

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

WEDNESDAY, 20 MARCH 2019

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable KEN LAY, AO, APM

The ministry

Premier	The Hon. DM Andrews, MP
Deputy Premier and Minister for Education	The Hon. JA Merlino, MP
Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Industrial Relations	The Hon. TH Pallas, MP
Minister for Transport Infrastructure	The Hon. JM Allan, MP
Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice and Minister for Victim Support	The Hon. BA Carroll, MP
Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and Minister for Solar Homes	The Hon. L D'Ambrosio, MP
Minister for Child Protection and Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers	The Hon. LA Donnellan, MP
Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Equality and Minister for Creative Industries	The Hon. MP Foley, MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Workplace Safety	The Hon. J Hennessy, MP
Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Ports and Freight	The Hon. MM Horne, MP
Special Minister of State, Minister for Priority Precincts and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs	The Hon. GW Jennings, MLC
Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, and Minister for Suburban Development	The Hon. M Kairouz, MP
Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services	The Hon. J Mikakos, MLC
Minister for Water and Minister for Police and Emergency Services	The Hon. LM Neville, MP
Minister for Jobs, Innovation and Trade, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, and Minister for Racing	The Hon. MP Pakula, MP
Minister for Roads, Minister for Road Safety and the TAC, and Minister for Fishing and Boating	The Hon. JL Pulford, MLC
Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Veterans	The Hon. RD Scott, MP
Minister for Local Government and Minister for Small Business	The Hon. A Somyurek, MLC
Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Resources	The Hon. J Symes, MLC
Minister for Training and Skills, and Minister for Higher Education	The Hon. GA Tierney, MLC
Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Women and Minister for Youth	The Hon. G Williams, MP
Minister for Planning, Minister for Housing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. RW Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Ms M Thomas, MP

**OFFICE-HOLDERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION**

Speaker

The Hon. CW BROOKS

Deputy Speaker

Ms JM EDWARDS

Acting Speakers

Ms Blandthorn, Mr J Bull, Mr Carbines, Ms Couzens, Mr Dimopoulos, Mr Edbrooke, Ms Kilkenny, Mr McGuire,
Mr Richardson, Ms Spence, Ms Suleyman and Ms Ward

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

The Hon. DM ANDREWS

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

The Hon. JA MERLINO

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

The Hon. MA O'BRIEN

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party

The Hon. LG McLEISH

Leader of The Nationals and Deputy Leader of the Opposition

The Hon. PL WALSH

Deputy Leader of The Nationals

Ms SM RYAN

Leader of the House

Ms JM ALLAN

Manager of Opposition Business

Mr KA WELLS

Heads of parliamentary departments

Assembly: Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Ms B Noonan

Council: Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr A Young

Parliamentary Services: Secretary: Mr P Lochert

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

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Addison, Ms Juliana	Wendouree	ALP	Maas, Mr Gary	Narre Warren South	ALP
Allan, Ms Jacinta Marie	Bendigo East	ALP	McCurdy, Mr Timothy Logan	Ovens Valley	Nats
Andrews, Mr Daniel Michael	Mulgrave	ALP	McGhie, Mr Stephen John	Melton	ALP
Angus, Mr Neil Andrew Warwick	Forest Hill	LP	McGuire, Mr Frank	Broadmeadows	ALP
Battin, Mr Bradley William	Gembrook	LP	McLeish, Ms Lucinda Gaye	Eildon	LP
Blackwood, Mr Gary John	Narracan	LP	Merlino, Mr James Anthony	Monbulk	ALP
Blandthorn, Ms Elizabeth Anne	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Morris, Mr David Charles	Mornington	LP
Brayne, Mr Chris	Nepean	ALP	Neville, Ms Lisa Mary	Bellarine	ALP
Britnell, Ms Roma	South-West Coast	LP	Newbury, Mr James	Brighton	LP
Brooks, Mr Colin William	Bundoora	ALP	Northe, Mr Russell John	Morwell	Ind
Bull, Mr Joshua Michael	Sunbury	ALP	O'Brien, Mr Daniel David	Gippsland South	Nats
Bull, Mr Timothy Owen	Gippsland East	Nats	O'Brien, Mr Michael Anthony	Malvern	LP
Burgess, Mr Neale Ronald	Hastings	LP	Pakula, Mr Martin Philip	Keysborough	ALP
Carbines, Mr Anthony Richard	Ivanhoe	ALP	Pallas, Mr Timothy Hugh	Werribee	ALP
Carroll, Mr Benjamin Alan	Niddrie	ALP	Pearson, Mr Daniel James	Essendon	ALP
Cheeseman, Mr Darren Leicester	South Barwon	ALP	Read, Dr Tim	Brunswick	Greens
Connolly, Ms Sarah	Tarneit	ALP	Richards, Ms Pauline	Cranbourne	ALP
Couzens, Ms Christine Anne	Geelong	ALP	Richardson, Mr Timothy Noel	Mordialloc	ALP
Crugnale, Ms Jordan Alessandra	Bass	ALP	Riordan, Mr Richard Vincent	Polwarth	LP
Cupper, Ms Ali	Mildura	Ind	Rowswell, Mr Brad	Sandringham	LP
D'Ambrosio, Ms Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Ryan, Stephanie Maureen	Euroa	Nats
Dimopoulos, Mr Stephen	Oakleigh	ALP	Sandell, Ms Ellen	Burnbourne	Greens
Donnellan, Mr Luke Anthony	Narre Warren North	ALP	Scott, Mr Robin David	Preston	ALP
Edbrooke, Mr Paul Andrew	Frankston	ALP	Settle, Ms Michaela	Buninyong	ALP
Edwards, Ms Janice Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Sheed, Ms Suzanna	Shepparton	Ind
Eren, Mr John Hamdi	Lara	ALP	Smith, Mr Ryan	Warrandyte	LP
Foley, Mr Martin Peter	Albert Park	ALP	Smith, Mr Timothy Colin	Kew	LP
Fowles, Mr Will	Burwood	ALP	Southwick, Mr David James	Caulfield	LP
Fregon, Mr Matt	Mount Waverley	ALP	Spence, Ms Rosalind Louise	Yuroke	ALP
Green, Ms Danielle Louise	Yan Yean	ALP	Staikos, Mr Nicholas	Bentleigh	ALP
Guy, Mr Matthew Jason	Bulleen	LP	Staley, Ms Louise Eileen	Ripon	LP
Halfpenny, Ms Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Suleyman, Ms Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Hall, Ms Katie	Footscray	ALP	Tak, Mr Meng Heang	Clarinda	ALP
Halse, Mr Dustin	Ringwood	ALP	Taylor, Mr Jackson	Bayswater	ALP
Hamer, Mr Paul	Box Hill	ALP	Theophanous, Ms Katerina	Northcote	ALP
Hennessy, Ms Jill	Altona	ALP	Thomas, Ms Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Hibbins, Mr Samuel Peter	Prahran	Greens	Tilley, Mr William John	Benambra	LP
Hodgett, Mr David John	Croydon	LP	Vallence, Ms Bridget	Evelyn	LP
Horne, Ms Melissa Margaret	Williamstown	ALP	Wakeling, Mr Nicholas	Ferntree Gully	LP
Hutchins, Ms Natalie Maree Sykes	Sydenham	ALP	Walsh, Mr Peter Lindsay	Murray Plains	Nats
Kairouz, Ms Marlene	Kororoit	ALP	Ward, Ms Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Kealy, Ms Emma Jayne	Lowan	Nats	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Rowville	LP
Kennedy, Mr John Ormond	Hawthorn	ALP	Williams, Ms Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
Kilkenny, Ms Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

Legislative Assembly committees

Economy and Infrastructure Standing Committee

Ms Addison, Mr Blackwood, Ms Connolly, Mr Eren, Mr Rowswell, Ms Ryan and Ms Theophanous.

Environment and Planning Standing Committee

Mr Cheeseman, Mr Fowles, Ms Green, Mr Hamer, Mr McCurdy, Mr Morris and Mr T Smith.

Legal and Social Issues Standing Committee

Ms Couzens, Ms Kealy, Mr Newbury, Ms Settle, Mr Southwick, Ms Suleyman and Mr Tak.

Privileges Committee

Ms Allan, Mr Guy, Ms Hennessy, Mr McGuire, Mr Morris, Ms Neville, Mr Pakula, Ms Ryan and Mr Wells.

Standing Orders Committee

The Speaker, Ms Allan, Ms Edwards, Ms Halfpenny, Ms McLeish, Ms Sheed, Mr Staikos, Ms Staley and Mr Walsh.

Joint committees

Dispute Resolution Committee

Assembly: Ms Allan, Ms Hennessy, Mr Merlino, Mr Pakula, Mr R Smith, Mr Walsh and Mr Wells.

Council: Mr Bourman, Mr Davis, Mr Jennings, Ms Symes and Ms Wooldridge.

Electoral Matters Committee

Assembly: Ms Blandthorn, Ms Hall, Dr Read and Ms Spence.

Council: Mr Atkinson, Mrs McArthur, Mr Meddick, Mr Melhem, Ms Lovell and Mr Quilty.

House Committee

Assembly: The Speaker (*ex officio*), Mr T Bull, Ms Crugnale, Ms Edwards, Mr Fregon, Ms Sandell and Ms Staley.

Council: The President (*ex officio*), Mr Bourman, Mr Davis, Ms Lovell, Ms Pulford and Ms Stitt.

Integrity and Oversight Committee

Assembly: Mr Halse, Mr McGhie, Mr Rowswell, Mr Taylor and Mr Wells.

Council: Mr Grimley and Ms Shing.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Assembly: Ms Blandthorn, Mr Hibbins, Mr Maas, Mr D O'Brien, Ms Richards, Mr Richardson, Mr Riordan and Ms Vallence.

Council: Ms Stitt.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

Assembly: Mr Burgess, Ms Connolly and Ms Kilkenny.

Council: Mr Gepp, Mrs McArthur, Ms Patten and Ms Taylor.

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Wednesday, 20 March 2019

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

Bills

SALE OF LAND AMENDMENT BILL 2019

Introduction and first reading

Ms KAIROUZ (Koroit—Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Suburban Development) (09:34): I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to make various amendments to the Sale of Land Act 1962 in relation to off-the-plan contracts, terms contracts, rent-to-buy arrangements and options to purchase land under land banking schemes, to amend the ANZAC Day Act 1958 to impose restrictions on public auctions, and to amend the Estate Agents Act 1980 in respect of payments that may be made from the Victorian Property Fund and for other purposes.

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (09:34): I ask for a further explanation in relation to the bill.

Ms KAIROUZ: This bill implements a number of consumer protection reforms to the Sale of Land Act which are a result of the Andrews Labor government's consumer property law review which was conducted in the last term. The bill will strengthen consumer rights in the Victorian property market by cracking down on abuse of sunset clauses by property developers; improving property sales disclosure, and protections for consumers in land banking schemes; and banning certain types of rent-to-buy schemes and public auctions before 1.00 p.m. on Anzac Day.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read a second time tomorrow.

Business of the house

NOTICES OF MOTION

Notice given.

Petitions

Following petitions presented to house by Clerk:

CAULFIELD ELECTORATE PLANNING

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly

We, the undersigned citizens of Victoria, call on the Legislative Assembly of Victoria to note:

The interim height limits established by the Minister for Planning, The Hon Richard Wynne MP in Amendment C157, are inconsistent, and unfairly impact Elsternwick and the broader Caulfield community.

The interim height limits have encouraged a wave of inappropriate high-rise development proposals in areas such as Selwyn and Horne Streets, Elsternwick and Hawthorn Road, South Caulfield. These proposed high-rise developments will impinge upon the surrounding neighbourhood character and traffic flow, introducing overshadowing and privacy concerns, without necessary community infrastructure upgrades.

The discrepancies between current interim height limits lack essential strategic justification, therefore the petitioners request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria call on the State Government to immediately reduce the interim height limits for the Caulfield Electorate.

By Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (1747 signatures).

DAIRY INDUSTRY

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria

The Petition of the residents of the South West Coast electorate condemns Animal Justice Party MP Andy Meddick for his comments that the Dairy Industry should be reduced by 20 per cent and that people should move to a plant based diet. The petitioners note any forced move to reduce the size of the industry would be catastrophic for the south-west region, which is the largest agricultural production areas in Victoria.

The petitioners therefore request that Mr Meddick visit local dairy farms to learn and see for himself the enormous contribution they make towards good environmental outcomes through the management of erosion and invasive weeds and vermin and the care farmers have for their animals.

By Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (730 signatures).

Tabled.

Ordered that petition lodged by member for Caulfield be considered next day on motion of Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield).

Ordered that petition lodged by member for South-West Coast be considered next day on motion of Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast).

Ordered that petition lodged by member for Mornington on 19 March be considered next day on motion of Mr MORRIS (Mornington).

Documents**DOCUMENTS****Tabled by the Clerk:**

Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Victoria—Strategic Audit: Implementation of environmental management systems in Victorian Government 2017–18

Crimes Act 1958—Instrument of Authorisation under s 464Z

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978—Order under s 17D granting a lease over Domain Parklands Reserve

Judicial Entitlements Panel—Advisory Opinion to the Attorney-General January 2019

Planning and Environment Act 1987—Notices of approval of amendments to the following Planning Schemes:

Greater Dandenong—GC123

Macedon Ranges—C128

Whittlesea—GC123

Yarra—C261, C262

Yarra Ranges—GC123

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994—Documents under s 16B in relation to the *Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017*—Determination of Fees.

Motions**SENATOR FRASER ANNING**

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (09:38): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house condemns Senator Fraser Anning for his hateful, dangerous and divisive response to the Christchurch mosques terror attack.

The SPEAKER: Is leave granted?

Mr M O'BRIEN (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition) (09:39): Speaker, leave is granted. I would seek leave of the house, given the Premier's motion, that general business, notice of motion 57 on the notice paper in my name be debated concurrently with the Premier's motion.

The SPEAKER: Is leave granted for the Premier's motion and that motion to be debated concurrently? The house has granted leave for both the Premier's motion and the Leader of the Opposition's motion to be moved and debated concurrently. I will call the Premier to move his motion and the Leader of the Opposition to move his motion. I will then call the Premier to speak on both motions currently, followed by the Leader of the Opposition and other members.

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (09:39): By leave, I move:

That this house condemns Senator Fraser Anning for his hateful, dangerous and divisive response to the Christchurch mosques terror attack.

Mr M O'BRIEN (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition) (09:39): I move:

That this house:

- (1) condemns Senator Fraser Anning for his contemptible, hate-filled response to the Christchurch terrorist attack and his attempt to divide our community on the basis of religion;
- (2) calls on Senator Anning to resign; and
- (3) reaffirms Victoria as an inclusive and multicultural society.

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (09:40): At the outset let me make it clear that I think it is only appropriate that both the motion I have just moved and the motion put on the notice paper last evening by the Leader of the Opposition be debated concurrently. There is no difference.

Mr Wynne interjected.

Mr ANDREWS: Yes, not just the same sentiments, as the Minister for Multicultural Affairs makes clear, but also a passionate commitment on behalf of all mainstream political voices in this Parliament and in this state—all people of goodwill in fact across political and other divides. We are not divided on this issue. We are as one when it comes to making a very clear point that there is no place for toxic bigotry in our civilised society—no place for that at all. Nor is it acceptable to dress up hate speech as free speech. The freedoms that we enjoy today, the freedoms that define our state and our nation as a special place in the world—a world where so many people do not enjoy those freedoms—were hard-won by standing up against hatred and the violence that comes from it. Those freedoms, the freedom to lead a peaceful, respectful life of opportunity, of family and of friends, where everybody is equal and everybody has redress and recourse—the values that define our modern Victoria and Australia—were hard fought. They ought to be enjoyed regardless of our differences, and in fact because of our differences and our diversity. Our diversity enhances the enjoyment of those freedoms, the celebration of those values, and it requires the defence of those values as well.

The comments, the conduct, the views of appointed Senator Fraser Anning should be denounced, they should be condemned and they should be called out. Now I have been somewhat torn in relation to how the house might deal with this important matter, because that denunciation, that condemnation, that calling out of his appalling, abominable, frankly evil views—

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Vile views—is exactly the attention that he craves. But at the same time we cannot ignore those sentiments. We do not concurrently debate these motions today, and hopefully pass them unanimously, to give him the platform that he so craves. We do it because it is important to make a clear statement to every single Victorian that hatred and bigotry—that toxic ideology of pitting one Victorian against another—has no place in our great state, a place where equality is not negotiable, a place where we value the civil society, that multicultural and multifaith civil society that we have built over decades. I would say in closing that that society, with its richest asset being our diversity, is in no small way the product of that bipartisanship that we single out, if you like, in the conduct of the motions today. I commend the motions to all honourable members. I say again on behalf of the government, and I think all fair-minded Victorians, that there is no place for Fraser Anning's toxic ideology, his hate speech and the violence that it leads to in our great state.

Mr M O'BRIEN (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition) (09:44): I commend the Premier for his motion and I thank the Premier for his cooperation in agreeing that my motion should be debated concurrently. I think that sends a very powerful message that this house and this state are as one when it comes to supporting tolerance, diversity and multiculturalism. We will not be divided by those who seek to divide us, whether they use weapons or words—and words can be weapons. Senator Anning has called for migration to this country to be determined on the basis of someone's religion. That is appalling. That is shameful—absolutely shameful.

In the wake of the horrendous terrorist attack in Christchurch he blamed the victims—appalling conduct unbecoming of a senator in the federal Parliament and unbecoming of human decency. This is a senator who has equated the religion of Islam with fascism. These are appalling sentiments, and I think that Senator Anning probably has a lot more in common with fascism than any mainstream religion does. His comments are disgraceful, and I agree with the Premier that there is almost a risk in this house passing a motion to condemn him because it does serve to give him some publicity—some notoriety. But there comes a time when people of goodwill must stand up, must be heard and must be counted. This is such a time.

I thank the Premier for his motion, and I hope that the house will be supporting both motions in sending a very clear message that this house is united in its condemnation of Senator Anning and his comments and in its support for tolerance, diversity and the harmonious multicultural state that is Victoria.

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) (09:46): I rise to support the motions put forward by the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in condemning those hateful words by that senator. Words can and do incite violence. Words can and do incite terror. Words can and do incite murder. It is time to stand up and put an end to hate speech, to Islamophobia and to bigotry in all forms. We are in a time when hate speech is on the rise across the world, not just in the dark recesses of society but also in our Parliaments, from political leaders, on our TV sets and in the media. The scene has been set and the foundation laid by the politics of fear and division. So let this motion not just condemn those hateful words but be the start of a political discourse that reflects the society that we all want to live in. We support the motion.

Motions agreed to.

The SPEAKER: I am very proud to be a member of this house.

Members applauded.

Members statements

KINGLAKE COUNTRY FAIR

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (09:48): On Sunday I attended the Kinglake Country Fair, which was a fabulous event. Keen to breathe life and colour into the Kinglake Ranges and to provide a fun family event, William and Robert Verhagen of Integrity Real Estate and Stacey Crowther and Georgia Shuttleworth of Mountain Events got together to resurrect the fair, which had lapsed for almost 20 years. Most impressive is that the organisers are all young. They are to be congratulated for their enthusiasm and hours of hard work. Not only did they have youth on their side but they seemed to round up so many other young people to act as volunteers on the day. It was marvellous to see this level of volunteerism from so many young community members.

There were carnival rides, children's yoga, drones, dog jumping, the one-armed tradie event, a cake-eating competition and the adventure challenge time trial run by another young person, Vanessa French, whose parents operate the Kinglake Forest Adventures. Elimatta youth were out in force, led by Kate Chalmers, a recent Murrindindi shire Young Citizen of the Year. Delicious options were provided by local food trucks, including Bowl of Soul, Yarra Valley Caviar, My Little Country Kitchen and Damian's Pizza. Damian is a much-loved regular at the old Glenburn Hotel site. Hargreaves Hill and Steels Gate winery did their bit for the adults.

Many other community groups who are involved, including the Kinglake Historical Society, Landcare, Rotary, Kinglake Karate and Kinglake Firefoxes. The three primary schools—Kinglake, Kinglake Central and Kinglake West—all got involved, and it was great to see the children learning about customer service and taking and receiving money and even how to mix a smoothie using bicycle power.

CASTLEMAINE STATE FESTIVAL

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) (09:49): On Friday this week the 22nd Castlemaine State Festival kicks off. This is the biggest biennial multi-arts festival in Australia, encompassing visual arts, music, theatre, literature, film and dance, with an extraordinary range of Victorian, Australian and international artists performing and exhibiting. The 10-day program highlights the diversity of the region and its unique ability to communicate and connect globally, with artists from South Korea, Indonesia, Taiwan, Japan, Italy, Germany and Timor-Leste celebrating all things Castlemaine—its success, its beauty, its contradictions, its charm and its uniqueness. Congratulations to festival director Glyn Roberts—this is his first festival as director—and to the board, the staff and the hundreds of volunteers across Castlemaine and the region who will be out in force supporting this great event. This is Castlemaine, a place that is contemporary, classical and, most importantly, communal. I look forward to the opening on Friday night and to another successful festival.

ZINDA FESTIVAL

Ms EDWARDS: Multicultural Bendigo is being celebrated at Zinda Festival this week in a week-long celebration of music, food and art, culminating with Harmony Day on Thursday and an interfaith dinner with guest speaker Ms Sherene Hassan, OAM, education director of the Islamic Museum of Australia. ‘Zinda’ means alive and lively in a number of languages, and the Zinda Festival highlights how our wonderful Bendigo community embraces our multicultural community and family. On Saturday night thousands attended Zinda Night in the Park at Rosalind Park to hear artists and performers from many cultures and to enjoy a multicultural food market, craft, cultural stalls and children’s activities. The Andrews Labor government is proud to support Zinda.

CAULFIELD ELECTORATE PLANNING

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (09:51): This morning I tabled a petition with over 1700 signatures of support calling on the Andrews government to immediately review and reduce interim height limits for the Caulfield electorate, and I note the Minister for Planning is at the table today. Minister, the inconsistent and unfair height limits established by you as the Minister for Planning in amendment C157 to the Glen Eira planning scheme have encouraged a wave of inappropriate high-rise development proposals in Selwyn and Home streets, Elsternwick, on what was the Daily Planet site and also the old ABC site. We are also seeing on South Road another development of up to 12 storeys, with no height restrictions whatsoever.

These high-rise developments threaten to impinge upon the neighbourhood character, amenity and traffic flow, introducing overshadowing and privacy concerns for thousands of residents in my electorate. I have met with a number of residents, some of whom are in the gallery today, from Caulfield South and Elsternwick that are affected at these sites, where I have seen firsthand the effect of inappropriate overdevelopment in these areas on the community. I have written on behalf of residents to the mayor of Glen Eira City Council to seek assistance in reviewing and addressing the concerns of these residents. Minister, these residents would like to meet with you to talk about these issues and to see if we can get some consistency with the Oakleigh and Bentleigh electorates, which have restricted height limits of six storeys while we have discretionary height limits of 12 storeys. If it is good enough for the goose, it is good enough for the gander. We should have consistency in our planning scheme.

BLAZE AID

Ms CRUGNALE (Bass) (09:52): BlazeAid, a volunteer organisation, helps communities rebuild after natural disasters. They have set up camp in Bunyip and have been out to 23 properties already this week, and they will be there for the next three to four months putting up over 600 kilometres of fences. A remarkable number of 250 volunteers have registered, with 60 on the ground each day, coming from Yarrawonga, the Western District, southern New South Wales, and locally, of course. One hundred and fifty properties have registered for the fencing, and a satellite camp will be set up in Yinnar as they have around 111 kilometres of fencing to do there. BlazeAid is a donation-based organisation, and anyone wanting to donate or volunteer should go to their website for more information. I want to thank the coordinators, John and Sue Anderson, and everyone involved.

BASS ELECTORATE EMERGENCY SERVICES

Ms CRUGNALE: I am grateful to our amazing local Bass electorate CFA brigades and SES units that form part of district 8 and district 9. They attended and are still attending as strike teams in the region: Pakenham, Koo Wee Rup, Lang Lang, Bayles, Clyde, Kernot-Grantville, Kilcunda, Bass, San Remo, Glen Alvie, Phillip Island, Dalyston, Wonthaggi, Inverloch and my Pound Creek crew.

JAKE FOX

Ms CRUGNALE: Special mention to the ever-so talented and effervescent local artist, Jake Fox. His artwork at the Corinella and District Community Centre Art Show was a standout. It is on the wall at our Wonthaggi office and we love it.

PRINCES HIGHWAY EAST UPGRADE

Mr T BULL (Gippsland East) (09:54): Last sitting week I advised the house of the roadworks disaster between Stratford and Sale on the Princes Highway. This week I move my attention to a different section of what is now being referred to locally as the Princes track—that is, the stretch between Stratford and Bairnsdale. The reason it is referred to as the Princess track now, rather than highway, is it resembles more of a track. Even the local roads contractors are referring to it with that tag. The concern I bring to the house's attention today is perhaps a bigger issue than what I raised last week, and it relates to construction standards on this \$51 million project. I am certainly not a roads construction expert myself, but when you have a number of people who have worked in the industry for many years and also those currently working in the industry telling you the standards are wrong, you sit up and you take some notice. The main issue raised is that the centre of the road line, which obviously was previously a single line, has been widened to 1.4 metres to cater for the centre-of-the-road barriers. This has pushed the traffic lanes and vehicles further left, and road users are now driving over the old ripple strip which was the edge of the road—the ripple strip or the fog line. The problem is that this stretch where cars, buses and trucks are now travelling is what was built as a non-trafficable shoulder. It was not ever intended to carry those loads of traffic. This has been brought up by— (*Time expired*)

PHILIP CUMMINS

Mr FOWLES (Burwood) (09:55): I rise today to offer my condolences to the family of the honourable Philip Damien Cummins, AM, former Justice of the Victorian Supreme Court. Along with the Attorney-General I attended a service to honour Philip's life at the MCG on 7 March. Philip was appointed as a Queen's Counsel in 1978 and a Supreme Court judge in 1988. He served in that role until 2009, presiding over some of the most important criminal cases in Victorian history, including the Silk-Miller police murders, child killer Robert Farquharson and the murder of Daniel Valerio, which led to the mandatory reporting of child abuse.

He was a believer in and protector of the jury system, an early and consistent proponent of open courts and a non-traditionalist. He sported a diamond stud earring, eschewed the wearing of the judicial wig and argued consistently against what he described as 'the egregious concatenation of church and state' that arose as a result of the attendance by judges in robes at the church service to open each judicial

year. Later as chair of the Victorian Law Reform Commission he contributed to significant law reforms, including access to medicinal cannabis, adoption by same-sex couples and the protection of children from sex offenders. Privately he was a man of strong social democratic values, frequently greeting me with a smile and a joyous shout of 'Up the workers!'.

In all of the roles he held he always—always—looked after the families. Indeed it was in his family life that I knew him best. As grandfather to my children he was always available to them for a lively discussion, lift to school or as a co-host with wife Maree at countless family dinners and celebrations. It is in that role that he will be most missed. Vale, Philip Cummins.

CHRISTCHURCH MOSQUES TERRORIST ATTACK

Ms HALL (Footscray) (09:57): I rise today with a heavy heart following the cowardly and hateful attacks in Christchurch last week. I know that the people of Footscray share this heartbreak, and I pass on my deepest condolences to the people of Christchurch and the Muslim community here and abroad.

HARMONY DAY

Ms HALL: Ahead of Harmony Day I want to highlight the work of Muslim community leaders and organisations who do so much to promote harmony, diversity and connectedness in Footscray. The Australia Light Foundation connects members of the Islamic community through worship, social activities, education, welfare and employment programs. They also do charity work around the globe. I look forward to joining them at Friday prayers this week. The East African Women's Foundation provides vital support to women and their families. When they are supported our community wins. Dr Berhan Ahmed, the CEO of the African-Australian Multicultural Employment and Youth Services, responds to challenges facing African Australians. They host an annual Iftar dinner for homeless people in the community.

SUNSHINE HEIGHTS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ms HALL: I would like to congratulate Sunshine Heights Primary School, who will be bringing a bit of sunshine to the city tomorrow when they sing on the steps of Old Treasury.

WESTERN PORT FESTIVAL

Mr BURGESS (Hastings) (09:58): On Saturday, 23 February, I was pleased to join the community of Western Port to judge the entrants in the annual parade down High Street, Hastings, a parade that annually displays many of the great things about the Western Port community. Being the 50th celebration of the festival it was a truly memorable day for all, and I congratulate the winners of this year's parade.

SOMERVILLE FAMILY DAY

Mr BURGESS: I was very pleased to join the federal member for Flinders and Minister for Health, the Honourable Greg Hunt, local councillor Julie Morris and the local Somerville community on Monday, 11 March, to celebrate Somerville Family Day. This event gets bigger and bigger every year, with rides, stalls and attractions. There is something for everyone. This year I was thrown in the deep end, quite literally, along with intrepid local councillor Julie Morris, as we were dunked many times, all in the name of fun and supporting the local community. I cannot imagine why locals would line up and pay money just to drop us into cold water. Thanks to the fantastic local organisers, including Cally McNulty and Chrissy Kouvaras, for another wonderful day, and their committees of course.

GOVERNMENT BANKING

Mr BURGESS: I have been approached by a number of very concerned community members who have been shocked and disappointed with the changes the Andrews Labor government is making to banking arrangements of all government bodies, including all state schools. The question has to be asked about what the Andrews government is getting from such a deal, which will see all state schools

forced to move their banking away from local community banks to Sydney-based Westpac. The result will be that local banks like the Bendigo Community Bank will lose a lot of the local business they were built on through the community pledges, and that will see many tens of thousands of dollars of community grants coming from those local branches to local community, schools and sporting and other community groups completely disappear. One community bank in my electorate has almost \$400 000 invested by the school and will lose these investments under the new policy— *(Time expired)*

WORLD'S GREATEST SHAVE

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) (10:00): On Sunday I participated in the World's Greatest Shave by spraying my hair red. I joined the Clarke's Angels team in support of a beautiful Geelong woman, Kylie Clarke, who survived leukaemia and wanted to raise funds to give back to others. This amazing woman has raised almost \$35 000, with a team of 21 angels getting sponsors. Kylie also organised raffles and auction items donated from our generous community. The Geelong Performing Arts Centre provided the venue on Sunday for the hair colouring, shaves and sausage sizzle. Congratulations to Kylie, her angels and all those who contributed, because they are giving people living with blood cancer the emotional and practical support they need and also helping to drive rapid advancements in blood cancer research.

WALK FOR JOHNO

Ms COUZENS: It was a real pleasure to participate in the final Walk for Johnno last Saturday. I have participated in the walk since it began four years ago. Johnno suddenly passed away from a heart attack in 2015, leaving behind his wife of 43 years, Sue, and three daughters, eight grandchildren, family and friends who all loved and adored him. John had no signs or symptoms, so the family were given no warning. I have worked closely with John's daughter Bec Spencer over the past four years to raise as much money as possible for the Heart Foundation. It is looking like this amazing family have raised \$100 000. Instead of allowing his death to be an entirely negative event, his family wanted to celebrate his life and memory by creating this fundraising walk, helping to raise funds for the Heart Foundation.

STREET2BAY PROJECT

Mr NEWBURY (Brighton) (10:01): Some estimate that 80 per cent of the plastics in our marine environment come from our streets. It is a confronting statistic. Understanding the type of litter that feeds into our bay led the 1st/14th Brighton Sea Scouts to lead an initiative called the Street2Bay Project. The project will conduct 500 street-litter audits around the bay, focusing on microplastics. I joined in for an audit in Brighton recently and saw the importance of the project for policymakers. It was confronting to see that roughly one third of the plastic waste was from cigarette butts. I congratulate Brighton and Scouts Victoria on their project and for the estimated 5000 volunteer hours that will be committed to the initiative.

BRIGHTON ELECTORATE PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS

Mr NEWBURY: My community is also in desperate need of two pedestrian-operated crossings. The first is on Glen Huntly Road in Elwood, outside Elwood Primary School. VicRoads crash data reportedly shows that in the last five years there have been 17 incidents along the strip. With a primary school and a secondary school nearby, there is a pressing need to keep our local children safe. The second proposed site is on Hampton Street in Brighton, near the Dendy shopping village. There have been a number of pedestrians injured along Hampton Street too. It concerns me that there are now two unfunded sites in the electorate that are in need of a pedestrian-operated signal. What is even more concerning is that there have been safety issues near both locations.

CHRISTCHURCH MOSQUES TERRORIST ATTACK

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) (10:03): My dark hair may appear straight, but hair irons do wonders at straightening out a Maori frizz. My great-grandmother was half Maori. She was born in Dunedin, Otago, in New Zealand's South Island. And whilst we really only know our New Zealand

roots from Dad and I piecing together family anecdotes and plotting them on ancestry.com, I have found that looking Maori has always given me a sense of belonging in New Zealand. Knowing my Maori ancestry has always been an important part of understanding my own identity.

And so it is with great sadness that I express my sincerest condolences for the people of Christchurch, for the people of the South Island and indeed for the people of all of New Zealand. The tragic events of last Friday are of course an assault not just on the people of New Zealand but on humanity. Freedom of religion, freedom of conscience and freedom of expression are fundamental human rights of all people. The assailant stole these human rights from his victims and in so doing attacked the fundamental human rights of all of us. This rightly concerns all of us, and sadly it also alarms us, particularly those directly attacked—our Muslim communities.

The great thing about the area I represent is that people come from every walk of life, are of every age and come from every corner of the globe. I am acutely aware that the district I am privileged to represent includes a large number of constituents who are Muslim. They are our students, our teachers, our business owners and our aged-care workers. We are with them.

VICTORIAN BUSHFIRES

Mr BLACKWOOD (Narracan) (10:04): The Bunyip State Park fire has destroyed 29 homes and many outbuildings. The recovery centre managed by Cardinia shire at the Bunyip recreation reserve has provided a central point for the dissemination of information and a location for a range of services to be based. The Cardinia shire staff have been doing a great job in the coordination of referral for those impacted by the fires.

At this stage there appears to be a gap in the support being provided for businesses affected by the fires. There are some businesspeople who have lost their homes which were also their business bases and therefore now have no income and are really doing it tough. After the 2009 Black Saturday fires the Brumby government put in place a business assistance program that provided a \$15 000 one-off grant to affected businesses and other assistance such as low-interest loans. This is exactly the type of assistance that is required for a number of affected businesses so they can take the early steps toward recovery.

After the 2009 fires every family or individual that lost a home received \$50 000, regardless of their insurance situation. Those impacted by the Bunyip fire are being told that the \$47 000 clean-up grant will only be available for those that were not insured. I also remind Parks Victoria and other agencies that changes introduced following the 2009 fires commit them to providing half the cost of materials for boundary fencing that is shared with private landowners.

I urge the Premier to ensure that those families and individuals facing the enormous challenge of rebuilding their homes and businesses get the help they deserve.

SCHOOL STRIKE 4 CLIMATE

Mr HALSE (Ringwood) (10:06): I rise to congratulate the tens of thousands of young people who went on strike to campaign for climate justice last Friday. Their actions were bold and courageous. Many students from the district of Ringwood participated in this collective action, and I congratulate them. Make no mistake: dangerous, human-induced global warming is real, and it is happening right now. The CSIRO, the Department of Defence and every major Australian university have indicated that we must act to reduce carbon pollution, and we must act now. The consequences of global warming will be devastating for our younger generations if we do nothing.

Some believe that global warming is a myth and that we should instead invest in new coal-powered electricity generation, but they are the minority, and they are wrong. The Victorian Andrews Labor government is forging ahead with the most ambitious renewable energy targets of any state in Australia and we are investing record amounts into renewable energy. We will not sit idly by while our planet is destroyed through inaction.

Finally, I would like to address the young people who are involved in this amazing movement. I want you to know that I am with you every step of the way. Keep going, keep the pressure on and keep forging a better future for all of us.

KEN PEAKE

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) (10:07): It gives me great pleasure today to pay tribute to two upstanding members of our community and recognise their incredible contributions. Gippsland Rotary Centenary House's hardworking chairman, Ken Peake, has stepped down from his role as inaugural chairman after 15 years of service. Centenary House is a charity and not-for-profit facility supporting cancer patients and their families when they are receiving treatment at the Gippsland Cancer Care Centre. Under Ken's stewardship, Centenary House went from a dream to bricks-and-mortar reality. His advocacy, fundraising and negotiations resulted in him overseeing the September 2006 opening, and the continued positive stages, additions and projects that have followed. The community and the patients and families that use Centenary House are so very grateful for his passion and commitment to delivering this magnificent community gift. Well done, Ken.

LORRAINE BARTLING

Mr NORTHE: Lorraine Bartling's significant contribution to welfare, health and local government in our local area is well understood. A nurse and Order of Australia Medal recipient, Lorraine was the longstanding driving force behind developing Traralgon's first self-contained retirement units, Yallambee, built nearly 50 years ago, and subsequently the development of a not-for-profit aged-care hostel called Margery Cole, which opened in 1975. Both facilities have undergone expansion and upgrades, continuing to be enormous community assets today. The subject of a fascinating biography, the proceeds of Lorraine's book go towards an annual nursing or social work scholarship awarded in her honour. Late last year Lorraine stepped down from volunteer service on the Yallambee board of directors after nearly half a century of leadership and achievements. The community and the residents and families that call Yallambee and Margery Cole home will forever be indebted to her remarkable legacy. Her late husband, Ken, would be so proud of this amazing lady.

REVITALISATION PROGRAM

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (10:09): Australians are overwhelmingly practical people, not ideological. They want politics to be a contest of ideas that resolves matters in the national and community interest to increase prosperity and a fair go. Inequality, especially place-based disadvantage, must be addressed in upcoming budgets and the Australian election. This is why I have produced the strategies *Creating Opportunity: Postcodes of Hope* and *Building Smarter Cities—Stronger Communities*, to deliver economic and cultural development where the need is most significant. They feature initiatives to attract new industries and jobs to save a fortune by coordinating affordable housing alongside blue-chip infrastructure to create much-sought-after 20-minute suburbs. Closing the infrastructure gap is vital. A city deal based on productivity, livability and sustainability would provide an overarching mechanism. It would leverage assets and create billions of dollars in economic value. My proposal is to designate 20-minute cities to fast-track projects where residents can work and get most of the services they need close to home, reducing congestion and increasing livability. Priority precincts would include Sunshine, Broadmeadows, La Trobe University and Clayton to harness economic engine rooms and anchor two \$15 billion developments of national significance. Australian and Victorian governments have unity tickets to end the half-century wait for the rail line to Melbourne Airport and build the missing link in Melbourne's road network—the north-east link. Need is vital and urgent. Melbourne's north and west are home to postcodes of disadvantage, struggling under deindustrialisation and historic investment deficits.

LAKE COLAC

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) (10:10): I rise today to congratulate the coming together at last, after many years, of the various responsible authorities for the wonderful Lake Colac. Lake Colac of course

is one of Victoria's largest permanent—well, usually permanent—bodies of water. It is a jewel in the crown of south-west Victoria and sits on the edge of the township of Colac and the foothills of the Otway Ranges. Lake Colac, being one of the largest open bodies of water without subsurface obstacles or infiltrations, is a body of water that is ideally suited for recreational fishing, sporting, boating, birdwatching and passive and other recreations around its shore. For 40 000 years, of course, it was a home and a supplier of a great source of food for local Indigenous groups, but over the last 200 years it has been a wonderful centrepiece for many community activities. However, over time the lake has been unable to develop its full potential because it simply does not have a guaranteed and workable supply of water. It is one of the few lakes where its catchment is smaller than its overall surface area. So we look forward to a meeting this coming week that will see the various authorities come together to hopefully work on a strategic plan.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mr TAK (Clarinda) (10:12): Thank you to the Minister for Women for hosting the International Women's Day afternoon tea at Parliament on 7 March. It was wonderful to hear from the inspirational Jill Gallagher and to join together to celebrate the achievements of women and the progress that is being made toward achieving gender equality in Victoria. Ms Siem Eng, Ms Mara Hay and Ms Bou Rachana, three inspirational women from my electorate, presented the minister with a letter from Madame Mu Sochua, vice-president of the Cambodia National Rescue Party. The letter was written from exile after having served more than two decades as Cambodia's Minister for Women's Affairs and as a member of the National Assembly. She fled Cambodia in September 2017, following threats of arrest and imprisonment. Just last week she was hit with new trumped-up charges of incitement and treason. In her letter she called on the members of this place to condemn the Cambodian Prime Minister's repeated orders to crush the opposition. Hun Sen's actions are direct threats against the safety, security and human rights of thousands of Cambodian women who have voted for change and of hundreds of women elected representatives at the national and local levels.

CHRISTCHURCH MOSQUES TERRORIST ATTACK

Mr TAK: On Sunday I joined many of my constituents at the Indonesian Muslim Community of Victoria Masjid Westall—the Westall mosque. The mosque was flooded with hundreds of Victorians from all kinds of backgrounds with all kinds of beliefs. Many of those Victorians had never set foot in a mosque—*(Time expired)*

CHRISTCHURCH MOSQUES TERRORIST ATTACK

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) (10:13): I rise to offer my condolences to the victims and their families in Christchurch, to the entire Muslim community and to the broader community in New Zealand and in Australia. It is something that has deeply affected all of us, as we saw during yesterday's condolence motion. Further, as the member for Clarinda did, I attended my local mosque on the weekend, and it was the most beautiful and moving day because there were hundreds of people in the 45 minutes that I was there, let alone for the rest of the day. It was always in my diary that I would go to the mosque on that day. It had been in the diary for weeks, but it took on a particular resonance given what had happened in Christchurch.

I also want to say that I fully support the bipartisan motion moved today in the house against Senator Fraser Anning, but I also echo the words of the member for Mildura yesterday. I do not want to verbal her, but effectively it is not just about people like Senator Anning; it is broader and it is more insidious. I think we all need to be careful and we all need to be mindful of the permission and the underwriting, as the Premier said, that we provide to a narrative that then allows some people to act violently. We cannot absolve our conscience by just condemning Senator Anning. It is broader than that, and I think we all need to be very, very mindful and careful not to provide authorisation for any behaviour or words that lead to actions like that.

BERWICK DISTRICT WOODWORKERS CLUB

Mr MAAS (Narre Warren South) (10:15): Last week I was pleased to attend the opening ceremony of the new Berwick District Woodworkers Club building at the Old Cheese Factory in Berwick. The Berwick woodworkers are a great group of retired people who make an important contribution to our community by coming together each weekday to make beautiful wooden crafts for distribution to those most in need in the community. The woodworkers hand make toys such as blackboards, trucks, hobbyhorses, trains and doll's houses that are provided as gifts to disadvantaged children during the festive season.

The club commenced with a group of six people back in June 1986, originally meeting at various venues before establishing a permanent home at the Old Cheese Factory. It now has over 100 members. The new facilities provide for enlarged and properly kitted workspaces, clubrooms and storage areas where these craftsmen and women can share their skills and passions and continue to hone their craft whilst importantly giving back to the community through the donation of toys.

My thanks especially go to the woodworkers president, Len Preece; vice-president, Brian Crowe; secretary, Richard Gething; and committee members Elsie Hoare, Rick Hoare and John McMahon. The standard of their work and the attention that the woodworkers put into each piece is just outstanding. I look forward to attending the Berwick District Woodworkers Club again in the very near future.

GIOVANNI ANTONIO SGRO

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (10:16): Vale, the Honourable Giovanni Sgro, MLC, former Deputy President of the Legislative Council. I reflect on a champion of the Victorian Labor Party and union movement. My friend Giovanni Sgro passed away this week. Giovanni was unique in so many ways and we will never see the likes of him again in our great Labor Party, our unions or parliaments. But he was also representative of the broader Italian community he so ably represented.

Giovanni was born in Seminara, Calabria, like so many of his time into poverty. And like so many others, including my family, with little education or resources he migrated to postwar Australia to find a better life. No-one was ever in any doubt what Giovanni's thoughts were on any issue, and almost always you could guess his position based purely on his consistently demonstrated values and polemic. An underdog himself, he was the great defender of underdogs. Whether it was at Bonegilla, out on the streets, in schools, on the job, in the town halls or Parliament, you were blessed to have had him in your corner, never giving up on what he knew was right. He was loyal, stubborn, fearless, driven, fair-minded, smart, intelligent, passionate, humble and self-deprecating, ambitious for his working class and community, a firebrand, an orator, a curser, a fighter, a painter and decorator, a unionist and an advocate for multiculturalism.

Giovanni was a loving husband and equal partner and a loving father. It was right and proper that a postwar migrant, one of the tens of thousands who came here from Italy, would be elected to Parliament, giving voice to so many who for too long had no voice, and of course he was a representative of the Labor Party. My heartfelt condolences go to Anne, his four daughters, grandchildren and other family members.

Bills**WATER AND CATCHMENT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2019***Statement of compatibility*

Ms NEVILLE (Bellarine—Minister for Water, Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (10:19): In accordance with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 I table a statement of compatibility in relation to the Water and Catchment Legislation Amendment Bill 2019.

Opening paragraphs

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, (the ‘Charter’), I make this Statement of Compatibility with respect to the Water and Catchment Legislation Amendment Bill 2019.

In my opinion, the Water and Catchment Legislation Amendment Bill 2019, as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with human rights as set out in the Charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview

The Bill amends the *Water Act 1989* (the Water Act) and the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (CaLP Act) to implement the Government’s commitment in its Water for Victoria plan to incorporate Traditional Owner and Aboriginal values and uses of water resources and waterways and expand the inclusion of Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal Victorians in water resource and catchment planning and in the development and reviews of strategies.

The Bill will implement the Government’s commitment, in *Water for Victoria*, to modernise the compliance and enforcement regime to reflect best practice regulation and to implement certain recommendations of the *Murray-Darling Basin Water Compliance Review* of November 2017. It will do this by strengthening the compliance and enforcement provisions of the Water Act.

The Bill will also amend the Water Act to improve processes for declaring serviced properties and clarify the legal framework for charges for the provision of salinity mitigation services.

Human Rights Issues***Human rights protected by the Charter that are relevant to the Bill******Privacy rights—section 13***

Section 13 of the Charter provides that a person has a right not to have his or her privacy, family, home, or correspondence unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with.

Work on Dams, Bores, and Works

The powers provided in new sections 80 and 81 of the Water Act, to respectively, inspect dams and to carry out work on dams, bores or works, may interfere with the Charter’s section 13 right not to have privacy interfered with because it will permit authorised officers to enter land.

I consider that the interference is compatible with the Charter’s section 13 right because it is confined in its application, structured, and formulated precisely. The section 80 power will be circumscribed under the provision because it will only apply if a dam is of a construction or location that make it hazardous or potentially hazardous for public safety, property or the environment. The section 81 power to carry out work is not arbitrarily defined. It will be circumscribed under the provision because it will only apply if a person has failed to comply with a relevant directions notice, to prevent waste or pollution of water, to protect public safety, property or the environment or to secure compliance with water laws of licence conditions. It is therefore both lawful and precisely formulated.

The section 81 power will also be limited in its application to dams, bores or works, as these types of works are usually located on commercial or business land or premises, in contrast with residential land or premises where this kind of infrastructure is not ordinarily located. This section will therefore have minimal application to residential property, where the right to privacy is generally stronger. To the extent that new sections 80 and 81 interfere with the Charter’s section 13 right, the interference will therefore be minimised. To the extent that this provision may apply to a residential property, the section 133(1B) of the Water Act limits entry to residential land to carry out functions under the Act to circumstances where entry is between 7.30 am and 6.00 pm and the officer gives the occupier 7 days’ written notice or the occupier consents to the entry or entry is in an emergency.

Installation of Meters

A new section 142 providing for water corporation officers to enter private land for the purpose of installing and maintaining a meter may interfere with a person’s Charter right under section 13 to not have privacy unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with.

I consider that the interference is compatible with the right to privacy because it is, authorised by law, structured, and reasonable. The power to enter land is circumscribed under this provision because it may be exercised only for the purpose of installing or maintaining meters. The power conferred is proportionate to the important function that the power provides for, of ensuring water meters are installed to measure amounts of water taken or used, or supplied or delivered to land.

The general limitation, under section 133(1B), will also limit entry of residential property, to certain situations as outlined above. These general limitations will circumscribe the power under section 142, and the extent to which it interferes with the Charter's section 13 right will be minimised.

Cultural rights—section 19(2)

Section 19(2) of the Charter Act provides that Aboriginal persons hold distinct cultural rights and must not be denied the right, with other members of their community—

- (a) to enjoy their identity and culture; and ...
- (d) to maintain their distinctive spiritual, material and economic relationship with the land and waters and other resources with which they have a connection under traditional laws and customs.

The Bill will amend the Water Act and CaLP Act to recognise and support the inclusion of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians in water and catchment management. Water Authorities will have a statutory requirement to consider Aboriginal culture values and uses when undertaking certain statutory processes and functions and when making decisions relating to both long and short term use of water resources. In doing so, water Authorities will be required to consult directly with specified Aboriginal parties and take into consideration any relevant recognition and settlement agreements made under the *Traditional Owners Settlement Act 2010* and any Aboriginal cultural heritage land management agreements under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.

The Bill will also provide that, so far as possible, at least one Aboriginal Victorian or Aboriginal person with experience or knowledge of Aboriginal values and traditional ecological knowledge of management of land and water resources is to be appointed as a member of the Victorian Catchment Management Council and for Aboriginal Victorians to be appointed as members of any consultative committee relating to the preparation of sustainable water strategies or review of long-term water assessments. Additionally, the Bill will provide for at least one representative from a relevant specified Aboriginal party as a member of a consultative committee for preparation of a management plan for a water supply protection area.

As the Bill explicitly recognises the cultural values of Aboriginal people and encourages their involvement in decision making where it impacts on the values and traditional uses of water by Aboriginal people, the Bill promotes cultural rights under the Charter.

Property rights—section 20

Section 20 of the Charter provides that a person must not be deprived of their property other than in accordance with law.

Declaration of serviced property

Water corporations are able to declare properties within their water, sewerage, waterway management or irrigation districts as serviced properties and impose fees and charges for services provided to their customers. Water corporations have identified that there are properties within their water and sewerage districts that have received a service for an extensive period but have not been formally declared as serviced properties.

The Bill will provide for a one-off opportunity for water corporation to identify these properties to be serviced properties. To be identified as a serviced property under this proposal, a property must have been receiving a service and been charged for that service for at least 2 years or more. The Bill will also validate the payment of any service charges imposed to date. While the water corporation will be required to place, in the Victorian Government Gazette, a notice of the plan identifying land as a serviced property there will be no requirement to advise the land owner directly.

The amendments will not interfere with a person's property rights affected by a declaration as the properties are already being provided with a service and charged accordingly. The identification of land as serviced property will merely formalise current arrangements. As there will be no deprivation of property, the right to property is engaged, but is not limited.

Salinity Mitigation Charges

The Bill will also clarify the legal framework for the imposition of salinity mitigation charges, the determination of salinity impact zones and the administration of the revenue from the charges. The Bill will validate past charges. The charges have been used to fund salinity mitigation works and measures and to meet Victoria's obligations under Schedule B of the Murray Darling Basin Agreement. The amendments will not result in a deprivation of property, as they relate to charges for the provisions of works and services only.

Work on Dams, Bores, and Works on Waterways

Under existing sections 80(1) and (2) of the Water Act the Minister is able to direct, by notice in writing, an owner of a private dam to carry out work on the dam or remove the dam, and to require an owner of a proposed

private dam to re-site the dam, change how it will be built or to not build the dam. Replacement sections 80(1) and (2) are being inserted in the Act to transfer to the Minister, from the Governor in Council, the same power to give directions notices over public dams. The new sections also amend the reasons for the Minister to require work to be done, by replacing the aim of protecting life with protecting public safety and adding the aim of protecting the environment.

Under existing section 81(1) of the Water Act the Minister is able to carry out work on bores or works on waterways, including dams on waterways, but not a dam off a waterway. Replacement sections 81(1) and (1A) are being inserted to provide that the Minister can carry out work on public and private dams, on and off waterways, as well as on bores and other works on a waterway. The new sections also add, as reasons for the Minister carry out the work, the aims of protecting public safety, property and the environment, and to secure compliance with the Act, regulations or licence conditions.

The amendments may interfere with a person's right not to be deprived of property under section 20 of the Charter. Both sections 80 and 81, as amended, may interfere with a property owner's right to make decisions about how to deal with their property. Sections 80 and 81 may also interfere with the Charter section 20 right by permitting Authority officers and authorised persons to enter land to inspect works and to carry out work, which may limit a person's use and enjoyment of the land they own or occupy. An amendment to section 309 of the Water Act will provide that the Minister (and ministerial delegates) may authorise a person to enter land under section 133 to carry out the Minister's functions, which includes the functions to issue directions notices for, and, if necessary, carry out work on works on a waterway, bores and dams under sections 78, 79, 80 and 81.

I consider that the interference is compatible with the Charter section 20 right because it is authorised by law, confined and structured and formulated precisely. The section 80 requirement on an owner or occupier of works to carry out work is limited, because it will only apply for certain purposes: to remove hazards where a dam is or is likely to be hazardous to public safety, property, or the environment. Section 81 will be reasonably limited because it will only apply in certain circumstances if a person has not complied with a directions notice to do work, or for specified reasons to prevent pollution, or to protect public safety, property or the environment, or to secure compliance with the Act, regulations or licence conditions. A person will also be able to seek a review of a notice issued under section 80 by VCAT.

The powers that are contained in the new provisions also substantially already exist in the existing sections 80 and 81 provisions. The new provisions are limited in scope and only improve the effectiveness of the provisions and expand the existing provisions in a limited way. The addition of protecting public safety and the environment, as reasons for the Minister to require work to be done, provide further clarification on what reasons would justify imposing a work requirement to prevent hazards and will therefore provide more certainty and justification for the limitations on the Charter section 20 right. This justification and certainty on when there will be interference with the right will also minimise the interference with the right.

Licences

New sections 60 and 74AC of the Water Act will provide a power for the Minister to suspend or cancel a licence to take and use water (section 60) and a works licence (section 74AC). The power to cancel a take and use licence already exists under section 60 as a power to revoke the licence and this part of the new provision is only changing the terminology of the existing power. New sections 60 and 74AC may interfere with a person's Charter right under section 20 because they will allow for take and use licences and works to be cancelled or suspended.

I consider that the interference is compatible with the section 20 Charter right because it is a reasonable limit to the right. The suspension and cancellation powers will be limited in that they may only be exercised where a licence holder has not complied with the Water Act, regulations or licence conditions or not paid an applicable fee or charge in respect of the licence or in other prescribed circumstances. The power will also be limited in that, before it can be exercised, there will be requirements to notify a licence holder and allow them to make a submission on the proposed cancellation or suspension. The power may also not be exercised until a certain period has elapsed to allow for submissions to be made. Finally the extent to which the new section 60 provision interferes with a right is limited because the power to "revoke" a take and use licence already exists under the Act so this part of the provision does not create a new interference with a right.

Installation of Meters

A new section 142 provides a power for a water corporation to install and maintain a meter on any land, in any position it considers appropriate. This new section may interfere with a person's property rights under section 20 of the Charter because it will be necessary for water corporation officers to enter private land to install meters, which may interfere with a person's use and enjoyment of their land. Sections 133(1)(a) and (d) of the Water Act provide powers for an Authority officer, or an authorised person, to enter land for the purpose of reading a meter installed under section 142 and to carry out any other function under the Water Act.

I consider that the interference is compatible with property rights because it is authorised by law, structured and reasonable. The power to enter land is circumscribed under this provision because it may only be exercised for the purpose of providing or installing, and maintaining, meters. The power conferred is proportionate to the important function of ensuring there are water meters to measure amounts of water taken, supplied or delivered to land or used on land.

The Water Act also includes a general limitation, under section 133(1B), on entering residential property. Section 133(1B) limits entry to residential land to carry out functions under the Water Act to circumstances where entry is between 7.30 am and 6.00 pm and the Authority officer or authorised person gives the occupier 7 days' written notice, or the occupier consents to the entry, or entry is in an emergency. For meter reading, entry of residential premises may only occur between 7.30 am and 6.00 pm unless the occupier consents. These limitations on entering residential properties under the Water Act will apply to the section 142 power and therefore circumscribe the power. The extent that new section 142 interferes with the Charter's section 20 right will therefore be minimised.

Further, the powers in new section 142 already substantially exist in the existing section 142. Existing section 142 provides that meters may be installed for the purpose of measuring the amount of water supplied or delivered, and may be installed for each occupancy and for each service. The new provisions make changes that are limited in scope: they only improve the structure of the provision and add that a meter may be installed for the purpose of measuring the amount of water taken or used, and may be installed at any point from which water is taken. The new elements of section 142 therefore only expand the provision in a limited way from the existing contents of the provision and provide further clarification on the reasons and locations for the installation of a meter. This will provide more certainty in the provision.

New section 142 also expands the provision by providing for criteria to be prescribed in regulations for determining what constitutes a separate occupancy, in addition to the relevant principles set out in the *Valuation of Land Act 1960*. The ability to prescribe additional criteria will improve certainty for making decisions about what is a separate occupancy in circumstances where the relevant principles set out in the *Valuation of Land Act 1960* are not sufficient.

The enhanced certainty in section 142 will provide more justification for the limitations on the section 20 right. This justification, and certainty on when there will be interference with the right, will minimise the interference with the right.

Fair hearing and Presumption of Innocence—section 24 and 25

Section 24 of the Charter provides that a person charged with a criminal offence or a party to a civil proceeding has the right to have the charge or proceeding decided by a competent, independent and impartial court or tribunal after a fair and public hearing.

Bringing proceedings in relation to salinity mitigation charges

Amendments proposed by the Bill may limit or prevent the bringing of proceedings in the particular circumstances but only in relation to those matters set out below. The fair hearing right is relevant to these amendments as the right has been held to encompass a right of access to courts to have one's civil claims submitted to a judge for determination. However, the right to access the courts is not absolute and may legitimately be limited by the needs and resources of the community and individuals.

In the case of salinity mitigation charges imposed under section 287A, the Bill will clarify the existing legislative arrangements for imposing charges for salinity mitigation works and measures provided to address legacy salinity problems and to off-set the impacts of current irrigation in northern Victoria and to validate past charges. The proposed amendments will not affect the outcome of current litigation in the Supreme Court. As the Bill will clarify that the impost of charges to date has been done so lawfully, any limitation to the right to a fair hearing is reasonably justified.

The amendments proposed by the Bill relating to charges imposed under section 259 for serviced properties affect, in all cases, only properties that have been receiving a service for two years or more. The validation is in the public interest because any broad scope refusal to pay the charge would mean that the charge would need to be borne by others. The validation does not preclude a person challenging a tariff on other grounds. Various grounds for objection to a tariff are set out in section 266 of the Water Act. Any limitation to the right to a fair hearing is therefore reasonably justified.

Presumption provisions for taking, diverting or using water

Existing sections 33E and 63 of the Water Act provide for offences of, respectively, taking water from a declared water system or taking or using water from a non-declared water system, without authorisation. These sections currently do not contain presumption provisions for proving any elements of the offence.

Existing section 289(1)(a) provides for an offence of taking, using or diverting water that is under the control and management of an Authority without the Authority's consent. Existing section 289(1)(b) provides for an offence of interfering with a flow of water that is under the control and management of an Authority, without the Authority's consent.

Sections 33E, 63 and 289 are being substituted with new sections 33E, 63, 289 and 289C that will restructure each offence into three tiers for intentional, reckless and strict liability offences for unauthorised taking of water (and, in relation to section 63, taking or using water).

Existing section 289(3) currently provides an evidential presumption for the offences under section 289(1)—that an owner or occupier of land on which the water was used, or taken or diverted to is presumed, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, to have used, taken or diverted the water. This presumption, in an improved form, is being made available for enforcement of unauthorised taking or using of water from a declared or non-declared water system under new sections 33E and 63 and for taking, using or diverting water under new section 289.

New sections 33EA(1) and (2) will provide an evidential presumption that an owner or occupier of land to which water was taken or diverted, or used on, without authorisation is presumed, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, to be the person that took the water. New sections 63A(2) and (3) and 289A(2) and (3) will provide the same type of evidential presumption—that an owner or occupier of land to which water was taken or diverted, or used on, without authorisation will be presumed, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, to be the person that took, diverted or used the water (as applicable).

New sections 63A(1) and 289A(1) will provide an additional evidential presumption that a person holding a 'relevant authorisation' (which is defined) that specifies the land to which the water was taken, diverted or used on will be presumed, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, to be the person that took the water (or diverted or used the water, as applicable).

Presumption provisions for interfering etc with works or property of an Authority

Existing section 288(1) provides for an offence of interfering etc with the works or other property of an Authority without the Authority's consent. Section 288(3) currently provides an evidential presumption that an owner or occupier of land—on which the Authority's works or property are situated, that is serviced by the works or has water delivered to it which is recorded by a meter of an Authority—is presumed, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, to be the person that interfered etc with the works.

Section 288(1) is being substituted with new section 288, which will restructure the offence into three tiers for intentional, reckless and strict liability offences of interfering etc with property or works of an Authority. Existing section 288(3) is being replaced by new section 288A to make provision for the same evidential presumption.

Presumption provisions linking interfering etc with a meter under section 288 and taking, diverting or using water without authorisation

New sections 33EA(3), 63A(4) and 289A(4) will provide a new evidential presumption that a person who is found guilty under section 288 of interfering etc with a meter of an Authority that records the amount of water that is taken, delivered or supplied to, or used on, land will be presumed, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, to have taken, diverted or used water and will also be presumed, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, to have done so without authorisation.

Presumption provisions for estimating amount of water

Existing section 301 provides for several evidential presumptions to apply to court proceedings under the Water Act. Section 301(1) is being amended to provide that the amount of water recorded by a meter will be presumed, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, to be the amount of water that was taken to, supplied to, delivered to or used on, a property. The current provision applies only to the amount of water delivered.

Existing evidential presumptions in sections 301(2) and (3) are being substituted with new sections 301(2) and (3) as a consequence of amendments made to section 142 and new section 142A regarding an Authority's power to record amounts of water and to estimate amounts of water. For enforcing offences to which the amount of water is relevant, and in certain circumstances where an accurate recording of the amount of water is not available, an estimated amount of water taken, or supplied or delivered to, or used on, a property will be presumed, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, to be the amount of water that was taken or supplied or delivered to, or used on, the property.

Assessment against the Charter

The new and amended presumption provisions may interfere with a person's right to a fair trial, under section 24 of the Charter, and a person's right to be presumed innocent, under section 25 of the Charter. The new and

amended sections affect the way evidence will be considered by a court in proceedings to enforce offences for taking, diverting or using water and interfering etc with works or property of an Authority. The presumptions relate to evidence of, and proof of, the following facts: that water was taken, diverted or used; who took, diverted or used the water or who interfered etc with the works or property of an Authority; that there was no authorisation to take, divert or use the water; and the amount of water that was taken, diverted or used.

These new and amended provisions may engage the section 24 and section 25 Charter rights by placing an evidential burden on defendants. They will require a defendant to present evidence to rebut a presumption for these elements of proof and finding of fact if the presumptions are not rebutted on the balance of probabilities.

I consider that any interference with these rights is compatible with the Charter rights because the presumption, under sections 33EA, 63A, 288A and 289A, about who took water or who interfered with works or property, will be limited in scope and will only apply to a specified class of people. The people that the presumptions will apply to are those who ordinarily have responsibility for management of land they own or occupy and for the substantial requirements for taking water, diverting water or using water on land. This class of people is: owners and occupiers of land and holders of a 'relevant authorisation' (which will be defined in each of the relevant new sections).

The presumption under new sections 301(2) and (3) about the amount of water taken, diverted or used will be limited in that an estimate for the purposes of the presumption will need to be carried out under a new section 142A. Section 142A will specify that estimates can only be carried out in certain circumstances and that an estimate must be made using a certain methodology.

The presumption under new sections 33EA(3), 63A(4), and 289A(4) for the offence element that a person took water without authorisation, when they interfered etc with a meter, is limited in its application in that it will only apply when it is proved beyond reasonable doubt that a person interfered etc with a meter, and the person is found guilty of that offence. There is a rational link between interference with a meter and a person being presumed to have taken water they were not authorised to take. This is because, in normal circumstances, if a person has an authorisation to take water there is no need to interfere etc with a meter, and interference etc with a meter will only arise if there is an intention to take more water than is authorised.

This presumption is also necessary as interference etc with a meter alters the evidence or avoids the collection of evidence (the meter record) of how much water is passing through the meter. If the presumption is not provided, a person could interfere etc with a meter and face only the consequence of that offence while defeating enforcement of the offence of taking more water than they are authorised to take.

For all presumption provisions, there is also a limit to the extent that ordinary evidential burdens will be affected. A person's ability to provide evidence against a prosecution case will be preserved and, when contrary evidence is provided against a presumption, the onus will then shift back to the prosecution to establish the relevant element of the offence. The presumption clauses under new sections 33EA, 63A, 289A and 301 are limited in their application in that they only apply to elements of the offence that are unduly difficult for a prosecution to establish: that water was taken without authorisation, who took the water, and the amount of water taken. This is because of the inherent difficulties in identifying possession of water and in tracking the movement of water by specific persons at specific times.

Finally, the presumptions about the person that took, diverted or used water for the offences under section 289(1) already exists under section 289(3). The additional application of this presumption to the offences in sections 33E and 63 will be limited in scope in that it will provide for consistency across all the offences in the Water Act of taking, diverting or using water without authorisation.

Conclusion

Accordingly, it is my view that the Bill is compatible with human rights as set out in the Charter.

**Hon Lisa Neville MP,
Minister for Water**

Second reading

Ms NEVILLE (Bellarine—Minister for Water, Minister for Police and Emergency Services)
(10:19): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I ask that my second-reading speech be incorporated into *Hansard*.

Incorporated speech as follows:

The Andrew's Labor Government, in partnership with water and land managers, the water sector, key stakeholders and the community continue to progress many of the actions set out in the government's strategic plan for water, *Water for Victoria*.

In furthering those achievements, this bill will embed in law a number of the flagship policies of *Water for Victoria* including—

- recognition and involvement of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians and their cultural values in the management of, and planning for, water, waterways and catchments; and
- greater consideration of the social and recreational values and uses of our waterways for communities.

Aboriginal inclusion and cultural values

Water for Victoria recognises the importance of water for Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians and their knowledge of water management over thousands of generations.

This bill will ensure that wherever possible, Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians will have a voice at the table to impart their knowledge and share their values.

To ensure this becomes a business as usual practice, the bill will amend the *Water Act 1989* and the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* to make it mandatory for the relevant statutory bodies—

- to incorporate Aboriginal cultural values and uses of water and traditional ecological knowledge in the management of waterways and catchments;
- as a statutory duty, to look for opportunities to provide for Aboriginal cultural values and uses of waterways when carrying out their other statutory functions;
- to include, where possible, Traditional Owners or Aboriginal Victorians in consultative committees and on the Victorian Catchment Management Council; and
- to consult with Traditional Owner Groups, native title holders and specified Aboriginal parties for the preparation of management plans and strategies for waterways and catchments.

Recreational benefits

The bill will also require water corporations, catchment management authorities and the Victorian Environmental Water Holder to consider opportunities to provide for the community's social and recreational uses and values of waterways, in addition to environmental and economic values of water and waterways.

Water resource assessments and sustainable water strategies

Long-term planning for our water resources is essential for security of supply for cities and towns, industry and the environment. Long-term water resource assessments are a key tool in the *Water Act* to monitor the state of Victoria's water resources. Importantly, a long term assessment will identify if there is declining water availability or deterioration in the health of our waterways.

In August 2018 we commenced the first of these long-term, 15 yearly, assessments of Victoria's water resources.

Water for Victoria recognises it is premature to commence the long-term resource assessment for northern Victoria, while we are continuing to implement commitments under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan to return water to the environment until the Basin Plan is reviewed in 2026.

To align the timing of the long-term water resource assessment for northern Victoria with the Commonwealth's review of the Basin Plan in 2026, the bill provides for the cessation of the long-term assessment of northern water resources currently underway and requires it to be commenced by 1 February 2025.

The bill also extends the time for undertaking a long term assessment from 12 to 18 months, which will apply immediately to the continuing long term assessment of water resources in southern Victoria. The extra time will ensure that we prepare a technically robust, high quality assessment. It is vital that we are doing everything we can and using the best available methods to get it right.

We have also commenced the ten-yearly reviews of the first generation of sustainable water strategies, completing the central region strategy in October 2018 and getting ready to start the review of the northern region strategy in October 2019.

A review of a sustainable water strategy includes extensive community consultation on how we balance and share the environmental, consumptive and community needs for water within our existing rights framework.

If a long term assessment of our water resources finds there are issues in water availability or waterway health, the only option currently available to the Minister is to undertake a formal post-assessment review, which includes the option of permanently qualifying rights to water.

A review of a sustainable water strategy, or making a new one, is a better process for stakeholders and other members of the community to engage in, for identifying actions to address concerns raised by a long term resource assessment.

The bill will therefore give the Minister more options for responding to any concerns raised by a long-term assessment. The Minister will—

- still be able to proceed directly to a formal post-assessment review, which includes the option of permanently qualifying rights to water; or
- instead, review or remake a sustainable water strategy; or
- do both. If the Minister considers that reviewing or making a new sustainable water strategy has not been able to identify sufficient actions to address the concerns determined by the long-term assessment, the Minister can then also undertake a formal, post-assessment review.

While building in more flexibility, the bill retains Victoria's commitments—

- to undertake long-term water resource assessments every 15 years—to support environmental interests;
- to not be able to qualify rights to water in southern Victoria before 3 August 2021 and not more frequently than every 15 years—to continue to give long-term certainty and security to those holding water rights; and
- to review or remake sustainable water strategies, in consultation with the community, at least every 10 years—to provide opportunities for the community to influence decision making for how we manage water.

Salinity mitigation charges

Water for Victoria commits the government to improving the current approach to managing salinity in the Mallee region. The Mallee region, bordered by the Murray River and the South Australian border, is highly sensitive to the salinity effects of irrigation.

Since 1993, Victoria has operated a highly effective scheme to off-set the salinity impacts of irrigation by determining salinity impact zones across the region and imposing charges on irrigators that vary according to the zone and the amount of water they can use on their farms.

Through the charges, irrigators pay for the State to invest in works and measures to offset the damage their irrigation causes to the River and its surrounds. This scheme has enabled the development of 35,000 hectares of new irrigated agriculture in salinity impact zones in the Mallee region.

Recent litigation has raised questions of the legitimacy of various aspects of the scheme and how charges are imposed. The bill will clarify the Minister's functions and powers to carry out salinity mitigation works and measures, determine salinity impact zones and charges and the administration of the revenue from the charges. The bill will also validate past charges up to the introduction of the bill in Parliament.

Compliance and Enforcement

Water for Victoria, also committed to modernising the compliance and enforcement provisions of the Water Act. Since *Water for Victoria*, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority released the *Murray-Darling Basin Water Compliance Review* (Basin Compliance Review) in late November 2017 which looked into the allegations of significant theft of water and inadequate enforcement of the rules in the northern part of the Murray-Darling Basin.

The Basin Compliance Review noted that there is a strong commitment in Victoria to compliance which is underpinned by sound governance arrangements.

This is reflected in Victoria's published compliance statistics, which show that the great majority of water users in Victoria are compliant with their rights to take water. Where excess water has been taken, it was mostly small amounts, which was dealt with using an advisory or warning letter.

Victoria has a robust water management framework that is designed to protect the environment and holders of rights to take water from illegal take and use of water.

Each water corporation has officers who read meters and undertake proactive and reactive compliance activities. Across Victoria, all significant water use in both regulated and unregulated water systems is metered.

Many larger water users are monitored via telemetry; their taking of water is monitored continuously and in real time. Thousands of accurate new meters have been installed over the past decade.

Many irrigation systems have been modernised with automated control systems providing water corporations accurate information about water deliveries and losses, and preventing people from ordering more water than they are authorised to take.

Victoria operates Australia's leading water register that tracks taking of water against authorisations to take, and verifies that trades comply with rules. Victoria regularly publishes comprehensive water accounts, up to date market information and compliance statistics.

Taken together, all these measures provide strong safeguards against large-scale misappropriation of water.

Nevertheless, the Basin Compliance Review found that the Basin States should have more comparable penalties and a full suite of enforcement powers and sanctions to make enforcement responses more flexible and appropriate in each circumstance.

To implement the *Water for Victoria* action and respond to comments of the Basin Compliance Review, this bill will strengthen the compliance and enforcement provisions of the Water Act, particularly in relation to unauthorised taking of water and certain principal offences that are critical to protecting the environment, rights and entitlements to take water, public safety and property.

The bill will also give the Minister and water corporations more options to secure compliance with water laws and enforce breaches of the laws and they will reduce the burden of evidence in a way that is fair and appropriate.

For an aggravated incident of the principal offences, including unauthorised taking of water, the Water Act already provides for a high penalty of 10 years imprisonment but a disproportionately low maximum fine. An aggravated incident of an offence is the commission of one of the principal offences under the Water Act that also results in serious damage to land, works or water or results in a person suffering substantial economic loss.

The bill will increase the maximum fine for an aggravated incident of a principal offence from 200 penalty units to 1200 penalty units (\$193,428) to match the existing 'level 5' penalty (under the *Sentencing Act 1991* scale) of 10 years imprisonment. It will also clarify that this penalty applies only to an intentional commission of the relevant offences.

The bill will also provide for prosecution of an aggravated incident of the same group of offences committed recklessly, with a maximum 'level 6' penalty (under the *Sentencing Act 1991* scale) of 5 years imprisonment or 600 penalty units (\$96,714), or both.

It is intended that the two elements of these offences, intent and recklessness, do not apply to whether commission of the relevant offence would result in serious damage or substantial economic loss.

The bill provides that the maximum fine for a body corporate found guilty of an offence is five times the maximum fine for individuals. This will ensure that large corporate agricultural businesses face appropriately serious sanctions if they seek to capitalise from disregarding Victoria's water laws. The higher maximum fines do not override the obligation of a court under the *Sentencing Act 1991* to consider a defendant's capacity to pay a fine, which applies to a small, incorporated family farm business as much as it applies to any defendant.

The set of principal offences with high penalties for intentional or reckless commission of the offence includes the unauthorised undertaking of works or erection of structures on land that impact on drainage, the flow of stormwater and floodwaters, waterways, and on tidal waters. The effect of these offences is becoming more critical as a result of climate change causing more intense rain events, with more significant flooding, and rising sea levels.

By making it clear that enforcing a breach of an aggravated incident of the specified group of offences requires proof of intention or recklessness, the bill also enables the option of enforcing a strict liability version of the principal offences with a lower maximum penalty. This level of penalty will enable the development of a comprehensive penalty infringement scheme to address minor instances of offending.

The bill will also create new offences for breaching a condition of a licence to take and use water or a condition of a works licence and gives the Minister a power to suspend or cancel these types of licences. As suspension or cancellation of a licence can have very serious consequences for the licensee, such as loss of livelihood or animals left without water, the bill will require due process for the licensee, including being able to make a submission to the Minister before a decision is made and being given a right to apply for a review of the decision by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

Most offences of unauthorised taking or diverting water, or using water on land, occur on private property so there are significant challenges for detecting conduct in contravention of the Act, regulations or licence

conditions. Detection and enforcement of these offences relies on accurate metering or other evidence for detection and a number of existing evidentiary presumptions.

The bill will make it easier to enforce unauthorised taking, diverting or using water by improving an existing presumption about who may be presumed to be the person who did this without an authorisation, to include a person holding an authorisation to take or to use water, where relevant. It also provides for a new presumption, that if a court finds a person guilty of having removed, tampered with or damaged an Authority meter, that will be evidence the person also unlawfully took water.

The bill also expands the scope of the Minister's power to enable the Minister to carry out urgent works in relation to dams, bores and works on a waterway that pose a risk to public safety, the environment or property. In place of the Governor in Council, the Minister will be given the power to issue a directions notice to an owner of a public sector dam to make the dam safe, as the Minister already has this power in relation to private dams.

Compliance and enforcement arrangements for water resources are effective when both water users and the general public are confident that the rules for taking water are suitable and fair and that they are enforced appropriately.

With these amendments, Victorians can be confident that the right checks and balances will be in place to ensure that our water laws and the Basin Plan are complied with and that, when necessary, appropriate enforcement measures will be actioned.

Other items

The Bill will also increase efficiency in the administration of the Water Act with a number of red tape reduction initiatives and housekeeping amendments. These initiatives will include, for example, improving processes for declaring serviced properties, how districts are declared, regulating declared recreational areas, provide an exemption for seeking approval to dispose of matters into aquifers by means of a bore and removing a barrier to Melbourne Water being able to prepare plans for special water supply protection areas, that can influence the planning schemes for land in its water supply catchments.

Removing the barrier to Melbourne Water preparing plans for special water supply protection areas was identified by the program of work for the Yarra River Protection project. It is being included in this bill as the amendment will apply to all of Melbourne Water's catchments, not only the Yarra River catchment.

As part of simplifying the processes for making changes to irrigation districts, tariffs will only be able to be imposed in relation to a serviced property. Currently, salinity mitigation and irrigation drainage charges can be imposed in relation to any property within an irrigation district.

A mechanism has been provided to bring properties receiving an irrigation drainage or salinity mitigation service or benefited by such a service under the new regime. The opportunity has also been taken to clarify the status of other properties in a district that have received a service for at least two years. Where a property meeting this criteria has been included in a plan lodged in the central plan office and notice of the plan has been gazetted, the Bill will validate any tariffs that have been imposed.

I commend the Bill to the house.

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (10:19): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned for two weeks. Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 3 April.

ESSENTIAL SERVICES COMMISSION AMENDMENT (GOVERNANCE, PROCEDURAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE IMPROVEMENTS) BILL 2019

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Mr SCOTT:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (10:20): I am pleased to rise to resume my contribution on the Essential Services Commission Amendment (Governance, Procedural and Administrative Improvements) Bill 2019. Just to recap on what I was saying last evening before the adjournment in relation to the background for this particular bill that is before the house today, we have got the Essential Services Commission Act 2001 and there was a review done of that act, as is required within that piece of

legislation itself, that was conducted in late 2016. It was required to be done by 31 December 2016. That review resulted in 10 recommendations, and the government's reply to that review was tabled in this house on 7 March 2017. The bill before the house now implements four of those recommendations that came from that review. The bill had been before the 58th Parliament. It was introduced on 22 August 2018, was debated on 18 September 2018 and went to the guillotine on 20 September 2018, which was the last sitting day of the 58th Parliament.

I will resume where I left off yesterday, and that was looking at the government's reply to the recommendations. I had just dealt with recommendation 9, and I was looking at recommendation 10, which is to amend the act to schedule a review of the act to be conducted by 31 December 2026. The government in their written response supported that. That is also reflected within the legislation and is covered off, as I mentioned at the start of my contribution yesterday, under clause 1(a)(v), which says:

to provide for a review of the operation of the **Essential Services Commission Act 2001** by 2026 ...

That deals with the recommendations and the government's response to the recommendations.

I just want to again look at some of the other matters that the Essential Services Commission (ESC) deals with. Perhaps before I do that I might just go back to what I said yesterday as well in terms of what the Essential Services Commission does. To quote their website, they are:

... an independent regulator that promotes the long-term interests of Victorian consumers with respect to the price, quality and reliability of essential services.

And it goes on from there.

So that sets the framework, and I think it is interesting to note that there have been and continue to be a large number of interesting reports prepared by the Essential Services Commission. I want to refer to one, which is the Essential Services Commission's recent publication, *Victorian Energy Market Report 2017–18*, in relation to electricity-related matters. Some of the contents of that particular report, some of the findings, were that in terms of residential energy prices the prices for electricity and gas are up an average of 16 per cent based on the standard contract. That is the biggest annual increase since 2014–15. Since 2014–15 the standard contract for electricity has grown from \$1522 to \$1824, or some 19.8 per cent. For gas it has gone from \$1316 to \$1768, or 34.3 per cent. That is on the residential side. On the business side we can see that standard contract prices have increased 21 per cent for electricity and 14 per cent for gas, but even the discounted market rates have gone up by 17 per cent for electricity and 20 per cent for gas. We can see that the ESC has an important role to shine a spotlight on some of the cost of living challenges that people here in Victoria are facing. We can see just from those statistics alone that Victorian households and businesses are significantly hurting, with the cost of utility bills, particularly gas and electricity, continuing to rise. The commission has an important role to continue to keep the Victorian public informed about these matters and to expose the significant increases to the broader community.

The ESC talks further in its report about customers experiencing great difficulty in paying their bills, and they have observed a 25 per cent increase in customers on hardship programs. That equates to approximately 98 000 customers experiencing difficulty. The particular point I want to make there is that Victorians, and I certainly know that this includes many of my constituents in the district of Forest Hill, are really hurting from cost of living pressures, and this government is not doing anything about them. In fact, to the contrary, this government is adding to the cost of living pressures. That is part of the challenge for residents.

Mr Pearson interjected.

Mr ANGUS: We have still got the member for Essendon interjecting over there. He is still here, listening to this important debate.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Essendon will get his turn. The member for Forest Hill, to continue.

Mr ANGUS: I think, Deputy Speaker, he is very, very keen for a turn on this bill because he was here last night listening to me and he is back again today for some more. He just cannot get enough of it. It is interesting to see that he is so keen about it. Hopefully he will highlight some of these important matters in relation to the Victorians who are involved in hardship programs. We have on average 47 289 customers on hardship programs here in Victoria. That tells you what is really going on at the coalface, if you like, in relation to Victorian consumers. That is something that the ESC needs to continue to shed some light on.

We have disconnections increasing. The rate of disconnections is up: 55 474 residential and 5258 small business customers were disconnected for non-payment. It is up 21 per cent from the 2016–17 report. So we can see that there is an enormous increase and growth in that area. It just continues to be a problem. The number of complaints to the energy and water ombudsman have ticked up as well, and there are huge increases there. Headlines have appeared in the newspapers. The *Herald Sun* of Monday, 18 March 2019, has the headline ‘Water bill shock’ and talks about a \$10 increase because 125 billion litres have been ordered from the desal plant.

These sorts of cost of living pressures are continuing to increase for Victorian residents, and as I said, that is certainly the case in my district of Forest Hill. It is incumbent upon the government to start doing something to alleviate the cost of living pressures because everything is going up and people are hurting. We now have this bill shock. It has not flowed through, so to speak, as yet onto people’s bills, but we know that will certainly be the case and people’s water bills, just like every other utility bill they are having to face, will continue to go up. That is hurting people within the flat wages environment that we are working in at the moment and people are really being stretched left, right and centre. The important work of the ESC needs to continue. It needs to continue to expose this government in relation to its poor governance and management, resulting in these cost of living pressures on all Victorians.

If I just turn back to the bill, we can see that I have covered a fair bit of it, but I just want to touch on part 4, which is on page 17 and makes consequential amendments to other acts. It deals with a whole range of other pieces of legislation: the Accident Towing Services Act 2007, the Electricity Industry Act 2000, the Grain Handling and Storage Act 1995, the National Gas (Victoria) Act 2008 and the Port Management Act 1995. It is interesting to note that one of the questions we had in the last parliamentary sitting week was about the port charges. We can see that they are out of control for port users. That is another area that hopefully the ESC can continue to expose and shine some light onto.

Having said all that, the opposition will not be opposing this bill. We do note that it has been a long time coming, but we will not be opposing it.

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) (10:29): It gives me great pleasure to speak on this important bill. I am pleased to do so not only because I get to talk about the values this government represents but also I do it in the esteemed company of the Assistant Treasurer at the table, whose bill this is. It also gives me pleasure because it affords me the opportunity to basically put down some of the fallacies put forward by the previous speaker, the member for Forest Hill. He was doing quite well for about nine-tenths of his speech, and then he strayed into territory which was false.

Apparently we are not doing anything to combat the cost of living—says someone from the opposition which has such a significant record on doing that, apparently. I have not seen any evidence of it. It is absolutely a relevant consideration of this bill, because it is one of the key objectives of the Essential Services Commission to protect consumer interests, including excessive pricing. But just to give a few examples of what we are doing for the cost of living, starting with the energy sector, we are deepening the supply of energy so that it brings down prices. We are actually doing that in a way that is not only important for energy pricing, but it is important in terms of our environmental outcomes and objectives, which are leading Australia in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, targets that are ahead of the rest of the states in terms of energy efficiency and targets in terms of renewable energy—all of that under this government. We are also providing a far more heavy hand, if you like, with the power companies, and far more regulation. As the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change

made very clear in question time yesterday, we are bringing in the power companies. We are being harder on them so they are easier on the customers and the Victorian community.

We are doing far more than that though. We are providing free dental care in every public school; solar panels for potentially 650 000 Victorian homes; better schools, so families are not forced to choose independent or private schools if they do not want to; better and more efficient and effective public transport so people do not have to get behind the wheel of a car; glasses for kids; school lunches; excursions and a whole range of things that absolutely alleviate the cost of living pressures on Victorian families. For the previous speaker to talk about the cost of living and what we are supposedly not doing about it without referencing any of those is really mischievous.

But just to the bill, I am proud of this—

Members interjecting.

Mr DIMOPOULOS: Well, more directly to the bill. I am proud of this bill. I am proud of it for a couple of reasons. One is that the Essential Services Commission is part of the important architecture of consumer protection that exists in Victoria, and it was set up by a Labor government. It was set up by the Bracks Labor government.

Mr Scott: Hear, hear.

Mr DIMOPOULOS: Absolutely. ‘Hear, hear’, says the Assistant Treasurer. And it is far more than that. It is part of the important architecture, but it is not the only part of the architecture that protects consumers. In the life of the last Parliament I spoke on two bills of the Andrews Labor government that strengthened the powers of the Environment Protection Authority and increased its funding. I spoke on bills that enhanced workers protections and workers rights, whether it be in labour hire or through the Long Service Benefits Portability Bill 2018 or the workers compensation and WorkCover bills. They were all part of an architecture that protects consumers, workers and Victorians at large. This is a very important bill. As the Assistant Treasurer said in his second-reading speech, the changes we are seeking to make to the Essential Services Commission and to the act come out of an important review that concluded in 2016, a review that was set in motion with the initial establishment of the Essential Services Commission.

The Essential Services Commission is an independent regulator with the purpose of promoting Victorian consumers’ interests regarding the price, quality and reliability of essential services. What are those essential services? There are many: the energy and water sectors are key, but there is also the transport sector, the administration of local government rate capping and the commercial passenger vehicle sector, which includes taxis. I might add that the Essential Services Commission also regulates the Victorian Energy Upgrades program, which was introduced by the Brumby Labor government. There is a bit of a pattern here. These architectonic programs and institutions are normally established by Labor governments. The Andrews Labor government strengthened that program. The program has helped cut power bills for Victorians. In 2017 alone it saved households more than \$400 million in power bills, which is the equivalent of taking 500 000 cars off the road.

A review of the Essential Services Commission Act 2001 was completed in December 2016, as I said. This bill aims to address the recommendations of that review, principally around four key areas. The first area involves replacing the appeals panels that are provided for within the act with the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. The second area is that the bill allows the minister to nominate a person to act as an acting chairperson in the absence of the chairperson of the Essential Services Commission, which allows it to operate more effectively. The third area is that the bill seeks to clarify that the commission has the ability to report on the market structure and performance of industries it regulates, which gives it more power and more efficacy and makes it more able to provide impactful reports to government and the community. The fourth thing it does is it provides for a further review

of the act to be completed by 2026, which is important. This is another part of this government's brand. It seeks to review the operation of legislation to look for opportunities for reform.

The Essential Services Commission is a vital piece of Victoria's consumer protection framework, and this government has taken far more action than just seeking to strengthen the commission, particularly in relation to power pricing. For example, we have introduced what we term the energy fairness plan, which builds on the final response to the review by announcing further reforms to the energy retail market, including improving retail marketing practices by banning door-to-door sales and telemarketing by energy retailers and overhauling and significantly increasing penalties for wrongdoing by energy retailers, including new criminal offences for wrongful disconnections. The bill also strengthens the powers and capabilities of the Essential Services Commission and extends the \$50 power saving bonus, which has seen one in four Victorians compare their energy prices, potentially saving over \$60 million.

Already the results are clear. Disconnections are down both for households and for businesses. The Victorian energy price is trending down if you look at the historical data. There are a whole range of offset programs for people, whether it be solar panels for roofs, hot water services or a whole range of other things. What I have been proudest of during the last couple of weeks is that we introduced a bill to abolish the default offer, and that will save potentially between \$200 and \$500 per household. I think the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change and the other ministers who spoke on this bill reminded us that 167 000 electricity customers are on standing offers, so they are paying more than they need to for their power.

There is a whole range of work that we have done in this area. There is probably too much to mention in this contribution, other than to say that the Essential Services Commission was established by a Labor government, it is being strengthened by this Labor government and it will continue to be. It operates not only in relation to energy but also in relation to, as I said, rate capping—which again was the first of its kind nationally. It is also an agency that protects consumers in the commercial passenger vehicle industry, and again the reforms that we undertook in that industry were a first for Australia. The work this apparatus does is largely unseen by Victorians until there is an issue or a problem. I recommend to people that they spend 5 minutes of their spare time during the week to have a look at the Essential Services Commission website. It is a very, very user-friendly website. It gives pretty decent information about how important this agency is, why it was established and why it is important that it is protected, reviewed and enhanced. That is exactly what this legislation seeks to do. I commend the bill to the house, and I commend the minister's work on it.

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (10:39): I rise to make a contribution on the Essential Services Commission Amendment (Governance, Procedural and Administrative Improvements) Bill 2019, following on from the outstanding contribution of the member for Forest Hill earlier today and late last night. We do know that this bill has had a few false starts over its time and that it has been a while in the making, but, as was mentioned by the member for Forest Hill, we will not be opposing the bill.

I will begin by looking at the purposes of the bill in general terms. The main purpose is to amend the Essential Services Commission Act 2001, and the bill does that in five ways. It repeals provisions for appeal panels to hear appeals in relation to requirements, decisions or determinations of the Essential Services Commission and made under the Essential Services Commission Act 2001. Secondly, it confers review jurisdiction on VCAT in relation to requirements, decisions or determinations of the ESC made under the Essential Services Commission Act 2001. Thirdly, it makes provision for the minister to appoint a person to act as chairperson of the ESC. Fourthly, it makes provision for the ESC to report on the market structure and performance of regulated industries. And fifthly, it provides for a review of the operation of the ESC by 2026.

I think it is important to understand what the Essential Services Commission actually does. It is an independent regulator that promotes the long-term interests of Victorian consumers with respect to the price, quality and reliability of essential services. It regulates Victoria's energy, water and transport

sectors, administers the rate capping system for the local government sector and regulates the Victorian energy upgrades program—and I do have a few concerns about that.

I have looked at the ESC's website. It talks about how it regulates the electricity and gas industries, which is only part of the work that the Essential Services Commission does. It says they regulate through a combination of legislation, licences, codes and guidelines and talks about the energy team being responsible for the licensing of certain businesses and also establishing and maintaining codes and guidelines, promoting and enforcing compliance and reporting on the performance of energy businesses and on energy prices. However, as the member for Forest Hill highlighted in his contribution, the ESC does not set energy prices, but it does set the minimum feed-in tariff, so on the one hand it is taking an independent stance but on the other hand it certainly has a major say.

A review was commissioned back in 2016, which resulted in 10 recommendations. The government did respond to this review in 2017, and the bill before us now is a result of four of the recommendations that came from the review. The review was of the Essential Services Commission Act 2001 and the purpose of the review was to determine whether the objectives of the act and the Essential Services Commission are being achieved and are still appropriate, and whether the act is effective or needs to be amended so as to further facilitate the objectives or insert new objectives if need be. In undertaking the review consideration was also to be given to the range of regulatory issues, regulated sectors and advisory issues that fall under the auspices of the ESC; appointments of commissioners and panellists; regulatory reform and the reduction of red tape; and arrangements for appeals against decisions made by the commission. It is fair to suggest that more input from the public should have been sought and considered.

There were 10 recommendations in the report, but essentially four have been addressed in this bill. I can only assume the other six will be raised in the future, but I am sure only if it suits the government's agenda to do so.

I want to mention briefly recommendation 2 of this review in relation to appeals. It talks about amending the Essential Services Commission Act 2001 to cease the ESC appeal panels and confer the jurisdiction to hear appeals on VCAT. The document states that the changes are supported by a communication strategy providing clarity to stakeholders regarding their access to the appeals mechanisms available to them, the avenue for assessing these mechanisms and the processes to be followed and also by funding for VCAT to hear appeals regarding the Essential Services Commission. It is important to note in terms of the number of appeals that it is very low.

Recommendation 3 deals with the deputy chairperson. It recommends amendment of the Essential Services Commission Act to appoint a deputy chairperson who will act in the office of the chairperson during a vacancy in that office or when the chair is absent. Recommendation 4 talks about consultation. Recommendation 5 talks about public reporting.

In summing up, as I mentioned earlier the bill amends the Essential Services Commission Act 2001. It makes amendments to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998 and various other acts. It repeals provisions for the commission-specific appeals panels to hear appeals in relation to requirements and decisions made under the principal act and transfers jurisdiction to VCAT to replace the appeals panels. It allows the minister, rather than the Governor in Council, to appoint an acting chair of the commission, and that is for a maximum term of up to six months. It provides that the act will be reviewed again by the end of 2026. My main concern is that the bill amends the act to allow the minister to appoint an acting chair rather than them being appointed by the Governor in Council.

As the member for Forest Hill stated, we will not be opposing this bill.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (10:46): I am delighted to make a contribution on the Essential Services Commission Amendment (Governance, Procedural and Administrative Improvements) Bill 2019. I want to thank the parliamentary secretary to the Treasurer, my very good friend the member for Oakleigh, for his very succinct and erudite contribution on the merits and strengths of the bill.

I did listen with great interest to the contribution of the member for Forest Hill last night and today. I am truly surprised that he was able to get out half an hour on this bill, but I do congratulate him nonetheless. It was probably not the greatest contribution he has made to this house, but nonetheless I did at times find it enlightening and entertaining.

Ms McLeish interjected.

Mr PEARSON: Clearly the member for Forest Hill must have supported the member for Eildon in her bid to become the deputy leader of their party. Far be it from me to interfere in those internal party machinations that dominate the Liberal Party these days.

The member for Oakleigh summarised very neatly and eloquently the benefits of this bill. I did listen to the member for Forest Hill's contribution. He talked at length about his concern about energy prices—electricity prices and gas prices. It is well-known that my cousin is a constituent of the member for Forest Hill. Although my cousin is a very good man, he bats for the other side. He does support the Liberal Party and he does spend some time with the member for Forest Hill. I suspect that it has been my cousin who has been bemoaning some aspects of this portfolio to the member for Forest Hill. But the member for Forest Hill did talk at length about his concerns about electricity price rises, gas price rises and water price rises.

Indeed this is a theme that those opposite pursued with a level of vigour, I think it is fair to say, over the course of the 58th Parliament. If I look at *Hansard* and I look at the contributions made by the now member for Bulleen—the former Leader of the Opposition—and the member for Caulfield, who was the shadow Minister for Energy and Resources in the 58th Parliament, the then Leader of the Opposition raised the word 'electricity' 11 times in question time, and he raised the word 'gas' three times. The member for Caulfield raised the word 'electricity' 13 times and 'gas' three times. So you can see there is a theme—that those opposite raised this with a degree of regularity, I think it is fair to say, over the course of the 58th Parliament. We have heard today and last night in the member for Forest Hill's contribution that they also have raised issues or concerns about price rises.

The wonderful thing about the Westminster system of democracy is what we all chase—in the case of Victoria at the end of four years, an election campaign. I am a devotee of good public policy. I love a bit of good public policy. I love the opportunity that an election campaign enables for a political party, especially one of the major parties, to outline its bold vision for our state and our nation, because you spend three or four years grinding away in opposition, as in the case of the coalition, or in the case of government doing the operational work of running a state, and you are given that moment—those 25 days here in Victoria—to outline and map out your bold vision for the state of Victoria and where you want to take the state. Again you had the now member for Bulleen and the member for Caulfield talking at length about issues around electricity and gas. Of course, therefore, you must then think, 'Okay, this has been an issue that has been explored with some degree of interest by the opposition over the course of four years. I wonder what they were doing behind the scenes'. They have come into this place in question time, they have raised issues about energy prices on numerous occasions and they have sought to probe the executive arm of government as to what the government is doing. It begs the question: what is the alternative? What is their response?

I am delighted to have been provided with a copy of the *Independent Policy Costings of the 2018 General Election Policies* of the Liberal-National parties of Victoria, produced by none other than the Parliamentary Budget Officer. I refer the house's attention to page 171 of this report. This is one of the big policy agenda items of those opposite that they took to the election last year:

Establish a tender process by which the winning energy retailer will provide discounted electricity

That is a novel idea, isn't it? So in substance—and there is not much here—this policy would:

... establish a tender process by which the winning energy retailer will provide discounted electricity and gas to over 910 000 eligible low income and vulnerable government concession recipients.

The great idea of those opposite was that they would run a tender process—which is probably not dissimilar to running a business case for building Rowville rail or Doncaster rail—to offer discounted electricity. That is it. Now, you might say, well, run a process—that is fine. You might want to subsidise that to sweeten the offer because the question is—and those opposite are devotees of the free market; they love the free market; they are adherents to the free market ideology of Adam Smith—if the market is not already doing it, then why would that be the case? There is no money in it.

What do those opposite offer up instead? They are offering up, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, costs of \$3.2 million to run the tender process. They are not offering any sort of discount; they are not offering any sort of support to sweeten the offer for these companies to do it. They are just saying, ‘We will run a process so these private sector oligopolies can reduce their profit margin with no incentives’. It is just absolute economic bunkum—it is sheer and utter laziness.

It gets better, though. I really like this policy from those opposite, which they took up last year:

Introduce a Fairer Water Bills plan that will reduce household water bills by up to \$100 per year

Fantastic. How are we going to achieve this outcome? The summary of the policy is that those opposite, if they had won the election, would have introduced a Fairer Water Bills plan that would have required water authorities to identify business costs savings that could be passed back to customers as reductions on household bills. This is the best bit:

A suitably qualified individual would be appointed to work with Victoria’s water corporations to identify savings. Savings would be identified between December 2018 and June 2019 with customers starting to receive rebates on their bills from the 2019–20 financial year.

What a load of rubbish. They were going to employ some bozo on \$200 000 a year to run around tightening up water pipes in water plants to create savings that are passed on to consumers, which might result in \$100 of savings a year. It is absolute rubbish. It is nonsense. They had four years languishing in opposition, and this is the best they could come up with. This is the best they could do.

There is also this idea:

Put the supply of 500MW of new electricity out to tender with the aim to construct a new power station ...

We know that the Liberal candidate for Frankston gave a very commendable interview on Sky News trying to explain that policy. We are not going to be lectured to by these—

Ms McLeish: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the member on his feet has strayed far from the bill. The candidates in the state election have got nothing to do with this bill, and I ask you to bring him back to the bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Essendon has strayed somewhat from the bill before the house. I ask him to come back to speaking on the bill.

Mr PEARSON: Thank you, Deputy Speaker, for your guidance. The issue is that there is an essential services commission amendment bill before the house. This is an important piece of regulation. It is regulation that those opposite might talk about but that they are trenchantly opposed to. Let us be honest, the member for Forest Hill’s aspiration in life is to be Alan Stockdale’s love child. That is what he would like to be, and when they come into this place and profess—

Ms McLeish: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I ask you again to bring the member on his feet back to the bill. He is making imputations, I feel, against members of this house which I think are inappropriate.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member for Essendon to come back to the bill.

Mr PEARSON: This is an important piece of legislation. We are actually ensuring that there is an appropriate regulatory framework in place to protect consumers. You cannot trust or believe those lazy dilettantes opposite when it comes down to it. We are not going to be lectured by them in terms

of providing consumer protections, when the best they can come up with is some of the weakest public policy you would ever come across in a debate.

They took this to the election last year, and it is just rubbish. We have got the runs on the board when it comes to having an appropriate regulatory framework to protect consumers, and you just cannot trust and you cannot believe those opposite, because their idols are people like Alan Stockdale. Their idols are the free market. They will have a bit of fig-leaf dressing around offices like the regulator-general, which they introduced in 1994, but they are not to be trusted and they are not to be believed. It is only the Labor government that is committed to providing efficient and effective regulation of our utilities.

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (10:56): I also rise to speak on the Essential Services Commission Amendment (Governance, Procedural and Administrative Improvements) Bill 2019. It is difficult to follow the member for Essendon and the most interesting contribution that he made, and of course I agree with all sentiments and everything that was said.

This piece of legislation, as was also said by the member for Essendon, has been debated in this house previously, with some slight variations and amendments, but in essence it is still the same piece of legislation that goes towards strengthening consumer protections, particularly, in the case of the Essential Services Commission, those essential services that we all need in order to live a decent life—electricity, gas and water. Also of course there is regulation around ports, which is very important in terms of security, economic development and trade, transport, industry and so on.

This legislation is very important. It is really a technical and structural piece of legislation. It does things such as replacing appeals panels and using the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, or VCAT, to hear reviews and appeals. That is just a bit of streamlining and it provides more efficiencies, but of course the Labour Party and the Victorian Andrews Labor government is very, very strongly committed to the need to regulate industries that people rely on for their very existence when it comes, as I said, to things like water and electricity. We believe there ought to be proper regulation of these industries.

As many people in this house would know, we have introduced and are dealing with legislation that provides more protection for consumers and households when it comes to electricity pricing and the way that electricity companies deal with households. We are making sure that, for example, the Essential Services Commission publicly reports on the markets and market structures and performance of the regulated industries which they are overseeing. While there has been provision for public reporting in the past, this guarantees without doubt that there must be reporting that is done in a public form so that people can understand what is going on in those markets and how they are structured. They have a right of course to express opinions about whether those industries are acting in the best interests of consumers and households when it comes to providing pricing on things like electricity, gas and so on.

This is an essential piece of legislation. There are also some small items around things like the minister being able to appoint a person to act as chairperson in the absence of the chairperson. These are things about which I guess some people would ask—and I think the opposition was talking about this—why is it the minister rather than the Governor in Council? But really once the chair is there that is the main position, but if there is an absence or something, sometimes it is a bit difficult to go through that process. The minister ought to be able to appoint someone in the best interests of the community and Victorians as a whole when it comes to a person to act as chairperson in somebody's absence or where there is a vacancy in the office.

We are also providing for further reviews, because this legislation did not just happen.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

WEST GATE TUNNEL

Mr M O'BRIEN (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition) (11:01): My question is to the Premier. Before the Andrews Labor government signed the West Gate Tunnel contract with Transurban, was the Premier aware of the \$87 000 in extra toll costs to individual motorists who will be using CityLink, including mums, dads and tradies?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (11:01): The government is and has always been completely aware of the need to get this project built. We have also been completely clear with the Victorian community about how it would be funded. On the issue of transparency and what was known to the government and what was put out there into the Victorian community, it is very important to reflect on the fact that the West Gate Tunnel legislation is of course public, the CityLink concession deed is public, the 10 000-page environment effects statement is public, the 2000 pages of contractual documents are public, the summary value for money assessment is public and the 1000-page business case is public—the first publicly released business case for a major road project in the nation's history.

Ms Staley: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is misleading the house. You cannot get up and talk about transparency in documents which are heavily redacted.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr ANDREWS: Despite the expertise of some when it comes to these matters, I reject that assessment. I think we have put in place and we have put into the public domain more documentation than many other projects that I could quote, but I will not go down that road.

What is very clear and what has always been at the centre of our decision-making is the need to deliver a second river crossing and the need to deliver the travel time savings that come from that, the need to deal with the fact that if there is a problem with that part of our road network invariably there is a problem across the whole network—

Mr M O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question. The question was: was the Premier aware of the \$87 000 in extra toll costs to individual motorists? He has not answered that question and I ask you to bring him back to answering the question. Did he know about that individual cost when he signed that contract?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is being relevant to the question that was asked.

Mr ANDREWS: I will resist talking about who signed what and when because there is a bit of history there, I think. I wonder if others were aware when they signed certain side letters.

This project has been endorsed by the Victorian community and it will be delivered by a government resoundingly endorsed by the Victorian community. We know and understand how important this is and we will not be relying upon, as others are, the analysis of an office that they themselves opposed.

Mr M O'BRIEN (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition) (11:04): When announcing contracts for the West Gate Tunnel the Premier claimed that this deal 'has been assessed as high value for taxpayers and for drivers'. Given that Transurban will receive \$37.3 billion in toll revenue for a \$4 billion outlay, hasn't the Premier's deal simply delivered high value for Transurban shareholders but massive extra cost for CityLink motorists?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (11:04): The answer to the Leader of the Opposition's question is no.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members of the opposition will come to order.

Mr ANDREWS: Well, members of the opposition who cannot quite work out whether this is a serious issue or something to laugh about signed off on arrangements. We had to build it, but they signed off on arrangements for the Tullamarine Freeway widening with terms less favourable than those connected to the West Gate Tunnel. So all over the shop you have been opposed to this project—

Mr M O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, in relation to relevance, if the Premier wants to discuss the CityLink Tulla widening, I can tell you there are no extra tolls there for building a road that people who are paying those tolls will not be driving on. This is about people paying for tolls—

The SPEAKER: Order! There is not a point of order.

Mr ANDREWS: I am indebted to the Leader of the Opposition for his point of order. It has just confirmed that he really has absolutely no idea what he is talking about. The concession deed was extended. The whole concession deed—not just on the Tulla freeway bit of it but the entire concession deed. The Leader of the Opposition is in need of a briefing. He is in need of a briefing, and maybe more than that.

The SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the Minister for Education on a ministers statement I acknowledge in the gallery the presence of a former member for Yan Yean and former member for Kororoit, André Haermeyer.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: TAFE

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk—Minister for Education) (11:06): I rise to update the house about the rollout of free TAFE across Victoria, particularly how it benefits female students. This is a great story. There are now 13 500 students enrolled in free TAFE courses thanks to the Andrews Labor government. Around 1600 are enrolled in preapprenticeship pathway courses and around 11 900 in certificate III to diploma courses in our TAFEs. To date, the five most popular courses are diploma of nursing, certificate IV in accounting and bookkeeping, diploma of community services, certificate IV in education support and certificate IV in cybersecurity. Of those 13 500 students, 8000 are female students. This represents an increase of 77 per cent of female students undertaking those courses compared to this time last year. Of those top courses, nearly two students out of three are women. Over half of the female students in free TAFE courses are over 30 and are seeking to get a job or to try and get a new career. This is life-changing.

Ms McLeish interjected.

Mr MERLINO: I am not angry, I am excited, Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party. I am particularly excited about the areas that are traditionally dominated by men. For example, courses in building and construction and cybersecurity have seen increases of 7 per cent and 13 per cent respectively. The proportion of women in free TAFE preapprenticeships has increased to 14 per cent, up from 9 per cent in 2008. This is transforming lives and careers, and importantly it is breaking down some of the financial barriers faced by women in particular returning to training after having children or caring responsibilities.

WEST GATE TUNNEL PROJECT

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (11:08): My question is to the Treasurer. The Treasurer admits—

Mr Andrews interjected.

Ms STALEY: Oh, you are unhappy that you are not getting it.

Members interjecting.

Ms STALEY: The Treasurer admitted on 3AW in July 2015 that he had secret discussions with Transurban—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Ripon is entitled to ask her question in silence, and I ask the member for Ripon to direct her question through the Chair.

Ms STALEY: The Treasurer admitted on 3AW in July 2015 that he had secret discussions with Transurban about the West Gate Tunnel prior to the 2014 election. The now government took a different project, the West Gate distributor, to the 2014 election. Why did the government decide to ditch its election commitment and take up the unsolicited bid from Transurban which the Parliamentary Budget Office has now found will generate billions of dollars of windfall gains for that company?

Mr Richardson interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mordialloc is warned.

Mr PALLAS (Werribee—Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations) (11:09): I thank the member for Ripon for her question. I think I would first make the startling observation that if in fact I had secret discussions with Transurban, I would not have discussed them on 3AW radio. That would mean they were not secret—I am just saying.

Can I also make the point that this government not only sought a mandate to improve access from the west and Geelong in the 2014 election, but we doubled down and we went to the last election advocating—not just in concept but in content—exactly what we wanted to do. In fact, it was not just a conceptual thing; we had people actually working. We provided in the concession deed arrangements that those opposite could pursue an alternative view if they wished.

Mr M O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, the question related to why the government ditched its election commitment in 2014 in favour of an unsolicited bid from Transurban. The Treasurer has not addressed that question. I ask you to bring him back to that.

The SPEAKER: Order! I do ask the Treasurer to come to answering the question. The Treasurer, to answer the question.

Mr PALLAS: We have been very clear that our commitment was to improve transport linkages from the west. Now the question seems to be: why didn't we, with some degree of engineering certainty, specify exactly what the best possible outcome would be? We certainly identified an alignment, unlike those opposite. Remember the triple bypass, the dotted line—'We think we might build something here or here, we're not sure exactly where'—and they were seeking a mandate for it—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer will resume his seat. Just before calling the Leader of the Opposition on a point of order, I warn the members for Mordialloc, Macedon from earlier on, Ferntree Gully and South-West Coast about their behaviour. In fact I warn all members to cease shouting across the chamber or they will be removed from the chamber.

Mr M O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, the Treasurer is again debating the question. There was not some vague promise of general upgraded transport links. The West Gate distributor was shovel-ready, according to the Premier, and fully costed, according to the Premier. The question is: why was that specific project ditched in favour of an unsolicited bid from Transurban? I ask you to bring the Treasurer back to answering that question.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order. It may be a supplementary question, but the Treasurer is being responsive to the question that is asked.

Mr PALLAS: The shovels were ready and those opposite tried to stop them. They tried to put a lot of people out of work, and they tried to withhold from the people of the western suburbs the sort of economic uplift and jobs that flowed immediately from this proposal. So, instead of trying to stop

people getting on delivering the infrastructure that this community so desperately needs, that Victorians voted for not just once—if there was any doubt about exactly what we were proposing, they absolutely knew; they absolutely knew at the last election— (*Time expired*)

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (11:13): In signing up to an unsolicited bid for a project that was never taken to the 2014 election, which delivers massive benefits to Transurban but huge costs to motorists, is it just the case that Transurban saw you coming?

Mr PALLAS (Werribee—Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations) (11:13): No.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: HOME OWNERSHIP

Ms KAIROUZ (Koroit—Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Suburban Development) (11:13): I rise today to update the house on the Andrews Labor government's commitment to make things fairer for Victorians when it comes to buying a home. We know that buying a home is one of the biggest decisions that Victorians make, so today I announce that we will change the rules when it comes to buying off the plan. We will give Victorians stronger protections and crack down on dodgy developers and unethical parts of the financial sector looking to make a quick buck.

Many members here, especially those who represent the booming outer suburbs, will be aware of the increased exploitation of sunset clauses. Certain sections of the property sector have deliberately delayed the completion of developments in order to exploit a clause allowing them to terminate a contract and to resell a property at a higher price. Too many Victorians have unfortunately fallen victim to these dodgy operators, investing honestly with the expectation that their home will be delivered on time for the price that they agreed to pay. We have also heard of developers threatening to use a sunset clause termination unless the buyer pays an additional amount. This is simply unacceptable.

The Andrews Labor government will ensure that off-the-plan contracts cannot be terminated without the agreement of the buyer or without the express permission of the Supreme Court of Victoria. We will also crack down on the ethical and dodgy practice of rent-to-buy schemes. Vulnerable low-income Victorians who are unable to access mainstream finance are being exploited by greedy developers and elements of the financial sector, leaving them with no legal rights and, in many cases, without property ownership.

Mr R Smith: On a point of order, Speaker, with regard to the rule of anticipation given that this bill is being introduced today, the—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr R Smith: On a point of order, Premier, I wonder if you could rule on my point of order—please. Maybe you could take the chair.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Warrandyte! Through the Chair, member for Warrandyte! Without the assistance—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Warrandyte is entitled to raise a point of order without the assistance of the Premier.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Warrandyte! Order! The bill has not been second-read yet, so no one knows what is in the bill, so the minister is entitled to make a ministers statement on these issues.

Ms KAIROUZ: Thanks to the Andrews Labor government we have already made renting fairer, we have cut stamp duty for first-time buyers and we have increased public housing supply, but we know there is so much more to do. These reforms will boost consumer protections and will restore balance so that hardworking Victorians can enter the property market with confidence, particularly when they are simply trying to purchase a house to make their home.

WEST GATE TUNNEL PROJECT

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (11:17): My question is to the Treasurer. When discussing the value of additional tolls to Transurban from the West Gate Tunnel deal, the Treasurer told Parliament in December 2017:

... let us be clear: the cost of this project in today's dollars is \$4 billion worth of capital works, \$4 billion worth of toll revenue to Transurban.

In light of the Parliamentary Budget Office report, does the Treasurer stand by his answer or did he simply not understand what he was signing Victorians up to?

Mr PALLAS (Werribee—Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations) (11:17): Yes, I understood, and I understand the difference between actual and nominal dollars, but apparently those opposite do not.

Members interjecting.

Mr PALLAS: Yes, I did, actually, and it was a very interesting report because the Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) made a number of observations about his inability to effectively model because he did not have the full information before him, unlike—

Members interjecting.

Mr PALLAS: We do. We have that material.

Members interjecting.

Ms Staley: On a point of order, Speaker, in light of what the Treasurer has just said, I would like to make available to the house the PBO report, which shows that the additional revenue is \$7.5 billion in nominal terms, up to \$11.9—

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member for Ripon—

Ms Staley: On relevance to the question. He is not answering the question—he is debating it.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer is being relevant to the question. There is no point of order.

Mr PALLAS: If I were to buy a coffee a day for the next 27 years, in nominal terms that coffee would cost me about \$67 000. And that is the sort of nonsense that happens when you try to compare current dollars to nominal dollars. The price of money and the opportunity cost of economic investment vary with time.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have warned the house already there is too much shouting across the chamber. Members will be removed from the chamber.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Hastings can leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

Member for Hastings withdrew from chamber.

Mr M O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, the question was simply: does the Treasurer stand by his answer where he said that Transurban were putting in \$4 billion and getting out \$4 billion? Is

he actually standing by that answer given the contradictory numbers in the PBO report? I ask you to bring him back to answering that question.

The SPEAKER: Order! I understand the Treasurer was answering the question.

Mr PALLAS: My answer was absolutely correct in terms of actual dollars, today's dollars. What the Parliamentary Budget Officer was looking at in the context of the \$7.7 billion that he identified was all the risk transfer that was effectively occurring to Transurban, that they were taking on; for example, the management risk, the operational risk, the capital risk. All of those risks were effectively incorporated into the capital—

Members interjecting.

Mr PALLAS: Well, it is 27 years of actually meeting operational and capital costs in order to make that road continue to perform to specification. This idea that you can simply put a dollar price in today's dollars and not accept that there are obligations that have real capital impacts over time, that is exactly what we have been saying. If you want to know what the capital cost for this project is, it is as the government has put on the record and consistently identified.

From our perspective, this is a project that absolutely has to happen and it is a project that those opposite have absolutely tried to stop. They have refused to accept the mandate that the people of Victoria gave us. They have refused even to acknowledge that they themselves applied these costings for the purposes of building their triple bypass. Where was the money to pay for that? 'Fully costed, fully funded'—that is what they said. The dishonesty of the way that those opposite behave post the election—they have learned nothing and they have come nowhere and they continue to flout the mandate that this government has been given by the people of Victoria.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (11:22): Yesterday in the Legislative Council's question time the Minister for Roads accepted the Parliamentary Budget Office's calculation of the cost to motorists of \$87 060 per person and admitted that:

I am sure it will not be universally popular.

Can the government name one single CityLink user, other than a Transurban shareholder, who is happy to pay \$87 060 in extra tolls?

Mr PALLAS (Werribee—Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations) (11:22): At the end of the day we have been very clear that the people of Victoria had to make a decision about how this project would be financed. We put it to them. So I suppose I can say by clear logical extension, if we got a mandate on the basis that we proposed to fund this \$2 billion out of capital allocations from the state or thereabouts and essentially the rest being picked up in either new tolls for the West Gate Tunnel or indeed for a concession deed extension, if we got elected—with a thumping majority, might I say—in circumstances where those opposite had flip-flopped on their position right up until they decided they would adopt ours—

Mr Walsh: On a point of order, Speaker, on the issue of relevance, the question was very clear about asking the Treasurer did he know of one motorist, other than a Transurban shareholder, who was happy with paying \$87 000 more in tolls. I ask you to bring him back to actually answering that question—just one person that is happy to pay \$87 000 more.

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer is being relevant to the question.

Mr PALLAS: Just to clarify, I do not know what people's individual choices are and nobody enjoys actually having to pay for tolls. Let me be very clear. However, I can say that the Victorian electorate clearly was happy for it, because they voted for it.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: WORKPLACE DEATHS

Ms HENNESSY (Altona—Attorney-General, Minister for Workplace Safety) (11:24): I rise to update the house on the government's progress in respect of workplace manslaughter reform. Of course tomorrow marks the first anniversary of the Delacombe trench collapse, which tragically took the lives of Jack Brownlee and Charlie Howkins. Charlie and Jack were killed while they were laying pipes at a housing development in Ballarat on 21 March 2018. They were at the start of their lives and their careers. Charlie was the father of two beautiful children, and Jack was only 21 and at the start of his life. I want to acknowledge the very profound strength and courage and generosity of their families as they have advocated for very important law reform that we are committed to delivering on.

Since the Delacombe tragedy, Lana, Dave and Janine have been tirelessly advocating and campaigning on behalf of their families, but also on behalf of all working people and on behalf of the Ballarat community that is very, very supportive of their work, for the introduction of laws that hold people accountable when it comes to workplace accidents. I also would like to acknowledge the member for Wendouree and of course the member for Buninyong, who have been strong advocates, and the incredible work that the Ballarat community have done to back and support people whilst they are making the very important need for these reforms understood.

As Lana, who lost her beautiful husband in this accident, makes the point very, very poignantly, that no-one should go to work and not come home. That is a burden that she and her family now have to bear—making the point that one life lost is one life too many.

I would like to advise the house that a workplace manslaughter task force has been established. The member for Sydenham has very kindly agreed to chair that task force. Jack and Charlie's families will be a part of that task force as we develop reforms to introduce these very important workplace changes. I know that the hearts and minds of this chamber will be with those families as they deal with the unbearable grief and recollection that tomorrow will inevitably bring.

FOSSIL FUEL INVESTMENT

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (11:26): My question is to the Premier. Premier, on Friday we saw over 30 000 people take to the streets in Melbourne supporting students in the School Strike 4 Climate action. These schoolkids were striking to send a very clear message to all politicians that they want no new coal and gas projects. And just last night the state of the environment report detailed how Victoria is already feeling the impacts of climate change, such as more extreme bushfires and droughts. My question is: how can this government justify support for new fossil fuel projects such as extending coal mining licences, increasing offshore gas exploration, supporting a new gas import terminal and giving public funds to a coal-to-hydrogen project when in fact our own kids are demanding that we do not invest in any new coal and gas projects?

Mr Pearson interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Essendon can leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

Mr Pearson withdrew from chamber.

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (11:27): I do thank the member for Melbourne for her question. I think I would take a slightly different view and perhaps interpret the protest of last week a little bit differently to the member for Melbourne. I do not think we necessarily would agree on that, but I want to make a couple of comments about what those young people were marching for and the fact that I was more than supportive.

We often bemoan young people for not necessarily being engaged in the issues of the moment—'They're on devices all the time; they're not concerned; they're in their own world'. And we did have a lot of commentary in relation to last Friday that it was somehow shameful that kids might take a stand and be concerned about their future and their stake in it. People are free to have different views about

that, but I would have been proud if any of my three kids had decided to be involved in that. As it was, they did not; they made a choice not to. They are pretty engaged in lots of other stuff though, and that makes Cath and me very proud. I do not think you should criticise people for standing up for the things that they believe in. That is the first point I would make. Secondly, I just reiterate I do not necessarily agree with the way in which the member for Melbourne has interpreted that action on Friday.

Thirdly, I would just say this: we are on track to deliver 25 per cent renewable energy by 2020, 40 per cent by 2025 and 50 per cent by 2030. That is profound leadership. It is creating jobs. It is creating certainty. It is creating the additional supply in the market that puts down the pressure on prices for households and for businesses. Whilst the member for Melbourne is critical of our position in relation to offshore gas, I will let the member for Melbourne in on a secret: I get a lot of criticism for the policy settings that I have been proud to put in place in relation to gas. That is not normally one of them, but we are proudly a frack-free state, and we will write that into the constitution of our state in full delivery of our election commitment.

We need a domestic gas reserve in this country so that our gas is for our businesses and our households first, and then whatever is left can be exported to the rest of the world for whatever price can be sought and gained for it. The credentials of this government in relation to those issues of gas and protecting our farming environment, our dairy country, our wine country are essentially knowing and understanding that when it comes to something like fracking you cannot separate the economy from the environment. I would have thought they were well-known. It could be a point of agreement between the Greens political party and the government and the chamber, perhaps. Beyond that, our commitment for renewable energy and all the benefits that flow from that is well-known and well understood. But I will say to the member for Melbourne: it is simply wrong to try and assert that fossil fuels are not part of our current energy mix. They are. That is a practical reality. What we are doing about that reality, though, is putting in place the policies that drive a powerful transition to renewable energy—a true act of leadership, not just in our state but in our nation.

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (11:30): In fact the demands of the strike were very, very clear: 100 per cent renewables by 2030 but also no new coal and gas projects. And that is publicly known. As I have said before, the government should be congratulated on their support for renewables and the fracking ban, but my question was specifically about coal and gas, and unfortunately it is a fact that this Labor government is supporting not just previous coal and gas projects but actually new ones, such as extending the licences for Yallourn and Loy Yang coal stations, committing to \$50 million of public money for a coal-to-hydrogen project and the release of new oil and gas reserves off the western coast of Victoria. Last week the former chairman of the Australian Coal Association, Ian Dunlop, described all new fossil fuel projects as ‘crimes against humanity’. So my question is: does the Premier acknowledge that this government’s support for new gas and coal projects is directly at odds with the survival of today’s students and future generations?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (11:31): I find myself having to deal with multiple assumptions and questions within that supplementary.

Ms Sandell interjected.

Mr ANDREWS: Well, that is part of why we are here. Sometimes we do have to debate different issues and we have to discuss whether my interpretation of matters is more accurate or less accurate than yours, member for Melbourne. With the greatest of respect, I do not agree with the assertions, assumptions and the contention that you have put to us. This government proudly has a practical, commonsense agenda that is being delivered. It is not just commentary, it is not just talk, it is not just words; it is jobs, it is megawatts, it is lower emissions and it is not necessarily universally popular. So I will just say to the member for Melbourne: thank you for the question and for the supplementary. You are entitled to your views, but what the government is entitled to do and obliged to do is deliver the agenda we have mapped out, and that is exactly what we will be doing.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT

Mr PALLAS (Werribee—Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations) (11:33): It gives me great pleasure to rise to update the house on the government's record of creating jobs right across the state of Victoria, but particularly in regional and rural Victoria. The regional unemployment rate now sits at an astoundingly low 4.4 per cent—the lowest regional unemployment rate in the nation, where the regional rate now sits at 5.2 per cent. It shows just how far regional Victoria has come under the Andrews Labor government.

We inherited a regional unemployment rate of 6.7 per cent from the now Leader of the Opposition. When we came into government we promised that we would deliver infrastructure to every corner of Victoria. For the past four years that is exactly what we have done. In fact we have invested \$13.6 billion in regional Victoria. Just for a comparison, that is almost twice what those opposite managed to invest. This is on the back of massive infrastructure investment, our new hospitals and our upgrades to almost 1300 schools right across the state, and of course our landmark reform of halving payroll tax for regional employers, a policy so good that those opposite tried to copy it.

Over 65 000 regional Victorians have found a job since Labor was elected. That is over six times the measly growth the Liberal and National parties managed to achieve when they were in government. Only 8500 jobs were created in their entire term in government, and if you were a full-time employee, they went backwards to the tune of 14 100 jobs. That is no surprise when you look at their current form—trying to block the West Gate Tunnel project, a project that will create vital jobs for regional Victoria, like the \$600 million precast facility being built at Benalla with 400 new jobs.

PUBLIC HOUSING

Mr T SMITH (Kew) (11:35): My question is to the Minister for Housing. Public housing tenants David Marffy and Elizabeth Malthouse of Belmont have been living in fear of a fellow public housing tenant for a number of years. Mr Marffy is Jewish and is extremely distressed after being subjected to increasing verbal anti-Semitic abuse, being forced to witness swastikas hanging from a window of a neighbouring residence and swastikas sprayed on communal bins. Ms Malthouse contacted the minister in early January 2019 pleading that this tenant be removed as a matter of urgency. However, the offending tenant is still there. Why has the government failed to remove this tenant?

Mr WYNNE (Richmond—Minister for Housing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Planning) (11:35): I thank the member for Kew for the question. I am aware of this particular tenant's issues, and I also aware of the very offensive behaviour that has occurred there. The local office of the department of housing in Geelong is dealing both with the tenant themselves and indeed the other party.

There is no place in our public housing for this sort of behaviour. I mean, this is not just antisocial behaviour, and in the context of the really important work that has been done this week in this Parliament and indeed again today, we repudiate any of this sort of offensive behaviour. I can assure the member for Kew that this matter is being actively pursued by the department, as you would expect me to.

Mr T SMITH (Kew) (11:37): A response provided by the minister on 3 February 2019 to Ms Malthouse's plea for help trivialised these hateful acts as merely an inconvenience. How long will this public housing tenant be allowed to remain in this location, openly threatening and religiously vilifying other tenants and displaying symbols of hate?

Mr WYNNE (Richmond—Minister for Housing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Planning) (11:37): This question invites a couple of responses, but I am not going to take the low road. This is about ensuring that our public—

Mr T Smith: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister wrote on 3 February:

I apologise for the inconvenience that you and Mr Marffy have experienced. This is not an inconvenience, Minister. This is extremely serious.

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

Mr WYNNE: I just simply repeat this: there is no place within our public housing for this type of behaviour. It is reprehensible behaviour, and in the context of the very, very important conversations that have occurred in this Parliament both yesterday and indeed today, I am absolutely confident that—

Mr T Smith interjected.

Mr WYNNE: You say, ‘Kick him out’. There are processes involved in somebody being evicted from public housing, and I can assure the member for Kew that in fact the government, through the Office of Housing, is pursuing this matter on behalf of the tenant that you raised and indeed the other neighbouring tenant.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: LEVEL CROSSING REMOVALS

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure) (11:39): I am once again pleased to rise to update the house on how the Andrews Labor government is getting on with removing dangerous and congested level crossings across Melbourne. As the house knows, in four years we got rid of 29, and I am pleased to say that there are more to come. In the last week or so I have been pleased to visit Mentone, Cranbourne and Dandenong to announce five more level crossing removals.

When it comes to the Frankston line, on the Frankston line we are removing 18 level crossings, with five already gone and three currently under construction. The next lot to go will be those three dangerous and congested level crossings at Cheltenham and Mentone. And after extensive consultation, superbly led by the member for Mordialloc, last week I was pleased to be with the member for Mordialloc to release the designs for the new stations at Cheltenham and Mentone. Can I say, and I want this to be clear on the record, we have been delighted with the response of the local community to those designs.

The member for Cranbourne will be the member for the first train line in Melbourne that will be level crossing free. We have already got rid of 11 level crossings on the Cranbourne line and we have committed to getting rid of the four that remain. I was pleased to join with the member for Cranbourne at Evans Road last week to announce that that one has also been fast-tracked and it will be removed by the construction of a road bridge over the track. I was delighted to be with the member for Cranbourne as the local community responded so positively as they were crossing that closed road across the level crossing, having dropped their kids off at the local school on one side of the tracks and trying to get home on the other side. It was a great local response.

Finally, I was then pleased to join with my ministerial colleague and the member for Dandenong at the South Gippsland Highway level crossing that will also be removed. Tragically this has been the site of a fatality, and we are getting on and removing yet another dangerous and congested level crossing.

Constituency questions

GEMBROOK ELECTORATE

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) (11:41): (377) My question is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. Can you supply information on the Clyde Road intersection removal for local residents in Berwick? The intersection is in a populated area where skyrail would be inappropriate, and residents are very concerned. The removal was promised by Labor candidate Colin Ross at the 2014 election in that term of Parliament. It is now late, and the community would like to know the timeline and receive an assurance that they will not have the skyrail in their backyard.

YUROKE ELECTORATE

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) (11:42): (378) My constituency question is to the Minister for Education. What is the latest information the minister can provide on plans for the two new primary schools to be located in the north of my electorate, namely, Merrifield West primary school and Kalkallo common primary school? Over the past few years new housing development in the Donnybrook Road corridor has progressed rapidly, with thousands of young families moving in. These much-needed new schools will provide families in Mickleham, Donnybrook and Kalkallo with access to quality education close to home. As a regular stallholder at the Merrifield Farmers' Market, I know local residents are very pleased with the government's commitment to deliver these new schools, and I am sure that they would appreciate further information that the minister can provide.

LOWAN ELECTORATE

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (11:42): (379) My question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and the information I seek is what alternatives to the drastic decision to close extensive areas of rock climbing sites in the Grampians National Park and Mount Arapiles have been or will be investigated so that access to all established rock climbing sites can be achieved while ensuring the respect, preservation and protection of areas of Indigenous cultural significance and the environment? The recent extreme measure of extensive closures of established rock climbing sites in the Grampians National Park has caused great confusion and angst. Rock climbing is an important activity to retain in the Grampians, not just as a great way to enjoy the park but also to support fitness, tourism and local small business. Rock climbing also provides a great future opportunity to create jobs for the local Indigenous community in relation to cultural education and awareness programs and sharing their important history and link to Gariwerd. This is a complex issue, and I am happy to provide a briefing to the minister. I believe there is a strong pathway available to preserve sites of cultural significance, particularly rock art sites, and to retain access to the best rock climbing in the world. I therefore ask the minister to provide information regarding alternatives available.

ESSENDON ELECTORATE

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (11:43): (380) I direct my constituency question to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. The state district of Essendon is home to many asylum seekers and newly arrived migrants. To that end, can the minister inform the house on the latest information about the rate of employment of asylum seekers and the culturally and linguistically diverse community on the Melbourne Metro Tunnel?

SANDRINGHAM ELECTORATE

Mr ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (11:44): (381) My constituency question is to the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events. Minister, what financial support will the state government provide for netball in the Sandringham district to ensure that participants can access facilities which adequately provide for increasing levels of involvement? Last week I was thrilled to attend a major announcement by the Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, together with the member for Goldstein, Tim Wilson, and the member for Brighton, James Newbury. The Prime Minister was there to announce that the federal Liberal government will contribute \$4.7 million to the Sandringham District Netball Association (SDNA) for the construction of new netball facilities within the Sandringham electorate. On the back of my commitment of \$3 million toward this project last year, last week's announcement emphasises the importance that the Liberal Party places on investing in grassroots sport. There is a current funding shortfall of \$4.3 million that the SDNA is now seeking from the state government, and I encourage the minister for sport to give favourable consideration to this request that will support more than 2700 local netballers.

BROADMEADOWS ELECTORATE

Mr McGuire (Broadmeadows) (11:45): (382) My constituency question is to the Minister for Workplace Safety. Up to 19 million litres of illegally dumped toxic waste could be stashed in warehouses across Melbourne's north, including my electorate, according to WorkSafe Victoria. Cleaning the dump sites could cost an estimated \$50 million. This would make it the biggest illicit dumping in Melbourne's history. Can the minister provide an update on the progress to clean up these sites and what action will be taken against the duty holder for failure to appropriately store chemicals, placing the public at risk?

MILDURA ELECTORATE

Ms Cupper (Mildura) (11:46): (383) My question is for the Premier on behalf of Mildura 2 OTU Heritage. I was wanting to find out from the Premier whether or not he would be able to consider a business case for a project that relates to our World War II history. Most of the Australian fighter pilots who served in the Pacific in World War II were trained in Mildura. Would the Premier commit to meet with the Mildura 2 OTU Heritage volunteers to provide information about how the government could assist with the development of a business case for this project?

MACEDON ELECTORATE

Ms Thomas (Macedon) (11:46): (384) My constituency question is for the Minister for Mental Health. Minister, it was an honour to stand with you and the Premier at Kyneton Men's Shed in October last year to announce Victoria would hold a royal commission into the mental health system—the first of its kind in Australia. Finally mental health will get the attention it desperately needs. Minister, can you advise how you expect my community will be able to participate in the royal commission? As you know, mental health is an issue of great importance to so many people in my electorate, and it has been my privilege to support the Macedon Ranges Suicide Prevention Action Group, PS My Family Matters, Live4Life, and Melanie Jorgensen and the charity and mental health awareness group, Laps for Lachy, that she established to honour her son. Most recently there was a community mental health event hosted by Woodend/Hesket Football Netball Club featuring my constituent and founder of Puka Up, Wayne Schwass. Wayne's powerful presentation focused on the particular mental health challenges faced by boys and men. My community has much to share with the royal commission, and we look forward to the minister's response.

CAULFIELD ELECTORATE

Mr Southwick (Caulfield) (11:47): (385) My constituency question is to the Minister for Planning. Minister, throughout the electorate of Caulfield we are seeing a number of overdevelopment proposals that are currently out of character with the local amenity and threaten residents' way of life in the Caulfield community. In fact we tabled a petition today of that nature. Caulfield residents have seen these proposals from Horne Street, Elsternwick, the old ABC site, and of course now in Caulfield South. There is inconsistency when it comes to planning in the electorate of Caulfield. Of particular concern is the discrepancy in the interim height limits of Elsternwick, Bentleigh and Carnegie because of planning scheme amendment C157. Minister, we ask you why there is such an inconsistency in the planning scheme. In Glen Eira City Council on the Caulfield side there is a 12-storey discretion, and within Oakleigh and Bentleigh it is four to six storeys. Why is there that inconsistency, Minister?

CARRUM ELECTORATE

Ms Kilkenny (Carrum) (11:48): (386) My question is for the Minister for Public Transport. Minister, my community is overjoyed that we are continuing to improve public transport services, with a brand-new bus service linking Carrum Downs and Skye with Cranbourne and Seaford railway stations, and I would like to know when this new service is starting. The new bus service will travel from Seaford station via Ballarto Road, McCormicks Road, Hall Road, Cranbourne-Frankston Road and Sladen Street before terminating at Cranbourne station. Route 760 will service key destinations

including Carrum Downs Plaza, Carrum Downs regional shopping centre and Cranbourne Park shopping centre, making it easy and convenient to go shopping, get to work or to medical or other appointments, or access either the Frankston or Cranbourne train services. I am proud that the Andrews Labor government is investing in public transport to better connect my communities. Minister, when can my constituents start catching the 760 bus service?

Bills

ESSENTIAL SERVICES COMMISSION AMENDMENT (GOVERNANCE, PROCEDURAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE IMPROVEMENTS) BILL 2019

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (11:49): As I was saying prior to the interruption for question time, the Essential Services Commission Amendment (Governance, Procedural and Administrative Improvements) Bill 2019 makes a series of amendments and improvements to the way that we conduct and regulate essential services through the Essential Services Commission. I think I had raised some of the particular and most important changes that this legislation is going to deal with. Of course, as I have previously said, this is a bill that had already been in the Parliament and had passed through the lower house, but it was held up in the upper house, the election date arrived and it could no longer be proceeded with. It had to be introduced again and go through the motions.

This bill is very similar to that 2018 bill. There are a few technical changes around some timing and so on, but in essence it still has completely the same intent—that is, to tighten up, improve and make sure that we have an Essential Services Commission that really does look after consumers and to make sure that we have a strong regulatory framework in which the essential services of the state must conduct their business.

We know, because we have had to introduce other legislation, that since the privatisation of electricity, for example, profit comes before the needs and requirements of the consumer and households in terms of electricity supply. There needs to be strong regulation because it cannot be the profit motive that determines how and when people receive essential services such as electricity, water and gas. These are all fundamental human needs that we must make sure people have access to in order for them to live proper and productive lives.

While there were some smaller amendments around things like the minister being able to appoint a person to act as chairperson, the bill also deals with some of the bigger things—for example, having reviews and also replacing the appeals panel so that VCAT can be used; rather than a separate parallel system for reviewing decisions it can all be done in a more central way through the VCAT process. There has been legislation previously debated in this house this term around the Game Management Authority, or fishing, where rather than having a separate or isolated process for decision-making, it was decided it could all be centralised within the VCAT structure that is already there. You would hope that would lead to some really good efficiencies as well as a more streamlined and consistent approach when reviewing the decisions of government bodies.

Some of the other amendments are around tightening up the public reporting on market structures and performance. The consumer has the right to have full disclosure and full knowledge of the market—whether it be transport, the ports or electricity—to ensure that, if they want to, they will be able to find out how the market structures are working and what the performance is to enable them to make informed decisions on individual companies or the industry as a whole. Of course the government itself very much needs to have this information so that it can also look at the sorts of policies, drivers and regulatory frameworks that it may or may not want to change into the future.

In the Thomastown electorate we have a lot of new infrastructure going in, which is fantastic. I think in the last four years, in the last term of government, the Andrews Labor government invested something

like \$600 million on infrastructure. One of the issues that we had was with utility companies not coming in to move power poles or change gas pipes in a timely way. The Essential Services Commission was trying to look into this issue to see whether there were some levers within that it could use in order to encourage—or maybe more than encourage—some of these companies to do the right thing by Victorians and make sure that they prioritised work on public infrastructure in the public interest.

I think we will be looking at legislation at a later time that may address this issue, but originally it was the Essential Services Commission that was able to look into this and investigate what could and should be done in order to provide proper services for much-needed public infrastructure. While this legislation is not, I suppose, the big attention or headline grabber, it is a bill that is very important for the proper running of this state.

Ms HENNESSY (Altona—Attorney-General, Minister for Workplace Safety) (11:56): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

OPEN COURTS AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL 2019

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Ms HENNESSY:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (11:57): I rise to speak on the Open Courts and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2019. Could I say at the outset that the opposition will not be opposing this bill. We believe that the sentiments around this bill are very, very important. It is important to ensure that we protect the rights of victims. We certainly make victims an absolute priority when it comes to law and order, which has not been the case in recent years.

The bill that is in front of us today has two main purposes: the first is to amend the Open Courts Act 2013 in relation to the prohibition and restriction of the publication of information in court and tribunal proceedings, and the second is to make related amendments to the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 and the Judicial Proceedings Reports Act 1958. The bill implements, in full or in part, seven of the 18 recommendations by the Honourable Frank Vincent in his 2017 report, *Open Courts Act Review*. This bill is pretty much the same as what we saw introduced just before the end of the last Parliament. There has been an intent to try and strengthen this act for some time, and the opposition has been calling for more transparency and more victim support. Unfortunately what we have seen in Victoria is that suppression orders have been not the exception but rather the norm. Victoria is currently the suppression order capital of Australia. We are seeing more suppression orders in Victoria than in any other state. A number of victim support groups and other key stakeholders in the community have been calling for us to ensure that we do not just have a standard tick-and-flick in providing suppression orders for court proceedings but that there is a proper review and that suppression orders are only granted when they are absolutely required. That is particularly relevant with the increase in serious crimes that we have seen—serious assaults, serious sexual offences and murders. These are the kinds of things that we need to ensure that we provide victim support for, but unfortunately what we are doing is ensuring that the community is not hearing firsthand what is happening, so we have not been able to ensure that we have proper transparency in this process.

While it was intended that the Open Courts Act 2013 would reduce the disproportionately high number of suppression orders made, unfortunately that has not been the case. The second-reading speech for the Open Courts Bill 2013 by former Attorney-General Robert Clark referenced this, and there was certainly an intent back in 2013 to look at it. A number of reforms have been made since then to try and improve this situation, but unfortunately they have led to an increase in suppression orders.

In 2017 Victoria represented 52 per cent of the national total of suppression orders made. That is huge—over half of the suppression orders made in Australia came from Victoria. There is something clearly wrong when that number of suppression orders are being made in our courts. As I said, Victorian suppression orders make up more than half of the suppression orders that are made in the country. We need to reduce that. We should be leading from the front, not being well and truly back of the pack, when it comes to the area of transparency and victims rights. Victims absolutely should be treated as a priority. That is certainly what we on this side of the house believe, and that is why we will not be opposing this bill.

The absurdity of the current state of suppression orders is demonstrated by recent events, particularly two recent cases. The first one was the George Pell case. Local media were unable to disclose details of last December's court decision of guilty until last week, while international and internet-based news sources were able to report it freely. That shows a complete inconsistency. You cannot prevent local media from televising and reporting live on information while internet-based reporters and the international media are allowed to do so. I will go into a bit more detail later about that situation.

We are also seeing this with regard to Lawyer X, who is also known as informer 3838. Suppression orders have been in place in this case for a number of years, even though Lawyer X outed herself back in 2009 and her identity has been widely known since. Again there is a huge inconsistency here. The courts have not delivered the objectives of the 2013 act. Many people have noted that it has not been implemented in accordance with Parliament's intention. We have actually seen that stated in the courts themselves. There is an intent to reduce the number of suppression orders. The courts have basically been granting them willy-nilly, as is evidenced by the number of suppression orders that I have outlined.

While the reforms in this bill are welcome, they do not go as far as the measures previously proposed by the coalition, which included publishing the details of serious violent youth offenders. This is a very important point that we want to put on the record today. We are talking about serious violent youth offenders. If you look at the crime statistics—and more crime statistics will come out tomorrow—those who are committing the most serious and violent crimes used to be those in their 20s and 30s, but unfortunately now we are seeing those crimes being committed more by 15 to 19-year-olds. That is who is committing a lot of these serious violent crimes. Therefore what we are saying, particularly with regard to these types of horrific offences that some of these people are committing at 16 or 17 years of age, is that this information should be made public, because what we want to be able to show is that there is zero tolerance when somebody has a deliberate intent to murder, to assault or to harm an individual, as some of these individuals do. We have spoken about how we treat violent youth offenders in terms of how we deal with them in the prison system. This is very, very similar. These people are committing the kinds of crimes we see 18-year-olds commit. When you have got a 16 or 17-year-old doing the same it is very, very important that the public is aware of them and, particularly even from an education perspective, that we send a very strong signal to the community that this will not be accepted in our community, that we have zero tolerance and that if you do the crime, ultimately you do the time. It is also important that we are able to hear an informed decision by judges and the courts as to why the sentencing has happened and also hear some details about it as part of that process.

In terms of some of the details, we have seen that the basic premise of our legal system in regard to reporting of court decisions is a presumption of openness and transparency, and that is really where we should be starting. As I said at the beginning, suppression orders should be the exception and not the norm, but what we are experiencing in Victoria is the reverse. One can understand the need for suppression orders to prevent the publication of court proceedings and specific details when it comes to the likes of child sex offences, family violence or other serious offences where the identity of witnesses needs to be protected. As I said before, witnesses and victims certainly should be our priority in terms of protecting them. Therefore we absolutely understand that when it comes to suppression orders for protecting victims they should certainly be in place, but this goes well and truly beyond that.

The reforms recommended by the Honourable Frank Vincent in his 2017 report were developed to try to find the right balance between fair and transparent court hearings while also preserving the privacy rights of individuals and the public's right to know about what is actually happening. It is important that suppression orders are used properly in the limited circumstances where they are necessary. I absolutely reinforce that point: in the limited times they are necessary. Not as almost a 'Yep, we'll grab this' tick and flick as we have been seeing in 52 per cent of cases, but certainly in situations where they are used only sparingly when protecting the rights of victims and witnesses.

Frank Vincent's review made a number of recommendations and I just want to cover a few of these. Firstly, it looked at the:

... fundamental importance that our system of justice must be open to public scrutiny and assessment to the maximum extent possible. Orders suppressing the dissemination of information should be approached as necessary exceptions to the transparent functioning of our courts and tribunals, required in the particular circumstances of the cases involved.

- b. Second, any order for suppression must be directed solely to the advancement of the interests of justice and be supported by adequate information.
- c. Third, each ground upon which an order has been made should not only be identified but separately justified.
- d. Fourth, an order should not be made if the objective to which it is directed could be achieved by other means, such as the use of pseudonyms or ... non-identifying descriptions of persons or events.
- e. Fifth, the terms of an order for suppression should be clear and confined in both scope and duration to the minimum required for the purposes for which it has been imposed.
- f. Sixth, reasonably available and inexpensive opportunities should exist to challenge the making of an order, its scope and duration or, once made, to seek its review.

It is very, very important to give people the opportunity to challenge a suppression order if it has been granted without proper detail.

It should be noted that Frank Vincent made the observation that the number of suppression orders granted is proportionately relatively small compared to the total case load of Victorian courts and tribunals. The report states:

To a substantial degree, the workings of Victorian courts and tribunals are compliant with the fundamental need for open justice. The processes of Victorian courts and tribunals and the reasons for their decisions are overwhelmingly open to public scrutiny, reflected by the miniscule number of cases in which suppression orders have been made as a proportion of the overall caseload of courts and tribunals.

Data was collected as part of the review from January 2014 to December 2016. During that time the courts made 1594 orders with the effect of suppressing information under various sources of power and 1279 orders were made under the Open Courts Act. These figures show that the numbers are huge, and certainly open justice does not appear to prevail in Victoria despite concerns about the number of suppression orders.

The bill we are referring to in full or part deals with recommendations 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 13 and 15. I will go through some of the details. Recommendation 1, which was supported by the government, is:

That sections 4 and 28 of the Open Courts Act ... be amended to make clear that orders made under the Act constitute exceptions, based on necessity in the circumstances, to the operation of the principle of open justice rather than it being a matter of the operation of a presumption in favour of transparency.

That is the first recommendation that is now being enacted in the bill.

Recommendation 2 is:

That the Open Courts Act be amended to include a new preamble emphasising the fundamental importance of transparency in our legal system.

Recommendation 3 is:

That the Open Courts Act be amended to restrict the power to make suppression orders to situations not otherwise encompassed by statutory provisions prohibiting or limiting publication.

Recommendation 6 is:

That, in each matter in which a suppression order is made, the court or tribunal be required to prepare a written statement of its reasons for the order, including the justification for its terms and duration. Save for restrictions and redactions reasonably required to effect the purpose and efficacy of the order, these reasons should be publicly available.

This is very important because, again, we are not just allowing the courts to provide a suppression order without then offering up the detail as to why. Recommendation 6 is important because it does deal with the requirement to provide good reason and justification as to why the suppression order would be given.

Recommendation 9 is:

That, in the event of an appeal being lodged against the outcome of proceedings in which a suppression order was made, the order would continue in effect until the determination of the appeal or it is discharged or varied upon application to the court and tribunal hearing the appeal.

Recommendation 13 is:

That consideration be given to statutory reform to enable the discretionary disclosure of the relevant convictions of juvenile offenders in cases of their continuing and entrenched propensity to engage in serious offending as adults.

Certainly some of my opening remarks did deal with that, and we think that the bill does not go far enough in dealing with particularly some youth violent crime.

Recommendation 15 is:

That adult victims of sexual assault or family violence or who as children have been so subjected should, on the conviction of the offender, be able to opt for disclosure of their identity. In situations where there is more than one victim, the court would be required to refuse an application where disclosure of the identity of a victim or perpetrator would result in that of a non-consenting victim ...

That is basically where these recommendations are in process and why part of those recommendations should be in place. Frank Vincent's review was a very comprehensive review, and it certainly does not surprise me, because his work is excellent, as we know. We know what he has done on family violence and certainly on dealing with sexual assault. That royal commission led the way for what was then further developed in the federal royal commission, and a lot of legislation has been developed from the work that Justice Vincent did with that royal commission. So, as I say, it does not surprise me, what is being done here in the work of this review.

I will look at a few of these in a bit more detail. We have seen a lot of calls for sex offenders being named and shamed. There was an article in the *Age* on 9 January 2019, which says:

Sexual assault victims would have more power to "name and shame" their abusers under a legal shake-up designed to lift a veil of secrecy that has helped shield some of Victoria's worst sex offenders.

New laws to be introduced ... would allow survivors to apply to the courts to identify themselves—in turn allowing greater disclosure of their perpetrators—and would also restrict suppression orders that conceal the identities of certain sex criminals.

This really goes to the core of a lot of these changes, which is again what I said in my opening remarks—that this should be about victims first and foremost. You just see time and time again the situation where it almost feels as though the right of the offender takes priority over the right of the victim. We can certainly talk about lots of cases where that certainly has been the case. Victim impact statements and the like are very, very important, and there have been important changes to allow victims to have their time to talk and provide very important information as to what the results of some of these horrendous crimes have been. Again this is a really important element that has just been sitting

for far too long on the shelf, and victims have not been made a priority for some time under this government. It has been far too long.

We accept and we welcome the fact that these changes are taking place. They do not go far enough, and they should have happened a long time ago. If you think about the hundreds of cases that have arisen since this bill first came into play—we started debating this bill in 2018, I believe—even over that time, if this had been in place, for how many cases could we have had information out in the public realm? But we have not had that opportunity.

As I say, this was the intent of that article that I was referring to. It talks about requiring the courts to prepare these statements and to treat all suppression orders as interim orders for the first five days so that the media, victims and interested parties can make submissions against them. That is what I said in terms of one of those earlier recommendations. Interim orders—if they are made as orders—do give the opportunity to those parties to, within a five-day period, be able to object and present a very good case in saying, ‘No, that information should not be suppressed; the details of the offender should not be suppressed, and for these reasons we should be making that information available’.

This is about openness and transparency, and it should be. That is what our role in Parliament should be all about—openness and transparency—when it comes to these situations, and I could not think of a better place to start than in justice and law and order. It is a very important area. As I say, when you are dealing with people’s lives, when you are dealing with a situation that is often life and death—and unfortunately in many cases death or tragic harm to an individual in the most sensitive ways—we need to show compassion. We need to show that we are on the side of the victim and we need to show that we have made all of the elements available to them. That is very important, and I understand that there are situations in which some trialling is being done by the government in terms of evidence that is being given at the moment by offenders via videoconference and not live into the courts. That is contentious itself, and it is certainly a part of this too more broadly, because many of the victims that I have spoken to have said to me they want nothing more than to look the person in the eye that has committed that violent crime and to face them in court.

We saw that tragedy just recently in Christchurch when that horrific, shocking individual was taken to court on that first hearing. Some of the families of the victims wanted to be there to look that person in the eye and to see their face. That is the right of the individual, that should be the right of every victim and that should be a priority, and that is why we need to always look at making this a priority. That is why we need transparency in our courts. It is why we need to ensure that these suppression orders do not become the norm but are the exception and that if we are going to suppress information out of court, there needs to be a very, very good reason why we are keeping that information from the victims, because at the end of the day that is who we should be focused on.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (12:23): I am delighted to make a contribution on the Open Courts and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2019, I listened to the member for Caulfield’s contribution, and there is a bit to unpack in that. I will endeavour to address some of the issues that the member raised.

The first point I will make—and in doing this I am not trying to be partisan, I am merely trying to make an observation—is that in the 58th Parliament the other place contained 14 members of the government out of a total of 40 members. This place can pass as much legislation as it wishes, but in order for it to enter the statute books it must pass the other place. So we brought in this bill in the hope and with the expectation that it would pass, and it did not pass. I do not profess to read *Hansard* from the other place extensively. I am sure that there were a wide variety of reasons why that might have been the case, but it was certainly a challenge to get the government’s legislative agenda through the other place in the 58th Parliament, and that caused some challenges and issues. So those of us on this side of the house would have liked this bill to already have been on the statute books and to already be in operation, but it is of course a challenge when the government can only field 14 out of 40 members. The crossbench had 10 members in the previous Parliament and there were 16 members of the opposition.

The member for Caulfield talked about 16 and 17-year-old children who commit an offence, and he made the case that if it is a particularly serious crime—and the member talked about murder, rape and serious harm—that should be made publicly available. What this legislation seeks to ensure is that if a juvenile has committed an offence that is of a serious nature and they go on as an adult to commit a similar serious offence, there is the capacity under this legislation for judges to use the serious juvenile offences in their sentencing remarks. There is that capacity to try to do that and to make that publicly available, so I think that can deal with and address some of the concerns raised by the member for Caulfield.

I am very mindful, though, that life is complex and individuals are complex, and there are individuals who at 16 or 17 may do something very bad but who have got the opportunity for redemption. It is not like in the 1970s or the 1980s where if you acted up, you played up, you fronted the Ringwood Magistrates Court—out where I grew up—or the Broadmeadows Magistrates Court or the Children's Court and you were convicted of an offence. In this day and age in the digital world, we have got a digital identity that follows us through. We have got to be really careful, in terms of younger offenders, that we try to separate the ones who are on the pathway to becoming frequent flyers in the corrections system and those who just did something stupid when they were a kid and who are entitled to a second chance and indeed have the opportunity, if they are given appropriate training and appropriate qualifications, to go on and lead meaningful, fulfilled lives, notwithstanding their interaction with the juvenile justice system.

I take the member for Caulfield at his word in terms of the sincerity of his comments that if these are serious offences and they are 16 or 17, then the victims have the right to know or the offenders' identities should be revealed, but I would just question that. If you turn around and you make that a blanket approach, then you inadvertently might capture and sweep up more individuals who may have had the opportunity to lead a full and meaningful life than would otherwise be the case. So it is a tight balancing act.

The bill before the house is about trying to look at improving the quality and the efficacy of the justice system, and I think that over the passage of time as legislators we have got a requirement on us to make sure that we continue to look at making the improvements that are required to modernise and update and to make sure that the statute books reflect the expectations of our community, because our community has changed and it is different. It is different now to what it was, and in years to come it will be different to what it is today.

To find that you have got a justice system that is nimble and able to respond to the challenges that we face I think is really important. I do agree with the member for Caulfield. I quote from the second-reading speech a statement by Frank Vincent, who said:

An increasing number of victims reject the absurd notion that they have been in any way diminished by the commission of criminal acts committed against them by another and are prepared to have their identities disclosed. There seems to be no good reason why a person who adopts this view, or an adult who has previously suffered abuse as a child, and makes an informed decision to do so should not be entitled to opt for disclosure ...

I think that is fair and reasonable.

As I said, this day and age is different to 40 years ago when I started school. I started primary school in 1978. I had not turned five. I do not regard myself as a victim. I never have. But when I started at school, I spoke back to a teacher and was physically assaulted. I might have just turned five I think. It just had a huge impact upon my schooling and my ability to function as a young person. It was extremely challenging to go through.

At the time I never disclosed to anyone what happened to me. I do not think that, even if I did, in those days it would have been regarded as assault. It would certainly be regarded as assault now. What I do know is that it had a huge impact upon me. It was a really difficult time to go through. The point is

that as an adult now I can talk about what happened, and I think that as an adult you do have the benefit of the lived experience, you can look back and reflect on your life and you can see things in a broader context than would otherwise be the case. You have got the capacity to make some calls about the way in which you were treated, you can put it in some sort of context and you approach a sense of understanding with yourself and who you are, whereas otherwise that might not be the case.

So I think that the notion that you have just got a blanket approach to the way in which victims should be treated is flawed. And in saying this I would not categorise what happened to me with some of the instances of assault that others have experienced, so that is why I am really at pains to point out I do not categorise myself as a victim, but I do have the ability as an adult to reflect upon my lived experience and I can make an informed choice as an adult as to how I wish to engage with and discuss and approach that experience. I think that the rights of the individual and the freedoms that the individual holds as an adult are really important. So a blanket approach where we just make an assumption that because something difficult or traumatic happened to you as a child you should automatically be protected I think is a flawed argument.

It is a very good piece of legislation. It should have been on the statute books some time ago, but it is not. Those from the other place can answer why this could not be brought forward and dealt with and put on the statute books earlier, but it will be dealt with. It is being dealt with now by this place and it will be dealt with by the other place in due course. I think it is important that it does get onto the statute books at the earliest opportunity and that we look at trying to modernise and reform our justice system to reflect contemporary practice and to reflect the world we live in. As we have indicated, the world of today is very different to what it was back in the 1970s and 1980s when I was growing up. There is a need and a requirement to make sure that we continue to use our best endeavours to bring forward the best quality legislation that we can to ensure that it reflects the aspirations of our community.

With those brief notes I commend the bill to the house.

Mr T BULL (Gippsland East) (12:31): I rise to make a contribution on the Open Courts and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2019 and reinforce our not opposed position. I can certainly sympathise with the previous speaker about some of the actions that went on at school. We had a size 12 sandshoe, member for Essendon, of which I was on the receiving end a few times. I will not say I did not deserve it, but it leaves a mark on you for a long time afterwards.

The basic premise of our legal system with regard to the reporting of court decisions and proceedings should be an initial presumption of openness and transparency. The member for Essendon spoke about ensuring that we do not have a blanket approach to this. I do not think any member of the chamber is suggesting that we have a blanket approach, but I think that is a very good starting point when we are taking into account these considerations. As the member for Caulfield pointed out throughout his speech, suppression orders should be the exception, not the norm.

It is worth noting that judges and magistrates have a tough gig in our legal system. They certainly do have a tough job. They have to constantly make decisions and, as has been brought up by previous speakers, they need to make decisions that do not tarnish for life someone who has perhaps been a bit silly on one occasion, and have that balanced against those who commit more serious offences and are perhaps a concern to the community in which they are living or in many cases moving to.

Over time in Victoria there has certainly been a tendency for increased applications for suppression orders in order to protect the identity of victims. I would say that in a lot of those cases it perhaps is questionable whether that should have been applied to the level that it has been in the past. One can understand the need for suppression orders, and absolutely we need suppression orders within our system to prevent the publication of court proceedings and specific details in cases where we might have child sex offences, family violence or other serious offences where the identity of either the victims or even the witnesses who have been involved in those cases do legitimately and absolutely need to be protected. But it is true that the rate of suppression orders being granted in Victoria has

increased disproportionately over a period of time in comparison to other jurisdictions around Australia. It is worth noting that in 2017 Victoria represented 52 per cent of the national total of suppression orders. That is a figure that is exceptionally high across the Australian jurisdictions.

In 2016 the government asked the honourable Frank Vincent to conduct the Open Courts Act Review into suppression orders. Mr Vincent delivered his final report in September 2017 with 18 recommendations. As we have heard, this bill is the first step in implementing the legislative recommendations of that review. They were developed around striking the right balance, and previous speakers have spoken at length about that. When we are discussing an issue like this and we are making these determinations that will be put into place as law in Victoria, it is all about striking the right balance. Invariably in the communities that we represent we will have different viewpoints on what the right balance is, but I would certainly agree with the two previous speakers in relation to this being good legislation. Having perused its content I think it takes a significant step to bring us closer in my view to what that right balance would be.

It is critically important that suppression orders be used properly and in the relatively limited circumstances where they are necessary. I go back to my opening comment that our legal system with regard to reporting court decisions should have a presumption of openness and transparency before anything else is brought into line with that. It should be noted that Mr Vincent made the observation that the number of suppression orders granted is proportionately relatively small when compared to the case load of Victorian courts. So whilst we see on the one hand that a couple of years ago more than 50 per cent of suppression orders came from Victoria, when we look at the overall number of cases in Victoria the amount of suppression orders, it could be argued, is relatively low. The comment mentioned in the report is that:

To a substantial degree, the workings of Victorian courts and tribunals are compliant with the fundamental need for open justice. The processes of Victorian courts and tribunals and the reasons for their decisions are overwhelmingly open to public scrutiny, reflected by the minuscule number of cases in which suppression orders have been made as a proportion of the overall caseload of courts and tribunals.

There is an argument back the other way, but I also think that the recommendations that have been put forth by Mr Vincent do strike the right balance. I guess the point he is trying to make there is that it has not been extraordinarily over the top in relation to the number of suppression orders that have been granted, while acknowledging that some changes do need to be made.

The data collected in the course of the review reveals that in the period between 1 January 2014 and 31 December 2016 Victorian courts and tribunals made 1594 orders, with the effect of suppressing information under various sources of power, with 1279 orders made under the Open Courts Act 2013. This bill implements only some of the recommendations of the Vincent review: recommendations 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 13 and 15. And of course it amends the Open Courts Act in relation to the prohibition and restriction of the publication of information in court and tribunal proceedings.

It also makes related amendments to the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 and the Judicial Proceedings Reports Act 1958. The overarching thrust of this is that it generally emphasises the presumption and importance of the principle of open justice and the free disclosure of information when assessing whether to grant suppression orders. I think one of the key points of that and the Vincent findings is that the bill now requires the courts and tribunals to provide a statement of reasons for suppression orders. I think one of the criticisms of the past is 'We'll grant a suppression order because the option is there', and it provided perhaps a level of coverage for those who were granting those suppression orders. I think the simple fact that those making these decisions have to provide a statement of reasons for suppression orders is one key element in this legislation that will go a long way to getting those that are making these decisions to think about whether the reasons they are doing this are justifiable and are in line with community expectations.

The bill enables the courts to make orders to not utilise suppression orders in cases where the victims of sexual offences and family violence post-conviction do not necessarily wish to be subjects of

suppression orders. We may have cases where some victims wish to tell their story or wish to have their story known to the wider public for purposes of goodwill—to warn others, to educate others of the risks and the concerns of what occurred to them. I think that that is also an extremely positive step. There are also amendments to the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 and the Judicial Proceedings Reports Act 1958. As has been mentioned, this is largely the same bill that was introduced into Parliament in August 2018, with one of the small differences being the introductory dates.

Just before I finish, there is one point I would like to make and it relates to Justice Vincent's findings where he talks about having a unifying law across jurisdictions. I think a lot of the differences that we have seen around jurisdictions in the nation could certainly be rectified by having a harmonisation of the law across all Australian states and territories. Now, that will require action from the Council of Attorneys-General—and I believe it will be discussed at that level—but I think that that would be a very positive step in getting some consistency on this issue nationwide.

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (12:41): It is great to rise and speak on the Open Courts and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2019, which makes an important number of reforms that go to the heart of the separation of powers in our Westminster system and of open and accountable courts. It requires that suppression orders have far more reasoning and are underpinned by reasoned judgements, striking the balance between excluding information from the public domain and those important hallmarks and appropriate reasons why suppression orders are put forward.

I will be followed by the member for Broadmeadows, who I am sure will have a very interesting take on how the media plays into that, and with my novice experience in that space I want to touch on a few of those points. Thirty years ago, or even longer, if you wanted to read an international paper, you would have to hope like crazy that your local newsagent might just stock a *New York Times* or a *Washington Post* or a paper from the UK. My father-in-law still goes down to get the UK paper as it comes through—it is a few days behind but he is not on social media. But the changing landscape of media means within seconds you can find out from international news sources various things that are happening in the public domain in our court system.

A recent judgement that was substantial to Catholicism really put that at the forefront. Everyone knew what that judgement was and what the issues were except Australian media, which was not able to report it. Across social media—across Twitter, Facebook and other platforms—the nature and the information of the judgement was already well known. It just shows the difficulty that we have with suppression orders. Also, just as with the Facebook live streaming in instances that we have seen and the critical role that social media platforms play, there is a real difficulty in holding big companies who are on these social media platforms to account on suppression orders. It underpins a lot of the reasons we need to modernise our approach to suppression orders, and I think the media has such an important role to play.

But on the other side of that balance is the fact that—we see this with politics, we see this with public figures, we see this in high-profile cases—when you are reported as going towards a trial or a hearing or a sentencing, the way it is portrayed on regular occasion in the media means you actually have a situation that is like trial by media and people are guilty before they have even had their time. A hallmark of our system is always 'innocent until proven guilty'. So it is an interesting and difficult balance, and that was the underpinning of the review by Justice Vincent. Critically of concern about that, and it was reported in the *Age*, was that Justice Vincent found that 1594 orders were made between 2014 and 2016 and that 22 per cent were blanket bans that failed to say what was being suppressed and 12 per cent did not give any grounds. At a time when access to information is instantaneous, it is a curious thing that the judiciary has gone the other way, towards trying to suppress more without any grounds given. There might have been very reasonable grounds for those suppression orders being put forward, but there should be accountability, they should be audited and they should be up to the high standard of whether that is the case.

What we find is that either people in our system are protected from that scrutiny and the information that is being put forward or what is genuinely in the public interest about high-profile cases or particular matters that each and every Victorian has a right to know about and understand through that process is suppressed. Tragically as well we have circumstances where victims of child sex abuse, victims of abuse more generally and victims of family violence are excluded and prevented in our court system from being able to share their stories when they want to put them forward. Sometimes people, for very good reasons—for safety or for their personal reasons, because it is a very traumatic process, giving evidence and going through that process again—will not want that information to be public, they will not want to share that in an open court and for that to be reported on. Some people make that choice. I think that is through all our communities.

Particularly post the Royal Commission into Family Violence what I found most powerful during a forum that we did with the former Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, the late Fiona Richardson, and my colleague the member for Carrum were the stories of people, of survivors, who had gone through the bureaucracy, gone through horrific violence. Telling their stories was so powerful. Their courage and their determination to educate, to try to make a better system for us all and also to warn people along the journey were powerful. It was important for our system that they got to have their voices heard. There was no suppression of those voices. That some of those accounts and some of those experiences have been suppressed or restricted I think is inappropriate, and where possible we should be opening that up.

I want to say, though, that our system of democracy, the Westminster system and our separation of powers, is one of the best in the world. While we can always make improvements—particularly with the culture towards suppression orders—we as Victorians and as Australians should be very proud of the system that we have here and the high standard of it. People in all our communities sometimes do not agree with sentences, do not agree with the length of time given. We hear those voices and those opinions, and it is right that those opinions are offered and put forward, but isn't it great that we live in a system where that debate and that accountability is known and can be tested and can be tested on appeal.

Having studied law through my time at Deakin University, reading voluminous amounts of case law, particularly in the criminal space, I have seen very clearly in long form the reasons for judgements that are put forward—a well-established practice of hundreds of years of common law that is the highest standard of auditing and accountability. I think of other jurisdictions where that suppression is not down to the information that is provided in a court but is suppression of people, suppression of journalism and suppression of the public interest. We are very fortunate in Victoria and across Australia that we have open courts, that we have a higher and greater accountability and transparency and that where it is seen that under the law the judiciary might have erred there is recourse. There is an ability to appeal and there is an ability to challenge. It strengthens our open courts system; it strengthens our system in the public interest and accountability under our system of democracy. I think that is a really critical point to put forward in that balance.

This particular bill before us today acquits in full or in part seven recommendations of Justice Vincent's review. We will continue with that work, echoing the member for Essendon's comments about people being able to tell their story and the member for Essendon's contribution about how important it is for people to share their story but also about how raw it can be for people to share their personal experiences and about the courage that people have in coming forward to our judiciary and our courts. If they are giving up their time and showing that courage, I think they should be heard in public and in full view.

This is a really important piece of legislation. I welcome the fact that the opposition are not opposed to this bill in principle. It is important work, and it will continue our acquitting of some of the other recommendations. I am a big believer in open, accountable and transparent organisations. Our judiciary is not free from that. It holds up the highest standards and it has an important and very vital role to play. I will say, though, that in our culture and our system we have to be careful about the

salacious reporting by media. We have to be careful of those who are given a platform, as we have seen recently. Media have to be more accountable in their decisions on how they can report. We see that with particular platforms that media give to various individuals who preach hate and division, and we see that in the reporting of various matters going towards editorialising or putting forward opinions on what should really be very narrow and black-and-white reporting of court proceedings and the like. We have to get to that standard. It is an important role to play. Sometimes we see that maybe the tendency of the judiciary to go towards more suppression has been due to the lack of accountability in opinionated media rather than straight up and down reporting of court cases and court proceedings. This is a very important bill, and I commend it to the house.

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (12:51): I rise to make some brief comments on this bill, which I note is the same as the bill that was introduced during the last Parliament. I will keep my comments brief, as much of what I can talk about has already been said very articulately by my colleagues the member for Caulfield and the member for Gippsland East.

This bill is to amend the Open Courts Act 2013 to emphasise the presumption and importance of the principle of open justice, the free disclosure of information and transparent court proceedings. It will require courts and tribunals to provide a statement of reasons for suppression orders. Basically the bill says that suppression orders should be the exception, not the norm. I note that the opposition will not be opposing this bill, but it is reasonable to assume that open justice does mean exactly that—open justice.

During my consultation on this bill I sought comment from a reporter from within my region who has some 20 years experience working in the field of reporting on the courts' work. I wanted to speak on this bill mainly to put on record the thoughts they have shared with me about the current system and also to take the time to thank them for sharing those experiences with me. The journalist's first comment when asked about these changes was that the Open Courts Act is one of the most abused pieces of legislation ever written. Whilst I am not making a reflection on the courts or the judiciary, I must admit I found it a little concerning to hear that in 2017 Victoria represented 52 per cent of the national total of suppression orders made and that in media circles Victoria is well known as the suppression state.

It is very clear the objectives of the 2013 act are not being implemented in line with the Parliament's intention, so these amendments go some way to strengthening open justice principles. However, you do have to question if they actually do go far enough. I note in her second reading the Attorney-General said this is the first step to greater changes which are needed, as seen by the recent publicity around the trial of George Pell. While publication of a guilty verdict was suppressed in Australia, the information was readily available on the internet because the news was produced overseas and of course was available in Victoria through social media and online news. While there were valid reasons for suppressing the information in that case—so as to not influence a jury in a later trial—local media not being able to publish while online outlets were just demonstrated that there was inconsistency and that the act is not working. I am pleased the Attorney-General has recognised the anomaly around online and international news and the difficulty of enforcing contempt-of-court law cases and suppression orders. I hope the government acts swiftly on this matter as it is one that does need to be addressed I think as a matter of urgency to keep up with the modern, changing society that we now live in. I will, however, again point out that this bill was introduced in the 58th Parliament in August of last year and failed to make its way through the Parliament. You do have to question the government's priorities on these matters, and we can only hope that the next steps the Attorney-General speaks about in her second-reading speech are much faster in coming before the house.

Back to the feedback I sought for the bill, the journalist that I mentioned earlier says right now it is extremely rare for any notice to be given of suppression orders as per the legislation. The journalist went on to say that on countless occasions they have argued with judges and magistrates about suppression orders. They have outlined how they planned to write the stories and have even offered to show the judges and magistrates drafts, which I am told is not a normal practice for journalists. But

still suppression orders were put in place which the journalist said were unnecessary and simply protected the identity of the perpetrator. The journalist said that the changes outlined in the bill would go some way, but only if judges and magistrates apply the law as intended. They point out that up until now that has not actually happened.

There are clear cases where suppression orders are needed and necessary, but I am happy to see these changes that will allow victims of sexual and family violence to be identified in an effort to give them the power to tell their stories. This of course has appropriate restrictions, these being that the person must be aged 18 years, they provide their consent and there is no other reason the information should be suppressed. For some people, being able to take ownership of their story and control how it is told is important and part of the healing process. It can be an important tool in an effort to end the stigma, particularly around family violence, and help drive cultural change.

All in all these changes are a good first step. They aim to hold offenders publicly accountable for their crimes. I do hope these changes will see a reduction in the number of suppression orders so Victoria can lose the tag of the suppression state and our justice system can be seen as open and transparent by victims and the general public.

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (12:57): What this bill does is rebalance issues concerning suppression orders. We had a situation in Victoria where the rate of suppression orders became unprecedented. There were almost 1600 suppression orders in three years. One of the key arguments from the media was that insufficient explanation was provided as to why these suppression orders were being put in place and what was actually happening in our court system. The *Herald Sun*, in an editorial of March last year under the headline ‘Court secrecy must stop’, went to a critical point about balance, and I quote:

In a digital age where information spreads quickly and widely, the reporting of certain information which could prejudice a jury does need to be restricted. But the professional media’s reporting requirements and contempt laws have long-established principles regulating reporting. Suppression orders are often superfluous.

I think this goes to the heart of the matter: the tension between the public’s right to know and what the courts are looking to do to protect critical cases and to make sure that cases in the future are not prejudiced.

The Victorian government engaged the eminent Frank Vincent to conduct an inquiry and to weigh and measure these issues. Frank is a former Supreme Court justice, and I have acknowledged across three parliaments now the length of his work and his distinguished career as a jurist. I also want to acknowledge the balance that he has been able to deliver in the advice he has provided to the Andrews Labor government and this Parliament on this inquiry and also, to go back to the 57th Parliament, all the work that he did with the *Betrayal of Trust* inquiry and investigation into child sexual abuse, which of course ended with a bipartisan report from this Parliament and with recommendations taken up across three parliaments now. The admissions that were obtained during that investigation also were of significance in the subsequent royal commission into all of those matters. I just want to put on record the debt that I think we owe for having someone of Frank’s long, distinguished knowledge as a key adviser to all concerns right across the political spectrum and both houses in this Parliament and for all that has consequently meant.

Sitting suspended 1.00 p.m. until 2.02 p.m.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Matters of public importance

ENERGY SUPPLY

The SPEAKER: I have accepted a statement from the member for Mill Park proposing the following matter of public importance for discussion:

That this house notes the commitment under the Andrews Labor government to increasing renewable energy generation and driving down power prices and further notes:

- (1) 30 000 Victorians have applied to take up solar panels under the Andrews Labor government's Solar Homes program;
- (2) a 928 MW pipeline of new renewable power generation is being supported by the Victorian renewable energy target;
- (3) the Victorian default offer is giving families and small businesses a fair price on energy; and
- (4) the failure of the federal Morrison government in energy policy.

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (14:02): I am absolutely delighted to rise to speak in this really important debate. Our government, the Andrews Labor government, is proud of our commitment to reform the energy sector, our commitment to get a fair deal for Victorians, our commitment to an energy system that is clean, affordable and reliable, and our commitment, absolutely, to actually make these things happen, to get it done.

It has taken a lot of work to address four years of neglect from those opposite, but there is more to be done. Energy prices remain too high as the privately owned energy companies—those opposite of course sold our energy assets—are slow to invest in new generation because of the policy chaos in Canberra under the shambolic Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison governments. Well, not in Victoria. We have legislated targets for new renewable energy investment and we are building the energy system of the future.

For the Andrews government here in Victoria investing in renewables, growing jobs and reducing our emissions are at the centre of our energy and environmental policies. The Andrews Labor government is putting power back in the hands of Victorian families and creating jobs with our new Solar Homes program. Over 10 years the \$1.3 billion Solar Homes program will install solar panels, solar hot-water systems or batteries on 770 000 homes right across Victoria. This will bring the number of homes in Victoria with solar panels to 1 million. It will save Victorians more than \$500 million a year on their electricity bills once the program is complete. Already more than 300 000 Victorian families have applied to participate in this program, with an estimated 10 000 household solar panel installations occurring since the program was launched in late August last year. More than 5500 rebates to the value of \$12.4 million have already been paid out to families by Solar Victoria.

The Solar Homes program was designed to cut our carbon emissions by almost 4 million tonnes—the same as taking 1 million of Victoria's 4.6 million cars off the road. It will also contribute 12.5 per cent of Victoria's 40 per cent target for renewable energy by 2025. The program, as I said, will be rolled out over 10 years, not in 10 minutes. That is why our commitment is very clear: to ensure that we have the highest standards and the highest quality in place, ultimately of course ensuring we have got the highest safety standards in place so Victorians can be absolutely confident that the scheme will deliver a quality product and a safe product installed through a very strong safety regime, getting the absolute benefit of reduced costs through their power bills. Such is the success of this program that many installation companies are creating new jobs and adding to the 2 million solar installations already on Australian homes.

We have written our Victorian renewable energy target (VRET) into law. We will deliver 25 per cent of our generation from renewable sources by 2020 and 40 per cent by 2025. That now is in legislation. We have already legislated for net zero emissions by 2050. Further to that, of course we will now introduce a new target of 50 per cent of our generation to be renewable by 2030. This is our trajectory. It is our policy. In Victoria this is law, and it will not be changing. It is this absolute certainty of policy and ambition which gives confidence to the industry to invest in these technologies, creating thousands of jobs for Victorians right across the state—in regional and rural communities and in Melbourne—and being very clear about our agenda of creating the new technology and the new energy supply that is needed and putting downward pressure on prices.

Last year our government launched Australia's largest reverse auction. We sought 650 megawatts of new renewable capacity through our first VRET auction scheme. Our government announced six successful projects, wind and solar combined, in the auction, totalling 928 megawatts of new renewable capacity. Such is the success of our VRET scheme that the design of it has meant that we have been able to attract far more energy generation, new generation, which today is being built because of our commitment and our very, very strong policy settings. Of course we know that the successful projects are going to produce enough electricity to power more than 645 000 Victorian homes, generate \$1.1 billion of economic investment in the state and create more than 900 jobs through construction.

Since we have been in government we have built or are building or have contracted to build more than twice the capacity of the former Hazelwood power station in renewable projects. We have not wasted a minute. We are getting things done, and there will be more that we will do. It is no surprise that our nation-leading policies and ambitious targets mean certainty for energy investors.

Ever since Jeff Kennett and the Liberals privatised our electricity, Victorians have been getting a dud deal from the big corporations. That is why our government is forcing big energy companies to get Victorians a better deal on their power bills. As part of the final response to the *Independent Review of the Electricity and Gas Retail Markets in Victoria*, which we initiated, our government introduced a bill into this Parliament to legislate the Victorian default offer. The VDO will cut the cost of energy for families and small businesses across the state from 1 July 2019. We are delivering a better deal on energy for all Victorians right now because we know that if we wait for Scott Morrison and his mates in Canberra to make up their minds, nothing will change. Nothing will change because they do not want anything to change. They are happy to leave the incumbent corporations spitting out the same old technologies and not planning for the future because they are absolutely beholden in a world the rest of us have moved on from. The Essential Services Commission has released its draft decision on the VDO and what that level should be set at. The next step is setting a fairer price on energy. We know that the VDO, according to the Essential Services Commission, will save over 145 000 Victorian families between \$390 and \$520 a year on their bills. This is a significant amount that Victorians should not have to be paying. This is the biggest reform to the energy retail market in decades, something only a Labor government would deliver, and we are doing just that. Further, thanks to our government, from 1 July 45 000 small businesses will save between \$1830 and \$2300 a year. A Labor government is delivering significant savings for small businesses in this state.

In addition to the Victorian default offer, we are delivering the energy fairness plan. This builds on our final response to the Thwaites review. We will banning cold-calling, doorknocking and sales bonuses, ensuring Victorians are not subjected to predatory behaviour by retailers, and we will strengthen the Essential Services Commission and significantly increase penalties for wrongdoing by energy retailers, including new criminal offences for wrongful disconnection.

This is all in contrast to the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison governments' energy policy, which is to have no policy at all and, worse still, to change their minds at every opportunity and every turn so that there can be no forward planning by the industry to actually work out a way of mitigating the threats of climate change, mitigating the rising cost of energy and, importantly, mitigating the continuing lack of grid connections and network. We know all of those issues that I have listed have to be addressed very, very quickly if we are to modernise and manage a smooth transition to a clean energy system.

In the last six years the federal Liberals have had multiple failed attempts at an energy policy, and I think it is important for us to reflect on what they were and the consequences and significance of these. In the last six years the federal Liberals have had multiple failed attempts at an energy policy: the renewable energy target—gone; the emissions intensity scheme; the clean energy target; and the National Energy Guarantee. This failure is purely driving prices up and putting the security of supply at risk. Never before have we seen a modern nation that has actually been taken backwards in terms of an energy transition and a government that has failed to understand the actual challenges before us and failed to understand that it is in charge. They are in charge; they are in government, and they are

failing to actually use their own reins on power to lead us through to a very important modernised energy system, which is about having lower prices, having clean energy supply, decarbonising the energy system, grabbing those fantastic jobs that we can create if we put our minds to it and importantly ensuring that we have got security of supply.

Every energy company, peak body and industry group has made clear to everybody countless times that federal policy uncertainty is stalling investment in new generation. Time and time again the Liberals and Nationals have shown that they cannot agree amongst themselves when it comes to energy, whether it is at a state level or at a federal level for that matter. This all started in 2009. Tony Abbott knifed Malcolm Turnbull over energy policy. In 2015 the renewable energy target was the only climate policy to survive Abbott's onslaught. As we all know, we almost got there in 2016 with the emissions intensity scheme, until it was taken off the table at the last minute after a coalition partyroom revolt led by Tony Abbott. We almost got there again in 2017 with the clean energy target, recommended by none other than the chief scientist of this country, Dr Alan Finkel. Again, the clean energy target was broadly supported by business groups across the economy; by state governments, Liberal and Labor alike; by the then Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull; by the then Minister for the Environment and Energy, Josh Frydenberg; and by federal Labor. And then once again another energy policy was taken off the table because of a partyroom revolt led by Tony Abbott.

The National Energy Guarantee, like all the failed energy policies that came before it, was also the subject of a veto exercised by a very loud minority in the coalition party room led by the hard right, despite then Treasurer Scott Morrison having said that he had not seen an initiative in his 10 years in Parliament that had broader support than the National Energy Guarantee. Well, words are fine, but we know they mean nothing when it comes to action from the federal government. Scott Morrison said:

If you're not for the National Energy Guarantee, then you're for continued uncertainty which leads to higher prices.

When Scott Morrison became Prime Minister he also walked away from that National Energy Guarantee.

Now the Liberals in Canberra are proposing the use of taxpayer funds to build coal-fired power stations. Over the past decade we have seen time and time again that sensible policy falls victim to the hard right of the coalition party room and those cowards who refuse to show leadership and give the community what they are calling for, and that is leadership. This is the group that the federal member for Higgins quite famously called out as 'the homophobic, anti-women, climate-change-denier faction of the Liberal Party'.

It is clear that the Liberals are incapable of developing any form of rational energy and climate change policy. We see this in Victoria too. Not all that long ago in 2018, in fact during the Victorian election, The Nationals came out and said, and I quote:

The Victorian Nationals believe the development of a new generation High Efficiency Low Emissions (HELE) power station is essential for Victoria ...

Only a few months later of course the Victorian leader of The Nationals said:

I don't believe that the government should invest in a coal power plant. If private enterprise doesn't believe it's attractive to invest, why should the government do it?

That is not to mention the comments of their federal Liberal partners in what are now very, very marginal seats. So you really wonder where all of this is taking us, and I think the answer is nowhere. I also reflect on the remarks of Tim Wilson—soon to be the former federal member for Goldstein, I might add—who said:

I'm not a fan of the government getting involved and building new coal-fired power stations.

It is clear that the Liberals and the Nationals cannot agree amongst themselves when it comes to energy, whether it is at the state level or the federal level.

We are delivering here in Victoria. We took a very strong agenda to the last election on the back of significant reforms to our energy system, focused squarely on lowering energy costs, decarbonising the energy sector and ensuring that we have the reliability of supply that Victorians deserve and need.

Mr R SMITH (Warrandyte) (14:17): You would think if the minister wanted to come into this place and insult this side of the chamber, she could do it unscripted, instead of slavishly reading from her notes, with prepared insults. But obviously she is not too nimble on her feet in that regard.

I am delighted to rise and lead the coalition in this debate on the energy policies that the Andrews government has put forward. I particularly note paragraph 3 of the matter of public importance:

(3) the Victorian default offer is giving families and small businesses a fair price on energy ...

That must be a pretty powerful policy considering the legislation has not even passed the upper house yet and considering that the Essential Services Commission has not even employed someone to set the default price, much less actually set the price itself. I call on the minister to perhaps reword her matter of public importance to be more accurate.

It also never ceases to amaze me how this government and indeed all Labor governments just refuse to take responsibility for the mess that they cause Victorians. This and other Labor governments have been in office in Victoria for 16 of the last 20 years. While those opposite continue to say that the privatisation of our energy generators by the Kennett government is the cause of all our woes, they have had the best part of 20 years to do something about it. And we should not think that they have not tried, of course. They have put forward policies that have done nothing except add to the problem that Victorian householders face when they look to pay their bills. They have put policies in place that have only forced prices up over the last 20 years. Do not just take it from me; it is also on record that a former Deputy Premier, John Thwaites, said that the policies that he and his government put forward have been directly responsible for the price rises that we have seen in this state.

The environment that we find ourselves in and the environment that households find themselves in as they bend under the weight of cost of living pressures are largely the fault of this and successive Labor governments. The minister said in her contribution that this government is wasting no time in making sure that prices are brought down. This is their fifth year in office. When this matter of public importance notes the commitment, it must be a newfound commitment because for the last four years, which way have prices gone? I ask the chamber rhetorically: which way have prices gone? They have only gone one way. They have gone up under this government, and they look to go up further.

You should not listen to a word this government has said. For example, when Hazelwood shut down, when it was forced to close under the policies of this government, the minister said that power prices would only rise by 4 per cent or that that would equate to about 85 cents a week for the energy user in Victoria. Of course we have seen prices rise far beyond that, something in the order of 25 per cent, which at the time even the Premier said was a wild and inaccurate possibility, much less the sorts of price rises that some businesses have had to face which have been 100, 200 or even up to 300 per cent.

The environment that we find ourselves in, the environment of high energy prices and household spending under the weight of cost of living pressures, is a direct result of this government's policies—whether it is the 2002 policy to implement full retail contestability, the 2009 policy to remove retail price regulation or the policy to triple coal royalties and force a coal generator out of business. For those members who have not been here that long, I sat in this chamber when Peter Batchelor was minister for energy and he told this chamber and indeed all Victorians that the introduction of smart meters would result in lower prices flowing to all Victorians. And what did it do? After the Victorian energy users spent \$2.5 billion to have the smart meters introduced, what have we seen? We have seen nothing in this state except higher price rises. That is the environment that we find ourselves in. We have more unreliable power, we have dearer power and we also have policies that affect jobs.

It was interesting to listen to the member for Morwell when in question time yesterday he asked a pretty straightforward question of the minister. It was not a gotcha question; it was a pretty straightforward question: what modelling has been done to show the impact that closing other coal-fired power generators in the Latrobe Valley would have on jobs? It was a fairly straightforward question.

You would think that amongst other priorities of the government jobs might be an important one, particularly in the Latrobe Valley, which again has been bending under the weight of 17 per cent unemployment, exacerbated by the policies of this government to force the closure of Hazelwood power station, putting 700 people out of work overnight—700 direct jobs gone, not to mention the indirect jobs, with restaurants, businesses and travel agents reporting cancellations of holidays and cancellation of events and all those sorts of things. The impact on the Latrobe Valley as a result of this government's policies has been enormous. It was not an unfair question for the member for Morwell to come into this place yesterday and actually ask the government of the day, 'What further impact are your policies going to have on my community?'.

The fact that the government and the minister danced around that is an indictment of them. Certainly for someone who consistently says in her statements to this chamber, 'Let me be clear', she could not be more ambiguous and vague if she tried, because in many cases the contributions from the minister leave people none the wiser as to where this government is going on energy policy and indeed the impacts that the government's policies are having on the wider Victorian community.

Let me move on to some of the policies or some of the finer points of this matter, including the Victorian default offer, which we debated in this place two weeks ago. During that time I challenged government members to actually stand up in this place and guarantee Victorian energy users that there would be no-one worse off under this policy, and of course not one member could do it. Not one member could assure the Victorian community that the deeply discounted offers that many of the second and third-tier retailers were putting forward to the community would be left as they were. The government cannot guarantee that these sorts of discounted offers that many in the community enjoy—and as I said in this chamber two weeks ago, probably there are members of Parliament here who enjoy similar offers—will not move. Research that has been put out by the Australian Energy Market Commission and indeed the Australian Energy Council show us that those deeply discounted offers will probably and almost certainly rise over the course of time as third-tier retailers are forced out of the market as a result of competition being killed by this legislation and by this policy direction.

A significant impost on energy users right around the state will be made as a result of this policy, and every piece of research and every piece of reporting and modelling that have gone into this particular issue will show that that is indeed the case. As I said, it does not take much to go through some of these documents to show that that is the case. Indeed, if I can go back to some of the issues that were raised earlier with regard to energy policy, would Victorians really think that the minister who is telling them that prices will go down as a result of this government's policies should actually be believed?

I go back again to other policies of Labor governments. I go to the 2002 policy around full retail contestability. John Thwaites was quoted in the newspaper in 2015 as saying that that part of the policy had not worked and the retail component had increased very substantially. He said that in developing the policy to deregulate energy retailers everyone expected there would be more competition and therefore a reduction in bills, and the figures show that that has not happened.

As I said, every Victorian is bending under the weight of these extraordinary cost of living pressures. Just a few weeks ago the *Herald Sun* reported that more than 1000 Victorian households a week had been disconnected from electricity and gas because of unpaid bills. Energy retailers cut off a staggering 55 474 retail customers last financial year. When speaking on the Victorian default offer bill last week, the member for Wendouree made comments about record disconnections under the government—I think she was referring back to the Kennett government 20 years ago—but indeed completely failed to comment on—

A member interjected.

Mr R SMITH: Actually it might have been the Napthine government. Was it? The 20 per cent surge in disconnections that this government has been overseeing is certainly something which should be taken into account. It should not be ignored by any member of this chamber who gets up to discuss these matters.

I move onto paragraph (4) of the matter of public importance:

(4) the failure of the federal Morrison government in energy policy.

I just want to point out first of all that to say the federal government is failing on policy when one of their policies is a default market offer seems quite ludicrous. It seems quite bizarre that a government that has brought in a default market offer particular to Victoria says that a federal government that is bringing in a similar policy for around the nation has had a failure of policy. It is essentially the same policy. Indeed, how can it be a failure of policy when the federal government on 1 January got retailers to lower their standing offer prices and made sure retailers were offering targeted discounts for their concession customers? As a result of federal government policies retailers like AGL have taken 10 per cent off the whole bill for all standing customers, Energy Australia 15 per cent off the usage component for all concession standing customers and Origin 17 per cent off the whole bill for non-concession customers on standing offers. The list goes on of savings that federal government policy has overseen. I think to say that that is a failure when energy users in Victoria are paying less as a result of federal policies is again particularly bizarre.

There are other federal government policies such as renewable energy investment, with Australian electricity statistics showing that clean energy investment was at its highest ever level in 2018, setting a new record of \$13 billion. This government talks about renewable energy a great deal. The fact that the federal government is investing in it as well shows that the federal government is certainly on the right track when it comes to investing in renewable energy.

Members interjecting.

Mr R SMITH: The government members in the chamber laugh, but the reality is that these are facts—\$13 billion in renewable energy investment. There are waste-to-energy projects that the government has invested in—certainly again not bad policy.

A member interjected.

Mr R SMITH: Well, not bad policy. It is policy that this government should be embracing, a commitment to—

Ms Thomas interjected.

Mr R SMITH: Member for Macedon, I thought you were going to be respectful during this particular contribution.

Ms Thomas interjected.

Mr R SMITH: Okay. The federal government has a commitment to the targets of the Paris agreement, which it says it will reach eight years ahead of time. There are waste-to-energy projects, as I said. There is a retailer reliability obligation agreed to at the Council of Australian Governments meeting, again a policy that the federal government put forward that this minister, the Victorian minister, actually signed an agreement with. If she thinks of it as a failure of energy policy at a federal level, then why did she sign up to implement a retailer reliability obligation, which was a key priority of the Australian government?

There has been a \$67 million investment in energy efficiency programs to cut costs and emissions in a way that will enable small businesses to claim grants of up to \$20 000 for high-energy-using businesses. This is a scheme very similar to one I introduced when I was environment minister:

Smarter Resources, Smarter Businesses. It is an opportunity for businesses to assess where they are in regard to their energy usage and find ways of making sure that they are more efficient so there is more money in their business for research, development, expansion—things of that nature. Certainly all of these policies that the Victorian government is talking about are actually policies that the federal government has put forward to ensure that there is a focus on renewables, a focus on using our resources more efficiently and a focus on making sure that energy prices come down and that the cost-of-living pressures that Victorian households are experiencing are less than they currently are—not only currently are but have been over successive Victorian Labor governments with policies that have only hurt them.

In a nutshell we can clearly see that it is in fact Labor policies that have caused the sort of pressures that Victorian households are facing. A number of issues have been raised about its policy around the Victorian default offer, which the government has completely failed to address during the course of the debate and indeed outside of this chamber when it is talking about this particular policy direction. The fact that the Victorian government has pointed to the failure of the federal government on energy policy shows that theirs is a position put forward with blinkers on, because the federal government's policy mirrors in many ways the policies that this government is putting forward. The Victorian government should be taking a bipartisan approach and putting forward policies centred and focused on the pressures that Victorian households are facing. Rather than embracing the policies of the federal government, which are very similar to the ones the Victorian government is talking about, the government has instead sought to paint the federal policies as out of touch. In many ways they are the same as those the Victorian government is putting forward.

In short, it has been Victorian Labor governments that have caused the pressures that many Victorians are facing. This particular matter of public importance draws a long bow to say the least. Certainly the policies that we will be putting together over the next three or four years will be ones that are focused on Victorian energy users, and that will be our focus rather than the partisan focus that the government is taking.

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) (14:32): It is my pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak on this very significant matter of public importance (MPI), one that affects all Victorians but one that people in my community of Macedon are particularly passionate about. That is why I take every opportunity that I can to talk on energy policy in this place. Before I talk to the MPI, I would again extend my offer to the member for Warrandyte to visit Macedon, to speak to members of my community and to have a look at the investments this Andrews Labor government has made in community-led projects that are really making a significant difference. I am going to enjoy detailing some of those projects to you as part of my contribution this afternoon.

Our Solar Homes package is a policy position that I am typically proud of. It was such a pleasure to be out in the lead-up to the November 2018 election, doorknocking the homes in the new housing estates of Gisborne, in Kyneton, in Woodend, in Romsey and in Lancefield to talk about our Solar Homes package, which was universally supported by everyone that I spoke to in my community. Of course it is no surprise whatsoever that 30 000 Victorians have already applied to take up the offer to participate in our Solar Homes program and that 5500 rebates have already been paid. On this issue, it is the people of Victoria who are leading the charge. The people of Victoria want to transition to renewable energy, and they want to do it now, but there is only one side of politics that is listening to what people of this state—and indeed, I would say, this nation—are looking for from their political leaders. As much as one would like not to have to talk about the Morrison government, it is impossible to come to this place to talk about energy policy and not make reference to the diabolical mess that the federal Liberal coalition government has put us in when it comes to energy, but I will say a little bit more about that later.

As I said, it is the people that are leading the charge, and they are doing this for two very clear and simple reasons. The first of course is that people in my community and indeed across the state want to

take greater control over their energy bills, and they know that investing in solar and looking to a government that is investing more broadly in renewables makes sense. You bring on more supply, and the power prices go down. You put solar on, and you take charge of your own energy use. That is what people are doing, and they are embracing it in their thousands.

The second reason—and I know this is news to those on the other side—is that people in my community and, I would argue, across the state are very committed to taking real action on climate change. I know that on the other side of the house and indeed in Canberra we have houses of Parliament that are full of climate science deniers—only on that side of the house, I might say. But out there in the community the people just want their governments, their politicians, to get with the program, move on and bring on supply. So it is to the people that we look to to see what they want governments to deliver, and this is a government that has responded in spades.

Over 10 years the Solar Homes program will install solar panels, solar hot-water systems or batteries in 770 000 homes across the state. It will bring the number of homes in Victoria with solar panels to 1 million, and it will save Victorians more than \$500 million a year on their electricity bills once the program is complete.

As I said, the notable feature of the solar revolution is the way it has been embraced across the state. My community is one that is already leading the charge. We have a very high proportion of households that already have solar. Indeed contrary to what others might think, this solar revolution is happening in the suburbs and in our regional centres. The people of Wangaratta and Wodonga, which is near where I grew up, have known this for many years. You go to any country town or regional centre and you see that solar has been well embraced.

Of course our program is designed to cut our carbon emissions by almost 4 million tonnes, the same as taking 1 million of Victoria's 4.6 million cars off the road. It will also contribute 12.5 per cent of Victoria's 40 per cent target for renewable energy by 2025. We are very confident that we will meet this ambitious target, and indeed that it will be exceeded, because Victorian households are choosing to invest in larger systems. This is, as I said, a very important issue for this house to be considering.

I want to talk a little bit more about our renewable energy target, because the importance of legislating renewable energy targets is this: you make the law, and industry then knows how to respond. In contrast to the policy chaos we see in Canberra, here the Andrews Labor government has provided certainty to the renewable energy industry so that people can build their businesses with confidence. We have legislated the targets, we have put in place a 10-year plan and we are seeing this incredible response from the private sector to help us deliver our ambitious program. Our commitment to an energy system that is clean, affordable and reliable is unwavering, and we have been steadfast in the face, as I said, of chaos in Canberra.

As I said before, I am going to have to talk about the Prime Minister. While Scott Morrison will be forever remembered for bringing a lump of coal into Parliament and using it to mock serious people, the Labor opposition federally and this Labor government here in Victoria have pursued clean energy policies in order to bring on more supply and bring prices down. I have got to say the behaviour of those in Canberra is nothing short of disgraceful in terms of the mess that they have left the energy sector in at this point. They do not take this debate seriously. It is a cultural war within the Liberal Party, and frankly it has got to stop.

I did say I was going to talk about some initiatives in my own electorate. Last October I had the then Minister for Industry and Employment, now Minister for Crime Prevention, join me in my electorate at Hardwick Meatworks. Hardwicks is the largest employer in the state seat of Macedon. This is a company that is interested in continuing to grow their business and to grow jobs in regional Victoria, and they have of course got an eye to their bottom line. That is why, with support from the Victorian government, they have invested in a more than \$11 million solar array, establishing their own microgrid in Kyneton so that they are a fully renewable enterprise. This is fantastic.

We have also assisted Hepburn Wind, who of course were Victoria's first community-owned wind farm. Our government provided a half-million-dollar grant to that wind farm, Hepburn Wind, to build a solar array, which will mean they will have an energy park in Hepburn. I am fully in support of competition, so I am very happy to see that Hepburn Wind is actually going to be challenged by the Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group over which of these community-controlled energy parks will be the first to deliver 100 per cent renewables in their shire. Both Hepburn shire and Macedon Ranges shire are committed to growing renewables, to building sufficient renewable resources within each of those shires to power in entirety those shires, so that these two local government areas will be on track to become zero-net-emissions councils. This is an important matter of public importance. The Australian people are crying out for some leadership on this issue. The only government that is delivering the real leadership our nation needs is the Victorian government. I applaud the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change for bringing this matter to the house.

Mr D O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:42): I am interested to rise to speak on this matter of public importance that the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change introduced and spoke on before instantly departing the chamber. That highlights this for what it is, and that is just a political stunt ahead of the federal election. I will come to that later, because as the member for Warrandyte pointed out, points (3) and (4) of this particular matter of public importance are almost in direct contradiction of each other. But this is an issue of great importance to the Victorian people and one where there has been significant contention in policy over the last 10 years.

I stand here and say the climate is changing. There is no doubt about that. Parts of my electorate of Gippsland South at the moment are suffering the worst drought they have seen on record. The farmers and the people of my electorate will say that the climate is changing. There are different levels of acceptance and debate about what is causing that, but there is an acceptance that that is happening.

There is also generally an acceptance, I believe, that we need to transition to renewable energy. That is needed, and that is happening. That will happen over a period of time. I believe it needs to happen slowly and carefully, because energy policy is not all about renewables and delivering emissions reductions. In my part of the world Gippsland obviously has been the powerhouse of the state for nearly 100 years with respect to brown coal, and in my electorate of Gippsland South in particular we supply most of Victoria's and indeed the eastern seaboard's natural gas. These are important industries in my electorate, and they remain important both in price terms and also in terms of the availability and reliability of our energy supplies. But as I said, I have no issue per se with renewable energy, which is what this matter of public importance is largely about. Indeed there is a proposal before federal and state governments at the moment for a very large offshore wind farm known as the Star of the South, offshore from Port Albert in my electorate, and I very much support that. If it can be done commercially and viably, then more power to their arm, and I say that not only from the renewable energy perspective but from the completely selfish perspective that if it goes ahead it is likely it will be serviced from Port Welshpool, also in my electorate, and potentially bring significant jobs and benefits to the people of Gippsland South.

But what is missed so much in the energy debate, particularly as espoused by those opposite, is the importance of not only, as I said, emissions reductions but affordable and reliable energy. What gets me time and time again is the dishonesty that is allowed to perpetuate, particularly in the debate on wind farms with respect to output. I heard the minister saying—I did not pick up exactly the figures, but I think this is what she was saying—that there is enough wind power in development at the moment to replace Hazelwood. You regularly hear a wind farm being announced, and they say, 'It can power 30 000 homes' or '300 000 homes'. What is very rarely mentioned—in fact is never mentioned in the government's press releases—is the capacity factor. Very clearly the wind does not blow all the time, and sometimes when the wind is blowing too hard wind farms have to actually be shut down. The capacity factor as I understand it for most onshore wind farms is around about a third—around 33–35 per cent. So when we say, 'There's enough capacity to replace Hazelwood', that is when the wind is blowing. I get back to that point of affordable and reliable power.

Mr Richardson: Storage.

Mr D O'BRIEN: I hear a word coming across the chamber, 'storage'. I would invite the person suggesting 'storage' to tell us where the storage is for the many thousands of megawatts from wind turbines that we now have in Victoria when the government has spent millions in the last couple of years on a 20-megawatt battery. We do not have storage at the moment for the level of demand that we have in Victoria. It will come; I have no doubt it will come in time. At what price it will come will be the other thing, and what the other environmental impacts will be with respect to battery storage has not been expounded at all by those opposite.

One of the reasons, though, I support the Star of the South project is that, being offshore in the middle of Bass Strait, it will have a much higher capacity factor. They are estimating it might be about 45 per cent. But it still will not be able to produce power all the time, which is why I certainly support opportunities in coal. High-efficiency, low-emissions power stations are now being built around the rest of the world. There is the opportunity for carbon capture and storage, which is being investigated quite seriously by the current government at both state and federal levels—something that those opposite again do not mention in this. The CarbonNet project, again, would be located off Golden Beach in my electorate of Gippsland South, taking carbon from the Latrobe Valley—potentially. It is still very much a potential. So by all means promote wind, promote solar, but let us have an honest debate. Let us not say that it is 300 megawatts and not actually talk about what the reliability and the capacity factor is.

The other thing, particularly with wind, that is never mentioned is the localised impacts. This debate is very rarely a debate about the city. In terms of energy production the vast bulk of our energy supplies has come from outside of Melbourne, whether it is coal, as historically has been the case, wind or solar. Those opposite and the Greens who sit beside me here now regular talk about the advantages of wind, but they never mention the impact on people next door to wind farms. I have currently got a proposal for a wind farm at Alberton, which the local community is very opposed to, and we have the wind farm at Bald Hills, about which the South Gippsland shire, I think, in the next couple of days—it might even be today—is considering a nuisance complaint, given the noise from the Bald Hills wind farm. These are things that are never mentioned by those opposite. They love to talk about pollution from Latrobe Valley coalmines, but they never talk about the other issues that come with renewable energy as well. I say, as I have said before in this place: let us propose a wind farm in Royal Park and see how that goes. Let us propose one at Albert Park. There would be a Save Albert Park or there would be a Save Royal Park within about 30 seconds if someone proposed one. So let us again have a bit of honesty about this and accept that there are impacts right around.

The first point in this matter of public importance is the government patting itself on the back for the take-up under the Solar Homes program. Well who would have thought people would take up free stuff. What a surprise it is that there is a subsidy for the taxpayer and it has been a success. People are lining up to get it. My God, what a genius policy that is, that it has been so successful! I mean, you would have to be seriously incompetent not to have people taking up something when there is a massive government subsidy; it is a bit like the free TAFE. We have had the government already hailing the success of free TAFE. It is not a success for free TAFE if people sign up for it; it is a success if those people get trained and find jobs at the end of it. That is what the success would be, not people enrolling in free TAFE. So let us just see what that does.

The matter of public importance also references the extensive pipeline of renewable energy generation that the minister is claiming credit for through the Victorian renewable energy target, at the same time constantly telling us that renewable energy is cheaper. If it is cheaper, why does it need a subsidy? If it is cheaper, why does it need taxpayer funds? If it is cheaper, why does the taxpayer have to be subsidising this energy? If it is cheaper to produce, it therefore must be cheaper to establish. I asked the minister this at a Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing last year, and the best she

could say was that every method of power generation over history has had government subsidy as well. The question still stands.

I very briefly want to mention privatisation, because it gets a mention regularly from the minister. She regularly says how privatisation is to blame for all our ills, including higher power prices. Can I say to the minister: Labor has been in power in Victoria for 16 of the last 20 years. If you do not like the privatised system, then nationalise it. Leaving aside the fact that it was Joan Kirner that started the privatisation—

Mr Pearson interjected.

Mr D O'BRIEN: It was, member for Essendon: Joan Kirner with Mission Energy in 1992 in Loy Yang B started it, so do not say it was all Kennett. The minister constantly says all the issues that we have are through privatisation—well, nationalise it. Well, you will not nationalise it, because you know it is not true because even the ABC found in a fact check a couple of years ago using Australian Energy Regulator data that prices in Victoria and South Australia were in fact lower over a period than they were in New South Wales and Queensland, which had largely public systems versus the private system here. So yes, let us have this debate, and yes, let us move to renewable energy, but let us at least be honest about it with the Victorian people.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (14:52): I am delighted to join the debate on the matter of public importance. Energy policy is a really fascinating area of public policy at the moment, and it has been for some time, because what you are looking at is an industry going through a period of significant transition and change. With that come certain challenges.

At the outset I want to anticipate the argument of the member for Brunswick because I want to put this to rest now: we will not be lectured by the Greens political party on energy policy. We will not be lectured by those who have never built anything, have never run anything, have never operated anything and, at every step on the way, have sought to get in the way of an elected Labor government achieving practical action on climate change.

I am not quite sure how long the member for Brunswick will have in this place, but if he ends up like a former member for Northern Metropolitan Region, Mr Barber, who was here for, let me guess, 11 years and whose only claim to fame was the fact that he instituted a 'men's room' in his electorate office to stop the female members of his team engaging with him, that would be a shame, because that is the only thing Mr Barber will ever be remembered for, when he had the opportunity of working with a progressive Labor government to achieve real action on climate change.

We are in this situation because the reform agenda that we were promised, that the community was sold, has failed to eventuate. If you look at the great promises, I look back to media releases from Alan Stockdale in 1994 saying customers could expect even more dynamic service-oriented companies to take over from the SEC, and over time electricity prices were expected to fall in real terms as a result of the government's reforms. He talked about the benefits of deregulation. Mr Stockdale in 2001 talked about the fact that the reform process had a very positive outcome for Victoria, an example of how to introduce competitive marketing to the electricity and gas sectors. Those benefits are, here and now, illusory. They have not provided the benefits which people like Alan Stockdale adhered to.

You had a set of circumstances where information was not freely available, so not every consumer had access to that information. Whereas the former Kennett government sought to stop vertical integration and sought to encourage a competitive market, what you saw happen in reality was that loyal customers were transferred onto not the best deal but the worst deal, and that resulted in people who were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people who lived in public housing and people who had special needs getting a raw deal, and we are now in a situation where the system as it currently stands is just not working.

So those of us who take these matters extremely seriously, those of us who actually want to devise and develop public policy that can be implemented in a practical way and give effect to the changes that we all seek and desire—not those sitting in the cheap seats and commentating from the sidelines, who are not prepared to embrace the challenge, nor those who do not believe in climate change—we recognise that something needs to be done.

The interesting thing I note is that table O3, titled ‘Electricity generation in Victoria, by fuel type, physical units’, in *Australian Energy Statistics, Table O*, which is a report prepared by the federal government, looks at Victoria’s usage on an annualised basis going back to 2008–09. We all know we have had significant population growth in the last 10 years. We know that in the last three years we have added a city the size of Canberra to our borders. What we can see in terms of a usage is that in 2008–09 we were using 55 gigawatt hours of power, and, notwithstanding the massive increase in population growth, we are now using less. In 2017–18 we used 47 gigawatt hours. Despite the fact that our population is increasing significantly our usage is dropping, so something is clearly working well. I appreciate the fact that there is an issue with prices, and I will come to that, but in terms of our per capita usage, it is dropping significantly.

Moreover, if you look at the increase in terms of renewables, in 2008–09 there was 1446.9 gigawatt hours in renewables and this increased to 7191.9 gigawatt hours in 2017–18. So we are seeing a massive increase in terms of renewable usage. This is extremely important because that is the pathway forward. As we look at transitioning out from baseload coal and fossil fuels, we need to make that transition to renewables, and again, as I said at the outset, these things are difficult, these things are challenging. When you look at market reform and market change, when you are looking at trying to work out how to get the balance right to enable an environment where the private sector can invest in these assets and can get a return for their shareholders but not at the same time gouge consumers while still running an efficient operation, that is really important.

I listened to the member for Warrandyte’s contribution, and I mentioned earlier in the day the issue of energy prices. This is something that has been an issue, which those opposite have sought to raise at various times certainly in the course of the 58th Parliament and now in the 59th Parliament. Indeed I am indebted to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who costed the policies of the Liberal-National parties. What I found fascinating about this is that given some of the interest that those opposite have professed to show in relation to energy policy, you would think that they would have taken to the electorate last November a comprehensive plan to bring down energy prices. They talked about this for four years; you would have thought that they would have been burrowing away trying to devise good public policy to tackle this very important issue, because we know that those opposite sought to raise the issue of energy prices and consumer protection at length over the course of the 58th Parliament.

Now, if I turn to page 171 of the Parliamentary Budget Officer’s costings, it states: ‘Establish a tender process by which the winning energy retailer will provide discounted electricity’. The cost for this is \$3.2 million, and that is for basically the administration of the scheme. But there are no costs in here for subsidising such a scheme. If the public sector is not going to underwrite the scheme or provide any financial incentives for it, why would the private sector invest in it to begin with? The member for Gippsland South said, ‘People like having free stuff’. Well, at least this government is trying to provide the carrot by which consumers can make a choice, be it in free TAFE or be it in terms of solar panels. What those opposite did was just window-dressing: ‘Oh, we’ll spend \$3.2 million on a tender process. We won’t underwrite it, we won’t provide any financial incentives whatsoever’. Again, this is from the same mob that came up with the business case for the Doncaster rail plan. They will come up with a plan, they will fund a plan, but that is about the end of it.

I regret that the member for Frankston is not in the chamber at the moment but the Liberal Party looked at putting the supply of 500 megawatts of new electricity out to tender with the aim of constructing a new power station. Again, looking at this proposal, this was costed at \$3.2 million. There is no

financial incentive for the private sector to provide this level of investment. All those opposite were offering was a contract to take 500 megawatts of power. That was it. So no incentives to invest, a contract to buy—but again, at what price? It is just sheer and utter laziness, just absolute laziness.

There was no thought or consideration given to tackling these issues. You have to ask yourself why that would be. I reckon their hearts are not in it. I reckon deep down those opposite do not believe in any of this. They do not believe in intervention into markets. They believe the best form of government is the smallest form of government. They believe that you should have a light hand approach to regulation, or no hand in regulation. They are channelling their masters. It is like reading Alan Stockdale:

The benefits of competition and privatisation are so great that the question should not be ‘Why privatise?’ but rather ‘Should a given business activity remain solely the province of government?’

That is the view of those opposite. That is why they are not taking this seriously. That is why they took to the electorate no coherent plan in relation to energy policy, because you know what? They do not believe in it. Their heart is not in it. They believe that the private sector will always do these things better and there is no role to play for the public sector. You just have a paper tiger of a regulator that is just a bit of window-dressing to make sure that you stop the most egregious examples of gouging, and that is it. That is why they cannot be trusted. They cannot be serious.

I will anticipate the member for Brunswick: we are not going to sit here and be lectured to by him about energy policy because they cannot be trusted. They are not serious. The only people tackling climate change in a systematic way are those in the Andrews Labor government.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (15:02): If you listen to the contributions made by the government and the energy minister as a small business owner or as a Victorian taxpayer, you would think that Victoria is doing so well when it comes to energy that their bills are almost to the point where they are getting their energy for absolutely nothing, it is the cheapest it has ever been, and people would be in sheer joy at the current situation of the energy market. You know that if you thought that was actually the case, you would be dreaming. There is no question that small businesses in this state are doing it tougher than they ever have. Bigger businesses that employ a lot of people in jobs are doing it tougher than they ever have, and certainly a lot of Victorians are struggling more than they ever have, and that is largely due to the highest energy prices that this state has ever seen, because of a government that is completely missing when it comes to the fundamental elements of energy policy dealing with reliability and affordability.

We have heard contributions from this side, including from the member for Gippsland South who quite correctly pointed out that there is certainly going to be lots of uptake when something is free but there is no such thing as free. We all know that there is a cost associated with free, and when some people take up the free, all the rest end up paying for it. That is what this market has experienced. It has experienced a situation where there are 911 000 people who are struggling to pay their energy bills, 911 000 vulnerable customers that have been left on the side so we can get some people to take up the free option of solar rooftops. Can I add, Deputy Speaker, these are important. We on this side of the house believe that it is important to provide good energy policy that brings renewables into the market. Going into the election we had a policy that was going to put solar on schools and on public buildings and on hospitals.

Mr Battin: Everyone benefits.

Mr SOUTHWICK: They are all very important because it would not just be one person benefiting but, as the member for Gembrook quite rightly pointed out, everybody benefits. Taxpayers benefit. That is where we should be starting to get the balance right, not like this government has in terms of the haves and the have-nots.

This matter of public importance deals with a number of points. Firstly, the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change says 30 000 people have applied to take up solar panels from the

Andrews Labor government. I am not sure whether I heard correctly, but the minister then said in her contribution that 300 000 people have applied, so I do not know if there was an extra zero added but I would be keen to look at *Hansard* to find out whether there has been an uptake of 30 000 or 300 000. We do know that it is a cost we are all paying for regardless of the uptake.

This government has been really scant on detail, because under this government we then have people coming in to install these solar panels. We are still concerned about the implementation. If it is in fact 30 000, or God forbid 300 000, in a short period of time, then how are we going to deal with this? Does the government have the right protections in place to deal with this? A November 2017 Consumer Action Law Centre report identified that less than 1 per cent of Australia's solar retailers are signatories to the Clean Energy Council *Solar Retail Code of Conduct*. This is an industry standard for the trader and sales conduct and warranty conduct. So again, it is very important and we want to make sure that those that are actually putting their hands up do not have a pink batts scenario of an installation gone wrong. We will certainly be watching very carefully from this side of the house in terms of the implementation of this scheme.

The minister also spoke about a 928-megawatt pipeline of renewable energy. Again, this is very important. We encourage it, we want private investment in renewable energy and we think it is very important. The minister then interjected about the Victorian renewable energy target scheme. Now, this minister—who has spent a whole range of her time talking about it—has interjected and then left the chamber. That shows you how passionate and concerned she is about cost and affordability of power. That is how they operate. They spew everywhere and then move off for someone else to clean up the mess. And that is what has happened here, because we had an opportunity with this government to be able to sit alongside the federal government and other state ministers to sign up to a National Energy Guarantee, to get together and—

Mr Foley interjected.

Mr SOUTHWICK: Well, let me tell the member for Albert Park how that went. How it went is that the first minister to object to a National Energy Guarantee was the Victorian minister, who objected to the National Energy Guarantee, who basically did a doorstep on 3AW and said, 'We won't be signing up to the National Energy Guarantee' and held the rest of the states to ransom, because this minister knew that unless there was consensus among all ministers we were not going to get a National Energy Guarantee. And let me be quite clear with all of this: the reason why Victorians are all paying the price is that this government has played politics with energy right from the very beginning. They do not want to sit together and work in the interests of all Victorians and all Australians; they want to play politics with this, and ultimately consumers pay the price each and every time. They always do, and this government has done it again.

This government has had every opportunity to work to try and get this done, including, as item 3 notes, with a default offer giving families a fair price on energy. The default offer was put together by the federal government. Every other state has signed up on a default offer, on a harmonious national system. What does Victoria do? Victoria turns around and says, 'Oh, no, we won't sign up to a national system. We'll create our own and another lot of administration to run it'. And what happens with that? We all pay the price. It is another situation where, instead of one default offer, one system, where we all sign up to it and we drive prices down, all this government wants to do, again the Labor way, is to drive up prices and drive a wedge between what's happening in the federal government and the state government. And, again, who misses out? Taxpayers miss out, Victorians miss out, vulnerable consumers miss out. That is what happens each and every time.

There are two other items I want to mention. The member for Essendon spoke about us not having a plan to reduce prices. Now, under this government we have seen a \$450 increase on electricity and a \$500 increase on gas. Prices have gone up in gas and electricity under this government, and we have seen reports from St Vincent's that have said vulnerable consumers are being hit the most under the Labor government. We had a plan for a Victorian energy concession discount for 911 vulnerable

consumers, which would have worked with the Brotherhood of St Laurence and with St Vincent's, both of which were happy with this plan—a plan the South Australian government, the Labor government, worked on and the Liberal government then implemented, and which continues to this day. It would have meant an 18 per cent discount on electricity and 11 per cent on gas—saving between \$250 and \$500 annually on a group purchase deal for vulnerable consumers. Where has that gone, Deputy Speaker? Nowhere, because this government does not care about vulnerable consumers.

I also wanted to talk about our deal, when it came to putting 500 megawatts into the market. The member for Essendon is wrong. The 500 megawatts was something that was going to be done by packaging up the government's power supply to be able to provide certainty for a new entrant into the market, and that new entrant into the market would drive down power prices. It was done by Frontier Economics, which has done work for both Labor and Liberal at all levels—a highly respected economics team. So when the member for Essendon says that we have not put the work into it, he is factually wrong. The work was done, it was costed and it would have driven down prices by about \$500. And it's there, certainly, on the record.

Let me just correct the minister in the final element, in terms of blaming everybody. This minister blames—

A member: Jeff Kennett, mostly.

Mr SOUTHWICK: the Morrison government and every other federal government, and then we go back to of course Jeff Kennett's problem. Let us go back 20 years ago, and it is Jeff Kennett's problem. He has privatised something, and that is the reason why we are all in the mess, and there is nothing we can do about it—so we are going to just move on because it is Jeff Kennett's fault. Well, let me correct the record. A news release on 11 June 1992—this is not from Jeff Kennett, it is from a Premier of Victoria, and who is it? Well, it is from the Premier of Victoria, Joan Kirner, who said this:

The Victorian Government's decision to involve private investment in this new project is essential to our energy future.

This is referring to the Loy Yang B sale.

There are enormous benefits for Victoria as a result of this sale—particularly, continued reductions in the real price of electricity to Victorian customers and improved customer service.

...

Following a keenly-contested bidding process, we now have one of the world's foremost power station operators working in partnership with the State Government to help deliver a more efficient and price-competitive power industry.

This was the Premier of Victoria with her move to privatise the energy industry, which this government now blames someone else for. *(Time expired)*

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) (15:12): It is my absolute pleasure to rise today to speak on this matter of public importance and to support the motion that has been put to increase renewable energy here in Victoria and drive down power prices for our Victorian households. I think certainly, when it comes to Victoria's future, there are not many matters that are more compelling, unless of course you are sitting on those opposition benches. I will never let them forget that it was those opposite who voted against our legislation to introduce renewable energy targets and who went to the election in 2018 promising to scrap our renewable energy targets, should they take office. We saw how well that went for them. We would think that they would learn from that experience, take on that information from the communities and work with us in a bipartisan way to transition our economy into renewables, to bring down our power prices and to support and help every single Victorian in this state.

First and foremost I would like to commend the Premier and our Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change for what has been really comprehensive and extraordinary leadership on this matter. It is a matter that is facing all of us, and that is the transition—quite a challenging transition—

to clean, renewable, reliable and cheaper energy and I say that I love that this is democracy in action. This is really about giving power and putting power back into the hands of Victorians—and it feels really good to be part of it.

Talking about democracy and feeling good, I was at the School Strike 4 Climate on Friday with my son Rafferty and with thousands and thousands and thousands of other students and young people as we gathered in Melbourne's CBD. Let me tell you that their message was really simple. It was really clear. They want to see strong leadership on this issue. They want our governments to take responsibility and to solve this climate crisis. Something else that was really apparent was that they are so angry. They are so extraordinarily angry with our federal Liberal government at the moment. Scott Morrison copped an awful lot of their complaints and their concern—and quite rightly, I have to say. Unlike here in Victoria, we have seen this federal Morrison minority government has had absolutely no energy policy. It has had no plan. In fact, until recently it did not even believe in the existence of climate change or of the need to transition from coal.

Earlier I was sitting in the chamber and I listened to the member for Warrandyte. He asked us to talk about and look at the environment that we find ourselves in. I am going to do that. I ask: what do we see? We have seen a federal government from Abbott to Turnbull to Morrison which has shown no leadership, none at all, on energy policy or the impacts of climate change and what we need to do about it. These 'leaders'—and I say leaders in air quotes—have been almost weathervanes on climate change, on energy policy. That has been over a decade now and that has been to the detriment of all of us here in Victoria and all of us across Australia as well.

What else is there? We have heard the Prime Minister announce his new policy, which is \$2 billion in funding over 10 years. It might sound like a lot, but as one commentator has observed, this funding shows that the coalition's climate policy and commitment to transitioning to renewable energy has barely moved in a decade. Remember that it was Tony Abbott's Direct Action that funnelled more money in less than half the time. We saw how well that went for Tony Abbott. Industry was scathing, questionable investments were made and in fact power prices went up. Iain McGill from the Centre for Energy and Environmental Markets at the University of New South Wales said that Scott Morrison with this funding has chosen to simply extend and expand one of Australia's most questionable climate policies to date. It seems as though it is just simply business as usual for the coalition.

As we heard before, the member for Macedon quite rightly reminded us that it was the then Treasurer Scott Morrison who brought that lump of coal into the federal Parliament, quite inexplicably taunting the federal Labor opposition. I remember his words at the time. He said, 'This is coal. Don't be afraid, don't be scared. It won't hurt you'. I do not think people were actually scared. They were probably confused and probably a bit embarrassed. Were they surprised? Probably not. I think that certainly Victorians and the Australian public are not surprised. They are not surprised because there has been a history of a lack of coherent policy from the coalition government. We have had no plan A and no plan B. There has been nothing. In fact, there has been worse than nothing. We have had direct resistance to transitioning to renewables. As I mentioned earlier, it was the opposition that in 2018 opposed our renewable energy targets and said that they were going to scrap them should they have—God forbid—got into government.

I want to go back to our students for a moment. I recall what Scott Morrison as Prime Minister said about the student climate strike that took place back in November. I certainly know that the students at the strike last Friday recalled what he said. He said, 'We want more learning and less activism in schools'. And the resources minister, Matt Canavan, said that the only thing striking would teach the children was how to collect government benefits.

Let me say to all those young people out there, those who made it to the strike and to those who were there in spirit—because I know there were thousands more who would have wanted to be there but could not be there for one reason or another—exercising your voice and standing up for something, showing critical thought, being proactive and having a real empathy with and an understanding of the

world around you are some of the greatest learnings that we can have and we can share. I for one and I know many others and many in this place are immensely proud of those students and young people, of them actively engaging and taking their message as they did to the streets of Melbourne last Friday.

Let me say also that I am immensely proud to be part of this government, the Andrews Labor government. This is a government that is absolutely committed to increasing our renewable energy generation. We are committed to reducing our emissions. We are committed to driving down energy prices, to helping every single Victorian, including those most vulnerable of Victorians. And of course we are a government that is steadfastly committed to supporting an industry that is going to grow thousands and thousands of jobs. Many of those jobs will be taken up by some of those student activists and many of those jobs will also be for transitioning workers who are going to have to move into other areas of employment. I could not be prouder.

We here in Victoria are really building the energy system of the future. We have not waited. We are not like the federal Liberal government, these fair-weather climate change campaigners. They seem to have found their voice now that we have got the New South Wales election this weekend and a federal election just around the corner.

We know our energy prices are too high. We know something has to be done about them. We have this plan, this coherent energy policy, in place now as we transition across to renewables. This is an exciting time to be part of Victoria and to be part of this government. What we desperately need now is proper strong leadership from our federal government. Scott Morrison has got to a critical point here. He knows it. His members in marginal seats know it. What do we have? We have an Independent in Wentworth and we have got three candidates, all with Liberal Party backgrounds, running in some of the most blue ribbon of seats.

This is an extraordinary time to be in Victoria. I am proud to be part of this government that is working on a transition to renewable energy.

Dr READ (Brunswick) (15:22): I would like to thank particularly the member for Shepparton, who has volunteered her spot for me to speak today. I thought I would also commend the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, who has raised this matter of public importance—because it is. Many of the other speakers have also commented on why it is a matter of public importance, and specifically climate change. It is critical that we understand that this is about more than just reliable electricity supply or prices. This is a much bigger topic than that.

When I was involved in the election campaign last year, a local activist came around asking candidates to sign a declaration that we face a climate emergency. I signed it and put it up on the wall of our campaign office. I understand that the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change also signed it and I absolutely commend her for that.

I think that it is quite true that we face a climate emergency. It is not a lights-and-sirens kind of emergency. It is not an emergency that will be over by bedtime. It is a slow-moving catastrophe, very slowly moving. Spring is getting a little earlier every year, species are disappearing slowly, and the emissions that government members and others have commented on in this debate that we are talking on—the carbon dioxide emissions that we might reduce—will last in the atmosphere for 30 to over 100 years. Even methane lasts in the atmosphere for a decade. So it is a bit like turning around a ship that is going in the wrong direction. It is going to take an awfully long time.

So why is this year particularly important? It seems as though a whole lot of things have happened just this summer. We have had heat waves in Australia. We have got a terrible drought in New South Wales that is extending into Victoria, which has affected in particular the Darling River, and we have faced these extraordinary fish kills. I do not know how people felt, reading about these mass deaths of fish in the Darling River, which is a long way away—a place that I have never visited—but I felt a sense of loss that ecosystems are being wiped out. This is largely due to the drought but also due to

mismanagement of the water, but at the base of it all is climate change. It is climate change that has made this energy debate a matter of public importance.

I am particularly interested in the health aspects of this. We know that when particularly overnight temperatures stay high in the city, death rates increase, and this particularly affects vulnerable populations. Amongst the most vulnerable are the mentally ill. I am very concerned about this because a lot of the medication we prescribe to mentally ill people affects their physiological response to heat. This is not well understood, but a lot of medications prescribed by doctors to literally thousands of Victorians make them less able to survive during hot nights. We do not have enough research on this. There are no recommendations out there to alter prescribing habits in heat waves. This is, I think, a matter of public importance. But it is also critically important that we do something to reduce the likelihood of more of these heat waves, and that is why this debate on renewable energy is important.

The member for Essendon was concerned that he might be lectured. I can advise him to take his fingers out of his ears now and just listen, because I am just going to tell a little story now. It was about the time when my dad nearly burned our house down. We had this pampas bush with a lot of dead grass in it next to my bedroom window many years ago when I was a teenager. Dad tossed a match in it one day. He did not quite expect it to burn as vigorously as it did. We are talking about a bush as big as the canopy behind the Deputy Speaker. The flames reached to the top of the house. The house was a little scorched, I confess. Dad thought he had it covered—he had the garden hose there—but when the neighbour, who none of us liked, stuck his head over the fence offering to call the fire brigade, we knew things had gone a little too far. We knew that the garden hose was not going to cut it. Fortunately another hose was provided and there were some buckets, and we did not need to call 000, but it was a lesson for all of us, and we had to be nice to the neighbour for a while.

So when the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change signs a declaration that we face a climate emergency we have to ask whether we are doing enough. We also have to ask another question: are we doing anything that might be making this worse? I will address that first. Yesterday the environment commissioner tabled the state of the environment report, which comes out every five years. There were about 17 different climate indicators and in all but one Victoria's status was assessed as—sorry, apologies to the member for Essendon here; fingers might need to go back in the ears—poor. The one area where our status was better than poor—it was fair—was awareness of climate change. So other points made in this report include: Victoria has the highest greenhouse gas emissions per person of any country in the OECD; our energy use is the seventh highest in the OECD; and 90 per cent of our emissions come from energy, and brown coal still dominates—in fact I think coal is responsible for just over half the emissions in this state.

Let us go to the question: are we doing anything to make this climate emergency worse? This fire in the pampas bush—is anyone chucking a little bit of petrol on the fire? Well, I am afraid to admit that we are opening new oil and gas reserves offshore for exploration—something this government is doing; spending public money on a coal-to-hydrogen project is going to make things worse; and arranging a monster gas ship at Western Port Bay to be an import terminal for gas is also going to make things worse, because these are fossil fuels. This will put CO₂ in the atmosphere, which will last the best part of a century.

So the other question is: are we doing enough? Will the garden hose cut it? Are we doing enough to respond to our climate emergency? Solar panels on rooftops is a fantastic idea. I recall the aforementioned Greg Barber taking that to the 2014 election as our primary platform. It is really thrilling to see it being adopted now by the government. But we cannot pretend that a subsidised solar program is all we need to do in this year, this year of crisis. It is also a year of opportunity, as the climate strike has shown us. There is a groundswell of opinion now that we need to not just put solar on every roof but start cutting emissions from other sources.

We need to remember what causes emissions. If people have trouble remembering, think of things that start with 'c': cows, coal, cars, compost that should be in landfill. So let us deal with those.

Concrete is another one, I forgot. The Netherlands currently has a program to disconnect homes from gas. We need a program to phase out gas as a source of energy for homes and industry. We need to bear in mind that our transport and aviation emissions are rising rapidly. So are our emissions from agriculture and emissions from food waste—food and organic waste in landfill decomposing to put methane into the atmosphere. This is driving the climate change that we are concerned about.

I am also indebted to the member for South Gippsland, who called for some honesty in the debate. We need to understand how big this crisis really is. This is enormous. Solar will reduce our coal use. We have to tackle these other sources of emissions. But imagine if the member for Essendon could magically switch off all our emissions tomorrow. Remember that they will be in the atmosphere for more than decades, for the best part of a century. We have got to turn this slow-moving crisis around. Unless we start turning around now, unless we have full ambition and throw all our resources at it, unless we dial 000 for this climate emergency, we will be too late. So I will leave it for people to think about, but if you accept that it is unethical to alter our climate for centuries and destroy ecosystems, the fact that it provides reliable electricity does not make it any more ethical.

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (15:33): It is important and a pleasure to rise to speak on the matter of public importance put forward by the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. Something I care deeply and passionately about is effective action on climate change. It was something that sparked my political passion and interest when I worked for the former Parliamentary Secretary for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, Mark Dreyfus, in the federal Parliament. Back from being a pup adviser then to now, we are barely making inroads at a federal level in the work that we need to do to drive down power prices, take action on climate change and support our community.

I just want to take up a few points made by those opposite. A consistent theme that has come through is under point (1) of the matter of public importance about how many Victorians have taken up solar. The insulting nature of comments by those opposite today who say that Victorians will grab something because it is free and that is why they are taking action is absolutely abhorrent. It is insulting. It is insulting to say, 'Victorians are just here for the take. They're not thinking about how they make ends meet in their communities and with their household budgets or how businesses make ends meet, they're just here all the time on the take'. How insulting to say that of our fellow Victorians—that they are only taking action because they are here for the take. I think that is very insulting and people should reflect on that.

The other notion was put forward by the member for Gippsland South, who is a very intelligent guy. I listened to his speech and I heard him say, 'Wind and solar don't meet capacity at the moment. We've still got a heavy reliance on coal, so that's that', as if we should walk away and give up. I want to share with the member for Gippsland South and those opposite that it took 120 years to commercialise and actually industrialise electricity generation into an industrial way of underpinning resource and capacity. Thankfully for the member for Gippsland South and our economy renewable energy generation advancement in technology is exponential. An expert in my area said some time ago that with solar generation in particular one year is like seven dog years. We are making exponential gains in solar and in wind and in storage. The notion that you step back and say, 'Well, sorry, it's not there yet, so we should give up', is an extraordinary position for those who preach free markets and free entrepreneurialism and enterprise. Imagine if people like Benjamin Franklin had given up back in the 1750s or people like Thomas Edison with his discovery. I was wondering if there were any conservative back there saying, 'Thomas Edison, just slow down here, mate. You haven't got the technology yet. You're a bit of a whippersnapper here. Just settle down'. It is an extraordinary position to take. No wonder those opposite and their colleagues in Canberra are considered to be in the dark ages on policy in this area. For goodness sake, they have lost three prime ministers out of it, and they have lost a number of National Party leaders out of it. Obviously the Leader of The Nationals down in Victoria has taken his paddle and is riding away as far as he can. He is trying to separate himself from those Nats to the north of our state.

The discovery of electricity in that commercialised and industrialised setting was described as meaning 'that fire had been discovered for the second time'. The way that renewable energy will support communities in the future and underpin our prosperity will be the third time, because according to the Clean Energy Council if renewable energy targets were not in place Australians would pay \$1.4 billion more for power by 2020.

The notion put forward by the member for Caulfield is that renewable energy and those actions are driving up prices. Point me to an example in the technology advancements now and the international and national evidence of where this is the case. The member for Caulfield talked about offsetting power bills. We have a number of ways that we are supporting Victorians with their power and concessions as well as giving power back to Victorians by putting solar on their homes. The notion that you keep funding and wallpapering over the problem rather than dealing with generation and storage just shows the inadequacy of their policy position in this space. We need to talk about storage. We need to talk about how we generate more renewable energy sources, because the market is investing in this area.

I want to share with the house a couple of facts in this space. One: power prices are going up, and we know that across this space. We are really tied to federal policies and the Council of Australian Governments meetings in this space. But those states and territories that had more investment in renewable energy had a lower increase in power bills; that is a fact. They had a lower increase in power bills with more renewable energy in the mix. That is why we are so passionate about creating more renewable energy in the market.

But the second thing that is really important to make clear to the house is that in the absence of a National Energy Guarantee we are seeing more supply in the sector. A report on the ABC on 27 June last year from Green Energy Markets, some new research at the time, said that renewable energy is set to supply one-third of the market needs by 2020. That is an extraordinary amount. If we look at the International Renewable Energy Agency arena, of which Australia is a member together with 160 other countries that are contributing in this space, it points to significant gains in technology and advancement that would see a substantial amount of more renewable energy in the mix. Its report talks about easily going towards 50 per cent by 2025. In the absence of policy at the federal level we are seeing that the market is far more cost-effective for renewable energy and that investment is being made.

The notion that was put forward by the member for Warrandyte supporting the federal position was absolutely extraordinary. He was saying that they are doing some great work in this space. Why then did the now Prime Minister, at the time that former Prime Minister Turnbull was trying to get the National Energy Guarantee, say in great detail, and I want to share this with the house:

If you're not for the National Energy Guarantee, then you're for continued uncertainty which leads to higher prices.

Indeed that is right. That is what the then Treasurer said—Prime Minister Morrison. Then of course we lost Prime Minister Turnbull and Scott Morrison walked away as prime minister from the National Energy Guarantee. Is that the policy position that the member for Warrandyte endorses that our nation should take? Three prime ministers have been lost because of policy inertia in this space. We have seen a backflip and a further flip on coal. We have a prime minister that walked in with a lump of coal, with a simplicity that was a painfully stupid way to approach a debate on energy policy in our country, which probably says more about where their federal policy position is, and then walked away from the National Energy Guarantee. Luckily the market is picking up the slack. Luckily Victoria is picking up the slack and we are giving power back to Victorians.

When we had the reverse auction the ambition was for 650 megawatts; we got 928 megawatts. It is an extraordinary amount, creating jobs and changing our energy mix. But it is more than just warped ideology. This matters to people's power bills, it matters to their cost of living and it matters to small businesses. The member for Caulfield came in here and said, 'Power prices are going up'. That is exactly right; they are. And what do you do to respond to those challenges? You have to have a long-

term policy position. You have to support the renewable energy target in Victoria and not go towards this flip-flopping on policy, because our constituents and our communities depend on it. Despite every bit of research that stacks up about climate change, the member for Gippsland South sneakily alluded to people believing in climate change but not being too sure about what the impacts are, which alludes to a long-held Nationals position that they still do not believe the overwhelming and huge amount of scientific research and papers that shows adamantly that climate change is being impacted by greenhouse gases. That is an extraordinary position to take. But beyond that, even if you are undermining science in our communities, the important thing is that this saves money and lowers people's power bills. That renewable energy—this was found in research provided—is now lowering power prices more than the subsidies that have been put forward for renewable energy. That is important, and that is in 2019. Look how far we have come in the last decade in technological advancement, in storage and capacity and in renewable energy generation. It is exciting because our communities will benefit from it and Victorians will benefit from it.

I do not hold my breath that those opposite will come to the table on policy in this space, but the Andrews Labor government will continue to do the heavy lifting in solar and wind generation and widescale renewable energy production because our communities, our constituents and our businesses rely on it.

Mr NEWBURY (Brighton) (15:43): I am particularly pleased to rise on this issue. At the outset I want to put my view on record. Traditional energy resources are limited. Our climate is changing. Renewable resources on the other hand are sustainable, support a balanced environment and can be naturally replenished. Renewable energy is the future. We as legislators need to lead and support the transformation of our energy market to renewables. Those comments are not simply motherhood statements. The Australian Energy Market Operator has also projected that Victoria's energy industry will shift towards renewables. AEMO has projected fundamental change in our energy generation over the next 20 years. Its report *Integrated System Plan*, released mid last year, predicts that roughly two-thirds of power generation will come from wind and solar, and I quote:

Record levels of newly committed renewable generation development ... is already on a path to wide-scale, fundamental transformation.

As a new legislator in this place, that gives me comfort because I know that positive change is well underway and that transformation will happen in my lifetime. What concerns me is that Victoria is unprepared for that widescale transformation. On a state-by-state comparison Victoria is notably behind. All states have aggressive plans for renewable transformation. However, this government is yet to develop the strategic planning pieces that will support widescale transformation. We need to do more than set aspirational targets. We need only look over our border into New South Wales to see how that government has supported change in a concrete way. In November 2018 that government released its particularly strong road map through its *Transmission Infrastructure Strategy*. The Victorian government has yet to show similar leadership.

We have already been handicapped by this lack of strategic planning. Industry is becoming increasingly concerned that this government needs to do more than set targets. In fact industry is now concerned that without a plan the government's target will become unachievable. Industry is also concerned that the government has not got a grip on the regulatory reform needed to make this plan happen, especially when Labor's default position is not smart regulation; it is over-regulation. Twenty years ago Victoria was a national leader on energy. Twenty years ago we were a net exporter of energy. Labor has been in government for most of the last 20 years. We are now a state of blackouts and a state that is forced to import energy.

In late January hundreds of thousands of Victorians suffered blackouts, and it was not the first time that we have seen them. Many Victorians were affected, including residents in my own electorate in Brighton, Brighton East, Elwood and Hampton. I recall a constituent of mine phoning me in tears because he was so concerned about his 74 and 76-year-old parents. I also remember the effect of

blackouts on my local small businesses. When a small business is forced to close its doors early it hurts them. It really hurts them. Those Victorians affected by blackouts were left angry by the misleading statements of our government. In fact only a day before this year's blackouts the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change guaranteed Victorians that she was absolutely confident there would be no blackouts. Those broken promises left Victorians incensed, and it was disappointing to see our Premier overtly and trickily mislead Victorians as to the cause of the problem. Instead of showing leadership and setting out a pathway for change, the Premier diverted the issue and blamed a former Premier. The Premier's intervention was political and cheap. What the blackouts have shown is that we are not properly prepared for the transformation of our energy market. With all due respect to the member for Mill Park, you can see that in the drafting of the matter of public importance.

What industry has consistently said to me is that cultivating a renewable energy industry will not happen overnight, and it will not happen by itself. Effectively we are heading down a path of fundamentally changing our energy market model from a model with a small number of energy generators to one with tens of thousands of generators. It is exciting, but there is growing concern from industry that it will take more than a target to achieve that change. One of their chief concerns is the issue of transmission and connectability. Our model has not been designed to plug in numerous thousands of new energy generators, nor do our current regulations support such a transformation.

Changing our energy generation model will require significant strategic planning and infrastructure work. Only recently Stuart Benjamin of the government's own Grampians New Energy Taskforce highlighted that point. He belled the cat by saying that limitations on infrastructure are inhibiting renewable projects, and I quote:

'We've got \$3 billion worth of projects currently underway ...

'And if some of the limitations that we're seeing in terms of infrastructure are addressed, we could possibly double or even triple that number.'

James Prest of the Australian National University's Energy Change Institute has voiced similar concerns. Although the Australian Energy Market Operator has suggested as much as 5000 megawatts of renewable energy could be generated in the state's west, Prest says:

It's really a bit like building a high-tech, modern greenhouse for agricultural production, and then attempting to get the produce to market down a one-lane bush track, which frequently becomes flooded.

That analogy paints a very clear picture. It is not just industry experts who have spoken about these issues. The Australian Energy Market Operator says in its *Integrated System Plan* report, and I quote:

The projected portfolio of new resources involves substantial amounts of geographically dispersed renewable generation, placing a greater reliance on the role of the transmission network. A much larger network footprint with transmission investment will be needed to efficiently connect and share these low fuel cost resources.

We need the right infrastructure, and this government should have planned for it yesterday.

One of my other great concerns is not just lack of preparedness. I am also concerned that other states are receiving a competitive advantage because our government has been slow in this policy space. In January the federal Labor Party turned its back on this state. They turned their back because they know that this government has not put in place the strategic plans to transform our energy model.

In January, federal Labor announced a \$1 billion commitment to make Gladstone in Queensland the hydrogen capital of Australia. There is no doubt in my mind that hydrogen is a particularly exciting fuel and an opportunity for our country. The federal Liberal Party recognises that opportunity too. Hydrogen is close to zero emissions, and with help it can be commercially viable. Other countries have recognised its potential and are getting on board. In its recent report, *Gas Vision 2050*, Energy Networks Australia has said, and I quote:

Exporting hydrogen from Australia ... provides a significant economic opportunity. For example, Japan has developed a roadmap for hydrogen, and Japanese businesses are looking at Australian natural energy resources to supply that hydrogen.

Australia's Chief Scientist, Dr Finkel, who is also chair of the Hydrogen Strategy Group, has said, and I quote:

Australian hydrogen exports could contribute \$1.7 billion and provide 2,800 jobs by 2030 ... [with] many of the opportunities ... concentrated in regional communities.

Yet despite the federal Labor leader hailing from Victoria, he turned his back on this state. Federal Labor's decision giving preference to Queensland is wrong and shows that Bill Shorten is no friend of Victoria. I am yet to hear a whimper from this state Labor government on that announcement.

Only this week, BAE Economics released its report into the economic consequences of alternative Australian climate approaches. The report assesses the two major federal parties' approaches to emission reduction, namely the coalition's intention to meet its Paris agreement commitment of 26 to 28 per cent emissions reduction by 2030, and Labor's target of 45 per cent emissions reduction over that same time frame. BAE's report found that under a worst-case scenario, Labor's policy approach could cost 336 000 jobs by 2030.

What the report should remind this Parliament is that transformative change must be planned and done responsibly. As a state, we must also be ready to put our best interests first. When it comes to renewable technology like hydrogen this state should be leading this country. I call on this government to bring together the best minds in this state and put in place a roadmap that will see the transformation of our energy market become a reality.

Members interjecting.

Mr TAYLOR (Bayswater) (15:52): It is great to hear the encouragement from my colleagues on what is an extremely important matter of public importance today. It is with great enthusiasm that I rise to speak in support of this matter of public importance. Having spoken on the environment just yesterday in my members statement it is timely that I am here today speaking on this matter as well.

Why am I so enthusiastic on this matter? Because it highlights a very clear distinction between the policies and the real actions of the Andrews Labor government and those opposite. On this side of the house—and the bit over here, as the Premier refers to—sits a progressive, forward-thinking government that is committed to an energy system that is clean, affordable and reliable. On the other side of the house sits an opposition that denies climate science and continues to run with the same old neoliberal narrative about high-energy prices and job losses. Some things never change.

Of course those on the opposite side of the house speak often about the benefits of privatisation, the cost of which this great state knows all too well. They speak often about how leaving the market to regulate itself is beneficial to consumers. In fact, when their so revered leader Jeff Kennett made the fateful decision to push that line and privatise the SEC, a government corporation that returned dividends back to taxpayers, he promised—and I note that the member for Caulfield, who was so resoundingly re-elected by 204 votes, likes a good quote, so I will quote Jeff Kennett:

... all members of the community, whether they be domestic householders or otherwise, will enjoy the benefits of lower real prices.

He said that in this house on 7 March 1995. It is commentary I am sure many of those on the opposition side would like to forget. And they do when they try to burden those on our side with the blame of rising energy prices, when we are the only ones actually doing anything about it.

When the constituents in my electorate of Bayswater tell me of the unparalleled pressure that rising energy costs put on their household budgets, when local businesses or the many residents in my electorate tell me they are struggling to pay their energy bills, it is clear that they are not benefiting from lower real prices. It is clear that they are not benefiting from a lack of government intervention in the market. It is clear the only ones benefiting are the private companies that profit from those high prices and then shift those profits overseas.

Now, I will not hold those opposite to account too much for the legacy left by the Kennett Liberal government, as I tend to think they have quickly wiped it from their memory in *Men in Black*-esque fashion, with one of those devices where they have all been flashed at a Liberal Party and have simply forgotten what has taken place. But the reality is that a largely unregulated market has been left to operate unfettered for far too long, and when those opposite were in government they did nothing about it.

What is even worse is that those opposite and their federal counterparts refuse to show leadership or support reforms in the sector—reforms that will lead to better outcomes for the environment, better outcomes for employment, better outcomes for the economy and for future generations to come. That lack of leadership has been phenomenal. We have seen a number of prime ministers, as the member for Mordialloc rightly pointed out, getting the sack for sticking their head up on this issue. I believe Barnaby might soon be making a very timely comeback in the lead-up to the next federal election.

The Andrews Labor government, in comparison, is leading the way in energy sector reforms. This government has developed energy and environmental policy that includes investing in renewables, growing jobs and reducing emissions, and moving into the 21st century. This government recognises that the world is rapidly transitioning to renewable energy generation sources, and we are acting to seize the economic, health and environmental benefits that renewable energy transition offers. Furthermore, our reforms mean better outcomes for customers by putting downward pressure on prices and protecting low-income and vulnerable customers.

Victorians have suffered the effects of privatising our energy sector for far too long. This government recognises that and has not wasted a single minute in leading the way towards significant change, despite the gaping hole left by those opposite. Under this government, unprecedented renewable energy development has occurred in Victoria. Over the 2018 calendar year alone renewable energy produced 20 per cent of Victoria's electricity generation. Since we have been in government we have built, are building or have contracted to build more than twice the capacity of the former Hazelwood power station in new renewables.

This government conducted Australia's largest reverse auction, seeking 650 megawatts of new renewable capacity. In 2018, we announced six successful wind and solar projects in the auction, totalling 928 megawatts of new renewable capacity. The successful projects will produce enough electricity to power more than 645 000 Victorian households, generate \$1.1 billion of economic investment in Victoria and create more than 900 jobs—which those opposite and in Canberra fail to understand.

We have written our Victorian renewable energy target (VRET) into law. We will deliver 25 per cent of our generation from renewable sources by 2020, 40 per cent by 2025 and we have legislated for net zero emissions by 2050. That is our trajectory, that is where we are going, that is our policy, and it is Victorian law. We are going further: we are setting a new target that 50 per cent of our generation will be renewable by 2030.

But it is a trajectory that those opposite are struggling to embrace. Only a few months ago they declared that if they won the November 2018 state election they would scrap that very same renewable energy target, declaring that the VRET leads to higher energy prices. Even a few months ago they were peddling the same old line, trying to scare Victorians with their neoliberal rhetoric while doing nothing—absolutely nothing—for the Victorian environment, for the Victorian people or for Victoria's future. Why can they not finally see that days of prioritising private sector interests over everyday citizens belongs well and truly in the past? All they were interested in was getting back in control. How good was that slogan? Just like their policy or lack thereof on the environment and renewable energy, it was empty self-interested rhetoric. We are doing what the federal Liberal government cannot do—that is, we are paving the way for national policy reform. We are not dilly-dallying around in the party room like the federal Liberal government—the Morrison-Turnbull-Abbott minority government or whatever they are being called from one day to the next. For the last six years they have failed to deliver decisive energy policy that includes a renewable energy target, an emissions intensity scheme, a clean energy target or a national energy guarantee. Instead they celebrate by

bringing coal into the Parliament and then knifing leaders in the back when they go against the hard right of the coalition party room, which surrounds the likes of Mr Peter Dutton. They fail to see that our old power plants, those built I might add by taxpayers, are getting older and that without certainty in federal policy no-one is willing to invest in new ones.

They are unable to see that this failure in policy is driving up prices and putting security of supply at risk. They fail to recognise that every energy company, peak body and industry group has made it clear that federal policy uncertainty is stalling investment in new generation and, in doing so, stalling investment in jobs and investment in the economy and the future generations of this great state. The policy experts of those opposite know better. If I want my facts on climate change and renewable energy, I will be sure to exclude those opposite from any future mailing lists.

The member for Carrum rightly also acknowledged the fair-weather campaigning by the federal Liberals, who cannot seem to make up their minds—

Ms Ward interjected.

Mr TAYLOR: Absolutely. The member for Eltham has rightly pointed out the flipping and flopping of—

Mr Edbrooke: They're the Birkenstocks of politics.

Mr TAYLOR: Absolutely. It has reached peak fever pitch when the likes of Tony Abbott, up against a staunch environmentalist Independent, magically changes his view for the 15th time on the Paris climate accord. I thought hell might have frozen over before he did that again, but nothing surprises me any more with that lot up in Canberra.

This government is not waiting for federal leadership, because if we did, we would be waiting longer than it takes for the cows to come home or whatever saying one could possibly think of—nor do we expect any bipartisanship from those opposite. While those on the opposite side are busy fighting amongst themselves and while they scramble around each other trying to work out their position, we are getting on and we are getting it done.

We are also implementing the recommendations that came out of the independent review of Victoria's electricity and gas retail markets. I was proud to speak on the bill around the Victorian default offer, which will hold greedy energy retailers to account and ensure those who are most vulnerable—of which there are many in our community—get money back into their pockets. As the Minister for Mental Health pointed out, ours is better and ours is fairer than the subsequent legislation that the federal Morrison minority government introduced after it was once again dragged kicking and screaming to the issue. This is why I am proud to be part of a government that values its environment and values and invests in renewable energy, one that has brought us into the 21st century.

Bills

OPEN COURTS AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL 2019

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (16:02): I wonder if I should call for an extension. The new member seemed to be in full flight, making a considerable contribution to the matter of public importance. But I will stick with protocol and continue on this bill.

Just to reframe the argument: rather than an ad hoc approach to suppression orders, courts will now be required to give reasons outlining the grounds on which a suppression order was made, its duration and its scope. This was a critical proposition that particularly the media were concerned about, and the

bill attempts to get the balance right there. But the presumption should always be in favour of open justice. That is why these amendments are needed.

The law will empower victims and empower the community, and that is another initiative because that has been important in a lot of cases particularly around violence towards women, particularly around sexual abuse. This is something that has evolved now, and the victims of sexual and family violence offences will be empowered to share their stories under a new process enabling courts to make orders lifting bans on publishing a victim's identity.

The bill also makes an important change to the existing laws preventing the publication of prior youth convictions. What we are also doing is ensuring that patterns of behaviour are easily identified by amending the law around prior youth convictions to allow the County and Supreme courts to publish relevant convictions in the sentencing remarks of adult offenders if the youth convictions are part of an entrenched pattern of offending. That is the key point—that it is an entrenched pattern. These changes build on amendments introduced by the government last year which explicitly excluded victims from non-publication provisions applying to Children's Court proceedings as these relate to disclosure of their own identities.

This bill was introduced in the last Parliament, and it is now looking to be enforced. I do not think I need to go into why it did not get through in that last Parliament—the arguments have been well ventilated. But just in summing up the key points: what it will do is get the balance right. We had an outbreak of suppression orders, and in the media in particular, as I know from my own experience in an earlier phase of my career, it is difficult to know what is being suppressed and where you can go to establish that. There is a mechanism for addressing the issue, which I think is critical for certainty. The bill also looks at how we address this as best we can now, looking at these issues.

It is also improving judges' understanding of suppression orders with new programs and materials developed by the Judicial College of Victoria, and that refers to the fact that the Vincent review found that too many judges and magistrates had limited understanding of their responsibilities under the Open Courts Act 2013. You could tell where the cultural blind spot had occurred. This is a way of addressing that.

Another proposal is creating the central, publicly accessible register, as I have described, so that you know where suppression orders are and where they have been made by courts and tribunals—you know where to go to get access. I think this is an important initiative. Having a central databank will enable journalists and other people who need to know to ascertain whether there is a suppression order in place or not so that they can comply with the law.

Another recommendation is that all suppression orders be treated as interim orders for the first five days so that interested parties, including the media, can make submissions against the need for the order. That means they can be contested and arguments can be raised again in court, and I think that is good for transparency and accountability.

I think we have now seen a range of different approaches arising from the work of Frank Vincent and his recommendations. The government is adopting those and now putting this bill through the house as a way of addressing as best we can the need to rebalance this issue and to allow greater access to what happens within the courts. To be able to deliver that is important.

We have to address the issue of the internet, digital technology, social media and whether they make suppression orders all but irrelevant anyway. This is the modern era that we live in. We have seen in a high-profile case recently—because it is on appeal I will not go into the detail, but I want to make this point from this perspective—that even though it was suppressed here it was reported overseas, and with the echo chamber of the digital media the results were known and understood here. So this will continue to be a work in progress, but I think that this is a suite of admirable reforms that will go a long way to providing greater transparency, and I commend this bill to the house.

Mr TAK (Clarinda) (16:09): I am delighted to rise today to speak on the Open Courts and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2019. This bill will require that suppression orders and closed court orders only be used when necessary, such as where publication of information would be unfair or would risk harming victims or other parties. Under the amendments a court will have to give reasons for making a suppression order, outlining the basis on which it is made, its duration and the scope of information it covers. This is a positive development, and I am happy to see this bill before the Parliament today because transparency and public scrutiny are fundamentally important to our justice system.

An open and effective judiciary is critical to democracy, and in this day and age it is more important than ever. The world is becoming a more complex place. Crime is also becoming a more complex issue, and it is changing and evolving. Organised crime and crimes such as terrorism are really complex issues, and as such the principle of open justice has never been more important.

At this point I would like to take this opportunity to share my condolences with the families of all those affected by the terror attack in Christchurch last Friday. I extend my solidarity to all. I was proud to attend the Indonesian Muslim Community of Victoria Masjid Westall mosque on Sunday. One of the quotes that really struck me at the mosque was:

God created different tribes, complete with different colours and languages. The purpose is not to hate each other but to learn from each other.

I think this is a really powerful message, a message that reminds us all that diversity is our strength.

In these changing times I am very happy to see this bill here today. The bill will respond either in full or in part to seven of the remaining legislative recommendations of the *Open Courts Act Review*. It was in 2016 that the government asked a former Court of Appeal and Supreme Court justice, the Honourable Frank Vincent, to conduct a review of the Open Courts Act 2013 and other Victorian legislation which prohibits or restricts the publication of information. That review was asked to consider whether the act is striking the right balance between the need for open and transparent justice and the need to protect the legitimate interests of victims, witnesses and accused persons and to preserve the proper administration of justice. It was a thorough and comprehensive review process that consulted and received submissions from various stakeholders including the courts, the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Victorian Bar, police, media and victims of crime.

The review found that the courts and tribunals made relatively few suppression orders considering their overall case load but that further work was needed to ensure that future orders are clearer and made only when necessary. In total there were 18 recommendations to ensure that suppression orders are only made when absolutely necessary. The government has supported 17 of the 18 recommendations; one recommendation is subject to further consideration.

One recommendation relating to the disclosure of the identities of adult victims in Children's Court proceedings was implemented by the government in the Justice Legislation Amendment (Victims) Act 2018, which passed the Parliament in February last year. The remainder of the legislative applications are being addressed in two stages. The first stage is the bill here today, which is identical to the Open Courts and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2018 which lapsed with the conclusion of the last Parliament.

Some of the key changes under the bill include amendments to the purposes of the Open Courts Act 2013 to make clear the value of open justice and to emphasise the importance of transparency in our legal system; preventing suppression orders being made under the Open Courts Act when suppression can be ordered under other legislation; importantly, requiring courts and tribunals to give reasons for making suppression orders under the Open Courts Act; enabling suppression orders to continue after an appeal has been filed unless varied or revoked by the appellate court; and enabling adult victims of sexual and family violence offences to speak more openly about their experiences. The bill will also amend section 534 of the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 to narrow the scope of particulars deemed likely to lead to the identification of a person. The amendment will ensure that

the prohibition against publishing the identity of a young offender applies as narrowly as possible to enable free reporting of court proceedings. This builds on the recommendations of the review.

I am sure many of us took advantage of the live streaming of the sentencing in a high-profile case recently. That is one example of how initiatives can facilitate the public understanding of court proceedings and sentencing. This is quite significant for my constituents in Clarinda. It is a very diverse electorate. More than half of my constituents come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Individuals from CALD backgrounds can experience significant barriers to accessing justice as a result of their circumstances and past experiences. One example that I encountered several times during my work as a suburban legal practitioner relates to the presumption of knowledge of the law. In the Victorian judicial system knowledge of the law is presumed and ignorance of the law is no excuse. This is often fundamentally different in the countries of origin of many of my constituents. The same can be said of court processes and the sentencing process. This confusion can breed mistrust of the legal system in migrant communities, so initiatives that help to open courts and help to foster a dialogue also work to enhance public confidence in the justice system and allow for clearer understanding and enforcement. This is an issue for many of my constituents, and I am looking forward to the potential benefits of these changes.

In addition to the proposed changes, the government last year asked the Victorian Law Reform Commission to review contempt-of-court laws and enforcement of suppression orders. I am looking forward to the commission's report to the government, which is due on 31 December 2019. The government has also committed to progressing all supported legislative recommendations of the review. The government is giving further consideration to recommendation 18 and will be consulting with stakeholders. Four recommendations are non-legislative. One has been implemented, as I mentioned, and the remaining three are being progressed independently with a view to implementing them as soon as possible. So this is a comprehensive and holistic approach to ensure the effective and transparent operation of our justice system. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms KAIROUZ (Koroit—Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Suburban Development) (16:18): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

Address to Parliament

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed on motion of Mr BRAYNE:

That the following address, in reply to the speech of Her Excellency the Governor to both houses of Parliament, be agreed to by this house:

Governor:

We, the Legislative Assembly of Victoria assembled in Parliament, wish to express our loyalty to our Sovereign and to thank you for the speech which you have made to the Parliament.

And Mr HIBBINS's amendment:

That the following words be added to the end of the motion: 'but respectfully regret that the speech fails to outline effective measures to protect Victoria's natural environment and endangered plants and animals, nor address the urgent water, climate and extinction crises that affect all Victorians'.

Ms WARD (Eltham) (16:18): As I was saying last time we were sitting, I was extremely thrilled about the announcement of a new community hospital for my community. This is going to be a great

advantage not just for the people who reside within the district of Eltham but for all those along the growth corridor between Yan Yean Road and Plenty Road. This is great far-sighted policy by this government, and I am thrilled to support it and indeed thrilled that my community supported it overwhelmingly.

We had \$8 million for the Diamond Valley Sports and Fitness Centre. Acting Speaker, you might not be aware of the magnitude of basketball in my community, but I can tell you it is massive. We have over 11 000 people playing basketball in my community. We have got clubs that you can see from the moon—they are that big. And while Diamond Valley do not have the great red and black colours that the Wildcats have, they are a fantastic family club and I am thrilled to support them.

There is \$16.1 million for Montmorency Secondary College, which will also advantage the Wildcats. Again, basketball needs infrastructure in my community, and the Andrews government has responded and will deliver to enhance basketball services across my community but also give them the facilities that they need. When we have got situations where girls cannot actually train on basketball courts on any given night of the week because there are just not enough courts to go around, government needs to step in and support them, and this is exactly what we have done with our election commitment. I cannot wait to see it come about.

The new parks for Eltham and the new dog park—these are going to be fantastic. As you would imagine in a community like mine, which is pretty environmentally oriented, we love animals. To be able to support our dogs, to have a place for our dogs in addition to the current dog park that we have got in Eltham, which is shared with the local sporting facility—as you can imagine, that creates its own challenges in having lacrosse and cricket played on an oval where there are also dogs, and you can imagine the deposits that sometimes go on that oval—and to be able to create a private space for dogs which they are not sharing with sporting codes I think will be of great benefit.

We have also got new car parks for Eltham station, which will also be of great benefit to my community. By 6.30–7.00 on most mornings you cannot get a car park within cooee of the station; to be able to address that is terrific. I am also looking forward to the direct bus service, once Hurstbridge stage 2 gets up and running, to help people again get into the city. It was a great success when the work for Hurstbridge stage 1 was underway. To be able to again ferry people into the city as quickly as possible with the least amount of disturbance is very important.

One thing I am particularly passionate about in our election commitments is the \$1 million for the Lower Plenty Football Club. This is a terrific club, and it is a club that has become the senior club for the Research Junior Football Club as well. You are probably aware, Acting Speaker, that we are already funding the redevelopment of the Research Junior Football Club pavilion, which is almost completed. It is going to have one of the best views going across the north-east. To be able to further enhance that club's structure and strength with money for the Lower Plenty Football Club—a fantastic club, the Bears—is going to be terrific.

I am also excited about the \$1 million that we have pledged for St Thomas the Apostle Primary School, a great local Catholic school, which has got a fantastic vision for how it can take the school further. I am really excited about the kind of works they want to do, including an amphitheatre for that school community.

But we have got commitments across Victoria that we announced over the last election period that will have lasting effects for our community. One of the most important was our announcement of a mental health royal commission. I commend the minister and I commend the Premier for the work that they are doing here. This is incredibly important. To be able to cast a light into the dark shadows of mental health and the way people who need mental health services are treated is going to be game changing, and I am very, very proud of this government for taking this important and strong step.

I also look forward to the legislation that will strengthen green wedge protections. As you can imagine, Acting Speaker Richardson, being a green wedge MP yourself, having protections that do strengthen our green wedge, that do consolidate those protections that are needed and ensure that the green wedge is used as it should be is something that I strongly support.

I am also excited about the announcements and the work we are doing in infrastructure projects like Melbourne Metro, the West Gate Tunnel, the north-east link, regional rail upgrades, level crossing removals, statewide upgrades to our hospitals and school rebuilds. There is so much we are going to do as a government in the next four years and it is going to be fantastic.

Before I finish up, I do want to acknowledge my community and thank them for supporting me and giving me the immense privilege of representing them. My community is full of activists, passionate people who are caring people, and I am deeply honoured that they have decided that I should be their member of Parliament for the next four years.

I also cannot thank enough those who have helped me in the Labor Party. I want to thank the state office. I thank the Labor Party and I thank my good friend Kosmos Samaras for the tremendous support that he has given me over decades of friendship. Thank you to my amazing staff: Joe, Adele, Naomi, Antony, Emily, Liz, Duncan and Andriana, Megan, Ashlea, Dylan and Shanae. I also have a fantastic crew of supporters and volunteers including but not limited to Rhonda, Jennie, Garry, Russell and John, along with Alexander, Harry and Angela and the amazingly energetic and passionate Natalie.

There are fantastic people in my community, people who have real commitments, who have strong commitments to social justice, who care deeply about their community and the wider community, and they are a very active community. I have had so many people come to help me during my campaign, people from the community who want to preserve our community but who also have embraced the progressive agenda of this government, who have felt proud of this government, who have felt proud of our Premier and who have wanted to go into bat for this progressive government and for the fantastic things that we are doing, and it is across the spectrum. It is people from a diverse array of backgrounds in my community who are so glad to have a government that stands up for them, that represents them, that cares about them and that creates legislation that will actively change their lives for the better. They know that we will do what we say, and they are grateful to have a government that will stand up for them and stand up for what is right in this state.

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (16:25): It is a great privilege to provide your address-in-reply because of course it means that you have been re-elected or elected to this place. I would like to open my contribution to this debate by thanking the enormous number of people who have helped me in my journey, whether that was over the election campaign or whether it was over the past four years in my first term of Parliament, because I have absolutely no doubt that the hard work that was put in over those four years of the 58th Parliament assisted me to achieve the result that we did at the last election. With that I would like to roll through a lot of thankyous. I realise most people would probably leave that until the end, but I think it is the most important thing to do when it comes to speaking about your re-election to this place.

Firstly, if I can just thank my wonderful staff who have worked so hard over the past four years. We have a reputation in the electorate office of Lowan that we get back to everybody. We make a conscientious effort to follow up on issues that we cannot necessarily fix. We know that constituents want to be heard and we make all possible efforts to try to resolve the problems. That certainly means that I get a lot of thankyous, but they really should be passed on to my fantastic staff. Particularly to Suzanne, to Kym and to Helen, I would like to pass on my thanks to those three wonderful women for fighting hard for our electorate to get a fair deal and of course for their ongoing support. I really greatly appreciate it.

I would also like to thank my campaign manager, the Honourable Hugh Delahunty. He is still very active in the community and provides an enormous amount of support and direction for me, which is

fantastic and greatly appreciated. I thank my campaign committee, the hundreds of people who handed out how-to-vote cards for me, particularly over the extended pre-poll period, and all of my supporters for their kind words of support, the funds that they provided for the campaign, maybe a like or a comment on social media or just telling their friends that I was the one that they should vote for and that Emma Everywhere was somebody worth supporting. Thank you so much. It does mean a lot to me, people putting in that effort.

To my amazing family, my loving family, to my mum and dad, Liz and Rob; to my awesome brother, Sam; the fantastic Jones family, particularly Chris, Mya and Tess; Jess who handed out heaps of how-to-vote cards for me, which was great; and the extended family—the support is never ending. Thank you so very, very much for that. And of course my little boy, Harvey, who would always keep things in reality and would refuse to be involved in any handing out of how-to-vote cards but did find it quite entertaining that Mummy's face was on lots of posters all around town. At one point we were in Warracknabeal at a netball and football match and he saw the big trailer. He looked at me and asked, 'Mummy, are you famous?'. I said, 'Not really, Harvey, but a lot of people tend to know who I am'. 'I knew you were famous, Mum', he replied. It was very, very cute, and I do love my little boy. Thank you very much, Harvs. You probably do not quite understand at six what that support means, but it does mean a lot. I hope you look back in the future and I make you proud, because you certainly make me a very proud mum.

I would also like to thank the National Party membership and The Nationals parliamentary team. The support we get from our National Party colleagues is absolutely amazing. We all travel long distances to be here each and every week and we provide support not just for political issues and helping to sort through different matters to get ideas on how we can do something a bit differently but we also provide personal and emotional support. I think that is what really makes the Nats stand out. We have that collegiality. We are like a big family, and I do think as a result of that we came up with some really good policies that would help people in country Victoria right across the state. I think that is why we had a really good result in many, many seats.

I would also like to express my gratitude to two members of the Nats, former MPs who were not fortunate enough to retain their seats, and that is Peter Crisp and Luke O'Sullivan. I think that both Peter and Luke were outstanding parliamentary representatives. This place is the lesser for the loss of those two members, but I know they are still in close contact not just with us as MPs but with their electorates. They will continue to stand up for their communities. They are still very strong supporters of and contributors to the National Party and I cherish not just the time that we were able to work together but also their friendship, which I know will continue long into the future.

I would also like to make special mention of Joanne Armstrong, who was a National Party candidate for Western Victoria Region. Jo put in an amazing effort over the time of the campaign. She also supported the member for Ripon in her re-election very, very strongly, whether it was helping to hand out how-to-vote cards, assistance with scrutineering or getting around the electorate and going to lots of events. Jo, your contribution was really something I have not seen before in a prospective upper house member. I thank you so much for your dedication and support. It is great to have strong, intelligent, wonderful women flocking to the party at the moment, because they know that women can be involved in the Nats and be strong advocates for country Victoria and that is something the Nats can help facilitate. Thank you so much, Jo. I look forward to continuing to work with you into the future.

As we know, it was a bittersweet result in Lowan. It was very humbling to have increased my first-preference vote from 54 per cent four years ago to 68 per cent against a statewide swing. But, as I said, it was not my own result. It was a combination of a lot of things, particularly a lot of hard work by a lot of people over that first term in the 58th Parliament of Victoria. The people of Lowan have put their confidence in me and I will never take this trust and faith for granted. That is something that is often slung around during an election campaign. You see these campaigns to 'Make Lowan marginal' or saying that the Nationals are taking the seat for granted. I have never done that and I refuse to ever

do that. The people of Lowan deserve a lot better and I know they are a lot smarter than that too. If I did start to take the electorate for granted and not put in the kilometres and the hours and the commitment that I do and have proven to do very strongly over five years now, then I think there would be a much different result. So I do make that commitment. It does not matter what the margin is but I will never, ever stop fighting for a better deal for all country Victorians, particularly those that are furthest from Melbourne.

I do think there would have been a slightly different result in the election if Labor had had policies which support country Victoria and if we had seen some significant financial pre-election commitments to our part of the state. I think the most disappointing failure of commitment was around the Warracknabeal education precinct. This is a half-built school that has basically half of the secondary college and a third of the special development school, which has meant that now the SDS has relocated to these new buildings but they cannot use the facilities properly and they are not appropriate for this cohort of children.

These are amazing students. They deserve far, far better. We cannot really use a brand-new science lab that was designed for secondary school students for the special development school students. They have not got proper learning spaces that can nurture and support the growth and development of children with special needs. We have got a budget coming up and I do urge the Andrews Labor government to try and fix this. It cannot just fund half a school and walk away from it. We need a full commitment. We need to see this project finished and it needs to happen starting with the next budget, whether it was an election commitment or not. The Nationals did commit to keeping that project going. Labor needs to fix the mess that is at Warracknabeal and I just cannot urge that project forward strongly enough, because it is a disaster now. It is appalling how that school has been handled and it just would not happen in Melbourne.

It is pleasing to see that we did get one commitment, which was a matched commitment to redevelop Baimbridge College in Hamilton. This was an amazing campaign and I am proud to stand side by side with the community of Baimbridge to achieve that. I look forward to seeing that in the first year's budget for this 59th Parliament of Victoria, and I look forward to seeing that project progress and making sure that Baimbridge is given the school that their students and future students deserve.

We also had some other really important commitments that will help to support and develop growth in our region—whether it was around an increased investment for Coleraine police station and Hamilton police station or whether it was around refurbishment and rebuilding of a section of Willaura hospital in the east of the electorate. We also put forward some great funding for a water play and splash park for Horsham. This is a great commitment of just over \$2 million and it may not have won me any votes from any adults—maybe a few grandparents and parents—but I think if I am still standing for Parliament at about the time that today's 6 to 10-year-olds are ready to vote then hopefully we will have that done by then and I will be able to collect on that future investment of putting in a water play and splash park.

A really important commitment that I would like to see continue to be developed was an interesting concept around developing the Wimmera River in Horsham to build a conference centre and a coffee shop or a restaurant. We have got this amazing feature of our local landscape, the Wimmera River, and there is not one place where you can have a cup of coffee or a glass of wine along it. We are halfway between Adelaide and Melbourne. We have got the beautiful Grampians National Park on our doorstep and we do not have anywhere we can have a cuppa on the river. This is a great opportunity for our region. It really captured the hearts and minds of my community when I put this idea forward and already two private investors have come forward, so this is something we need to just get going on. It is not a lot of money that the council needs to look at master planning in that area and doing some consultation in the community to work out what exactly we need for that region, but it is something I hope this government will assist to support the growth and development in our local region.

There were other great announcements that support our community, around unlocking commercial land and building the Stony Creek Bridge in Halls Gap, and new clubrooms and a community pavilion at Nhill's Davis Park—and can I at this point just recognise and thank the marvellous late Glenn Meek for his amazing commitment to Nhill and to that park and making it amazing. If there is no other reason we need to get Nhill's Davis Park upgraded, let us do it in memory of Glenn, because gee, he was a good fella and it is awful that we have lost him.

Whether it is about the refurbishment of Longerenong College's agribusiness centre or whether it is stage 2 of the Hamilton CFA-EMV airbase, we need all of these things in my electorate. We also made a great commitment to fix country roads and save country lives. Let us look at building better roads and look at being smarter about how we build roads which are actually made to stand the test of time and be built to last through the type of transport that we have in our region.

Let us bring back passenger rail to Horsham and Hamilton. We are the only electorate in Victoria that does not have any passenger rail services whatsoever. We do have the Overland train. There is a constant question mark about it and it is more of a tourist train but there are people, particularly in the west of my electorate, who rely on the Overland to commute to medical appointments in Melbourne. I really would like to see a huge investment in how we can have better connectivity between our part of the state and those bigger centres, whether Ballarat or through to Melbourne. We need to be connected and we deserve better around that.

We also had good announcements around how we can provide better connections, particularly around enhancing reimbursement rates for the Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme. I think that was very important. It is something that I get a lot of complaints around, just the sheer expense of having to go to medical appointments out of town. We need to look at how we can get decent policy to support people in country areas. It is different to being in the city. We need to see an extension to the kangaroo pet food trial—and in fact it should be made permanent. We need to see a change of heart from the Andrews Labor government around the centralised government banking concept, where any government body has to centralise their funds in a Westpac bank account in Sydney. It is hitting our community banks particularly hard, and our communities are losing an enormous amount of funding as a result of this banking decision. There is the management of native vegetation and the locking up of our national parks, and the ridiculous decision to shut down rock climbing in the Grampians, which is just absolutely crazy and needs to be reversed. There is a pathway we can take where we can respect the environment, we can respect local Indigenous history and sites of cultural significance and we can support our amazing tourism industry and small businesses which rely on rock climbing.

We have so many opportunities here, but I do want to see one thing from the Andrews Labor government. We live a successful life beyond Melbourne. We may be a long way away, but we should not be forgotten. I urge the Andrews Labor government to put us first at some point in time.

Ms HENNESSY (Altona—Attorney-General, Minister for Workplace Safety) (16:40): I rise to make a couple of brief comments on the address-in-reply, and of course this serves as an opportunity for us to reflect upon the Governor's speech and the fantastic election result. One of my colleagues just advised me that today is in fact the International Day of Happiness. We can sometimes lose the love when we are in Parliament, and so it is in that spirit that I shall make a very brief contribution.

The member for Lowan makes a very important point, that we can have happiness even if there is not too much love in the joint—and I will take up that sentiment. I would like to briefly reflect upon some of the important things that have occurred in my local electorate over the last four years. Labor's investment in infrastructure has been incredibly important. There have been over 31 000 new jobs generated in the western suburbs, and that has been very important, given the incredible levels of population growth. We are investing in skills and education. Wyndham Tech School opened, and the investment in free TAFE has been very important for our local community. We have seen over 13 000 students take up opportunities at Wyndham TAFE as well. We have made investments in local roads.

The outer suburban western roads project—a \$1.8 billion project—is very important. That is not to say that any of the local representatives in the western suburbs will take their foot off the accelerator when it comes to advocating for ongoing investment. That is something that my community expects of me.

Investments in things like the West Gate Tunnel will be important because they will improve commuter times as well as generating 6000 jobs. I was very proud to know that we have finally got some direct services back on the Altona loop for my local community. But investing in local roads and rail and improving bus services are certainly very big priorities for my local community. There is the \$85 million Werribee Mercy Hospital expansion, again a very important project that I am very proud of. The \$200 million Joan Kirner Women's and Children's Hospital Project is very important when it comes to local health services, and I was determined to not stop being the Victorian health minister until we secured the investment and commitment for the redevelopment of Footscray Hospital. I am delighted that the \$1.5 billion investment in that important piece of infrastructure was a commitment that our government made in the prelude to the last election, and I am very proud of that.

During the election campaign other commitments were made. There was the expansion of Altona College, another very important education facility; building a new community hospital in Point Cook; and the second stage of Saltwater P-9 College. We have committed to provide assistance for boaters and fishers—and we have fantastic coastal facilities in Altona, right across the west in fact. We do not like to brag about them because we like to keep them secret, but boating and fishing are very important in my electorate as well. There will be a new car park for Aircraft station, which will increase the number of car parks there. That is very important as we see great growth in the outer suburbs. We need to encourage people. We need to actually make it possible for people to be able to access those train lines. Expanding the car park is an important part of that, but as I said, I will be continuing to advocate for increased investment in additional bus services and additional train services.

Our multicultural community is a very important part of our local community in the west. We were delighted, as were my other western suburb MPs, to make commitments to funding and providing support to Holi and Diwali festivals in the west and to be able to support all of our local Indian communities and cultural leaders to that end.

Following the election we saw some changes in the ministerial line-up. I would like to use this opportunity to express my very deep thanks to all of those I worked with whilst I was the Minister for Health, in particular all the staff from the Department of Health and Human Services. I was a demanding minister of my bureaucracy, and together we managed not just to turn around things like poor elective surgery results, get the best ambulance response times and the biggest capital injection across the state but we also tackled very challenging issues like medical treatment decisions, assisted dying, getting safe access zones in place, reforms around assisted reproductive technology and getting quality and safety reforms in place arising out of some of the horrific findings into the Djerriwarrh hospital incident. We supported our nurses; we put in place nurse-patient ratios for the first time in this state. We legalised medicinal cannabis and we supported medical research. Many of those things were only made possible because of the support of the workforce and the very hard work of the people from the Department of Health and Human Services, and I doff my hat to them with the greatest of respect and gratitude. I know that they will continue to work hard supporting my friend Jenny Mikakos, who will do a spectacular job as the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services.

I would like to acknowledge the former Attorney-General, the member for Keysborough. They are indeed big shoes that I have to fill in my new role as the Attorney-General. I am very focused on the election commitments we have made in respect of workplace manslaughter and wage theft. Ensuring that we increase the accessibility of justice for all Victorians is very much part of my priority over the coming years, as well as ensuring that victims are given much greater sensitivity and inclusion in the criminal justice process. There is much work to be done.

Campaigns are not won by any one individual. They are won by teams, and I had a very competent and wonderful team in my corner in Altona. In particular I would like to thank Craig Mayo, Maryam,

Vinayak, Rachael and Gaye, Lori and Jason, the McPhersons, Ed, Carl Marsich, Paddy, Akira, Punita, Sara and Nat, Corneilius, Jack Hollowell, Elleni, Charlie Volpe, Gary Cogan—a very passionate Western Bulldogs supporter—Greg Buliffe and the exceptional John and the entire Ballestrino family. I thank my electorate team: Helen, Memphis, Emma and Josh, and John as well—and all of the wonderful volunteers that supported us, of course. I also want to acknowledge my staff who worked for me as the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services in the political office. Many of those have taken the great risk in life by coming along and following me to the justice department. Some have stayed working in health and some have decided, very wisely perhaps, to go and get a life. It is very, very difficult to sustain life working in political environments and I want to express my deep gratitude and thanks to them.

I would like to acknowledge the incredible team who worked on the Labor campaign. People have called out Sam, Kosmos and Stephen and also Lissie, the Premier's chief of staff. They led an extraordinary team that was supported by volunteers, members and supporters right across this state in an election result that I think we have every right to feel extraordinarily proud of. We also need to ensure that we feel very humbled by that result and we will continue to be focused on delivering on our election commitments and rising to the challenges that we have not planned for over the next four years.

In conclusion, I would like to also just acknowledge my wonderful family who endure my political life. They have been a fantastic source of support. Election year means different things to different people. For candidates and MPs it means working tirelessly but for children it means sometimes getting the disappointing news that your mum or your dad are not able to make things. So I would like to really thank my beautiful children, Lily and Ginger, for their support and their indulgence. Thank you to my lovely husband, Bernie—again, a person who endures my political life rather than a person who is a champion of it. Ultimately, keeping households running is such an incredibly important role of partners of politicians. Irrespective of what your political colour is, I think for partners, children, other family members and supporters of politicians we ought to get down on our hands and knees and worship the ground they walk on, because they endure all of the costs and consequences of political life. I pay my family my respects very, very deeply and with great love and appreciation. There is also to my extended family, who come out and support my political activities on election and who forgive me.

There are my beautiful girlfriends as well, particularly Donna, Marlene, Georgina and Suzette. They have been my best friends from school time and continue to be. They are my civilians who ensure that I keep myself very, very engaged in what ordinary people care about. Again, I thank them for indulging the negligence as my friends as being funny and fun. Again I would like to just place my love and appreciation of them formally on the record.

Finally, Maria and Frankie. Maria is my very large pussy cat and Frankie is my very gorgeous border collie.

Ms Kairouz interjected.

Ms HENNESSY: She is indeed beautiful. Again, they are very important parts of my family. They too have endured neglect. I am very grateful for the fact that when you come home from work, even when it is late at night and the rest of the family is to bed, they are still an enthusiastic couple with wet noses ready to give you love and a bit of affection as well.

With those informal and perhaps slightly inappropriate acknowledgements, I would like to also acknowledge and express my appreciation and thanks to all of those who have made such spectacular inaugural speeches. They have been breathtaking from, as I said, people right across the chamber. It does make me reflect upon the fact that the future of this Parliament is in good hands. What I have been particularly moved by has been the power of the personal stories that many people generously shared. I hope we can remember the respect that we have felt and that those stories have engendered throughout what will be some inevitably very contested times in this Parliament. I wish everybody

well and thank the Governor for her speech and I thank the chamber for the opportunity to comment on it briefly.

Mr TILLEY (Benambra) (16:51): Thank you for the opportunity to make a contribution to the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech. As we have heard from parliamentary colleagues over a number of weeks since the Governor gave her speech, it is an extraordinary privilege to be able to serve our respective electoral districts in this great state of Victoria, no matter where they are, whether they be suburban, regional or more remote parts of our state. We all come to this place with significant passion and drive to do the very best for our respective districts. I would like to congratulate each and every person on their respective election success. I congratulate those who are new to this Legislative Assembly and wish them all the very best. We will see what the future has for all of us. I congratulate those who are returning to carry on the work that they do for their respective communities.

More important than talking about ourselves is talking about the people in our districts. For Benambra, it is about the 44 000 people who lodged their vote, whether it was at pre-poll, by postal vote or on polling day. I thank each and every person who lodged their vote regardless of who they voted for. They did take that very important step of making their vote count. In my case it was to my benefit, to continue serving the Benambra district. I thank everybody, I really do. It was not like the election for the 56th, 57th or 58th Parliament for me. There was a significant amount of bark taken off and the primary vote was significantly reduced, down to around 40 per cent. It took a number of days to count the vote. The traditional two-party preferred was not the Liberal Party and Labor. It was a count between the Independent and the incumbent, so it took a little bit more time. I appreciate that. There was a little bit of excitement, colour and movement during those days and talk of what the likely outcome was going to be. It was fascinating to watch. Throughout my service and in my working career people watching has been a fascinating pastime. I certainly enjoy watching people's reactions to a whole range of things.

Anyway, that is now going back to November of last year. Parliament is back and now it is time to knuckle down and do the important work that we do as legislators for the betterment of the state of Victoria. We may not agree on everything. We may agree on some things and we may oppose others. The important thing is our Westminster system. It is not perfect but it has to be robust. Hopefully we will have the best outcomes that we can achieve as legislators for this great state of ours.

I will talk about the electorate. Those who have not been there need to take the time out and enjoy the great parts of the Benambra district, including the local council area of Indigo, which is very rich in its original gold rush and goldmining history. There is no goldmining there nowadays but it is very rich throughout. You can see history in Beechworth or Chiltern and certainly in Rutherglen, where there are still original what I suppose you would call relics of the past. Certainly you cannot touch the very ground where our forefathers—

Mr Wells interjected.

Mr TILLEY: Yes, Tony Plowman moved out. He has gone down to the coast. I thank him for his service once again.

Talking about Beechworth and Rutherglen, it is a very rich and diverse area. Yackandandah is very rich in the history of chasing alluvial gold up Twist Creek to the top. The Cornish miners probably sent a number of coffins back to England. If you look at the history there, they weighed something like nearly a ton and a half. I cannot remember ever putting a body or a body bag into a coffin that weighed a ton and a half, but anyway the history is fascinating. It is worth taking the time out to look at the rich and diverse history in those original gold areas.

Tourism is a very big part of the region and it is a very important part. More work needs to be done, particularly through some significant promises and commitments that have been made by the current government. It needs to deliver on those. You cannot keep drawing it out week after week with false

starts a number of times and repeat announcements. The people who live and choose to reside there and raise their families and work in the Benambra district by and large, probably 90 per cent of them—in my view and they share that view—are just battlers, people just trying to raise their families and get by. You see, the divide between country and city dwellers is that we have a fantastic lifestyle, but it costs to have that lifestyle. It is no different to those that live in suburban Melbourne. The thing is we like to have our campervan, we like to have our tents, we like to have our four-wheel drive—

A member interjected.

Mr TILLEY: You have probably seen it in the car park; I am unashamedly now driving a Ford Mustang. I paid for that and make a significant contribution of my own to run that. For me, and I will put this on the record, what little five-year-old boy does not want to be a soldier, want to be a fireman, want to be a policeman and own a Ford Mustang. Well, I have nailed all four in my life, and I am very happy to have nailed all those things. I do not know what five-year-old boy actually puts on his bucket list that he wants to be a politician, but that is a whole other thing.

Let us go back to the election again—I am switching around the place in a very short time. I caught up after the election with your old mate, the ALP candidate Mark Tait, a CFMMEU organiser. Mark carried his team there, and I thank him. I acknowledge the way the Victorian Trades Hall Council and others who turned up to support the ALP during the campaign, particularly at pre-poll, behaved there, and likewise for the candidate from the Shooters and Fishers, Josh Knight, who is a terrific fellow. He works hard. He has a young family, and I continue to see him around the town quite a bit. He is a really smart young guy. He is a terrific bloke. We extended invitations and caught up at the pub after the election. We extended invitations to all the candidates. Unfortunately I do not think the Greens candidate accepted the invitation. In fact I do not think he has been out of Prahran—anyway, we never saw him up there during the campaign, and he probably scored the appropriate number of runs on the board. As I said, there were a couple of candidates that were invited but certainly did not take up the offer to join us for a meal and a couple of cool bevies, a couple of frothies, down at the pub. That is not surprising at all.

The funny thing we are seeing not only in the state of Victoria but right across the nation—no doubt we will probably see a bit of this at the next federal election—is the rise of Independents. We certainly saw in the last election the Benambra Independents. It is a bit of a movement off the back of something; I do not know exactly what it is.

What I really want to say is that during that campaign there were claims of there being grassroots campaigns. There was nothing more grassroots than what I saw on the ground, not only from the ALP but from all over—they were all locals, apart from the blokes that came down from Canberra and the blokes that came up from Melbourne to help out, but they are the union boys. But when I am talking about grassroots campaigning, there was nothing more grassroots than the team and supporters that supported me and have supported me in previous elections. They are not lords or dames or silver-spooners; they are just good hardworking local people. They are not necessarily members of the Liberal Party. They are just good solid citizens who volunteer and provide me with all their support, trust and confidence to keep serving them in this Parliament. I do not even know how a lot of us even express it in words, but the trust and confidence they give us to serve our respective communities is very humbling. It is extraordinary. One of these days I might be able to put it into words, but anyway, we will work that out. They are certainly not landed gentry.

I have not spoken to the family but I want to take this opportunity to highlight one of the examples of our growing regional setting on the border of New South Wales and Victoria and acknowledge the passing last week of Garry Wolter. Garry Wolter served the nation in the air force. He had a lot of stories. I do not know what his politics were necessarily. I do not know how he voted over the years, but I had a close personal relationship with the entire Wolter family. Garry unfortunately passed away last week. From all accounts he was out mowing the lawn and went back up to the garage, and they later found him in the garage. But more importantly he was the patriarch of a great local family and a

great local small business that has grown. There has been succession planning, and it has now gone on to the two boys, Adrian and Nathan, not forgetting of course their sister, Amber, and the matriarch of that family, Marlene. It is just an incredible example of a family. I do put on the record that I apologise to the family for not contacting and speaking to them. It is just so important. They are intrinsically just so much a part of the grassroots family that makes up the Benambra district.

I am extremely and extraordinarily proud to have been in their company—the fun we have had, the stories we have shared, even the political banter from time to time. These are the sorts of families that fear no man and will belt you whichever way it comes. Garry's service will be on Friday, which I will be attending, but it is extremely sad. I am pretty confident that there are going to be quite a number of people attending that service, but no doubt the eulogies will be better served coming from his family, his friends and his associates in the community. He now rests in peace. It is sad. He passed away too early, way too early. I thank Garry for his association and friendship and for my ongoing friendship with his extended family. It is a large family. There are grandkids, too many to mention, and certainly the wives of Adrian and Nathan—I do not want to be namedropping—and also Amber. But it is just so important to mention that, and I will talk to them on Friday and apologise for using this place to make mention of a great Victorian, a great Australian, that served not only his business but his family. It was just time, and life has to go on.

There were a number of commitments for the Benambra district. Yes, they were my commitments—they were the Liberal Party's commitments. Some of them are crossing over from a number of parliaments, but I have taken the opportunity on behalf of the Benambra district to write to the responsible ministers that were sworn into the now cabinet. Some of these plans, these visions, are not that of the local council. They are truly the visions and aspirations of the community, of the people who choose to live up there. They are not necessarily big-dollar items. Let us not forget that you guys have got a lot of hungry mouths to feed out there, so it is going to be a very competitive market, and I tell you what, the way you are spending money, there is not going to be a lot of it to go around. So please do not forget rural Victoria and please consider us. I look forward to the challenges of working with the government where we can so that we are not forgotten, even though you will hear the catchcry that the government stops governing at the end of the tram tracks of Melbourne and at Craigieburn. Anyway, we will not go on about that terribly a lot. With education, we just want to educate our kids. Yes, we both made a commitment to Beechworth Secondary College. That issue has been going on for probably about eight years, and we both committed to it. I will be watching the government and expecting and hoping for the sake of the community that want to educate their kids that the Beechworth Secondary College project really starts advancing. I will even take this opportunity to thank my colleague Jaclyn Symes in the other place. She worked very hard on that. I look forward to working with her now she has made the cabinet and in her portfolios of regional development and agriculture, which are two very important portfolios. I ask the Treasurer to make sure that the government puts some money into those portfolios.

My 15-minute contribution is going very quickly. Significantly there are major projects on roads. I will watch with interest what the government's position will now be for the Country Fire Authority. I appreciate that the Liberal Party's results in Victoria have probably given a whole new definition to what it means to be boned, but in this place please consider all the volunteers. There are about 63 stations in the Benambra district with great expectations and hopes for an outcome that will not trash what is a great organisation. I was away a couple of weeks ago, but I was only one of a couple of thousand men and women voluntarily serving this great state. My time is up. Let us fight on for the future.

Mr DONNELLAN (Narre Warren North—Minister for Child Protection, Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers) (17:06): It was an honour to be re-elected at the last election to represent Narre Warren North. It is a great privilege to represent such a marvellous, diverse and beautiful community. I am very honoured to have been re-elected for the fourth time.

I just want to say a few thankyou's more than anything else to a whole lot of people who did a whole lot of doorknocking, made a whole lot of phone calls and did a lot of time on the polling booths. I want to acknowledge people like Rex Ashenden; Morshed Chowdhury; Richard Dabrowski; Helen Donnellan, my mother, who is always a very aggressive fighter on the polling booths; Declan Foley; Lalith Silwa, who was there many nights after his long days at work; Javad Khan; Zoran Kovacic; Brian Miller; Brian Oates; David Parr; Keith Pimblett; Thorwald Phillip; MaryAnn Spencer; Doug Wilkinson; Declan Williams; and Radenko Mihailovic—the late Radenko, a beautiful person who passed away in between the election and just recently. Also, Prabodh Perera, Carlos Loyola and staff from my office like Kieran, Drew, Sandra, Jonathon and Ben, who took time off to come down and campaign. I am sure there are some people I have missed in that acknowledgement, so I apologise.

There were also many people who generously gave to my campaign and I would like to acknowledge them because without doing the fundraising it is a bit difficult to get out in the field and do the things you need to do to ensure you win. It was a good campaign. The polling booth was fun. It was a bit like a holy crusade. We had many and various people who thought it was a holy crusade, including the Liberal candidate, but we slayed them along the way and we got up, so that was very satisfying.

I really want to talk about what happened in the last four years in various portfolios and then about what I am looking forward to both locally and as a minister. Over the last four years in terms of roads, it has never been as large. If we look at the west, there is the \$1.8 billion going to upgrade roads there, which is beginning. Dohertys Road was the first road, and it has already started. If we look at the north, there is the \$1 billion package which is going in under a public-private partnership, or if we look at the south-east and specifically at my area, we see the Healesville-Koo Wee Rup Road in Pakenham South which is being upgraded and Lathams Road, Hallam North Road, Narre-Cranbourne Road and Pound Road West. That is a \$1.2 billion exercise. It is the biggest investment in outer suburban roads that has ever been undertaken by any government, full stop.

We have got over \$4 billion being spent on the building of outer suburban roads. We know that we have had a 50 per cent growth in volumes of cars in the outer suburbs, and very much what this government did over the last four years was address those issues head-on. I think what you will find in future years is that there will be greater ease and greater capacity for the community in the outer suburbs to get to employment zones and the like because these roads are going to be fit for purpose.

You have only got to look at regional and rural Victoria and at the record investments we made there. If you look at the total figures over the four years that the Andrews government was in and compare that to the four years prior, there was an uplift of about \$450 million in maintenance alone. That is separate from the approximately \$940 million we announced in last year's budget, which included substantial increases in maintenance but also substantial increases in capital upgrades across the state. You have only got to look at things like the Midland Highway where there was an extra two to three passing lanes put in to make that link between Geelong and Ballarat so much safer. I know those road upgrades were very much welcomed.

Obviously we have a commitment to continue those upgrades in the outer suburbs, which the government is presently working on in terms of design, funding and the like. That work, as I was saying, has already started in the west, but we will move on to the south-east and the north over the coming months. I notice the member for Yuroke has a smile on her face, because she has \$1.2 billion worth of road funding coming her way very soon. She is a good hustler locally to get that—a determined hustler, to put it mildly. In terms of roads, it was a very good four years with record investment. There is no doubt that it was a record investment.

But look at the work done by previous ministers in the last four years in the roles I have presently, whether it be child protection or disability. Look at the work that the Minister for Mental Health did in relation to taking on the commonwealth in relation to the issues with the national disability insurance scheme (NDIS) in terms of transparent pricing for services. This is an area that he pushed very heavily and it is an area which more than anywhere else will impact directly upon regional and rural Victoria.

If you do not have the pricing right for your NDIS, you will simply not get a market developed in those areas. That is something we will continue to fight for.

We have not signed up to the NDIS yet because we do not believe it is in the form that we committed to delivering to our community. Further, we have only got about 50 per cent of the people we expect to actually be in the NDIS currently within the system. There are various issues in relation to complex cases which the minister took up in terms of trials. The federal government is currently running a trial in relation to complex cases such as people with dementia and the like. We are running a trial in the outer suburbs of the west but the problem is that there is still not a program to roll out across the whole state so we can actually deal with complex cases. I congratulate the minister for the work he did on disability and the NDIS, and that is work I will continue to work on with the commonwealth to get better outcomes.

I also want to acknowledge the marvellous work that Jenny Mikakos did in relation to delivering the *Roadmap to Reform*. That is very much about trying to get in early before we have people entering the child protection system. That is working with families so we do not have kids entering the child protection system. Let me put it very bluntly: we have really got to stop feeding the youth justice system potentially with people out of child protection. What we are finding is that 60 per cent of people in the youth justice system have had engagement at one period or another with child protection. That is simply not sustainable in the long run—to actually feed from youth justice into the jail system. So the work that Jenny started and I know the Minister for Corrections will be doing in relation to youth justice is to get in early to ensure we support these families and ensure they have the capacity to provide a loving and welcoming environment for their children more than anything else, and then as a state government we will provide the skills and the support to get better outcomes for our community. That will very much stop feeding the member for Niddrie's work and starve him of clients, I guess. I think the member for Niddrie would be very happy to be starved of clients in the youth justice system, and that is very much where we need to do that work.

But if you look at the figures, there has been a 69 per cent increase in expenditure for family and children's services, and I very much give Minister Jenny Mikakos credit for that. She did a marvellous job. There have been 610 new child protection officers over the last four years. Again, they are very much needed because what we are finding is that we have got frequent re-presentations in the child protection system. About 60 per cent of clients have been presented again. We need to be able to make these assessments more thoroughly and do a greater deep dive before we actually bring people into the system. The problem with having people assessed twice is that you really should just be doing that job once. What we found is there is greater support for child protection officers, and they need that support to actually have the time to make those decisions.

What has been very much occurring is a greater focus on the use of kinship care in child protection, which we have put substantial funds into. Kinship carers actually represent about 71 per cent of carers in the system now, and we are finding that that definitely provides better outcomes than residential care, which is difficult. Jenny has substantially reduced the number of children in residential care to approximately 400, and I intend to continue doing that. But it is about actually supporting the kinship carers so that they can deal with sometimes very complex relationships. Frequently it will be a grandmother taking care of a grandchild with a family member in the middle of that. That is not an easy thing to deal with. That is not an easy relationship to move through, but that is why we need to look at supporting those kinship carers, and that was actually done under the last government.

In terms of residential care we have also introduced Home Stretch, which again provides support for people from 18 to 21 years of age. What we have found is that many people end up homeless in the youth justice system, and that is just simply not acceptable because we are not providing the support they absolutely need.

In terms of ageing, there is enormous work being done in that space as well. Various commitments have been made. I was actually out at St George's Hospital in Kew the other day. We are building a

90-bed public sector residential aged-care facility. That is going very well, with allied health services beside it. It is a seamless transition for people who are in aged care to actually receive the services they need right next door. That is in partnership with St George's Hospital, and it is very much one that St George's Hospital welcomes and that the state government welcomes.

We know that we have given an absolute commitment to keep our aged-care services. We have 76 per cent of the public sector aged-care services in the country now, because every other state has abandoned aged care or never actually provided it in the first place. A couple of elections ago, I think it was in 2014, we as a government made an absolute commitment to keep our public sector aged-care beds, because they are for the people less well off in terms of income but also for the most complicated cases. So we as a state government more than anything else will be providing those services people need for the less well off and the more complex cases, and that is why we have made the commitment to build that extra facility at St George's Hospital.

Next we are also looking at a public sector aged-care facility in Wantirna to ensure that the Angliss Hospital can actually have that extra space for the hospital services they need. We will also provide an extra 120 beds to provide the services that are needed. We have also made a commitment to provide an enormous number of extra hours of respite care. I think it was 100 000 extra hours of respite care for the carers in our community, whether they be caring for a child, a parent or the like. Carers are incredibly generous people. They give their time. They are not paid for their work a lot of the time, but we need to recognise that they need support to actually be able to continue doing that work, because of the massive contribution they make to caring for those people in our community. That was a commitment we made at the election, and I will be following that through with great passion, because I know how much those carers provide to our community. If we actually had to provide for and fund that, we would be in a very difficult situation.

In terms of my local community there are some exciting things happening. I am waiting to look at this budget. We have got a commitment of \$500 000 to actually help the Narre Warren Bowls Club. That is a beautiful bowls club. It is a club that welcomes people from far and wide. I was actually there the other night, and they were having an emergency services challenge. They set up the emergency services challenge between the local emergency services. That was their way of saying thank you to the community for the work that the emergency services people do. Further, I am there to support them in their endeavours for how they support the community. It is a very successful bowls club, written up in the various publications for bowls. What we are looking at doing, very much like what they have in Queensland, is getting a roof put up over the bowls club so they can play late into the evening and continue to provide that opportunity for people to socialise and play sport together. I am very much looking forward to that.

There are various other upgrades I am expecting on roads and the like, but there is also the upgrade which is occurring presently in the emergency department of the Casey Hospital. I am excited to see when that finishes. That is a major service in our local community. For many years the local emergency service was very much provided down at Dandenong, but as the Casey Hospital has grown and the demands on the hospitals have grown, Casey has had to obviously expand its emergency services and provide those services for Casey, Cardinia and beyond.

There is a lot to be done. I am very excited about being re-elected again. I am very much looking forward to the work that I wanted to do, and I very much want to continue the work for my local community so that they have better outcomes and better services.

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) (17:21): I am very pleased to make a contribution to the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech. At the outset I want to congratulate all the members who have been re-elected, but in particular I want to congratulate the new members and wish them all the very best for the four years ahead.

I have listened to all of the inaugural speeches that have been made, and I am inspired, I am impressed and I am excited to be working with the many new members of the government in this place. The future is certainly very bright. To that end, I am extremely pleased to be standing here as the re-elected member for Yuroke. It is certainly a great honour and one that I take very seriously. I am very humbled by it.

I am also very excited about this term of government and building upon the achievements of the previous term. I look forward to watching the progress of our existing projects locally that the community is very much looking forward to seeing the completion of. These include the long-awaited duplication of Craigieburn Road, including the signalisation of some very busy and dangerous intersections, flexible barriers and shared walking and cycling paths. This massive project will reduce congestion and travel times for more than 28 000 drivers who rely on this road, and it will boost safety for all road users.

The construction of an additional car park for Craigieburn railway station will provide around 700 new spaces. With the current car park full well before 7.00 a.m., this is a vitally important project. Regarding the opening of the new secondary school in Craigieburn South, it was terrific to turn the first sod on this project last week, and I look forward to seeing this construction progress throughout this year and the school opening for term 1 next year.

The new Craigieburn CFA station will provide an expanded and improved home to our terrific local firefighters. Other projects include the delivery of a new Craigieburn ambulance station, the new Craigieburn North State Emergency Service facility and the commencement later this year of the new Mickleham-Kalkallo to Craigieburn bus service that will improve public transport and give an option to residents in these growing estates to the north.

I look forward to seeing a retired W-class tram begin a new life as a learning space at Our Lady's Catholic Primary School. And I look forward to seeing the completion of projects where we have partnered with Hume City Council: the Craigieburn splash park near Livvi's Place in Anzac Park, which will give families an opportunity for outdoor water play; the Craigieburn softball centre is the first of its kind in the Hume municipality; the all-abilities play space and barbeque area near the Hume Tennis & Community Centre; the soon-to-be-opened pavilion at the Aston recreation reserve as well as the new pavilion at Arena recreation reserve; the Aitken Hill integrated community centre, next door to the recently opened and incredibly impressive new Aitken Hill Primary School; the Merrifield West northern community hub with three preschool rooms and five maternal and child health or specialist consulting rooms as well as multipurpose rooms and community spaces—this hub has been supersized and it will need to be to cater for the rapid growth in Australia's fastest growing suburb; the Kalkallo kindergarten with 33 kindergarten spaces for families in this growing community to the north; and the Cloverton South community hub, with preschool services and community meeting spaces in Kalkallo.

The Greenvale West Integrated Children's Centre will have maternal and child health services, a multipurpose space and an activities room for playgroups. I look forward to seeing the new pavilion for the Greenvale Equestrian Centre that will include changing facilities and office and storage space. There are many projects underway, as members can see, in partnership with the Hume City Council, and I thank them for their continued work and their advocacy for our growing community.

As well as all that we have got underway, I am also thrilled that we will deliver on the commitments that we made prior to the election. The Craigieburn community hospital will take pressure off the Northern Hospital and provide a whole new level of confidence to families, who will know that this means health care much closer to home. The new hospital will include pharmacy services, women's health, paediatric care, public dental services, day surgery, day chemotherapy, rehabilitation support and family violence and crisis support services. Families will also be able to access alcohol and drug services and social support services. This is an exciting project, and I look forward to working with the community as chair of the Craigieburn community hospital consultative committee.

I am also thrilled that our commitment to new schools continues with the previously mentioned Craigieburn South secondary college to open next year. This is to be followed by Merrifield West Primary School and Greenvale North West Primary School, which are set to open in 2021; and Kalkallo Common Primary School and the long-awaited Greenvale Secondary School to open in term 1 in 2022. When the minister came to announce these schools he could see how ecstatic the Greenvale community was at the prospect of this secondary school project finally coming to fruition, and I cannot wait for it to open. In fact Mr Ondarchie in the other place was saying at the early voting centre that we would not deliver on this commitment, so not only do I look forward to the school opening but I also hope that it will be a polling place where we can continue that little chat.

Speaking of polling places, I think it is also important to note my thanks to the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) staff both at the early polling place as well as the election day polling places. Sandra McGregor, the election manager for the Yuroke district, was very helpful and along with her team did a great job in challenging circumstances. There was certainly a lot of frustration with the location of the early polling place, and those frustrations ultimately were taken out on the VEC staff. That was not fair; they were just doing their job and they did not pick that location. It was in an industrial precinct which you had to drive to get to, and once you drove there there was nowhere to park, so there was a lot of frustration. My heart certainly went to the staff that copped the brunt of that, and I hope that next time a better effort is made to find appropriate locations. One thing for sure is that this did not deter the almost 19 000 electors, or more than a third of electors, who voted early in this election. It did not deter them, but it did frustrate them, so I do hope greater efforts are made.

I would also like to say a few words about my Liberal opponent in this election. I have known Jim Overend for many years and he is generally considered to be a pretty good bloke. Personally I think he may be the smartest Liberal candidate in the state. This is because Jim knew that the best way to get elected as a Liberal candidate was to pretend he was not a Liberal candidate. I kid you not, this is what he did. Jim's campaign material was completely void of anything to do with Liberal branding. It was black and white—no blue. It was black on one side with his name. You had to search to find written in tiny little letters 'Liberal for Yuroke'. You really had to look for that. I understand this was a condition of him standing for the party. He is certainly a smart man.

Jim campaigned in his black shirts, with 'Jim' written across the front and black branding on his material. At the pre-poll the how-to-vote material was black Jim-branded on one side and on the other side it had the former Opposition Leader and Liberal branding. This did not go down well with Jim's campaign team, I can tell you. It did not go down well and Jim won that battle, so come election day the how-to-vote cards came out in full black on one side with 'Jim' and his other branding on the other side. Good on Jim. He knew what his technique had to be. He was determined to make sure that people did not associate him with the Liberal Party—that was his best chance of success. But unfortunately for Jim, the then Leader of the Opposition blew his cover on a couple of occasions: he visited Yuroke three times in two weeks, drawing attention to Jim being the Liberal candidate and undermining his 'Liberal not Liberal' campaign technique.

I am sure others will have their own views as to whether or not the then Leader of the Opposition visiting Yuroke three times in two weeks during an election campaign was a good use of time, but personally I think it was terrific and it was great to have him there. The results do speak for themselves, and while I was amused by Jim's campaign, I do thank him for the way that he and most of his campaign team conducted themselves throughout the election. The reality is that Jim was up against a history where the Liberals did absolutely nothing for Yuroke from 2010 to 2014, and voters remembered that. The Andrews Labor government played catch-up over the four years following that Liberal neglect, and the voters knew it—the voters knew that they had been neglected. They remembered that and not only did they not want to go back to those years of inaction but they really could not afford to.

As you know, Acting Speaker Suleyman, the area I represent is experiencing rapid growth, and voters simply could not afford to take the risk that the good work that Labor was doing would come to a halt under the Liberals. I have spoken about the ongoing works that are currently underway in Yuroke and the upcoming works. This is no doubt an exciting agenda, and the voters have endorsed that program.

In conclusion, I would like to thank those who helped during the campaign. Firstly to my family, my husband, Kosmos, and my son, Adam: I thank them both for their ongoing support. Given that all three of us are involved in politics, election season can be fairly hectic around our place and there is a general understanding throughout the campaign that we will all catch up some time in December. Whilst we have all got each other's backs throughout the campaign and we know that we are all there supporting one another, the reality is we see each other when it is all over and share stories at that point.

The other important members of the household—everyone has heard about our massive tribe of black cats, Marvin and Minx and Maximus and M—the biggest duty during an election campaign is to make sure that whoever actually gets home at a decent hour feeds the cats. That is the one thing that we are all very committed to. When we are not campaigning we are making sure that that tribe is fed, and they reward us by not being terribly, horribly behaved towards us in that period.

To Paul, Ryan, Justin, Alicia, Josh S, Josh P, Gursewak, Ravinder, Deepak, the Pastras family, Peter, Chandra, Drew, Upul, Walid, Joseph and Anthony, and everyone else that was involved in the campaign, I say a huge thank you. Whether it was helping out at pre-poll, being a booth captain or a helper on election day, coming to markets and street stalls, doorknocking or even hosting a sign at your property, your assistance and support was greatly appreciated and you all played a vital role in this result.

To all the residents that I represent in Yuroke, I am incredibly grateful that I have been given this opportunity again. I will continue to work with you and for you to improve our community, to deliver the many projects that we have underway and to deliver on the commitments that we made prior to the election. I am proud to do this as a member of this Andrews Labor government.

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie—Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support) (17:33): It is my privilege to rise and contribute to the address-in-reply as the returned member for the electorate of Niddrie. It feels like yesterday that I was sworn in after the by-election back in 2012. It is a privilege to represent the community you have been a part of essentially for all your life. To grow up in a community and to attend kindergarten, primary school and secondary school and to get your first job there—these are all privileges that I hold dear. After the last election it was a wonderful privilege to be sworn in by the most progressive leader in Australia, our Premier, and to feel the support of my colleagues as the Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice and Minister for Victim Support.

I want to begin by highlighting what we are doing in the Niddrie electorate. When I came to office back in 2012 I said in my inaugural speech, and I quote:

... I have set myself clear priorities. Any conversation about opportunity must include education, the most fundamental building block to success. Niddrie is blessed with a great network of schools; however, some are in urgent need of attention. It is difficult to inspire students on the relevance and importance of education when the school around them is falling down. My immediate task is the implementation of the Essendon Keilor College master plan.

Well, last Friday I had the very great honour of opening the brand-new science, technology, engineering and maths facility at Essendon Keilor College. This was a project that was essentially 10 years in the making, and thanks to the Andrews Labor government—and in particular the man that is building the Education State, the Deputy Premier—we opened that facility. I am very proud because it was essentially opened in my own backyard of Airport West. The former Niddrie High School, which closed many years ago, is now a beacon of what education and opportunity means. It is incredible what this will mean for future generations growing up in the north-west, who will be given the world's best

education right there in Airport West. It was not easy. We promised \$10 million for this school back in 2010, and when I was elected in 2012 it was one of the biggest issues that came up for me whenever I walked down the street. We ended up having to bring a door in from the college, which we presented to the former Minister for Education, Martin Dixon, for him to do the advocacy. But when we came to office we delivered on it, and I thank both the Premier and Deputy Premier for that.

I am also proud that we are funding a major rebuild of Aberfeldie Primary School, Joan Kirner's primary school. But the list goes on. There is funding for Keilor Primary School and also \$7.6 million for the Western Autistic School in Niddrie, which the Premier came out to announce. There can be no more important role for government than how it treats people with disabilities and special needs. I knew this as employment minister, but I saw it firsthand at the Western Autistic School in Niddrie. Jeff Kennett sold off the school oval, and it is quite a small facility in Garnet Street, Niddrie. Then to come there and announce \$7.6 million and see the faces on the parents who have kids with special needs, who have more stressors than you and I will probably ever understand, and to see how that is going to transform their lives and give those kids the very best level of education to go on and make something of themselves is something I am very proud of. I think in building the Education State there is no more important policy for us as local members of Parliament.

We also made some major transport reforms in the previous government. I want to give a shout-out to the member Essendon, because he led the charge and I was a very strong supporter of it, for the Buckley Street level crossing removal. That is transformational in my community. Everyone in the Niddrie electorate, from East Keilor to Avondale Heights and from Aberfeldie to Niddrie, goes through the Buckley Street level crossing. It is a significant project. We copped a lot of flak doing it, like we do on some of these projects, but we got it done and it is very significant that we got it done. Right throughout the pre-poll many people came up to me and said, 'It feels like it's always been done'.

But there was also \$5 million to fix up the bottleneck at the Newman Street, Keilor Road and Grange Road intersection. There were a thousand signatures by local community members. I thank the Minister for Roads and Road Safety in the previous government and Kieran Barns-Jenkins as the ministerial adviser. This was a critical project. I probably had no better feedback than about this project at the pre-poll, and I am very proud of that. It is transformational for our community, as will be our funding commitments to fix up the dangerous intersection at Rosehill Road and Hoffmans Road and build a new science and technology centre at Rosehill Secondary College.

Probably one of my proudest achievements during the last term was that I became a father. You cannot choose when you become a minister, but I became a minister when our daughter was only six months old. To become a minister but also to replace someone who I deeply admire, Wade Noonan, and to follow in his footsteps to become the Minister for Industry and Employment was a special occasion. I am very proud of what we managed to achieve in my 12 months as minister. To become a minister 12 months out from an election you have got to hit the ground running, and I think we did that. But I am most proud as employment minister that I focused on people with disabilities and that we really used the leverage of the government's procurement program to support ex auto workers and people with marginalised backgrounds to get work on government projects. The President in the upper house is very clear about this, as are the Premier and literally the whole cabinet: that for every dollar we spend, we make sure there is a social dividend.

On social dividends, I want to mention the member for Lara, who is the former sports minister and is in the chamber, because not only did he support my local sports clubs through coming out and making announcements but he also had a very good listening ear. Whether I was bringing in the local mayor to talk about the East Keilor Leisure Centre that we went on to build, doubling the size of the Keilor Basketball Netball Stadium, funding the Overland Reserve in East Keilor or female-friendly change rooms, these are all wonderful projects that I know the former sports minister should be very proud of having as a legacy in my local electorate.

I am privileged also to be the Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support and Minister for Crime Prevention. I am very keen, and I look forward to the challenges that these roles present. I am surrounded by some wonderful people, particularly the lead minister, the hardworking Attorney-General, who will be an outstanding Attorney-General, following in the member for Keysborough's footsteps. I will also be working with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services as well as the Minister for Child Protection and the minister overseeing the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, which we know is an important area for my portfolios and is a real touchstone in making sure we address those criminogenic aspects but also the antisocial behaviour and the mental health aspects that we know lead so many people that need support down that marginalised path.

You cannot do this role without the support of some wonderful volunteers and a wonderful electorate office. In my electorate office I have got Jackie Foley, Emily Williams, Simon Frankland and Stefan Loukomitis. I have also had a range of volunteers over the years who have been a great support, including Davide Pantalone and Alex Nikolaou. I want to thank them because they are front and centre on busy Keilor Road, dealing with constituents day in, day out. They do an outstanding job. I think there can be no more important reflection when you are out at the supermarket or the street than when someone bails you up to say to you as a local MP, 'Listen, you weren't there when I came in, but your office helped me', 'You sorted out my issue with Telstra' or 'You helped me get the local tree trimmed' or whatever it may be. Day in, day out, being on a busy shopping strip—Keilor Road—next to the post office and all the banks, my electorate office staff members work very hard, and I am proud of all of them. I want to thank Emily Williams, who does an outstanding job on my communications and in my newsletters. I think I am one of the luckiest and am most proud of my newsletters, because they hit the mark, they have almost replaced the local paper and they do a very good job in communicating what we are doing as a government and what we are doing to support the local community.

I want to thank my family—my wife, Fiona, and my daughter Madeleine. She is too young to know what is happening and what role Dad is playing, but one day she will be able to look back on it and see some magnificent photos out at Government House. I want to thank my mum and dad, who are also constituents of mine. I also want to acknowledge the candidates that ran against me at the last election. We got on very well at the pre-poll. There was Ben Reeson for the Liberal Party. I acknowledge the Greens candidate, Jean-Luke Desmaris, and Rebecca Primmer of the Animal Justice Party. We get along very well. They are three individuals that I hope do not give up on politics. I hope they pursue it, because they have very big careers in front of them if they choose to go down that path.

I also want to thank the Niddrie and Keilor East branch members that have supported me so strongly throughout the last four years. I could not have done this role without their support, and I thank them—from the booth captains to the scrutineers and all the volunteers. I want to thank the Bates family, Pat Anderson, Ray Rushbury, Adrian Grossi, Alex Nikolaou, Andrew Philippou, Ashley McInnes, Owen Virtue, Ashela Bright, Narelle Wiggan, Joshua Rose, Bec Spiteri, Caitlin MacFarlane, Ben Thomson, Davide Pantalone, Jackie Foley, Judy Maddigan, Julie Jones, Libby Williams, Rachel Rei, Robert Walters, Siobhan Loukomitis, Sue Hannaford and Tim Mayfield. I also thank the volunteers that helped on election day and pre-poll—Cath McDonald, Cathy Fasciale, Charlie Pandolfo, Gary and Jennie Rothville, Jake Carroll, Janice Eldridge, Ken Solomon, Kiera Williams, Lou Di Gregorio, Maria Cardillo, Martin Strebs, Maureen Crowley, Norm Chapman and Stephen McAteer—and also, for the signs throughout the community, Barbara Gleeson, Gavin MacDonald, Ness Conidi, Robert Alvares and Tony Kamitsis. I am also very lucky to be supported by a range of other people. I just thank them. They know who they are; they know how important they are to me.

As we go through the next term of government I am very keen—I think it is in the Labor Party's DNA—to help some of our most marginalised community members. We do have gender equity in cabinet—50-50—and I was proud most recently as Minister for Corrections to spend my International Women's Day out at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre to see firsthand the reforms this Labor government is making to support and assist women prisoners. We are rolling out a 70-bed mental health and

wellbeing precinct at Dame Phyllis Frost. Victoria did not feature on the *Four Corners* program on women prisoners, and I do not know why, but it could be because we are doing a couple of things right in this area—focusing on mental health and making sure women have access to their children. But more than that, we are a government that is in the process of eliminating strip searches of women. In fact we will have reduced them from 20 000 to about 1000 a year through technology but also through some of the procedures and policies that we are implementing. I remember meeting Baroness Jean Corston, who reformed the women's prison system in the UK. She said to me when I met her—I was lucky to meet her through the Reichstein Foundation—‘Always think, Ben, of women prisoners as being troubled, not troublesome’, and that is what they are. They are often victims of family violence, often have mental health issues and are often the breadwinner who is doing all sorts of things to try and keep the family unit together, which has led to their incarceration.

As minister I am very conscious of the growing number of women prisoners, and it is certainly something that I wish to address—the recidivism rates—and I am looking forward to working with my caucus colleagues, many of whom are in the chamber today, who have come up and addressed this issue with me as the new Minister for Corrections.

On the Youth Justice portfolio, I have inherited a great body of work from Minister Mikakos in the other place. I want to congratulate her for commissioning the largest review of the youth justice system in 20 years by Penny Armytage and James Ogloff, which is really the road map to youth justice. It does have its challenges—no-one walks away from that—but if we can get the machinery of government changes right from the Department of Health and Human Services to the Department of Justice and Community Safety; if we can get the legislative instruments right in terms of a single, dedicated youth justice act; and then if we can focus on rehabilitation and the work of Pat McGorry and his team out at Orygen on the youth justice system; and if we get those early interventions, we could begin to turn these young lives around and make them see the benefit of living a life of purpose rather than graduating to the adult corrections system. I am very keen, along with my parliamentary secretary in the crime prevention portfolio, the member for Broadmeadows, to make a very big investment to support those experiencing place-based disadvantage but also to look at the first 1000 days and the importance that that has.

The member for Footscray knows the great work that Tweddle do out in the western suburbs. I know the great work they do. I know the great work that the Murdoch Children's Research Institute do through maternal health nurses. Recent research shows that if you amped up the rate of maternal child health nurses by even tripling their numbers and the visits to some of these disadvantaged families, you would get the wraparound services a lot earlier and you would support them really from cradle to college ongoing, therefore making a very important contribution.

Finally, on the victim support portfolio, I am very committed to working with the Attorney-General to implement all the reforms that the Victorian Law Reform Commission report on the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal made and making sure that all those 100 recommendations are implemented in full and that we support victims.

I know, as the Premier has said on many occasions, we are the most progressive state and we are the most progressive government. We should be very proud of that victory recently in November. It was a real endorsement from the community that this is a government that not only gets on and builds the infrastructure—we know about that—but builds the social infrastructure and support every step of the way, and I will continue to do that across my four portfolios in the justice area.

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) (17:48): I would firstly like to thank the people of the Oakleigh district. I very much appreciate the trust they have shown in me and Labor, not just at the election but over the last four years.

On 24 November the people of Victoria had a clear choice—a government that had a record of getting things done, of keeping its promises and of making things fairer for Victorians, or an opposition that

offered the politics of fear and division and of seeking to promote the worst in our society just to win an election. There was not a plan based on any values; it was a political plan, not a plan for government. There is a difference, and I think the outcome exposed this. When you offer a positive agenda and when you talk about the things that matter to everybody in health, in schools, in transport and in jobs, people listen. When you get things done, it does not go unnoticed. The Premier summed it up well when he said that if we delivered on the commitments we made, if we stayed the course and focused on the issues that made a real difference in local communities—hospitals, schools, roads, rail, jobs, funding, skills and training properly—and if we stayed focused on those things and delivered the commitments we made, we would be rewarded for that. We certainly were.

I would like to welcome all the new members to this place. I heard all the inaugural speeches from the government members. I want to commend all the new members, but particularly the government members. I was stunned by those contributions. Never have I seen a more compelling cocktail of values, heart, intellect and lived experience. I am proud to be a member of your team. You are extraordinary.

I would also like to thank those people who flew the Labor flag for the last four years. Being involved in politics is never easy, so for the volunteers who gave up so much of their time to the campaign for Labor, I say thank you. Without you none of us would be here to make a difference—it is that simple. I also want to acknowledge all of my opponents in the last election.

Here are just some of the things we have seen in the Oakleigh electorate since 2014: level crossing removals at Grange, Koornang, Murrumbeena and Poath roads and nearby in Clayton, Ormond, McKinnon and Bentleigh; new train stations and the Huntingdale bus interchange; school upgrades delivered or funded for Hughesdale, Oakleigh, Carnegie, Mount Waverley Heights and Amsleigh Park primary schools, Sacred Heart Girls College Oakleigh, Salesian College, Glen Eira College and Bentleigh Secondary College—and my good friend the member for Bentleigh is here in this chamber; significant extra capital funding for Glen Huntly, Clayton North, Murrumbeena and Huntingdale primary schools; and upgrades at Murrumbeena Park, Duncan Mackinnon Reserve, Oakleigh Recreation Centre, Scammell Reserve, Murrumbeena Tennis Club and Caloola Reserve. And those are just a few.

It was not just our capital program across Oakleigh and indeed across Victoria. There were reforms that when the history books are written will be judged as groundbreaking. I am talking about medicinal cannabis, safe exclusion zones for women, voluntary assisted dying legislation, the safe injecting room, the apology for historical homosexual convictions, 50 per cent women on government boards and in courts, our commitment to Safe Schools, commencing negotiations for a treaty with Victoria's Indigenous communities and flying the Aboriginal flag on top of this building, the Royal Commission into Family Violence, followed by the biggest investment to reduce this insidious disease and issue, and the creation of 440 000 jobs since 2014.

Being successful in politics is not a means unto itself. If you do not get things done, you do not deserve to be here. Mistrust of politicians has been growing over the last few years. There is a simple lesson which politicians often forget, and the Premier always reminds us of it—that is, to keep your promises. Say what you are going to do and then do it. It should be a simple formula: the community choosing the party whose policies and programs best reflect their values. I get the sense somehow that our government style is refreshing. It should not be; it should be the norm. To provide government that delivers services, better life chances and decency for the people of Victoria is why we are here, but if you keep your promises, you keep your word—not just in politics but in life—you get credit.

There are a couple of notable things I have observed over the last couple of years. Firstly, there were the countless people who considered themselves Liberal voters who told me they were voting for Labor for the first time and the staunch Liberals who would not vote Labor but commended us on what was happening in Victoria with variations of, 'I'm not Labor, but, gee, you're getting a lot of things done'. That is something the opposition did not pick up on—that overall people have a very positive outlook of Victoria and that optimism is not easily displaced. As the Premier observed, the low road, the politics

of fear, the politics of division—which is not leadership—that has been rejected. Between 2010 and 2014 very little was achieved by the Liberal government, and their years in opposition were negativity personified, with no plausible solutions for the future and no positive narrative.

Chief in negativity was Mr David Davis in the other place. But for all his disgraceful conduct I thank him. For four years Mr Davis conducted a personal crusade in the seat of Oakleigh. He thought he was on a big vote winner, particularly in relation to our removal of level crossings. Mr Davis spent an estimated \$80 000 campaigning in my area. There were his incomprehensible late-night tweets, the public meetings and the profanity-laden abuse directed at me straight after watching people vandalise my office while he was recording it.

Ms Ryan: On a point of order, I do hate to raise a point of order on someone's address-in-reply, but I think it is a little unfair given the upper house member is not here to refute the claims that are being made against him and there is no mention of the upper house member in the Governor's address to Parliament.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Suleyman): There is no point of order. Continue on, member for Oakleigh.

Mr DIMOPOULOS: Thank you, Acting Speaker. Let me cite two examples as to whether his campaign was a success—Burwood and Hawthorn, both seats in the region that Mr Davis represents. Without diminishing the campaigns of our excellent new members for Burwood and Hawthorn, imagine if Mr Davis had directed his negative scare tactics to those seats. Hawthorn was won by just 330 votes, so for those wondering why the member for Malvern is Leader of the Opposition and not John Pesutto, you might think about Mr Davis spending all his resources in seats like Oakleigh instead of Hawthorn and Burwood. So to Mr Davis I say, 'Thank you'. Thank you for being there for us in Oakleigh. You have shown yourself, by accident or by design, to be a true stalwart of the labour movement.

The second observation I have is in regard to the advent of lowest common denominator politics, particularly online through social media. Politics is a tough business, but there are certain activities that push the boundaries of acceptability in any walk of life and I will call them out. We call them keyboard warriors—brave behind a computer. What is worse is when it moves into stalking and threats, including threats to kill.

I have personally been followed by an individual who has secretly taken photos of me just going about my day and then posted them online. Title searches have been conducted to find out where I live and where my family lives. And this same individual has said that he had organised people to chase me all over Oakleigh and set up a roster of people to stand outside a residence he mistakenly believed I lived in. He threatened to send cabbies to that place and effectively said he could not control what might happen because, and I quote:

The more you anger them, the greater the chances.

And I would be at the mercy of:

... Punjabi's, Arabs, Turks & Greeks.

I know of people convicted of threats to kill against members in this house who are still out in the community today, and we recall the terrible attacks on the former member for Brunswick, which could have been much worse. I am also aware of countless times individuals have been spoken to and cautioned by Victoria Police for their online behaviour and public conduct against members of Parliament and others. However, despite this, the threats continue. Here is one from another individual in January:

Fells, Jacunta Allan, Andrews, and others will all meet their creator in time.

The great equaliser.

...

There's only one way to feel satisfaction.

Everybody just shhhooosshh for now.

Hell hath no fury on their lost soles.

Let them all laugh and carry on as if nothings happened ... but and there's always a but my friends.

Shooosshh.

This was followed up a few days later with:

Shhhssss, there will be a time and a place.

The plot thickens, the list grows once again.

And here are just a couple of his from last year:

Her day will come, she'll squeal like a little pig.

... I prayed for us all, but especially for her demise, and I mean demise

This person has recently changed his Facebook profile picture to the Clint Eastwood character, Dirty Harry, holding a Magnum handgun.

And here are some comments from various individuals not just in relation to me, but also to the Premier and the Minister for Transport Infrastructure:

You sir had better be very careful when crossing the road.

Only time I will like him is with 3 bullets in the head and 6 foot under.

That was referring to the Premier.

That scarf around your neck may prove to be quite useful.

That was referring to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure.

Take this slut Jacinta out

And I don't mean to dinner?

And, 'I'll be seeing you little poofter, we will have words you unwashed cunt'. I am really sorry for the language, Acting Speaker. 'Slap him with a dildo and strike him with your belt. Leave the dildo hanging like a tail. Pin a tail on the mule'. 'I will fuck you little poofta, your time will come'.

She needs her teeth taken out ...

This is all on social media, Acting Speaker.

Ms Ryan: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I can appreciate that these are incredibly distressing comments, but I do not think it is appropriate language for the house. There is an appropriate place to raise these things, it is via privileges. Acting Speaker, I seek your guidance on this language. I do appreciate that it is incredibly distressing, but I think there is an appropriate place to raise it.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Suleyman): I will seek advice. I remind the member to not use unparliamentary language in his contributions.

Mr DIMOPOULOS: Thank you, Acting Speaker. I just remind the house that I am quoting entirely from sources on Facebook.

The last one is:

Keep looking at your BACK.

And just 'DMW', or dead man walking. I and others have endured this almost daily for the last four years. It is not on. These comments are against the law. This is not free speech. These are threats. This is a crime, and while we hope these people do not act on their threats, there are also troubled people out there reading these threats. They are being led to believe that the hate and the threats of violence are acceptable, that any action taken would be justified by the approval of online commentary. I fear that we are moving to a time where politicians and anyone with a public profile are fair game.

We have seen it in the UK with the tragic murder of Jo Cox, MP, a dedicated local member with two children under five. We saw it in the attack on Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords in Arizona, where six people died, including a nine-year-old girl. Both attacks occurred while they were conducting mobile offices to talk to constituents—something I and many other members here do regularly. The leadership must start here and in other parliaments across Australia. We must call out these threats, and we must not whip up anger and hysteria then act surprised when people take it too far. We must adopt respect and we just have to help stop the hate.

Acting Speaker, I wrote this speech weeks ago, and if we need no other reminder about where this can lead to than what happened in Christchurch in New Zealand last week, then I would be stunned. But on social media, particularly Facebook and Twitter, it is very difficult for action to be taken let alone to get redress. When a threat is reported to a major social media company, the onus should be on them to caution or remove the user, and the threats must be reported to authorities. These companies cannot promote freedom of expression without the appropriate vetting of threatening behaviour. These are after all multibillion-dollar global businesses. They have the resources to do this, and they must. I thank you, Acting Speaker, and the indulgence of the house.

In my few remaining minutes I want to move on to what comes next for Victoria, because we have a fantastic agenda. The slogan was ‘getting things done’. It was a line that came from the ground up—from what people were telling us. Our campaign was purely a reflection of how the community viewed our government. We did things, and we have promised to do even more. We will deliver our election commitments to the Victorian people.

In my community, upgrades to Glen Huntly Primary School, Murrumbena Primary School and Oakleigh Grammar are yet to come. We have made commitments and will deliver them: upgraded sports pavilions at Lord Reserve and Koornang Park; level crossing removals at Neerim Road and Glen Huntly Road; funding for a new Indian community centre; more open space and more car parking in Carnegie; a new ambulance station on Warrigal Road, which my good friend the member for Bentleigh fought for; and of course more reforms across the energy markets, industrial relations and other key areas of consumer economic interest. The Treasurer has said we will cut our cloth according to the economic times. That is what a responsible government does, but it also delivers on its election commitments and continues to back its values. That is what we will do.

Again I sincerely thank the people of Oakleigh and the people of Victoria for showing their trust in the Labor Party. To me and to many members here the people of Oakleigh are not just an unknown constituency. I grew up in Oakleigh. I know thousands of people in Oakleigh, and while the two weeks of pre-poll was hard, hard yakka, it gave me and all other members an unprecedented opportunity to meet literally thousands of people in our constituencies in a short space of time. Every time I met those people I was even more humbled by the privilege I have to represent them. They are not the people who have written those horrific things on social media.

I want to thank the Premier for his leadership and his friendship, and I also thank the entire government, including the ministers. I have got a special thankyou in my heart for the member for Bentleigh. There have been many, many late nights, and I do not think we would have gotten through the four years unscathed had we not had each other to lean on.

I also want to thank the member for Werribee. The Premier has given me the best gift by appointing me Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer, because he is a good friend and he is an excellent mentor. I am so delighted to be working with him over the next four years. It is a rare privilege.

I want to thank my staff for the last four years: Kieran Boland, who has been an extraordinary support; Caroline Melzer; Connor Parker; Aidan Wright; Jasmine Stanhope; Deborah Tagoda; Loren Rotunno; and Elijah, on and off. I also want to thank the Victorian Electoral Commission staff, as other members have, for that really hard few weeks of work they did to keep our democracy going.

Finally, I want to thank my beautiful partner, who is an incredible human being—I love him more than anything—and that is Yianni. I want to thank my mum and dad, and I also want to thank my sister, her family and my three beautiful nephews. I also thank all these amazing colleagues I have for the next four years as we achieve success in changing Victorian society forever.

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) (18:03): It is a great pleasure that I am speaking to the Governor's address-in-reply. It is 10 years since I bought my first home on Moreland Road, and my husband, Adrian, and I and now our new baby, Patricia—although she is not so new; she turned one this week—and our two rescued cavaliers, Kelly and Bridie, very proudly call Pascoe Vale South home. Like so many people who have come from other parts of our great state—indeed from across the world—we have chosen to make our home in the vibrant multicultural community that I am so privileged to represent. Since 2014, living in this amazing community and representing it in the state Parliament as part of an Andrews Labor government has indeed been a great privilege. We have worked hard and we have delivered results, and in a somewhat unique election where we were regularly accused of not having delivered for the people of Melbourne's north, we were very easily able to refute that.

Some of the big-ticket items that over the last four years we were very pleased to be able to deliver in the electorate that I am so pleased to represent include \$10 million for noise walls in Glenroy, protecting residents in Glenroy from the noise on the Western Ring Road. This included walls on the Moonee Ponds Creek bridge, which ensured that the residents of Glenroy and in the valley were protected from the noise from the Western Ring Road. We began work on removing the dangerous level crossing in Glenroy; early works are underway. We had \$750 000 for the new Glenroy Library at the Wheatsheaf Hub, and we had \$1.6 million announced last year for a new early years centre at the Wheatsheaf Hub in Glenroy. We also provided \$1.8 million for a new Oak Park ambulance station, and the building of this ambulance station is in the design phase currently. We have two new netball courts at JP Fawkner Reserve, a \$100 000 grant for unisex change rooms at Hallam Reserve, \$2.3 million for upgrades at Pascoe Vale Girls College, \$200 000 for Pascoe Vale Girls College sports fields, \$2 million for dedicated bike lanes on Cumberland Road, \$13.8 million for upgrades at Strathmore Secondary College and \$3 million for upgrades at Pascoe Vale Primary School. We upgraded the Tullamarine Freeway.

There has been \$3.5 million for upgrades at Pascoe Vale South Primary School; a \$100 000 grant to redevelop the pavilion at Raeburn Reserve in Pascoe Vale; \$1 million for a new multipurpose hall for St Oliver Plunkett Primary School, which I was very pleased to officially open just before we entered the caretaker period; upgrading the Western Ring Road; a \$100 000 grant for the Glenroy Bowls Club, which is almost finished; four new netball courts at Sewell Reserve in Glenroy; two upgraded netball courts at Martin Reserve in Hadfield; \$5 million for upgrades at Westbreen Primary School; \$3.5 million to extend the Upfield bike path; two new netball courts at Cole Reserve in Pascoe Vale; \$2.8 million for a new home for the local SES unit; \$1 million for upgrades at Mercy College in Coburg; road safety improvements in the Bell Street–Sydney Road precinct; \$754 000 for upgrades at Newlands Primary School; \$1.9 million in upgrades at Coburg High School; a \$192 000 grant for lighting at De Chene Reserve; and \$3 million to redevelop the Coburg City Oval, home of the Coburg Lions. We have begun work on removing the Bell Street level crossing, and we have begun work on removing the Moreland Road level crossing. There has also been a \$100 000 grant for lighting at Bridges Reserve and \$6.7 million for upgrades at Coburg North Primary School.

These are just a few of the things that we have delivered in the electorate of Pascoe Vale and on the borders of Pascoe Vale in just the last four years. So the accusations that we are taking the community for granted are somewhat debunked by that list and certainly debunked by the many, many other things that did not feature in that list that we have also achieved in the last four years. I am very proud, on that record, to have been re-elected as the member for Pascoe Vale, and I think it is a clear endorsement that the people of Pascoe Vale know that it is an Andrews Labor government that will deliver for them. As the Premier says, it is an Andrews Labor government that says what it is going to do and then it does it.

When we took to the electorate a plan for the next four years we were overwhelmingly endorsed in that plan. I was very pleased that after much work one of the key features in particular—and the Premier came to Pascoe Vale to announce this upgrade himself—was \$11.9 million for the upgrade of the Gaffney Street–Sussex Street intersection. This is an extremely dangerous roundabout which I have spoken about in this chamber on a number of occasions and which the former Minister for Roads has visited previously and the new Minister for Roads will visit later this week.

It is an intersection that takes more than 35 000 cars through it on a daily basis. It has a major shopping centre built on the intersection and it has residents living on the opposite side to the shopping centre. It is certainly a dangerous intersection for pedestrians, and particularly for the many school students who walk to schools within the area. So to be able to have the Premier come and announce that a re-elected Labor government would put \$11.9 million into fully signalling this intersection and realigning the road was a great victory for local community who have advocated tirelessly. In particular I would like to acknowledge Sarah Jefford, who was a tireless advocate for the local community in achieving the funding for this project.

The Labor government also announced that, if re-elected, it would invest \$9.2 million in rebuilding Glenroy College, and \$1 million in upgrades at the Corpus Christi Primary School. Indeed, the \$1 million for Corpus Christi Primary School was announced at the same time as our overall capital funding package for Catholic schools. One-third of students are educated in our independent and Catholic school systems, and to have the Premier come to what was his old primary school to announce \$1 million for Corpus Christi Primary School was very welcome to this community. The investment of \$9.2 million in Glenroy College, a school that is doing fabulous work in improving literacy and attendance outcomes for students but which needs some extra help with its facilities, was a great outcome.

The announcement that we would remove two more dangerous level crossings was another win for our local community. We were already removing Moreland and Coburg, and we would now also remove the Munro and Reynard streets crossings in between the two. This is a great outcome, which will obviously improve traffic flows, and also pedestrian flows and the reliability of public transport along the Upfield line. Of course work continues on removing the Glenroy level crossing.

We announced 355 new car parks at Merlynston station. This was also something that the community and I have been advocating for for quite some time. We also announced a further \$1 million for the Pascoe Vale South Primary School and funding for an upgrade to the Oak Park Soccer Club's kitchen. I was very pleased to welcome the then Minister for Multicultural Affairs who made the announcement that CALD seniors groups would receive funding as well. To have the multicultural affairs minister visit the Hadfield senior citizens was a great day for those senior citizens.

I am extremely humbled to have been re-elected as the member for Pascoe Vale. I think I have been re-elected on the achievements of the Andrews Labor government in Pascoe Vale, and certainly on the commitments that we make going forward. But I would just like to put forward some thank-yous. For me, this was a difficult election. I was just home from hospital with my first baby when I heard that two blokes were going to nominate against me. Patricia was only four weeks old when she came with me to the Pascoe Vale Primary School with the Minister for Education, and five weeks old when she joined the Premier at Strathmore Secondary College. She was certainly a trooper on the front line of the campaign.

I would also like to thank my husband, Adrian. Obviously it was an emotional campaign. You cannot do these jobs without the support of your family and friends, and Adrian was by my side the whole time. He was absolutely staunch in his support of and his advocacy for me and I love him dearly. I said in my inaugural speech that our relationship will be forever marked by election campaigns—given it was at the end of the 2010 election, when we were both chiefs of staff in the government, that we met—and that obviously continues.

I noticed that the now Attorney-General thanked her dogs, and I want to do the same. Kelly and Bridie certainly suffered a lot during the election. A new baby came home and they looked as if to say, 'What's this?', and then there was an election on top of that. They probably bore the brunt of much of it, so to Kelly and Bridie, a particular thank you. It certainly takes a village to raise a baby, and to run a campaign under the circumstances in which I did. I could not have done it without my extended family, in particular my mum, who effectively moved for great periods of time from her home out in the Yarra Valley to ours in Pascoe Vale. Thanks to my brothers John-Paul and Daniel. John-Paul in particular was a staunch defender of mine out there on the trail and falsely maligned in many circumstances, but I think retractions and whatnot have proven the day there. I would also like to thank my extended family, who give me unconditional love and support, particularly my cousins. We come from a long line of loud and proud women and Richmond supporters, and my cousins in particular were on the campaign trail day in, day out for me, often travelling from all over the place to come and help me.

Thank you to my staff—I do not think any of us can do this job without our staff—and in particular Liam, who has since gone on to work for the Minister for Education. Liam was with me for four years and well and truly kept my office going and my campaign going. To Laura, to Paula, to Elise and to Kate: I could not have done any of it without you.

I would also like to thank Terry Alberstein, who works with us on our social media. I would like to concur with the member for Oakleigh about the comments he made about parliamentarians becoming the victims of keyboard warriors who feel they can say anything from behind the comfort of a keyboard. There was no doubt that my election was also subject to some of the sorts of behaviour that the member for Oakleigh has referred to in his electorate. Certainly Terry and my staff assisted in managing that and protecting me from that, but it is totally unacceptable that we are coming to a world where people feel that just because they are behind a keyboard they can say and do whatever they like without any consequences. I think, as the member for Oakleigh eloquently put it, we have seen in the last week in particular where allowing people to get away with that kind of behaviour can lead.

I also thank the other members of my campaign team, Paul, Lauren and Evan, and their families. Not only do our own families take a hit in an election period, but so do the families of our staff and our volunteers. Thank you to my friends, and in particular Cassandra, Umandeep and Helen, who would often appear with parcels of food or a new round of clothes for Patricia, or just that little thing that you might need or that you do not have time to do. I thank the union movement, and in particular the shop assistants union, but also the plumbers, AWU, CFMEU and Transport Workers Union, who are always great advocates of our working families in this Parliament. Their support, often at short notice, during my campaign was certainly greatly appreciated.

I thank Labor's head office, and I know a number of people in this chamber have already thanked Kosmos Samaras. I have always thought that I would not become that annoying candidate for Kosmos, but I think this time I did. Thank you to Kos for his advice and support. I thank Student Unity and Young Labor. The member for Oakleigh referred to the gruelling hours of the pre-poll, and certainly my pre-poll location was unique and it was very hostile. The Student Unity members in particular staffed that pre-poll and kept it going. I am very grateful to them for that. It was often at times when I was physically unable to, so thank you for that.

I thank the staunch locals in our community who remain great supporters of mine—people such as Terrian and Pieta, Rory, the Hosseini family and the Erdogan family. I enjoy great support from our local community. During a very difficult election in Pascoe Vale they stood by me, they advocated for me and they often took a bit of flak in their own communities for it, and I am very grateful to them for that.

Thank you, finally and most importantly, to the voters of Pascoe Vale who have re-elected me, both on the record that I have outlined and on the commitments that we made. I can assure them that I will continue to be an advocate for our community day in, day out in this place.

Mr J BULL (Sunbury) (18:19): It gives me great pleasure to make a contribution and respond to the Governor's speech to the Parliament by way of an address-in-reply. It is a truly wonderful feeling to return to the Parliament for my second term and to represent the outstanding people of the Sunbury electorate. I would like to thank my electorate for re-electing me and, in doing so, voting for a positive set of plans, a positive set of policies and initiatives that will propel our community forward. I want to thank the community for overwhelmingly voting for a record of investment in local schools, local roads, health care, public transport and community infrastructure, and I want to thank my electorate for rejecting fear and division and instead choosing to re-elect, in record numbers, a government with a big, bold, positive agenda for our great state. I want to thank those that voted for Labor. To those that chose not to, I assure you as your local member that we in this government will work hard over the next four years, as we have over the past four, to try and win your support.

I would also like to thank my incredible wife, Jasmine, whose unwavering love, advice and support is truly remarkable and a constant source of inspiration to me. I would like to thank my terrific parents, Ian and Lesley, who I adore, whose advice is endless and whose love is endless. I also thank my extended family, friends and wonderful team of volunteers, without whom I certainly would not be here today.

Can I also take this opportunity, as other members have this evening, to thank my terrific electorate office team. To Adam, Jarrod, Jules, Almendra, Mik, Josh, Sharpe and Sam, thank you for all the work you have done over these past four years and thank you for your commitment to the people of the electorate and to constantly focusing on delivering for them.

To the countless volunteers, of which there are too many to name—although in saying that, I will attempt to name them—can I thank and acknowledge Brad, Ann, Cheryl, Sharon, Kylie, Juan, Peter H, Peter J, Mathew, Spiro, Cameron, Justin, Gillian, Darren, Steve, Jana, Jordan, Ross, Doug, Peter, Bob, Jean, Brad, Thommo, Ryan, Jeff, Cole, Rhys, Britt, Deys, Tim, Dylan, Brian, Connie, Clint, Lauren, Phil, Liam, Andrew, Shannon, Barb, Maureen, Joan and so many more. This great Labor victory was your victory, and I would like to put on the record my thanks for the incredible hard work not just through the campaign but right across the four years.

Other members have mentioned the Victorian Electoral Commission staff. I think it is very important to acknowledge their work both on election day and in the lead-up, those wonderful two weeks of pre-poll that we all enjoy so much.

Mr Wynne interjected.

Mr J BULL: I hear the Minister for Multicultural Affairs also enjoys his time on pre-poll. Whilst I am discussing the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, I am incredibly proud to be the parliamentary secretary in this state for multicultural affairs and incredibly pleased to be serving with the minister.

Can I also take the opportunity to thank the ALP head office—Sam, Stephen, Kareem, Simon, Jas and Conrad—and in particular the unwavering, unstoppable Kos Samaras for his advice, for his support and for an incredible job and an incredible campaign.

I want to congratulate and acknowledge of course the Premier—a stunning campaign, an incredible four years—for outlining a platform for a bold, visionary Victoria. To all cabinet and all caucus colleagues, it is a wonderful privilege to be serving with you in this place. I particularly would like to acknowledge the member for Yuroke for her terrific friendship and unwavering support. It has been indeed truly remarkable to listen to those inaugural speeches over the past few weeks in this house—to listen to the breadth of experience that is now in the chamber. To listen to many of the reflections that have been made over these past few weeks has been truly extraordinary.

When I was first elected in November 2014 I was somewhat shocked and somewhat surprised to learn that there were no projects in my community—a community that I have lived in my entire life. No projects were underway—no school rebuilds, no new roads and no community infrastructure—and

worse yet, there was huge uncertainty caused by local instability due to a potential local government split. There were those who were not sure of their future employment. There was no pipeline of projects. It was not a good state of affairs at all, with no pipeline of works and no plans to address numerous concerns that were in my community, a community that was growing. I think this was reflected right across the state.

We set out to change that. Four years ago, the Premier and this government made a promise to the people of Victoria to put them first by investing in jobs, education, health and public transport, and by getting to work on those really important matters of reinvesting in TAFE, reinvesting in schools and hospitals and ensuring that we began to set this state on a new course, a new path. And that is exactly what we did.

Projects that had been set up in the previous term, projects that are underway now, are changing this state for the better. They include the Metro Tunnel, with those five new stations and over 6000 jobs; the 75 level crossings gone by 2025; the airport rail; western rail; the Geelong high-speed rail; the Cranbourne line duplication; and the Suburban Rail Loop—has there been a more exciting project in this state? I can see that members in the house are incredibly excited about this project. There is the north-east link and the West Gate Tunnel. These are terrific projects that not only create jobs but set this state up for decades to come.

I am incredibly proud to be the local member, with a record pipeline of local projects: \$53 million for the Sunbury recycled water plant; \$10 million for the noise barriers at Gowanbrae, that the member for Pascoe Vale mentioned; \$3.5 million for a new science wing at Sunbury College, my old school, and \$4.8 million on top of that for a new library; \$1.5 million for Gladstone Park Primary School; \$3.5 million for Sunbury Primary School; \$700 000 to my old primary school, Sunbury Heights Primary School; \$3.1 million for the Mickleham Road–Melrose Drive intersection upgrade; 300 additional car parks at the Sunbury station, which is a terrific announcement; \$700 000 for Kismet Park Primary School; \$2 million for the warm water pool; signalling the Gap Road and Horne Street roundabout; building the Sunbury men's shed expansion; \$3 million for the Sunbury global learning centre; nearly \$500 000 for Boardman Reserve; and \$400 000 for the Sunbury Lawn Tennis Club.

The list just goes on and on and on: \$3.9 million for Sunbury Downs College; \$7.2 million for a terrific project of a shared facility, to have an early learning centre and a local council facility on both primary school land and secondary school land; \$4.5 million for Tullamarine Primary School; and for the first time a new future for the Jacksons Hill historic site, including \$3 million for an arts and community precinct. I should acknowledge the work of the Minister for Planning in having the Victorian Planning Authority do some very important work around ensuring a great future for this site, something that I am incredibly proud of as the local member.

The list goes on, but in looking towards the next four years, I as the local member and a member of this government will be focused on a number of things. They will be removing the Sunbury level crossing; upgrading the Sunbury Day Hospital to turn it into the Sunbury community hospital; building on that record investment in schools, starting with upgrades at Gladstone Views Primary School and Gladstone Park Primary School; those 300 car parks at the Sunbury station; exciting new upgrades to Langama Park and Boardman Reserve in partnership with Hume City Council; ensuring the delivery of the arts precinct; and upgrading the Sunbury and Macedon Ranges Specialist School.

I do want to take this moment to just reflect on a conversation. I think your being the chair, Acting Speaker Dimopoulos, may have led to this reflection. It was a conversation I had with a parent of a student at that specialist school. It would have been perhaps six to eight weeks before the election. This parent said to me one evening, 'Make sure you guys win, because we need you'. I know that each member on this side of the house can reflect on the importance of ensuring our schools, and in particular our special schools, are well funded and well supported to give every single student the very best opportunity in life.

We will continue to get on with duplicating Sunbury Road. We will continue to deliver free TAFE. We have got an extraordinary Solar Homes package. For the very first time this state will be prioritising panels for Victorian homes, driving down prices. Not only are we reducing people's power bills, but it is also good for the planet, and that is what this government supports. There is also the airport rail link, the Suburban Rail Loop and so much more.

I am conscious of time, but I did want to touch on something briefly. In my first speech in this Parliament I reflected on the need for our state to do more in mental health. After four years as a local member I have had the opportunity, like a number of members have had, to meet with constituents who themselves are dealing with mental health issues or whose families are dealing with poor mental health. I think of all the matters that you deal with, in not having the answers and not knowing what to say in many respects to these wonderful Victorians, this would have to be one of the toughest. The triggers and causes are many and varied, but the solutions are never simple. This year 3000 Australians will take their own lives and countless more are trying to cope. Last year alone we lost 621 Victorians to suicide. That is a devastating statistic. That is why I was so very pleased that this government established the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. It is widely supported by my local community and I imagine it is supported by all communities. This is important work. It is work that will save lives, and what could be more important than that?

This government is focused on delivering for all Victorians. It is focused on investing in health and hospitals. It is focused on building the Education State. It is focused on ensuring that we are giving our young people the best start in life. We know that skills and training provide opportunity. That is why we are going to make TAFE bigger and better and it is why we are going to continue to invest in all our wonderful skills and training facilities that operate through TAFE and give people a great start in life.

We know that clean energy is the way of the future, and our Solar Homes package is exceptional. I referenced it earlier, but it is an extraordinary package and something that I am incredibly thrilled to have a part in delivering.

We have removed 29 level crossings. There are 46 to go in order to have 75 removed by 2025. One of those is the Sunbury level crossing. There is also the Metro Tunnel, the north-east link, the West Gate Tunnel and the Suburban Rail Loop. We are getting on with building the road and rail projects that our state needs.

It has been an incredible journey over the past four years. We have the opportunity now over the next four years to continue to deliver those projects, those initiatives and those elements of government that can improve people's lives every day. Whether it is the royal commission into mental health or investing in schools, TAFEs and hospitals, they are the things that this government will continue to do, and they are the things I have been incredibly proud to be a part of.

Ms HUTCHINS (Sydenham) (18:34): In my address-in-reply to the Governor's speech I acknowledge and thank the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker and congratulate them on their reappointment. I have no doubt they will both continue to do a fantastic job. It is a great honour to stand here today and represent the people of Sydenham in what is my third term. I congratulate the Premier, my friends and colleagues in this place and those in the other place who were successful at the election. I look forward to continuing to work with all of them to deliver the best outcomes for Sydenham. There are lots of people that I want to thank for this election victory. First, I must thank the Sydenham community of course for re-electing me to fight for them here in the Parliament. I know that every day in government is a gift from the people and that it must be treasured and used for better outcomes for all. And that is what I intend to do. I want to thank the constituents, particularly those who came to see me over the last eight years in the electoral office, on street stalls or at community events to tell me about their hopes and dreams of making Sydenham a better place to live, learn and work.

I want to thank my campaigners at the last election, particularly those that gave up so much time in the election campaign and during pre-poll and on election day. Particularly I want to give thanks to my booth captains and scrutineers: Mark Gazic, Uros Rasic, Madeline Moore, Glenn Sykes, Simone Stevenson, Despina Havelas, Nicole Barr, Karishma Mohan, Ian Herbert, Mark Bell, James Singh, Leo McClay, Ivan Popovic, Lauren and Paul Hutchins, Evelyn Proud and Bob Boyd, Stuart Miller, Draga, Ismene Thiveos and Anne-Maree. Thank you to the many other volunteers that stood by my side during those weeks and of course on the very long day of the election.

Can I also give a big thanks to my former ministerial staff, in particular my chief of staff, Robert LaRocca, who has moved on to be another minister's chief of staff now, for his unwavering support of me in my time as a minister; my industrial relations adviser Maddy Moore, who has been with me for eight years; Ismene Thiveos; Tanya Corrie; Emma Webster; Shelley Maher; and of course the infamous Jana Stewart, who many in this place will hear more of when she is successful in the federal election as the Labor candidate for Kooyong. Thanks to my local Brimbank and Melton councillors who helped me in the lead-up to the election and on the day, in particular the Labor councillors Kim Truong, Lara Carli, Steve Abbouchi and Melissa De Santis.

And of course I want to thank my family. I made the mistake on election night of not thanking my mother. God beholds that fact; she is here now to make sure that I am in the Parliament to thank her. So can I say thank you, Dianne Bell, for giving birth to me but for also helping me through probably the toughest time of my life over the last few years. And of course I thank my stepdad, Mark Bell, who is more like a dad than anyone else I have in my life. I love you, Mark. And of course to my son, Xavier; my brothers Glenn and Brent; my niece and nephew Gus and Tara; and to my wonderful stepkids and their partners who, on the most difficult of days, 24 November last year, came down from Sydney on the anniversary of my husband's passing on election day, on a really difficult day, to be beside me handing out how-to-vote cards. Can I thank Lauren and Paul, Julia, Michael, Leslie, Georgia, Maddy and Ben for your support—your ongoing support—and my wonderful little step-grandchildren William, Jacob, Edie, Nate, Rorie and Audrey, and of course there are two little plums on their way.

I thank my friends Carolyn, Gab, Lara, Amy, Rachel, Martine, Matt, Nicola, Simone, Sarah and Liberty for all your support over the last four years, but in particular in the last two years of helping me out by providing things like meals when Steve was at his sickest, and just helping out generally in keeping my spirits lifted during the most difficult time of my life.

Can I also thank the ALP head office, their leaders and volunteers, the Victorian trade union movement and of course my parliamentary colleagues for their support.

Of course I have to thank my late husband Steve. Stephen Patrick Hutchins has been by my side for 17 years and was with me through the last eight years, always at the ballot box with me, always at pre-poll. I have got to say it was the toughest pre-poll before this election because I had this terrible Independent running against me, whose wife was the biggest loudmouth on the face of the western suburbs. All I could think about was what my husband would have said to that woman who was constantly haranguing people. That made me a little teary during pre-poll just because I thought he would certainly have had the best comebacks ever during that time. Certainly he was by my side as an MP and by my side as a minister, and I want to acknowledge just how much support and strength he gave me here in the Parliament and of course at home by being the number one carer of our kids after I decided to go into Parliament. Of course he was repaying 13 years of debt to me in terms of being a senator in the Senate during those years and then retiring, enabling me to then be able to take up my career aspirations here in the Victorian Parliament.

Being married to a New South Welshman is never easy as a staunch Victorian. We started our relationship by travelling across the Murray on a regular basis. In fact when I found out I was having a baby we talked about maybe even calling our son 'Murray', after the Murray River, but we saw the light and called him Xavier instead. But certainly Steve was my number one support, and he always

will be. I miss him greatly and dearly. I just want to take the opportunity here in the house to thank all of the staff at the Epworth Hospital who helped us to fight cancer through those years, particularly the oncologists, who were absolutely amazing. I am not sure how the nursing staff there continue to do their work week in, week out, but my heart and thanks go out to them.

Steve would tell me not to be sook, so I am going to get on with it and talk about local achievements. Despite the campaign that was being run in my electorate by those opposite and by the Independent candidate running against me, one that was based on fear in the electorate, particularly targeting Sudanese families—despite all of that—we managed to run a decent and hardworking campaign. I am proud to say that we were able to deliver in the last term of government in Sydenham the removal of the dangerous and congested level crossing at Melton Highway. We upgraded the Taylors and Kings roads intersection, and we built a new secondary school called the Springside West Secondary College in my electorate, which has already grown tremendously in numbers.

Labor has many proud accomplishments, but one of its proudest is supporting the education of our children. Labor is looking after kids in classrooms right across the state by providing free dental check-ups and breakfasts, all while getting on with delivering 100 new schools and upgrading 1300 more. We will also be the first government in Australia to introduce kinder for every three-year-old in the state, giving our littlest Victorians the best possible start in life.

We promised to rescue TAFE, and we did. Now we are making it bigger and better than ever before, making 50 courses free, creating 30 000 new training places and upgrading campuses across Victoria.

Sydenham schools have received almost \$2.1 million from the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund, with over 11 000 payments across the Sydenham electorate. There is almost \$25 million in equity funding. This is based on the introduction of programs that help disadvantaged students across my electorate and beyond. More than 1100 students in Sydenham have benefitted from the state school relief program over the last few years. This is because we want schools to be inclusive and we want to make sure that no child is left behind and every child is given the opportunity they deserve.

The Andrews Labor government has also delivered funding certainty for Catholic schools, such as Catholic Regional College in my electorate. We secured \$3.5 million for Copperfield College's Sydenham and Delahey campuses in the last budget to refurbish the school and help support the great work being done at Copperfield.

This stands in stark contrast to the investment made by the previous Liberal government, who between the years of 2011 and 2014 contributed \$638 000. In contrast the Labor government delivered \$66.6 million in capital funding between 2015 and 2018. This is all in the context of huge growth in my electorate.

In terms of other areas of significance, health has been a really important one to the people of Sydenham, and our investment in health continues to deliver. We are investing billions into health and hospitals so that Victorians can get the care that they need, no matter where they live. This means more nurses, more midwives, new community hospitals and backing our paramedics so that they can keep responding to emergencies in record time.

Locally these significant investments include \$200 million for the Joan Kirner Women's and Children's Hospital; \$29.6 million, a huge boost—as Acting Speaker Suleyman would know—to the Sunshine Hospital emergency department's capacity; and \$50 million to develop the business case for the new Footscray Hospital, which will be an amazing new health and research precinct into the future. We also know that Western Health received over \$145 million more in operating funds than under the previous government, which is an increase of almost 30 per cent.

On top of that we have delivered in the area of infrastructure. We have already removed 29 level crossings, and as we have heard before we have set a target of 75 by 2025. One of those 29 levels crossings, I am happy to say, is the removal of the Melton Highway level crossing.

We have delivered the biggest infrastructure program Victoria has ever seen, including the expansion of the M80, which is a very important project in both my electorate and your electorate, Acting Speaker Suleyman, and of course the upgrades to the Tullamarine Freeway, the investment in the Melbourne Metro Tunnel, the West Gate Tunnel, and the policy we took to the election around the Suburban Rail Loop. We are getting on with building the road and rail projects which get Victorians home sooner and safer, and also delivering local jobs in the process.

Melbourne's western suburbs are experiencing strong population growth and this is increasing pressure on the road network, so it is important that we keep investing in our infrastructure. I want to thank the Andrews Labor government for committing funding for a business case to improve the Calder Freeway between the M80 and Bulla-Diggers Rest Road, in particular looking at alternatives to the current arrangements at Calder Park Drive.

In 2016, I began advocating to secure planning funding to upgrade the Calder Freeway. Thankfully, as part of the 2017–18 budget we saw planning funds provided. A long-term strategy for the Calder Freeway is in progress, with the support of many locals who are calling for secure funding into the future and for us to look at ways to fix the bottlenecks that exist on the Calder. Since then, I have written to the Victorian Minister for Roads, as well as to federal ministers and shadow ministers responsible for roads and infrastructure. I have also previously raised here in Parliament the need to address safety and congestion all along the Calder Freeway. I will continue to advocate for the interchange to be built at Calder Park Drive and for improved safety on our Calder Freeway.

I have only just touched on a few things, but of course there is so much more that we have delivered in the last four years and that we have committed to into the future—renewable energy, jobs and of course our awesome announcement around a mental health royal commission. That is really going to change the face of some of the issues that my residents are facing. Unfortunately only last week a friend's daughter was feeling very suicidal. She ended up having to take her to Sunshine Hospital's emergency department. I have to say that our resources are very lacking when it comes to mental health at our emergency departments. Some of the investments that are yet to hit the ground will, I know, address this. I know it is a huge burden on our ambulance system and on our policing system.

Of course there are many other achievements in the area of industrial relations, in the area of women and the prevention of violence against women, and of course Aboriginal affairs. I guess of all my work, what I am most proud of as a former minister is the work I have been able to do in the area of treaty and being able to advance treaty with Aboriginal Victorians. I was absolutely blessed to be able to work with the leadership of Aboriginal Victoria to progress a bill to this house and to have that accepted by a majority of the community across Victoria—that is, the Aboriginal community.

I thank the Premier for all his hard work in delivering for my area.

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (18:49): I am very pleased to be here in the chamber and speaking tonight. I took a bit of an idea from one of the previous speakers. We were talking about the re-election of the Andrews Labor government and the volunteers and the many, many people that help an individual candidate in their campaign, so I thought I might do the same and do the thankyou's at the start, because otherwise you end up getting to the point where if you leave it to the end you always run out of time. I guess the first thing to say is that I am so proud and feel so privileged to be part of this second term of an Andrews Labor government. In fact I am very proud of the work that was done in the last term, from 2014 to 2018, and I hope that was instrumental in the re-election—the 'Danslide', as it is called—of the Andrews Labor government in 2018.

I will just go through some of the thankyou's, because it really is hard work for a whole lot of people running a campaign, even in a safe seat like the electorate of Thomastown. I believe that you cannot take people for granted. Everybody has a right to have a campaign in their electorate so that we can respect people's views and let voters know what it is that the Labor Party is offering to the electorate and so that people have full information and can then make their decisions on that. I do not believe we

should feel that people in safe seats do not need to be told anything just because they are going to vote a certain way anyway. It is just not right to have that attitude; in actual fact it is not the way things are going anyway. Everybody has views, and they all want to look at what a government is offering and then make their decisions on that.

In terms of thank-yous, I can only really go through some of those that really put in way over and above the call of duty. Of course we had lots of people manning—or crewing, or womanning—the polling booths on election day. And of course there is now so much more importance placed on the pre-poll in the two weeks prior to the actual election day; you need to have people there for quite long hours every day starting at 8 o'clock in the morning. I think it was on Thursdays and Fridays until late and also on Saturdays.

I would like to thank first of all my union, the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, and congratulate the new secretary, Tony Mavromatis, for taking on the position of secretary of the AMWU. I thank him for all his help and support, and I thank all the officials and members that also supported me during pre-polling in particular as well as on election day. It was great to see them all again. I also thank Lorraine Cassin, who is the federal secretary of the print division of the AMWU, and Tony Piccolo, who is the assistant state secretary there. Tom Hale is a former secretary of the food division of the AMWU and replaced me when I left to come into this place. I thank the secretary of the Electrical Trades Union, Troy Gray, along with Danny Filazzola and Alfonso and Joe Youssef. I think they were there on the days when it was pouring with rain and very cold, and they stuck with it during the pre-polling.

Of course the very, very important local ALP branch members and also the community volunteers put in so much of their time and their heart at all times of the year, not just at election time. I thank Suctettin and Perihan Unal and their daughter, Ruiekye Unal, and Reyhan Unal and her husband, Imran Ahmed. They came across and really helped out when we were in a bit of need and there were problems or something happened. They would drop everything and all rush over and help wherever they could. I really appreciated their help along with that of Siri Abak.

Nessie Sayer is a real Labor Party stalwart—she is pretty well doing work for our party 24/7. She goes to everything and supports everybody, and I really appreciate both the work that she does and also her friendship. I thank Imran Khan from the new area in the Thomastown electorate. Regina Leung-Huning and Ann Lo did a lot of work, including during election day. My partner, Gary, my son, Kynan, and my mother, Kathleen, were always there helping me whenever I needed their help. I also thank Samir Bekhazi, Antoun Khoury and Sarah Tawil. At the tramways union, the new leadership there—Tarik Koc, Mark Moran and Frank—also gave me a lot of help during the campaign and on election day. I also thank Bone Despotovski, Koste Kolevskio and the many members of the Australian-Macedonian community living in the Thomastown area, and of course I would like to pay a special tribute in remembrance of Simon Petrovski, who sadly passed away recently. He was too unwell to actually help on election day, but he arranged other members of the community to help out. That is an incredible commitment to the Labor Party, while he was ill and fighting a terrible cancer, to do that. I also thank members of the Palestinian community; the Australia Pakistan Youth Association and other members of the Pakistani community; the Iraqi community; and Donato and Marai Polvere, even though she had a serious neck operation and had quite a lot of difficulty moving around.

These are all the people that make the Labor Party what it is and put in so much love, work and commitment to make sure we have a Labor government, because they know that a Labor government is going to help and is the best chance for working people to increase their standard of living and have a better life. They do that for nothing other than the belief in the values that we all share, and they really are wonderful friends and committed party members.

When we look at the actual electorate and what was committed to, there is a long list of things and money that will be going into the electorate of Thomastown. Everyone goes on about safe seats getting nothing. I think, from my adding up, by November last year the Thomastown electorate received about

\$600 million—more than half a billion. When I tell people that, they are absolutely surprised, but they can also see all the work that is being done in the area, all the building that is going on and even a few cranes now on some of the buildings such as the Northern Hospital. Not only are we building a seven-storey tower at the Northern Hospital, but we will also have more theatres. The Minister for Planning is here. I hope that is okay and fits in with the planning system of the area. Of course we also committed to a new emergency department in the election at the Northern Hospital, and that will be devoted to children and their families. That hospital is overstretched in emergency, as are other parts of the hospital. With a number of people coming in by ambulance, it is much better to have a quieter place for children and their families, separate from the general emergency department.

There will be two more primary schools built in the next few years as part of the education package, and of course kindergartens will be attached to those. There is more commitment to the planning of stages 2 and 3 of Edgars Creek Secondary College, and of course we are really advocating and wanting that to be built as soon as possible because of the number of families and students in that area. It is the only secondary school in the new suburbs, and we really need to make sure that is completed.

Of course the Reservoir level crossing removal is an iconic issue for residents. While it is not in the Thomastown electorate, people do not just stay within the boundaries of a state electorate; they move around. The Reservoir level crossing has been the bane of many people's lives, often waiting 20 minutes in traffic while trains and cars go by. I think there is a five-way intersection as well as the train track there.

The bus service which has been committed to between Mernda and Craigieburn through Wollert is really important, and again this is part of the new suburbs. This will service Edgars Creek Secondary College. There is a real need for students to be able to travel on public transport to get to the new secondary school rather than having their parents drive them there or drive them to the more established areas and creating congestion around them.

We are also really looking forward to more information and more work on the high-performance basketball training hub that is going to be developed in Melbourne's north-west. People were astounded that a party would actually offer kindergarten for all three-year-olds, and they were so excited to think that they would be able to get free or subsidised kindergarten for three-year-olds in the area. With the scout hall, there has been a real issue around facilities and activities for teens and younger people—

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Rulings by the Chair

UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

The SPEAKER (19:00): Before moving to the adjournment debate I wanted to make a few remarks about some comments made earlier this afternoon when the member for Oakleigh was making a contribution to the address-in-reply debate in which he quoted a number of concerning comments that had been made towards him on social media. While the member obviously felt aggrieved, he should not have used unparliamentary and offensive language in his contribution. I remind all members that unparliamentary language is not acceptable and that quoting such language does not make it acceptable in this house. There are numerous previous rulings that set out this practice. I would invite the member for Oakleigh to consider apologising to the house.

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) (19:00): Thank you, Speaker. I absolutely apologise. I am sorry for the offence it caused the chamber. It is offensive content. It is offensive to me when I receive it and to other people when they receive it. I acknowledge it was offensive to the chamber, and I am sorry.

Mr Wells: On a point of order, Speaker, thank you for your clarification on this, but I think it would be important and worthwhile, because there are a number of new members in the chamber, that your

ruling today be sent out by email or through the clerks to just clarify the ruling in regard to quoting unparliamentary language.

The SPEAKER: I will consider communicating that advice to members.

Adjournment

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

FORREST-APOLLO BAY ROAD

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) (19:01): (387) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Minister for Road Safety and the TAC in the other place. The action I seek is for the minister to ask VicRoads to announce when the proposed overtaking lanes on the Forrest-Apollo Bay Road will be completed. The Forrest-Apollo Bay Road is a crucial alternate route to the busy Great Ocean Road. It is the main supply road and connection from Apollo Bay to Colac. This notoriously winding and dangerous road is carrying more and more traffic. It passes over the wettest mountain range in Victoria. On weekends it is a busy route for cyclists, and during the week buses, trucks, commercial vehicles and slow-moving holiday-makers with vans and Winnebagos make their way along this road.

This government first announced its commitment to match federal government funding for these much-needed road improvements in January 2017 with much media and fanfare. It took until July and August 2018 for this government to put the notice of tender documents up on the VicRoads website, which no doubt aligned with some more specially choreographed media. We are now approaching April 2019, a full two years after the commitment was made to upgrade the road. The money has been committed. The local people who rely on this road are tiring of excuses. Please, Minister, for the sake of road safety get these much-needed improvements underway.

BUS ROUTE 627

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (19:03): (388) My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport and concerns bus services in my electorate. The action I seek from the minister is that she takes a ride with me on the new 627 bus when it is up and running in June. Around three years ago I held a bus services forum in East Bentleigh. A number of opinions were raised by local residents, mainly existing bus commuters, and as a result of that forum a number of improvements were made. One of the principal requests that kept coming up at the forum was the need for another north-south bus route in Bentleigh, and I am pleased to say that following extensive consultation—and it was very extensive consultation—we will have the new 627 bus route, which will run from Moorabbin railway station to Chadstone shopping centre. As I said, we consulted widely. That included more forums. It included a lot of mail, including writing to more than 4000 residents near the bus route and sending them a survey. We got a lot of surveys back—600 from memory. We consulted widely on the route, and we came up with something that we think will actually serve the area well. It will mean that there will be a connection between Moorabbin station on the Frankston line and Murrumbeena station on the Dandenong line. It will mean for the first time ever there will be a proper bus connection to the Glen Eira Sports and Aquatic Centre.

It is fair to say, though—I have noticed this in my nearly five years as a local member—that for some reason buses seem to cause division in local communities, because of course nobody wants a bus stop outside their home. I have to say I have received complaints from some people now that bus stops are being designated, but what I would say of course is that bus services are necessary for the many, many young people in our area who work at Chadstone shopping centre and need the means to be able to travel there. But can I also say that bus services are necessary for the many older people in our community who do not have cars or who do not like driving but need to be more mobile so that they are not isolated. They need to be independent so that they remain well and lead healthy and happy lives.

I look forward to hosting the minister in my electorate to take a ride on this fantastic new bus route.

KINSHIP CARERS

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (19:05): (389) My adjournment matter is to the Minister for Child Protection, and the action I seek is that he make the time to join me on a visit to Yarrawonga or Wangaratta during the next couple of months and meet with kinship carers in our region to discuss their views. I was delighted to hear the minister speaking in his address-in-reply contribution today about kinship carers and how he highly respects them, so I am certainly satisfied he is right across the issue and will have empathy with kinship carers in my region.

Kinship carers are an extraordinary group of people who find themselves, for one reason or another, looking after family members due to circumstances beyond their control. Often it is a grandparent looking after grandchildren, or an aunty or an uncle supporting children without parents.

There is a massive need for support workers to assist kinship carers to access services and help them to understand what they can and cannot get help with. A support worker with eight to 10 clients appears to be the at threshold to ensure a fair level of support, and the number of kinship carers far exceeds the availability of support workers in my region.

There is a fundamental difference between kinship carer support and foster care support. Logically it would make far more sense, both mentally and financially, for a relative to support a child or children, but when a child is not well supported by a relative they then fall into the foster care system or into residential care. That is not an ideal result for the child or the state.

In most cases a family member is the best person to support the child, but often the carer does not own a car large enough to transport the children to school or a house large enough to house them. In line with the old saying about putting an ambulance at the top of the cliff rather than at the bottom of the cliff, this is a perfect example of where early intervention and early support can make so much difference to the child and to the carer who supports the child or children. If the minister cannot come to Yarrawonga or Wangaratta to meet these families, I would respectfully request that a time be made for these carers to come to Melbourne and spend some time speaking with him.

ELTHAM ELECTORATE ROADS

Ms WARD (Eltham) (19:08): (390) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads in the other place. The action I seek is that the minister meet with me and give me an update on the planning works undertaken by VicRoads on two intersections in my electorate: the roundabout at Civic Drive and Diamond Creek Road in Greensborough and the Wallowa Road–Ryans Road intersection in St Helena. These two intersections can be problematic for both motorists and pedestrians. I have visited many residents in the neighbourhoods around the two intersections and sought the views of my community on how they could be improved. I thank them for their assistance, and I have passed this information on to VicRoads.

In the 2018–19 Victorian budget the Andrews Labor government funded planning work into how these two intersections could be improved to increase safety and reduce congestion. I therefore ask the minister to meet with me to give me an update on the progress of this planning work.

WARRNAMBOOL SPECIAL DEVELOPMENTAL SCHOOL

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (19:08): (391) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is that he provide information about what specific equipment is funded as part of the new build of Warrnambool Special Developmental School.

On 19 September last year, in response to a question from me in this place about budget allocations for the new Warrnambool Special Developmental School, the minister told the Warrnambool *Standard* the following:

I am advised that as part of the new school construction project, both landscaping and playground equipment are provided for in the budget.

So, Minister, you could imagine my surprise when I heard a radio advertisement on local station 3YB FM calling for the community to support a fundraising campaign for the school which says the following:

The Government has provided funding for soft-fall material, but nothing for the children to play on.

The advertisement then goes on to ask the community for assistance to provide funding for playground equipment at the new school. Now, there is something wrong here. You, Minister, are saying playground equipment and landscaping are provided for in the budget, but the school community obviously does not understand that to be the case; otherwise they would not feel the need to run an advertising campaign calling for community support specifically for playground equipment.

The minister has a chequered history with this project, at first dragging his feet over successive budgets, failing to deliver funding for the build and only jumping to action when I announced the Liberal-Nationals would fully fund the new building if elected. So you can imagine how sceptical I am about anything the minister says about this school.

Can the minister provide my community with information about what is actually included in this school development and explain why his statement as reported by the Warrnambool *Standard* is at odds with what the school believes has been funded and what it is seeking support from the community for through radio advertisements.

YUROKE YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) (19:10): (392) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Youth, and the action I seek is for the minister to provide me with an update on how the Andrews Labor government is supporting young people in the Yuroke electorate. I am particularly interested to hear from the minister given members of my 2019 Yuroke Youth Advisory Council recently met for the first time this year.

Since I was elected in 2014 the Yuroke Youth Advisory Council has met each year and provided me with an opportunity to hear the concerns and ideas of young adults across the electorate, focusing on issues within the local community as well as broader issues that impact on young people across the state. I look forward to sharing the minister's response with members of this year's advisory council, and I hope that the minister will be able to join us for a future meeting.

FOREST INDUSTRY TRANSITION PLAN

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (19:11): (393) My adjournment matter is for the Premier, given that it relates to an issue crossing both the environment and agriculture portfolios. On 31 August last year the *Herald Sun* reported an Andrews government plan to spend \$500 million on a forest industry transition plan, including paying \$340 million to Japanese-owned paper company Nippon Paper Industries. Since August last year, however, no further information about this plan has come to light; it seems to have disappeared. The action I seek is that the Premier write to me outlining what plans the government is considering regarding the transitioning out of native forest logging and whether this includes providing public funding to companies such as Nippon and what this money is to be used for.

For those who do not know, Nippon is a Japanese-owned paper company that runs a paper manufacturing facility at Maryvale in the Latrobe Valley. Nippon makes paper out of Victoria's native forests. In fact 90 per cent of the trees logged in Victoria's native forests get turned into paper by Nippon. Most Victorians may not realise this. Most Victorians may not realise that our precious forests, home to more than 70 endangered species and the source of our clean air and water, are getting made into cheap paper so a massive multinational company can profit.

This issue is also intimately linked to the waste and recycling crisis that we are facing in Victoria. Many Victorians may not realise that Nippon's paper plant in Maryvale also makes recycled paper. In fact that is a very big part of what they do. But they do keep using our native forests as well, because the government is giving them our trees for virtually nothing. The government is giving Nippon these huge, old, important trees for less than what they can pay for wastepaper that could be recycled. It is a bit embarrassing. Surely our spectacular forests are worth more than this.

The government right now has an amazing opportunity to both get out of native forest logging and fix the recycling mess. It is a win-win. If the government is considering a \$340 million payment to Nippon, I would like it to ensure that any money delivers a genuine end to native forest logging in Victoria. At the same time, why not use that money to further build Victoria's capability to recycle paper and create new jobs?

I am worried that instead of using this amazing opportunity, this Labor government might go down the wrong path. I am aware that Nippon has just received Environment Protection Authority Victoria approval to build a waste-to-energy plant. I am deeply concerned about waste to energy. Burning rubbish is no solution to this crisis. It says that we have given up on recycling and it can lead to terrible health outcomes, but it could also prop up the logging industry, and that is not okay. I ask the government to, if it is providing any money to Nippon, guarantee this money will not be used to support the waste-to-energy project and will actually be used to get out of native forest logging.

MARIBYRNONG RIVER BOAT RAMP

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (19:14): (394) I direct my adjournment matter to the Minister for Fishing and Boating in the other place, and the action I seek is for a meeting to be convened between the minister's office, her department and the Essendon Anglers Club to discuss the provision of a boat ramp on the Maribyrnong River in Flemington. I am delighted to have the Essendon angling club in my electorate. I have got to know the president, Martin Corkill, extremely well over these few last years. He is an absolute champion of a bloke, and he is a passionate angler. I think the idea of trying to encourage more people onto our waterways and to get them to experience the joy of being on the Maribyrnong will improve the water quality and the natural environment. I think finding ways in which we can encourage small-scale boating on the Maribyrnong would also be a welcome thing to do, and to that end I would indeed welcome the opportunity for a meeting to occur and for this to be discussed further.

ST TIMOTHY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL SUPERVISED CROSSING

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (19:15): (395) I raise a matter of importance for the attention of the Minister for Roads. The action I seek is for the minister to ensure enough funding is provided to the City of Whitehorse to enable it to continue funding all the supervised school crossings in Whitehorse, in particular the supervised school crossing at St Timothy's Primary School in Vermont. The principal of that school recently received a letter from the City of Whitehorse dated 20 February 2019, advising the school that the one and only supervised school crossing outside the school will, and I quote, 'no longer be in operation from term 2'. This came as a great shock not only to the principal but also to the broader school community, some of whom have contacted me. The letter from the City of Whitehorse also states, and I quote:

that this crossing no longer satisfies the VicRoads requirements for a School Crossing Supervisor subsidy.

It would appear from this letter that a very narrow view of the requirements around providing a supervised school crossing have been taken. It does not appear to take into account the safety of the children attending the school and the safety of other users of the crossing, including residents and children from other schools.

It is worth noting that this crossing is located on Stevens Road in Vermont. Stevens Road is quite a narrow road but is nevertheless relatively busy, including being a two-way bus route. The existing

crossing provides a crossing point for not only school children and their families but also other people walking to and from Brentford Square, a popular local shopping centre located 400 metres north of St Timothy's. The safety of pedestrians and road users is of great importance to all local residents, and this supervised school crossing on Stevens Road helps to keep local schoolchildren and other users safe on their local journeys.

I would also note that St Timothy's Primary School was the 2018 Golden Shoe award winner from the City of Whitehorse, won by the school for actively promoting and participating in the VicHealth-encouraged Walk to School program. How ironic that at the same time the school has received this important award for walking to school, it is losing its one and only supervised school crossing.

I ask the minister to ensure that adequate funding for supervised school crossings is provided to the City of Whitehorse to enable the supervised school crossing at St Timothy's Primary School in Vermont, and indeed all other required supervised school crossings in the City of Whitehorse, to be funded on an ongoing basis.

GLEN WAVERLEY RAILWAY STATION

Mr FREGON (Mount Waverley) (19:18): (396) The matter I wish to raise is for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. The action I seek is that the minister join me at Glen Waverley train station. Glen Waverley station is at the end of the Glen Waverley line and is a major hub for our commuters. I would like to show the minister some of the station's amenities and potential options for future improvements to the station that would benefit all our commuters.

The Glen Waverley station will be a major hub in the Suburban Rail Loop, a project which only the Andrews Labor government has the capacity to see through from planning to reality. This project will connect our district to our universities, our hospitals, our entertainment and dining centres and even the airport via rail. I would also note that even the Prime Minister has now jumped on board to borrow from our Premier's infrastructure credibility. The people of Mount Waverley district voted for this great project to connect our state and to slash congestion, and I know our government will deliver on this and all of its commitments.

RESPONSES

Mr WYNNE (Richmond—Minister for Housing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Planning) (19:19): The member for Polwarth raised a matter for the Minister for Road Safety and the TAC seeking advocacy for an overtaking lane on the Forrest-Apollo Bay Road as an alternative to the Great Ocean Road, and I will make sure the minister is aware of that matter.

The member for Bentleigh raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport, inviting the minister to visit the electorate and take the opportunity to ride on a new bus route, the 627, which is obviously making a significant difference in his area.

The member for Ovens Valley raised an important matter for the Minister for Child Protection in relation to the really important work that kinship carers do and asking whether the minister is able to make some time to visit kinship carers either in Yarrowonga or perhaps here in Melbourne, and I will make sure that the minister is made aware of that invitation.

The member for Eltham raised a matter for the Minister for Roads in relation to two significant road projects. She is seeking an update on the planning and implementation of those projects. I will make sure that the minister is aware of that request.

The member for South-West Coast raised a matter for the Minister for Education relating to the Warrnambool Special Developmental School and seeking clarification of whether play equipment is in fact part of the broader upgrade of that facility. I will make sure that that matter is clarified and I will pass that on to the minister.

The member for Yuroke raised a matter for the Minister for Youth seeking the opportunity for her to have an update about the member's 2019 youth advisory council and an opportunity to meet locally. I will make sure that the minister is aware of that request.

The member for Melbourne raised a matter for the Premier seeking an update on the forest industry transition plan, and I will make sure that matter is brought to the attention of the Premier.

The member for Essendon raised a matter for the Minister for Fishing and Boating seeking a meeting between the minister and the Essendon Anglers Club, who are seeking support for the construction of berthing facilities at the Essendon angling club. I can assure the member for Essendon that my hope over the Easter break is that my sons and I will be taking a trip up the Maribyrnong River in our boat, and we will give that a very close inspection over the Easter break.

The member for Forest Hill raised a matter for the Minister for Roads seeking funding for the school crossing in Stevens Road, Vermont, and I will make sure that request is provided to the Minister for Roads.

Finally, the member for Mount Waverley raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport asking the minister to visit Glen Waverley railway station where he seeks the opportunity to point out to the minister some important improvements that may need to be made at Glen Waverley station. That is it for tonight, Deputy Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The house now stands adjourned until tomorrow.

House adjourned 7.22 p.m.