and her team's advocacy over a long period of time. Unfortunately Vicki's family, like a lot of families in the Latrobe Valley, have had family members who have suffered from asbestos-related diseases. Her advocacy over a long period of time is well recognised. In fact she is now Vicki Hamilton, OAM, deservedly so, for her contribution to this particular space.

I incorporate some comments from the GARDS newsletter of November 2014, just prior to the election.

In part it talks about an update on *Multari v. Seltsam Pty Ltd* and the Wrongs Act 1958 under the heading 'Win! Win!'. It goes on to talk about the decisions made by the then Attorney-General, now the shadow Minister for Industrial Relations, who is at the table next to me, in introducing legislation to right the wrongs of what had occurred previously. In part it talks about the need for legislation to be considered in the future, which the new government has now introduced into the Parliament.

I can certainly assure the house that while we continue to get strong advocacy from GARDS, the organisation is very pleased with the Attorney-General of the time and all members of Parliament for making sure that this anomaly was rectified. I put on the record that it has been bipartisan support. It is one of those issues where you can sit in a room with members of Parliament from all political persuasions and have a discussion about ways to find a good outcome.

I conclude by quoting from that particular newsletter:

Thank you to all concerned that made this happen — the Attorney-General Hon. Robert Clark and his department, Gary Blackwood, MP, member for Narracan, Minister Russell Northe, MP —

I should include myself in that —

Johan Scheffer, upper house member for Eastern Victoria —

a Labor member —

and those who helped with writing letters — the law firms who represent asbestos sufferers; unions — you all did a great job for a wonderful outcome for Victorian asbestos sufferers and their families.

I think that says it all, and that is why we as a coalition support this legislation.

Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Local Government) — I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — The opposition will not divide on this issue, but I do want to make the point that the opposition believes that the better course of action would have been for the Leader of the House, by leave — and I believe leave would have been forthcoming — to have suspended standing orders to allow the time for the guillotine for debate on bills to have been extended until 5.00 p.m. in line with the new sessional orders. The Leader of the House has indicated that she is not prepared to do that.

The consequence of that will be that debate on the bills will be guillotined when the government business

program time arrives at 4.00 p.m. In consequence, amendments moved by the member for Prahran and the member for Melbourne to various bills, and the opportunity to consider in detail the Back to Work Bill 2014 and the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Funding of Non-Government Schools) Bill 2014 in particular will not be possible. That means that from day one the government will not be delivering on its election commitment to make consideration in detail a standard part of the consideration of bills in the Assembly, even though it was something that was open to the Leader of the House and the government to achieve. The opposition believes it is regrettable that the government is not prepared to extend the government business program deadline to 5.00 p.m. in line with the new sessional orders, meaning that that debate will be truncated at 4.00 p.m.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Debate adjourned until later this day.

STATUTE LAW REPEALS BILL 2014

Second reading

Debate resumed from 11 February; motion of Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport).

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — This is a bill that in schedule 1 proposes to repeal the various past years appropriation acts and Parliament appropriation acts. The only issue that arises in relation to the content of the bill is whether those provisions are fully spent. It is fortunate that the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee has been able to meet within the limited time that was available to it, given that this bill was included in the government business program. The committee has been able to report to the house and has included in that report a certificate from John Butera, first deputy chief parliamentary counsel, indicating that the relevant department has confirmed that the acts proposed to be repealed by the bill are now spent and can be safely repealed. The opposition is prepared to accept that certification and the government's view and, therefore, not oppose the bill.

One matter that is worthy of consideration in relation to this bill is whether it meets requirements of standing order 5(2) in relation to proceedings on the first day of a new Parliament. That standing order requires that a bill is read a first time:

... to reassert and maintain the right of the house to deal with its own business before the Governor's business.

This practice has been observed for many centuries in Westminster parliaments. It symbolises the right of parliaments to deal with the business that the elected representatives of the community wish to deal with and not solely with the business that the Crown or the executive wishes the Parliament to deal with. As the 24th edition of *Erskine May* puts it:

... it is the practice in both houses to read some bill a first time pro forma in order to assert their right of deliberating without reference to the immediate cause of their summons ...

However, this practice has over the years lost some of its original character and meaning in Victoria. It appears to have come under particular pressure as a result of both the constitutional changes and changes to standing orders that were made in the earlier part of last decade. I believe it should now be considered by the Standing Orders Committee with a view to determining whether either the standing orders or practice of the house should be amended, whether to strengthen the practice or to abandon it, or to confirm it in its current form.

Looking at the history, *Fact Sheet G21* published by the House of Commons says:

The first occasion on which we have evidence of the house taking the first reading of a bill ... before any other business is in 1558. In 1604, the practice was codified by a resolution: 'That the first day of sitting in every Parliament, some one bill and no more receiveth a first reading for form sake'.

And this resolution of 1604 can be found in the relevant *House of Commons Journal*: volume 1, 22 March 1604.

The practice has been the subject of explicit reference and debate in the House of Commons on several occasions, particularly in times of conflict between the Crown and the Commons when members wanted to raise some particular point of issue or controversy immediately upon resumption of the Parliament.

In the course of debate in 1676 it was established that the one bill should receive its first reading prior to consideration of the King's speech, and that has been the practice followed where the practice has been observed since.

In Victoria the former standing orders that were replaced in 2004 provided in the rules of practice, item 11:

Before the Governor's speech is reported to the house by Mr Speaker some bill is read a first time pro forma.

In 1999, and as far as I am aware in previous Parliaments, the practice was for one bill only to

receive a first reading ahead of the house receiving the report of the Governor's speech. For example, on 3 November 1999, then Premier Bracks moved:

In accordance with the usual practice and in order to preserve the privileges of the house, I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill to make minor amendments to the Administration and Probate Act 1958.

Current practice since 2003 has been for the government to introduce and have the first reading of a number of bills prior to the reporting of the Governor's speech. In 2003 and 2006 a short and technical bill was the first of those so introduced and read a first time, and it was introduced by the Premier with words similar to those I cited earlier. However, that practice was not followed in 2010 or indeed last year. In 2010 no short and technical bill was introduced on the first day of sitting, and last year the Statute Law Repeals Bill, which we are now considering, was the last of four bills introduced and read a first time prior to the reporting of the Governor's speech. The bill was not introduced with words referring to 'usual practice'.

As a result it seems to me that while the literal requirements of standing order 5(3) have probably been complied with, it could well be argued that the spirit and symbolism of the standing order have been lost. Symbols are very important, but a symbol is only important if people know what it stands for. That is why stories are told and explanations are given. That is why visitors and members are told about the importance of the mace as a symbol of authority of the Speaker and told about why the Governor's speech is given in the Legislative Council, harking back to the days when Charles I entered the Commons and sought to arrest members who had defied him.

Similarly, the first reading of a bill before the house considers that the Governor's speech symbolises the fact that assemblies of the realm are entitled to deal with their own business as well as the business which the Crown, or the executive government, desires the Parliament to consider. Consideration of grievances and problems that subjects or citizens of the realm wish to raise is important, not just the needs and plans of the Crown or of the executive government. That is a matter that has been exemplified as far back as *Magna Carta* — the 800th anniversary of which we celebrate this year — if not earlier.

It is well worth considering whether we want to retain, revive or strengthen the symbolism of the house commencing its own business before considering the business that the executive wishes to place before it.

This is not a matter that can be considered in detail in this debate; however, I would make the suggestion that if we are going to retain this symbol and reminder of parliamentary history and the struggles that have given us the Westminster democracy we enjoy today, we should make some adjustments to make the symbolism more consistent with what it is intended to represent and thus to enable it to be better understood and appreciated.

For example, in the House of Commons the first reading of the bill is not moved by a minister but is simply taken to have been done by the house as a whole. Also the bill that is first read is neither part of government business nor a bill that is a matter of current political dispute. In the Commons the same standard bill, the Outlawries Bill, is used in each Parliament and never progresses beyond the first reading. In the Victorian context, a bill such as the bill before us could perhaps remain as a suitable bill. However, these and other options are ones that may well be appropriately considered in detail by the Standing Orders Committee.

In the meantime, the bill before us would appear to at least formally satisfy standing order 5(3), although it has not been explicitly characterised as such. The only way in which it does so any more than any of the other bills that were put before the house is that it is purely technical in its terms.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Crisp) — Order! The time set down for consideration of items on the government business program has expired, and I am required to put the following questions.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

BACK TO WORK BILL 2014

Second reading

Debate resumed from 11 February; motion of Mr PALLAS (Treasurer).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING REFORM AMENDMENT (FUNDING OF NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS) BILL 2014

Second reading

Debate resumed from 11 February; motion of Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education).

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Crisp) — Order! The question is:

That the bill be now read a second and a third time.

All those in favour say aye. All those against say no.

Mr Hibbins — No.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Crisp) — Order! I think the ayes have it. The bill will now be sent to the Legislative Council and their agreement requested.

Mr Hibbins — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, we did seek to vote no on the education bill, and were seeking to vote no on it.

Ms Allan interjected.

Mr Hibbins — We did say no. We did clearly say no.

Mr Clark — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, I think there is merit in the point that the member for Prahran raises. We are in a slightly awkward position, but I think it has arisen due to a genuine misunderstanding or non-hearing. The honourable member did quite clearly say no when the question was put. I think that did not come to your attention. If it had, Acting Speaker, I think you would have then asked, 'Is a division required?', which would have given the opportunity for the member for Prahran to indicate such. There has been a legitimate confusion or misunderstanding. I think that, as a house, we should seek to provide a way of remedying it.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, I think it would be setting an unfortunate and at times dangerous precedent to go back. We are well and truly past the point at which the question for this bill was put. I did not hear the member of the Greens political party object to this bill. Yes, that may have been a misfortune

of experience; however, that moment has passed. I implore those members of Parliament on both sides who have been here for quite some time to recognise the precedent that would be set to go back and unpick the decision of the house. If we start doing this, do we go back and unpick decisions that were taken yesterday or the day before because new members of Parliament did not get it together?

I put it to you, Acting Speaker, that there was a fair bit of coaching going on amongst the khaki coalition over there, and perhaps it was a misguidance that was given to the Greens political party by my friends in the Liberal Party. Next time I am sure the Greens will be better instructed. Next time I am sure the instructions will be much clearer.

I also put it to you, Acting Speaker, that it would be highly inappropriate and highly irregular to agree to this most unusual request. I agree it is unfortunate, and it may be a product of inexperience, but it is not something that should be unpicked.

Mr R. Smith — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, I add to the point of order made by the member for Box Hill. It is the practice of this house when a member of this place says no when asked if an agreement has been reached that the Chair would further prompt the member by asking if a division is required. That did not occur, I assume because the member was inaudible to the Chair. Therefore it is not the fault of the member that the Chair did not assist with the flow of the proceedings. The member would have been directed if the Chair had asked if a division was required. It is obvious the Chair did not hear, and the member did not get the prompt from the Chair.

With regard to the Leader of the House asserting that if we let this one go through, then we are going to recall all the others, the fact of the matter is that we could recommit the vote by leave. If the issue ever came up again and leave was sought, then of course leave would not be granted. In this case it would be good as a Parliament for us to recognise new members, show graciousness and allow the motion to be recommitted.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Crisp) — Order! I uphold the point of order, and I will recommit the question on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Funding of Non-Government Schools) Bill 2014. The question is:

That this bill be now read a second and a third time.

House divided on question:

Ayes, 77

Allan, Ms	McGuire, Mr
Angus, Mr	McLeish, Ms
Battin, Mr	Merlino, Mr
Blandthorn, Ms	Morris, Mr
Brooks, Mr	Mulder, Mr
Bull, Mr J.	Napthine, Dr
Bull, Mr T.	Neville, Ms
Burgess, Mr	Noonan, Mr
Carbines, Mr	Northe, Mr
Carroll, Mr	O'Brien, Mr
Clark, Mr	Pakula, Mr
Couzens, Ms	Pallas, Mr
Crisp, Mr	Paynter, Mr
D'Ambrosio, Ms	Pearson, Mr
Dimopoulos, Mr	Pesutto, Mr
Dixon, Mr	Richardson, Mr
Donnellan, Mr	Richardson, Ms
Edbrooke, Mr	Ryall, Ms
Edwards, Ms	Ryan, Ms
Eren, Mr	Scott, Mr
Foley, Mr	Sheed, Ms
Fyffe, Mrs	Smith, Mr R.
Garrett, Ms	Smith, Mr T.
Gidley, Mr	Southwick, Mr
Graley, Ms	Spence, Ms
Green, Ms	Staikos, Mr
Guy, Mr	Staley, Ms
Halfpenny, Ms	Suleyman, Ms
Hennessy, Ms	Thomas, Ms
Hodgett, Mr	Thompson, Mr
Howard, Mr	Thomson, Ms
Hutchins, Ms	Tilley, Mr
Kairouz, Ms	Victoria, Ms
Katos, Mr	Wakeling, Mr
Kealy, Ms	Walsh, Mr
Kilkenny, Ms	Ward, Ms
Knight, Ms	Wells, Mr
Lim, Mr	Williams, Ms
McCurdy, Mr	

Noes, 2

Hibbins, Mr

Sandell, Ms

Question agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

WRONGS AMENDMENT (ASBESTOS RELATED CLAIMS) BILL 2014

Second reading

Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

Unparliamentary language

The SPEAKER — Order! Further to my ruling on the point of order raised by the member for Mornington, I wish to clarify that during an initial review of *Hansard* I did not notice an inappropriate word used yesterday by the Minister for Roads and Roads Safety. I went on to listen to the audio of yesterday's question time and noticed the usage of the word. Upon reviewing *Hansard* again I realised that I made an error in that the inappropriate word was in fact in *Hansard*. I apologise to the house.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed from 11 February; motion of Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) for adoption of address-in-reply.

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — It is my pleasure to rise to make my address-in-reply to the Governor's speech that was made at the beginning of the 58th Parliament. It is an honour and a privilege to have been elected by the people of Warrandyte for a third time. Serving here is indeed a privilege. We have heard a number of new members talk about the honour they have felt on being elected to this place for the first time. That honour is no less diminished in being elected for a third time.

Over the last eight years it has certainly been enriching for me to have been able to advocate and deliver for my electorate, particularly over the term of 57th Parliament. In my first term I was in opposition, and I have to say that very little was provided to my electorate over the

period from 2006 to 2010. However, during the period from 2010 to 2014 the coalition government was able to deliver funding to a number of schools in my electorate, including Ringwood Heights Primary School, Ringwood North Primary School, Warrandyte Primary School and Anderson's Creek Primary School. These four schools had previously had funding denied to them by the Labor government.

If you drive down Ringwood Street, which lies within the former boundaries of my electorate, you will see that the police station is being redone; it is in the middle of some significant works. An upgrade of Ringwood railway station was promised by the Bracks and Brumby governments over many years, but as each budget came and went, that funding was denied. It is also a great pleasure to me, after much advocacy, to see when I drive down Maroondah Highway that work has begun on a \$66 million redevelopment, which led QIC to invest over \$650 million in the expansion of Eastland.

We also saw under the coalition government the Warrandyte Community Centre receive funding; a library brought to Warrandyte for the very first time, which was a great achievement; and funding go to sporting clubs in my electorate.

Most significantly, in contrast to the first four years that I was in this place, grants that had been unsuccessfully applied for by my community under the Bracks and Brumby governments were reviewed by the coalition government in a very mature, transparent and equal way. More grant funding came to my electorate in the last term than in the years under the Bracks and Brumby governments. I hope this government will be fair and transparent in the way it allocates taxpayers funds and that the Warrandyte electorate will receive the funding it is due. It is telling, however, that not one dollar was committed to my electorate throughout the election campaign by the Labor Party. I hope that will not be the case going forward.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my family, including my wife, Avril, and my two children, Jaime and Brodie, who were without their husband and father throughout the duration of the campaign. Many of us spent a lot of time on the campaign trail, as we should.

It was a tough campaign, made much more difficult by the resetting of the boundaries by the Victorian Electoral Commission. In some ways the biggest complaints we get from our constituents right across the state, in each and every electorate, is that politicians do not listen enough to or make connections with their

community. The electoral boundary changes broke some long-term relationships between many MPs, community groups, schools and sporting clubs. When you represent an area for so long and build relationships with constituents I think it is a shame that when a boundary changes come in you are then forced to move to a different area. While it is an honour to represent a new area, it is also a shame that you must then cut ties with many of these relationships; you certainly have less opportunity to maintain them.

I am very proud to have been a minister during the Baillieu and Napthine governments. Being a minister is a high honour, as is being a member of this place. I am proud of the fact that we put through some good and sensible reform in the environment portfolio. I was led by a pragmatic approach, not an ideological one. We streamlined a lot of processes, cut a lot of red tape and brought a common-sense approach to many problems. In that portfolio in particular I found that going on-site really clarified the issues. It was really good to get out there and talk to people to understand the difficulties in place and to then take measures to deal with those issues.

Over the last four years the then opposition, now government, took a fairly ideological view of the environment portfolio. It was disappointing that it had no real knowledge of what we were trying to do in this area. I genuinely do not believe Labor will take a sensible approach to the portfolio now it is in government.

I was particularly proud of my achievements in the youth portfolio. Many members who served in the last Parliament received a book called *Inspiring Stories by Young Victorians*, which was a collection of stories from those young people who were involved in programs put in place by the previous government. Over 260 000 young people were involved in programs or policies implemented by the coalition government. I was very proud to be able to talk to those young people, hear their stories and get an understanding of how much those programs impacted on them. I am very proud of the work we did there.

However, Victorians made their choice. We will spend this term in opposition holding the government to account, and I think we are already doing that very effectively. We have already been able to highlight the government's mounting broken promises. It is scrambling somewhat to try to convince Victorians that everything is going along fine, but the reality of the matter is that Victorians are starting to see that that is not the case.

We will continue to highlight the budget blowouts that will inevitably come and the underfunded promises that can never be delivered without materially damaging our economic rating or our economy.

While Labor sits on the Treasury benches we should not let the glow of victory overshadow some of the darker practices that contributed to that victory. In my electorate we saw for the first time the petty removal of corflutes by Labor operatives. That happened on many occasions. The member for Bayswater also had her corflutes terribly defaced. That is a real issue for the people who did it. We do not have to look too far to see who was responsible for that pettiness and, may I say, illegal behaviour.

In many of the pre-polling booths we also saw incidents with emergency services workers. I do not for one moment say that people should not get out there and stand up for what they believe in, but the impersonation of emergency services workers was evident. It is well known that Trades Hall made fake firefighting gear and that not everyone standing at a booth was a firefighter. Indeed the member for Gembrook spotted one of the former electorate officers of the member for Narre Warren North, and now the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, at a booth and commented to the member that this man had never been a firefighter. The response from the member was, 'Well, he is today'. That is in direct contravention to section 75A(2) of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade Act 1958, which states:

A person must not represent that the person is associated with the Board unless such an association exists.

It also says in clause 3:

A person must not impersonate a member of a unit.

It is particularly damning for the Andrews government that it condones the actions of those people who dressed in the gear and purported to be emergency services workers when they actually were not.

The Labor Party created an environment in which members of the public were intimidated by firefighters and paramedics, whether they were real ones or otherwise. I had an elderly couple in my area say that they had never thought they would see the day when they felt intimidated by a paramedic. They expressed real concern that if they expressed their political views to the paramedic, they would be in real danger of not having an ambulance turn up. It is a sad state of affairs in this state when people think they are not going to get a response from an ambulance because of the way they are being treated by paramedics at a pre-polling booth, and I think that is a real shame. If members of the

government are proud of that, it is an indictment of them.

Most abhorrent of all was the bullying we saw at many of our sites. I turn to the Bully Zero Australia Foundation webpage under the title 'What is bullying':

Bullying is when an individual or group uses its power and strength to repeatedly and intentionally use words or actions against another individual or group. They repeatedly hurt, harass, verbally humiliate, physically, emotionally and psychologically and socially harm individuals, making the victim feel oppressed, traumatised and powerless.

The website goes on to say:

The largest and most powerful group in a bullying situation is the bystander ...

The fact of the matter is that at many of these polling booths candidates who are now members of this Parliament stood by while our candidates, particularly our female candidates, were being harassed and intimidated on a regular basis. It happened almost every day, if not every day, of the pre-polling period right up to election day. That people in this place have earned their place as a result of that sort of intimidation speaks volumes. It was not just our women, although the former members for Bentleigh, Carrum and Mordialloc were certainly abused and intimidated every single day of that period. Those opposite have certainly lost the right to take the moral high ground. Any woman who sits with Labor should be disgusted with the behaviour that was condoned by her colleagues in this place.

Putting politics aside, our candidate for the seat of Narre Warren North, Amanda Stapledon, is as nice a woman you could ever meet, and she does outstanding work in her community. But she was bullied by firefighters, or people dressed as firefighters, for two weeks before she had to call the police on the Thursday before the election after firefighters stood behind her all day and made comments about her body shape. The Minister for Roads and Road Safety was standing at that booth. He stood with those people. The white ribbon oath says, 'I swear never to commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against women'. Those on the other side of the house who owe their positions here in part to the bullying and intimidation of those who they consorted with should hang their heads in shame.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr R. SMITH — I will not be silent. It is amazing that one of the members over there is actually condoning this behaviour and defending the indefensible. The bullying and intimidation of the Labor Party, the union members and those others the

Labor Party consorted with is absolutely disgusting. On White Ribbon Day this November I will watch who walks in here with a white ribbon. You do not wear those ribbons just for the sake of it; you wear them because you believe in them. I will note the hypocrites and point them out on that day. To all the people on the other side of the house taking the high road on intimidation and violence against women, what I saw at those polling booths was nothing short of disgusting and was certainly not the sort of behaviour I and other Victorians would expect of their members of Parliament. Those who intimidate should be named. Those who bully should be named. We saw from the member for Frankston in question time today that it is in Labor's DNA.

We saw the member for Frankston make intimidating gestures to the women on our side of the chamber and laughing about it even when he was reprimanded by the Speaker. He continued to laugh and carry on about it — —

Ms Garrett — On a point of order, Speaker, I do not believe the member for Frankston accepts that characterisation of events, and I ask the member for Warrandyte to withdraw.

Mr R. Smith — On the point of order, Speaker, the member admitted that he had made the gestures and apologised for it. I think he does agree with the characterisation because he apologised for it, as he should have.

Mr Edbrooke — On the point of order, Speaker, I do not accept what the member for Warrandyte is saying.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I advise the honourable member to be careful in regard to what he saying, but I will continue to hear him.

Mr R. SMITH — It is when we are silent and let people get away with bullying and intimidation that we probably do the worst damage. We should not be silent. We should out those who bully women. We should out those who intimidate women. It is not just women: the Liberal candidate for Eltham had his car, with his name printed all over it, rammed by paramedics. The paramedics proceeded to drive around the corner, and when he caught up with them their union official offered to pay for the damage. It was only when Steve Briffa got the police involved that they gave up their identification. That is the sort of behaviour we are dealing with. Our candidate for Yan Yean, Sam Ozturk, was jostled by unionists. The former member for Carrum, Donna Bauer, who is among the nicest women

you will ever meet and did a great job in this place and in her community, had her well-documented illness used as a weapon against her by firefighters on the issue of presumptive legislation. It is shameful for those opposite.

Those opposite stand condemned for their behaviour. While they sit on the Treasury benches, which we accept, and we will hold them to account while they do, those who owe their positions there in part to their behaviour and the behaviour of those who they consorted with under their leader's best wishes stand condemned and ought to be ashamed.

Mr NOONAN (Minister for Police) — From the outset, I congratulate you on your election to the office you now hold, Deputy Speaker. I know that you have given this house many years of service. You have also taken care with new members and ensured that they have a very good passage into this place. I am very pleased that you have been elected Deputy Speaker.

It is a very difficult decision to make whether to dignify what we just heard from the member for Warrandyte with a response, but I want to make a couple of brief comments. I am very proud to stand with working people, and I am particularly proud to stand with firefighters and paramedics, because I have done that many times. I am very proud to have the member for Frankston, who was elected at the last election, in this chamber. The member for Frankston is a firefighter by profession, and he is now a voice for firefighters in this chamber. He is an important voice, and he will perform an important function in terms of restoring a level of dignity to the colleagues he stood with over the last four years and who took a pummelling from the previous government.

The same is true of paramedics. I will tell you why paramedics were standing up and calling out the previous government. It was not just about the fact that it took almost two years to get some sort of resolution to their enterprise bargaining agreement battle. They were standing up for the many families who were ignored by the previous government. I met a number of those families — families who lost their children. They are some of the most moving moments that I have had in my job in this place in a bit over seven years. How do you comfort a mother or a father who has lost their child because an ambulance did not arrive for more than 20 minutes after their son had stopped breathing? I would say to the member for Warrandyte: stop and have a think about that for a moment.

Stop and reflect on the work of firefighters, paramedics and all those other emergency service workers —

government workers — who get up each day to serve our community. They are the heroes of our community. They are the individuals who rely on good governments to support them. They can be clear that this government will not be like the last government. We will support those workers. We will support those workers because they were sorely let down by the previous government.

It is a great honour to stand here as the member for Williamstown after being elected again to this Parliament. I want to thank the constituents of the Williamstown electorate for re-electing a Labor member. Williamstown has had a Labor member consistently since 1904, and most recently enjoyed having Premiers as local members in Steve Bracks and before him Joan Kirner. It is a fantastic place to live, it is a fantastic electorate to represent and it is my great privilege to be able to serve the people of Williamstown for another four years.

I am also very proud to be here as part of the Andrews Labor government. I want to thank the Premier and congratulate him on his fantastic leadership. I remember from the very first moments that the now Premier took the leadership of the opposition, he made it clear that he was not just doing it to fill a seat but was doing it to try to win back government for Labor. I reckon no-one rated him a chance at that point, after the election loss of 2010, but my goodness he gave it everything. He worked harder than anyone in that caucus, and he set a great example for others to follow. I want to congratulate him. He deserves that victory more than anyone else.

I also want to congratulate my colleagues, particularly the colleagues I served with in the last Parliament. I also want to congratulate the colleagues who have just entered this Parliament as members of this Andrews Labor government. We will always be bonded by our historic 2014 victory, a victory that no-one can ever take away from us.

I am also very proud to serve in the Andrews Labor government cabinet as both as Minister for Police and Minister for Corrections. I am now going to do something that is not usually done very often — it certainly was not done by the member for Warrandyte — and acknowledge the previous Minister for Police and Emergency Services and his chief of staff, Glenn Corey, for the very respectful and decent way they dealt with me and my staff during our period in opposition, particularly on matters which called for a bipartisan approach. I want to wish them well for the future.

I also want to make a point as the incoming Minister for Police of how proud I am to take that role. My family connection with police goes back a number of decades. It goes back to very tragic circumstances involving the death of a young constable, Angela Taylor, who was sadly killed in the 80s following the Russell Street bombing. It was at that point that my father, a member of the community, through a social running club, decided to organise a fun run to raise funds in the honour of Angela Taylor to help advance the careers of women in the police force.

Following other tragic deaths of serving police, the police Blue Ribbon Foundation was established. I am very proud that my father was an inaugural member of that foundation and in recent years has become chair. That allows me to bookend, if you like, the work that my father has done, and it demonstrates the tremendous depth of respect that the Noonan family has for the work of our serving men and women in the police force.

Labor has made a number of important election commitments in the area of policing. Firstly, we have made a commitment to employ 400 new custody officers to work in police cells. This is a very important commitment, and it will ensure that police who are currently babysitting prisoners, or supervising prisoners, will be freed up for first-responder duties. We have also announced that we will invest in upgrading the police radio system by moving it from an analogue to a secure digital system. That buys you no votes, but it is the right thing to do, because it is about protecting the serving men and women of Victoria Police, and it is about ensuring that people cannot listen to or intercept police communications. I am very pleased we were able to make that commitment.

We have also made a commitment to build a new police station in the Mernda and Doreen area. This is a rapidly growing area that is experiencing a significant increase in its crime rate.

We have made important commitments in relation to family violence. I was very proud when the Premier announced last year, when he was opposition leader, that Labor would establish Australia's first royal commission into family violence. We all know why this is important. Each year we are seeing 65 000 incidents where police are called out to respond to family violence cases. There is no way we can possibly police our way out of the family violence problem. It is the no. 1 law and order issue, and it is the no. 1 community safety issue. I am very proud that Labor made that commitment to Victoria and is now getting on with conducting the commission.

Similarly, there is the ice task force. This is a very important body of work. I have been around all parts of Melbourne and country Victoria in my roles as both minister and shadow minister, and I tell you what: the problem of ice is ripping through communities like no other drug. It is having a devastating effect. It is turning good people to bad in a matter of months. Members of this Parliament have a collective responsibility to deal with the ravages of ice. I am very pleased with the early work that has been done by the ice task force. I am looking forward to the plan being adopted by the task force members so that the government has the direction in this term to deal with this very crippling issue.

The previous government did a lot of chest-beating on the issue of law and order, but if we go to its record, we see that crime rates went up each and every year. We saw our prisons growing at unprecedented rates, and we saw prisoners returning to prison within a couple of years of their release. That was the record of the previous government. That should never be a mark of success for any government. Essentially we have rising crime, rising imprisonment rates and rising recidivism rates. That is what we have inherited.

We have also inherited a corrections system under enormous pressure. There has been an increase of 1200 prisoners in the Victorian prison system in just two years. The previous government opened 2000 prison beds. It opened more prison beds than hospital beds; that was the priority of the previous government. Now we have to find those hospital beds that former government members said they opened. It is funny that we can find the prison beds but we cannot find the hospital beds.

As the previous government lifted spending in the corrections system by \$500 million over its term, it took money out of schools and it took money out of public TAFEs. That was its priority. We have inherited a corrections system under enormous pressure. We will manage that system and we will meet our statutory obligations around the management of that system. But my goodness, what we will do, very clearly, is invest heavily in the skills of our young people. That is where your priorities need to be as a government.

I want to make a few comments in relation to my electorate of Williamstown in the brief time I have left. The previous government invested no additional capital funding in the Williamstown electorate over its four years — four budgets, no dollars. Labor has committed to spending \$15 million on a new education precinct in the inner west. This will create a precinct that will provide preschool through to post-graduate education, and it will involve multiple partners. This is the priority

of Labor, and I am very proud to have been part of the policy formulation to bring that \$15 million to the inner west. It needs to be said that that \$15 million commitment is the single largest commitment that Labor has made to a primary or secondary education project, and it is coming to the inner west.

I am also thrilled with the government's pledge to commit \$500 000 to the construction of the Williamstown High School performing arts centre. This is another very important project, as is the government's commitment to Bayside P-12 College. The college will receive \$300 000 to upgrade the technology wing at its junior campus. These are three significant education commitments, and I will be very proud to see them implemented.

Labor has also made important commitments to rein in overdevelopment in Williamstown. I am looking forward to working with the Hobsons Bay City Council in relation to tackling the issue of buffer zones as they interface with major hazard facilities and to bringing some common sense back into planning around height controls in the Williamstown area.

I am also really proud of the commitment we have made on trucks in the inner west — the West Gate distributor project in particular. My community has fought for this project for four years. It goes back to my inaugural speech, when I said I would do something about it. Labor will do something about it, and we will do it in this term. We will take thousands of trucks off local roads. It would be nice if anyone from the Liberal Party would come out to the inner west and speak with local residents, because they would certainly learn how important that particular project actually is.

There are many jobs to get on with, both in terms of my ministerial responsibilities and my responsibilities as a local member. I would not be here without the great efforts of my local campaign team — the local branch members from the areas of Yarraville, Newport and Williamstown, who helped out in great numbers. I want to thank my campaign managers, Fiona Ward and Olly Tripodi, for their dedication to the cause, and I would also like to thank my electorate officer, Lindsay Wilson-Roberts, together with Bob Stensholt for his wise counsel and support in my roles as shadow Minister for Police and shadow Minister for Emergency Services.

Finally I want to thank my family — my wife, Julie, and my sons, Will and Henry. You cannot do this job without the support of your family. It is a rare privilege to serve in this place, but it comes at a great cost to families in terms of the time we are able to spend with

them. I made a firm commitment to my two sons in the lead-up to the election. I promised them that once we got through the election I would buy them a trampoline. I can say that I have delivered on that commitment. They deserved it, and it is the first commitment I was pleased to be able to deliver. With those words I look forward to getting on with the opportunity I have been given.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I thank the honourable member for his kind words.

Mr DIXON (Nepean) — Thank you, Deputy Speaker, and I would like to congratulate you on your elevation to the position of Deputy Speaker. You are certainly a highlight of what is good about the Parliament in the way in which you conduct yourself and have done over the years.

Congratulations to all members who have been elected to this place. It is a great honour. I extend a special welcome to all new members from all sides and all parties. As I said, it is a great honour. I was re-elected for the sixth time in this place. I was elected three times as the member for Dromana, and I have been elected three times as the member for Nepean. It is a great honour, and I assure my constituents that I will do everything in my power to work hard for them and represent them well in this place. It is interesting to note that 30 per cent of my constituents voted in the pre-poll, and about 10 per cent submitted postal votes. About 5 per cent did not turn up on the day, so only 55 per cent of eligible voters actually voted on election day. They did the right thing of course, but it is interesting. That statistic is growing all the time.

I would like to thank my campaign team led by David Stewart and Russell Joseph, who were ably supported by Anthea Mollison and Jackie Hammill. I thank the whole team and all the branch members, because I was not around a lot during the campaign, especially over the last 12 months, and they did a mighty job.

My family has been great support over my 19 years as an MP. My wife, Chris, is a great supporter of mine, and she is getting used to the idea of having me around the house more! I thank my daughter, Julia, who also supported the member for Forest Hill. My son, Marty, took a week's leave to support me and work with me in my electorate and the marginal electorates around the state. I thank my grandchildren, Ella and Sienna, who had their 'Vote 1 Poppy' T-shirts, which I think swung many votes in my direction.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the member for South-West Coast on the great work he did

not only during the campaign but also as Premier of this great state. I would like to thank all the other ministers who served with me in the cabinet. I would also like to congratulate the member for Bulleen, the new Leader of the Opposition. He has already made his mark in this place, and he will be a great Leader of the Opposition. He will bring the fight right up to the government.

In a way I have a new role. I decided this was an opportunity to take a step back and allow a lot of the great talent we have on this side of the place to have the opportunity to be on the front bench. I look forward with enthusiasm to representing my electorate with renewed vigour, working on parliamentary committees and wherever I may be called to work. When I come back, I want to come back as a Labor MP. The reason I say that is it is a pretty easy life. Even though my brother is a member of the socialist left of the Labor Party — —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr DIXON — I am the moderate in the family! He tells me — and I see it in this place too — that you do not have to campaign too hard. When I was visiting marginal electorates I did not see many of the Labor candidates or their signs, but they had their union colleagues out there phone polling, canvassing and doorknocking. They were there at the pre-polling booths, and they were raising money for them. They still get half their money from business as well. It is a pretty easy life in the lead-up to an election. Once Labor members get into government they spend, spend, spend. They are all things to all people. They rip up contracts and break promises — it is just fantastic — and away they go. But eventually voters wake up to that and ask the conservatives to come in and rescue the state, to make the hard decisions and do the hard work to bring the state back. That is what we do.

If you are a member of the Labor Party, it does not matter. Even though you have caused all this trouble, you sit back and have a go at the new government for making cuts — trimming the public service or looking at programs that perhaps cannot continue — and bringing the state's finances back into shape. It is an easy life. Sometimes I think there is a lack of scrutiny from our friends in the media of what I see as the hypocrisy that is part of the natural cycle in politics in Australia.

Anyway, Labor is back in government. Sometimes it is easier to get into government than to be re-elected. Many members do not even need 30 per cent of the primary vote to get across the line. If they happen to get into the 40 per cent area but do not have quite enough

primary votes, they have their good friends, the Greens, to get them over the line. I have done a little bit of work on this.

There are 21 members on the other side who would not be here without their good friends, the Greens: the members for Albert Park, Bellarine, Bendigo East, Bentleigh — the member for Brunswick got here because of Liberal preferences, actually — Buninyong, Carrum, Eltham, Essendon, Geelong, Ivanhoe, Macedon, Monbulk, Mordialloc, Mulgrave, Northcote, Oakleigh, Richmond, Sunbury, Wendouree, Williamstown and Yan Yean. They are all here because of the great work of their very close friends, the Greens, who gave them their preferences.

There is another list of those on the other side who, even though they were elected, only received a primary vote in the 30 per cent range. The member for Bentleigh received 38 per cent; the member for Frankston, 34 per cent; the member for Ivanhoe, 35 per cent; the member for Macedon, 38 per cent; the member for Monbulk, 37 per cent; the member for Mordialloc, 38 per cent; the member for Richmond, 33 per cent; and bringing up the rear — or the lead, depending on how you want to look at it — the member for Albert Park could not even get one-third of his electorate to vote for him, yet he got into Parliament thanks to his very good friends, the Greens. It is an easy life for them, and I hope they are nicer to the Greens in the next sitting week.

I will speak briefly on many of the achievements of the previous government in education. You hear this rant that we cut education spending. If you look at the last budget of the previous coalition government — and it was signed off by the Auditor-General — and compare it to the last budget of the Labor government before it, you will see we spent an extra \$1 billion on school education. No matter what Labor members or their friends in the Australian Education Union might say — no matter what lies they peddle — there was not a cut in school education funding. In fact there was a \$1 billion increase. Members opposite seem to know best, but the Auditor-General signed off on that.

Part of that was the school funding agreement. We stood up to two Labor state governments and also the coalition government in Canberra to get a fair share for Victorian schools. We signed up \$5.4 billion over six years. One of the main issues was the fact that the federal government wanted to control education. It wanted to get right down into our classrooms. We would not allow that; we would not sign up to an agreement that allowed that to happen. I am proud of the stand that we took. I stood there with Greens,

Independent, Labor and Nationals ministers. All of us stood together to get a fair deal for our states. I was proud to be a part of that.

Another great thing we did was the school maintenance audit. We increased maintenance funding. It had fallen by 20 per cent under the last Labor government. It is not sexy. It is one of those things you cannot produce brochures about. Sometimes it is not a large amount of money for each individual school, but we increased maintenance funding for four schools by 40 per cent. It was a needs-based system. We now have a database of every aspect and element of all 27 000 buildings in the state education system.

On the 25 per cent funding arrangement for non-government schools, we supported the legislation that went through the house today and over our full four years of government we funded non-government schools per student at, at least, 25 per cent of the cost of educating a child at a Victorian government school.

In last year's budget we delivered 13 public private partnerships, and I look forward to seeing them come to fruition. I understand that a couple of the schools that went out to tender have been taken off the list by the government and a couple of others have been added. Given the expectations of those communities, such cuts are not fair, but for the communities who receive these schools these are great projects.

On languages education, we have reversed the trend away from students learning another language. The internationalisation of education is so important. Students in our schools will be learning, living, studying and working overseas more than any previous generation, and they need the language and cultural skills to do that.

We did a lot of work in curriculum and pedagogy assessment and reporting — the assessment portal — giving schools the freedom to come up with the reporting system that works best for them and also for their school community and parents. It is important that our schools have that sort of autonomy. A one-size-fits-all approach just does not work.

We did great work in reforming and building on the Victorian certificate of education (VCE). I pay tribute to Lynne Kosky, a former Minister for Education and Training in this place. She did some great work, and we built on that. Because of its great popularity, we have a northern hemisphere VCE program to allow schools in other countries to take up the VCE, as well as the Victorian baccalaureate and the industry pathways program, to name a few examples.

We gave principals networks back to the principals. There is no longer an element of command and control from the central office. We said to principals, 'You need to be in networks, but you choose the networks that work for you. It may not necessarily be a geographic one, but it has to be one that will work for you and make your school a better place and you a better leader'.

We also started to change the culture of the department from a management organisation and a centralist organisation to one that is a service organisation. That is a key thing, because our schools need the autonomy to do the things that are right for them. A one-size-fits-all approach just will not work.

We did a lot of work on antibullying, especially with the Alannah and Madeline Foundation and the Bully Stoppers program. I hope this government continues that work because we are making real inroads in that area. We are educating parents, educating teachers, educating the community and educating our young students.

We also did a lot of work on school governance. Once again we implemented some reforms. The government has put them on hold, but they are about giving school communities the opportunity to choose a model that fits and works well for the school community. We were not dictating a particular model. We said to schools, 'Here is a range of models. You pick one that works for you'. You cannot have school governance operating on a one-size-fits-all approach.

Three of the main priorities for me in my electorate over the next four years are to do with jobs. First, the port of Hastings has to go ahead, not only for the future of the Mornington Peninsula and to create a whole range of jobs for our young people but also because jobs are so important for the future of the Victorian economy. There are 400 jobs involved in the opening up of Point Nepean. Only 10 per cent of the buildings there are currently used. Under the proposal all the buildings and land would be used and available to the people of Victoria, Australia and the world, and, as I said, there would be 400 local jobs.

Tourism is our largest industry, being worth more than \$1 billion, and in two weeks time our first cruise ship comes to the Mornington Peninsula. I will be working hard and working with the government to ensure that tourism remains the great provider of income, business and depth for the business life of our community. There is a bipartisan approach to the chairlift at Arthurs Seat, and the proposed skylift has now gone through all the

regulatory hoops. Hopefully construction on that will start very soon.

We improved public transport services. There was \$6 million in last year's budget to improve some of the infrastructure for our bus service. There is only one way in and out of the peninsula; people have to go up the one road. Up the highway, the 788 bus is the main way for people to access Melbourne and Frankston services from the peninsula. The electorate of Nepean has the oldest population age profile of any of the 88 electorates — 28 per cent of my constituents are aged over 65. The next nearest electorate is 20 per cent. In fact, I am rapidly approaching a true representation of the age of the people in my electorate. If I hang on long enough, I will be very typical. At the same time it is also the fourth poorest electorate if you look at it in terms of average income. There are many elderly people and many poor people in my electorate who really rely on public transport, and we need to continually improve it.

Frankston Hospital and Rosebud Hospital are very important parts of our community. I have just received an invitation to the opening of \$80 million worth of works at Frankston Hospital that were funded and built by the previous government. I remember that the Labor Party in opposition railed against our attitude towards Frankston Hospital, but I see that the Minister for Health and the Premier will be there to open the \$80 million investment the coalition made in improving the health of the Mornington Peninsula. Again, because of the elderly population, which is a growing population as well, we need to keep improving our health services both locally in my electorate in Rosebud and in Frankston.

The peninsula planning statement has ensured that when proper development occurs in the green wedge, it will fit in with what everyone expects and wants of the Mornington Peninsula. It is so important that we protect the green open spaces, that the villages are constrained and that any development occurs in the three townships that are geared that way. We have to protect our way of life and our beautiful environment. That is why people live there. That is why so many people want to holiday there, and I will be ensuring that that remains in place.

Traffic congestion is also a major issue, especially over the summer months. We have had a pretty cold summer, and it has been tough for business. We do have crowds down there, though, and traffic congestion is a huge issue. We funded a study that came up with three options, and I will be working through those three options with VicRoads and the minister.

Once again, Deputy Speaker, it is an absolute honour to be re-elected to this place, and I commit the next four years to working for the people of the Nepean electorate.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Traffic congestion

Ms RYALL (Ringwood) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek is that the minister provide me with a letter I can circulate to the tradies, small businesses and independent contractors in my electorate of Ringwood to explain how the Labor government is going to reduce the time and cost to their businesses and livelihood of their work-related travel from the east to the west, to the north-west, to the city and to the airport.

As a former small business owner I know that increasing costs to business can determine whether there is money to put food on the table, pay the bills and, for those who have employees, keep them in a job. Fuel and time costs are a huge impost for businesses that need to move their products and services from the east to the west and back. A plumber I spoke to recently talked about the time it takes for him to get from Ringwood to Geelong twice a week and his concern about his future ability to continue that work to support his family and sick wife as that road congestion worsens. He is worried that if he loses that job because of the cost in time and fuel becoming greater than the return he gets from that job, he will need to look for other work, may not be available to him. However, at the same time he would be without necessary work, so the challenges of being able to fulfil that need at a stressful time of his life is difficult.

His story is typical of many tradies and small-business owners in my local community. Other concerns they have expressed include the impact on family time, being home in time to interact or play with their kids or put them to bed and even the relationship pressure on marriages and relationships in general that reduced family time creates. I would very much appreciate an understanding response for my local community, for tradespeople and for businesses that tells them how this government will deal with the congestion that impacts on our livelihoods and incomes when travelling to and from the east to the west, to the north-west, to the airport and to the city.

Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Energy and Resources. The matter concerns the government's commitment to supporting community-led renewable energy projects in my electorate, and I ask the minister to visit the electorate of Macedon and reaffirm her commitment to allocate a grant of \$100 000 to the Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group to build a solar farm at the site of the old timber mill on Black Forest Drive in Woodend.

The people of Woodend are passionate about protecting their beautiful environment and living more sustainably so that that environment is protected now and well into the future. This passion is shared across the generations. I recently had the pleasure of attending an assembly at Woodend Primary School to join with the children who had fundraised and community members like myself who had donated solar panels to celebrate stage 2 of the primary school's solar project. The school has already raised \$50 000 towards a 33-kilowatt solar system.

The Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group was established in 2008 out of the Woodend Sustainable Living Community, and it has been very successful in delivering on its vision to create and nurture sustainability by promoting local solutions and prosperity throughout the Macedon Ranges.

It was my pleasure to welcome the now Minister for Energy and Resources to Woodend in November last year, where she joined with the then shadow Minister for Planning to announce that an Andrews Labor government would provide a grant to develop a solar farm at the old timber mill and lift the arbitrary ban on wind farms in the Macedon Ranges to enable the planning and development of a community-owned and controlled wind farm in Woodend.

The now Minister for Energy and Resources was warmly received by the people of Woodend. Her genuine interest in and commitment to developing and supporting renewable energy was there for all to see. What a contrast to the previous government, which had no interest in renewable energy, no interest in addressing climate change and no regard for our environment. The previous government ignored the wishes of the local communities and stymied all plans for a community wind farm modelled on the very successful Hepburn community wind project, which is also in my electorate.

The solar farm at the old mill is supported by the mill's owners and its tenants, and it is planned to serve as a demonstration site for sustainable building and living

practices. It will be a great catalyst for the redevelopment of this important site.

I advise the minister that the Macedon Ranges Sustainable Living Festival will be held on 28 February. It will be a great event, with lots of information, entertainment and wonderful food. It would be fabulous to have the minister join me in attending that event. I ask the minister to confirm her commitment to the solar farm, and I warmly invite her to my electorate.

Salvation Army youth street team

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) — I rise this afternoon to raise a matter for the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation. The action I seek is that the minister and her government provide funding and support for an extension of the Salvation Army youth street team to various outer suburban and regional centres.

By way of background, the Salvation Army youth street team came into operation just prior to Christmas in December 2010, funded by Melbourne City Council. It seeks to provide support for vulnerable young people who may be at risk, particularly on Friday and Saturday nights. It provides them with support to make sure that they are able to get home safely. I am sure that all members of the house endorse the great work that the Salvation Army does.

Whether people are intoxicated, experiencing the impacts of drugs or otherwise vulnerable, the Salvation Army youth team goes out and provides them with water, transport in certain cases and clothes and footwear. The team does a wonderful job within the city of Melbourne area. The team also runs a chill-out zone, which provides temporary relief, particularly for younger people. It allows them to chill out for a period of time until they are right to go on to other places, including home.

The volunteers in this team have been described as guardian angels. I think that is an appropriate term to use for people who volunteer their time to go and support vulnerable young people in our communities. From a liquor point of view, each nightclub precinct is different. It is important that we implement local initiatives to support local revellers where possible. The youth street team, funded by Melbourne City Council, has done a wonderful job.

Prior to the election the coalition made a number of commitments with respect to extending the youth street team. We sought to extend the team into Ballarat,

Bendigo, Geelong and Frankston. We made a commitment of \$400 000 over four years to support the Salvation Army in its endeavour to extend this well-regarded program into those outer suburban areas and regional centres. The team has made a massive difference within the city of Melbourne. There is a great opportunity for the new government to support this proposition proposed by the coalition and supported by the Salvation Army. It is a great opportunity to provide a good outcome together. I call upon the minister to consider this initiative.

Kindergarten funding

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — I raise with the Premier the matter of the extension of the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education. I have the great privilege of having been a board member and the inaugural president of the Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA), which was formerly Kindergarten Parents Victoria.

ELAA championed the concept of providing quality access to a positive early learning environment for all children. That is why we were thrilled when the former federal government embarked on establishing 15 hours of kindergarten per week for four-year-old children. In practice the program delivered 600 hours a year of kindergarten run by a degree-qualified early childhood teacher. Under this agreement the state government of Victoria funds 10 hours of kindergarten, with the federal government funding the remaining 5 hours.

Last year the federal coalition government extended the agreement for just 12 months. If this agreement is not extended, each year 70 000 Victorian children will have the quality of their early years education experience compromised. With the agreement set to expire this year, I ask the Premier to continue to raise this matter with the federal government to ensure that Victoria's kindergarten children are not left behind.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member for Essendon should keep going, but one of the criteria for the adjournment is that members cannot raise a matter just for the federal government; there must be a different action.

Mr PEARSON — With the agreement set to expire this year, I ask that the Premier write to the Prime Minister as a matter of urgency to ask him to ensure that Victoria's kindergarten children are not left behind. Clearly if the agreement is not rolled over, then children, particularly those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds or from regional

Victoria, will miss out. The reality is that more affluent families will ensure that their children have at least 15 hours of kindergarten a week. It is important that children from regional Victoria — and I am sure that The Nationals will support the government in this — as well as those from a linguistically different background can also access quality early childhood education.

Bimbadeen Heights Primary School

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — My request for action is addressed to the Minister for Education. I ask that he ensure that a commitment to funding for a rebuild of the Bimbadeen Heights Primary School take priority in this year's budget. During the 2014 election campaign the coalition government made a commitment to provide over \$5.2 million in funding for Bimbadeen Heights Primary School to upgrade its buildings and facilities, which are in desperate need of attention. It is vitally important that this work proceeds under the new government to deliver safe, high-quality and modern learning facilities for the 563-strong student body. I have raised this matter with the Minister for Education, as has the school council and its principal. In fact in opposition the now minister visited the school on 2 August last year with a Labor candidate. In a letter dated 10 September 2014 to the school council president after that visit he said that the building was effectively being condemned under the department's audit process and that it was in a shocking state.

At a Yarra Ranges principals meeting on 28 August 2014, where the current Minister for Education was guest speaker, he stated the then opposition was committed to upgrading all Victorian schools. He even said, when referring to his visits to schools around Victoria, that Bimbadeen was one of the worst he had seen. Yet the school is still waiting for a commitment from the minister. Its hopes were built up by the now minister's visit and by his public comments, but they have been dashed. The only communication since the election has been a departmental form letter telling the school that the government's challenge is to responsibly balance and prioritise the needs of over 1500 government schools, all in varying conditions. If Bimbadeen is one of the worst the minister has seen, surely it should be at the top of the list.

This is truly a terrific school, which integrates children with disabilities and those from various cultural backgrounds. It has a lovely, happy feel when you walk in at playtime, as I have many times over the years. The teachers and the principal have done a tremendous job of keeping it looking bright with the limited funds they have. When you walk into the school you do not really pick up on the issues and the problems. It is only as you

spend time walking around that you see the gaps you can put your hand in under the windows and the deterioration of all the window frames with the rotting wood, and you see the condition of the toilets and the play area. The principal and his dedicated staff deserve better facilities, as do the students and the community. I urge the minister to support the school's request.

Infrastructure procurement process

Mr BROOKS (Bundoora) — The matter I raise is for the Treasurer, and the action I seek is the implementation of processes that ensure the highest standards of probity and rigour in infrastructure project contracts. The issue I raise concerns contract probity arrangements and infrastructure procurement. In the November 2012 *Victorian Labor's Plan for Jobs and Growth* we committed to establishing two infrastructure prioritisation and delivery bodies, Infrastructure Victoria and Projects Victoria. The policy notes that the infrastructure procurement processes of the time lead to adversarial behaviour and discourage collaboration and innovation. I note that the government provided \$40 million in the 2014 budget update to establish Infrastructure Victoria, and I applaud the Andrews Labor government on its progress in implementing its commitments in this area.

However, I am concerned that the lack of integrity shown by the former government in its infrastructure procurement may have eroded the spirit of collaboration for which Victoria used to be famous. The action I seek is the implementation of processes that ensure the highest standards of probity and rigour in future infrastructure project contracts so that the agreements between the state and the private sector deliver value for money for Victorian taxpayers.

Prahran electorate secondary school

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran) — I rise to raise a matter for the Minister for Education, and it is in regard to the proposed state secondary school in Prahran. The action I seek is for the minister to update the Prahran community on the progress to create a new secondary school in the electorate. As the minister would be aware, all political parties supported the new school during the recent election campaign and promised to begin negotiations to secure the deaf school site. But there is still great uncertainty in our community as to whether the school will go ahead, where it will be located and when it will be opened. This is the no. 1 issue in the Prahran community. I have had a steady stream of visitors to my office and correspondence from people, all questioning the status of the school and expressing support for it. There is strong community

support for a new state secondary school in Prahran and strong support for its co-location with the deaf school site.

As I am sure the previous member for Prahran raised in this house — and I acknowledge the work he did to progress the new school — there is currently no school in the Prahran area. The distance to travel to the nearest state secondary school is prohibitive, which particularly affects disadvantaged students and families as it is another barrier to accessing education. The fact is that many families move out of the Prahran area when their children reach secondary school age. I would like the Prahran electorate to become an area where families of all types are able to live, and having an accessible, quality state secondary school is key to making this possible. There is \$20 million already allocated in the budget for the school. It is important that we have transparency and accountability in the new funding for schools, and I would like the minister to give certainty to the Prahran community that the funding will be used for a new state secondary school in the electorate.

Mordialloc electorate ambulance services

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Ambulance Services, and the action I seek is for the minister to meet with local paramedics from the Chelsea, Mordialloc and Moorabbin ambulance divisions to hear about the challenges they are facing in the region and to discuss what the Andrews Labor government is doing to end the crisis in our ambulance system.

Over the past 12 months I have had the privilege of meeting many of our dedicated paramedics who live and serve in the Mordialloc electorate. You cannot help but marvel at their contributions to the community. Our paramedics are good people. They are highly trained, highly skilled and they work tirelessly to protect others. In the second half of last year I had the opportunity to attend the Moorabbin ambulance station to meet with mobile intensive care ambulance (MICA) paramedics. This enhanced my appreciation of the complexities of their work and the life and death decisions that a MICA paramedic faces on a daily basis. That is why it is so hard to understand the approach taken by the previous government with its constant demonisation of their profession, the intimidation and the smothering of important response times that Victorian taxpayers have a right to access. We saw many paramedics lost from the profession during this toxic period.

The Andrews Labor government committed to end the war on paramedics, to work with, not against our paramedics, to reduce response times and to help them

deliver better care to Victorians. On day one the paramedics' work value case was referred to the Fair Work Commission. We have released secret data that shows that the crisis in the system was worse than imagined. In fact during 2013–14, 1 in 10 ambulances took more than 22 minutes to arrive at a code 1 emergency, well above the 15-minute target, which makes Victoria the worst state on the mainland.

We replaced the board of Ambulance Victoria. Labor has resolved the protracted and bitter industrial dispute and established the Ambulance Performance and Policy Consultative Committee, which met for the first time in January. I also welcome the vital \$60 million contribution by the Labor government to start the Response Time Rescue Fund, which will support initiatives that free up ambulances for critically sick patients, as well as provide \$40 million towards upgrading ambulance stations, vehicles and equipment. I look forward to continuing to work closely with local paramedics in my electorate of Mordialloc to address these ongoing challenges.

In conclusion I request that the Minister for Ambulance Services meet with local paramedics in the Mordialloc electorate to hear about the challenges they are facing and to discuss how the Labor government is addressing the crisis in our ambulance system.

Chandler Highway bridge

Mr T. SMITH (Kew) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The matter I wish to raise is the duplication of the Chandler Highway bridge. The action I seek from the minister is to confirm the start date for construction of the Chandler Highway bridge in accordance with Labor's 16 June 2014 commitment. As we have heard in this place, the minister has demonstrated that he struggles with the concept of a shovel-ready project. But if one were to read Labor's media release of 16 June 2014, one would see it says works to duplicate the Chandler Highway were to 'start immediately on coming to government'. It is 74 days since Labor came to government, and despite the spin, the media stunts and the avalanche of media releases, not once has the Premier or any member of this government uttered a word on this supposed shovel-ready project.

No-one can deny there is a traffic crisis at the western end of the Eastern Freeway. It is not soon forgotten that for 11 years the former Labor government, a government the now Premier was a senior member of, did not lift a finger to alleviate the nightmare faced by motorists daily in Kew. Since coming to government Labor has sought to entrench this crisis by recklessly

ripping up the east–west link contracts. Common sense dictates that to improve traffic conditions at the western end of the Eastern Freeway the duplication of the Chandler Highway is an important complementary traffic management solution along with east–west link.

I understand there are unique challenges with the construction of this project, particularly relating to heritage. I implore the minister and the government to ensure that the heritage of the current bridge, which was engineered by Sir John Monash, is preserved as a tangible example of the contribution that great Victorian made to our state. Further, given the rampant rat-running through local Kew streets by motorists trying to avoid the daily gridlock at Hoddle Street, residents are concerned that the government has yet to announce any sort of traffic management plan should the project get underway. It is incumbent upon the government to release the detail as soon as possible, as this single bridge is the only north–south access route across the Yarra River between Studley Park Road and Burke Road.

I implore the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to stop the spin, stop the inaction and get on with the job of building the Chandler Highway bridge. I conclude by asking him to confirm the start date of this project.

Amsleigh Park Primary School

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education. The action I seek is a commitment that the funding for the redevelopment of Amsleigh Park Primary School in Oakleigh East will be provided as soon as possible.

Amsleigh Park Primary School is an amazing, progressive and inclusive school in the electorate of Oakleigh. It offers a diverse curriculum, including a second language program, and a high-class sports and recreation program as well as performing arts and extracurricular activities. It also offers a terrific social skills program called Together We Achieve. I had the great pleasure of visiting the school again at its first assembly this year and meeting with the students, staff, parents and principal Michael Cormick. While the school does its very best in providing a quality education, many of the facilities and buildings were born in a different era. The redevelopment of Amsleigh Park Primary School is long overdue. It urgently requires state-of-the-art teaching facilities and modernisation. A commitment was made by Labor prior to the 2010 election for this to proceed. Disappointingly, funding to improve the school was not included in any of the last four state budgets under the

previous government. Labor recommitted funding in the 2014 election campaign.

I was delighted to join the Premier and Deputy Premier on a visit to the school last September and to make a commitment that the Labor government would provide \$5.7 million for the redevelopment of the school. As I said at the time of that commitment:

Amsleigh Park Primary staff and the school community works very hard to provide quality educational opportunities for the growing number of students who attend this great school.

They deserve the further opportunities that will come from Labor's commitment to rebuild and modernise the school facilities.

The motto of the school is Our Best Always. We need to do our best for them as well. I will be very pleased to offer any personal assistance, as would Mike Cormick and the president of the school council, John Kouvelas, to ensure that the redevelopment of Amsleigh Park Primary School can proceed at the earliest possible time. The school is ready to proceed, so we would like it to be considered the no. 1 priority. I ask the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education that funding be provided in the coming budget.

Responses

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — The member for Bundoora raised the implementation of processes that ensure the highest standards of probity and rigour in future infrastructure project contracts. Under the former government, the moral and commercial integrity of infrastructure procurement went into freefall. This decline culminated in the despicable side letter signed by the member for Malvern.

The Andrews Labor government will improve the state's standard of behaviour in dealing with these matters. Companies seeking to work in Victoria must understand that the financial interests of taxpayers will always be our primary concern. Ensuring that proper procurement processes are followed and procurement is conducted in a fair and collaborative manner is critical to achieving value for money for taxpayers. As part of the establishment of Projects Victoria and Infrastructure Victoria the Andrews Labor government will review the process by which preferred bidders are selected to make sure it is robust. Victorians must have confidence in the process, and that is what this government will do to ensure confidence. We will consider the past performance of companies as part of future evaluation processes. We are improving the standards of transparency and integrity that we apply to ourselves, and we will seek to partner with companies that have a

record of equitable and honest dealings and that overall are good corporate citizens.

Victoria has a long history of working collaboratively with the private sector to deliver key infrastructure projects, and we will continue to do so.

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Ambulance Services) — I thank the member for Mordialloc for his request and for his interest in fixing ambulance services. The member for Mordialloc knows, as does this new government, the crisis the previous government wreaked on paramedic services. Having spent significant amounts of time in the member's electorate, I would be absolutely delighted to meet with paramedics in the electorate.

I also advise the member for Mordialloc that the Parliamentary Secretary for Health, the member for Macedon, an important member of our ambulance policy and performance committee — a committee charged with improving ambulance response times — will be visiting his electorate within the next week. I thank him for his interest and commitment, and for his invitation. We look forward as a new government to working with paramedics from the state seat of Mordialloc to see what we can do collaboratively to improve response times.

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Industry) — I thank the member for Macedon for her adjournment debate matter. I know firsthand of the member's passion for renewable energy and her passion for the community which she quite ably represents. I know through her advocacy for the project she has raised for my attention today that it is a signature project for the community of Woodend.

I was very pleased to have been able to visit the community in November last year, together with the then shadow Minister for Planning, to deal with what were some very important issues for the community. I know that the Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group has done a mountain of work since 2008 — that is a long time in planning for a wonderful project, and one that has broad community support across Woodend — to come up with a fantastic business case for a viable project for a community solar farm on the old timber mill. My understanding and appreciation of the project grew enormously on that visit. The member for Macedon, together with the Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group, was able to explain to me that the project was not just about generating renewable energy for community use but also about taking advantage of and growing tourism and hospitality opportunities for the Woodend community. It was a whole ecosystem

approach to what is a wonderful heritage legacy that exists in Woodend.

I commend the member for Macedon for the terrific representation that she has made, with the Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group, on behalf of her community on this project. The government made an election commitment to provide funding for the community to go to the final step of installing the solar farm on top of the old timber mill in Woodend.

I am delighted to take up the opportunity and invitation to attend the Macedon Ranges Sustainability Festival later this month. I look forward to providing an update to the member's community about the terrific project they are providing. Community renewable energy is so important to the Andrews Labor government. We believe that communities, especially in regional Victoria, have missed out on opportunities to put in place fantastic grassroots initiatives such as the one in Woodend. While the project commenced as a concept back in 2008, there was no support whatsoever available to the group until the Andrews Labor government took office. I am very pleased that we are now able to step up and respond to broad community support for renewable energy.

Mr Southwick interjected.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — The member for Caulfield has now got this mantle of renewable energy. For the four years the opposition was in government there was no mention of renewable energy, so it is a joke. The member for Caulfield cannot even get renewables right. The opposition had no agenda for it at all for four long years. The member for Caulfield coming here with the mantle of renewable energy in his shadow portfolio is a joke on the whole community.

Community renewable projects are supported by this government and will be supported by this government into the future because it believes in community renewable energy projects. I know that the people of Macedon and the people of Woodend will get good results from this government, working in partnership with terrific members such as the member for Macedon.

The member for Ringwood raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety regarding work-related travel and congestion in her community.

The member for Morwell raised an issue to do with the extension of the Salvation Army youth street team program.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I ask the honourable member for Ringwood to be very clear about what her point of order is at this late stage.

Ms Ryall — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, our ministers always fronted for the adjournment debate. No ministers fronted for this.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order. I ask the honourable member to sit down.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — The member for Morwell raised a matter for the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation regarding the extension of the youth street team program. I know the minister will deal with that matter in due course.

The member for Essendon raised a matter for the Premier regarding universal access to education for early years, seeking that the Premier write to the Prime Minister to extend this agreement.

The member for Evelyn raised a matter for the Minister for Education regarding funding to rebuild the Bimbadeen Primary School. I note that the member for Evelyn is not in the chamber to hear a response from the minister.

The member for Prahran raised a matter for the Minister for Education seeking an update for his community on a new secondary school in his electorate.

The member for Kew raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety seeking a start date for the duplication of the Chandler Highway bridge.

The member for Oakleigh raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education regarding funding for Amsleigh Park Primary School.

All these matters will be referred to the appropriate ministers.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The house is now adjourned.

House adjourned 5.35 p.m. until Tuesday, 24 February.

