

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY, 13 AUGUST 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 Rowsell, 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 Rowsell, 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 Vallenge.

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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Tuesday, 13 August 2019

The SPEAKER (Hon. Colin Brooks) took the chair at 12.03 pm and read the prayer.

Announcements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The SPEAKER (12:03): We acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land on which we are meeting. We pay our respects to them, their culture, their elders past, present and future, and elders from other communities who may be here today.

Business of the house

STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure) (12:04): By leave, I move:

That so much of standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow today's order of business to be formal business, statements by members, government business, question time at 2.00 pm and government business continued.

Motion agreed to.

Bills

RENEWABLE ENERGY (JOBS AND INVESTMENT) AMENDMENT BILL 2019

Introduction and first reading

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (12:05): I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Renewable Energy (Jobs and Investment) Act 2017 to establish a target of 50 per cent of electricity generated in Victoria to be sourced from renewable energy by 2030 and for other purposes.

Mr R SMITH (Warrandyte) (12:05): I ask the minister for a further explanation of the bill.

Ms D'AMBROSIO: The bill will legislate the Victorian renewable energy target of 50 per cent of electricity generated in Victoria to come from renewable energy sources by 2030, building on the existing targets of 25 per cent by 2020 and 40 per cent by 2025.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read a second time tomorrow.

RAIL SAFETY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (NATIONAL SERVICES DELIVERY AND RELATED REFORMS) BILL 2019

Introduction and first reading

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Public Transport) (12:06): I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Rail Safety National Law Application Act 2013, the Transport (Safety Schemes Compliance and Enforcement) Act 2014, the Transport Integration Act 2010 and the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983, to repeal the Rail Safety (Local Operations) Act 2006 and to make consequential amendments to other acts and for other purposes.

Ms RYAN (Euroa) (12:06): I request that the minister provide a brief explanation of the bill.

Ms HORNE: Victoria entered into a single national regulatory scheme for rail safety in 2014 through the enactment of the Rail Safety National Law Application Act 2013. This bill will complete the reform process.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read a second time tomorrow.

Petitions

Following petitions presented to house by Clerk:

BANYULE PLANNING SCHEME

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria

The Petition of residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the House to the Banyule Planning Scheme Amendment C152 that seeks to make the interim heritage overlay (H0198) for 22 Arden Crescent, Rosanna permanent.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria act promptly (interim order expires on 1 Nov 2019) in accordance with this request from Banyule City Council, the local residents and wider community and make the amendment to the Heritage Overlay permanent and thereby protect this 115 year old architecturally unique heritage building.

By Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) (383 signatures)

BOER WAR MEMORIAL

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria

The Petition of the undersigned, being concerned residents of the State of Victoria, draws the attention of the House to the proposed relocation of the Victorian Boer War (South African Soldiers) Memorial, presently situated at the intersection of St.Kilda Road and Albert Road, Melbourne

The relocation of this Memorial has become necessary due to the proposed construction of the Domain Rail Station.

The Memorial is of the highest significance to the military history of Victoria and Australia as it commemorates 'All Australians' who fought and died from 1899 to 1902. Initial enlistments were Colonial troops and following Federation in 1901, enlistments were Commonwealth troops even though actual recruitment continued for several years in the control of the individual States.

The memorial was constructed on State Crown Land with funds raised through public subscription and dedicated in 1924, ten years before the completion of the Shrine of Remembrance. The Shrine precinct presently has no Boer War Memorial at which Commemorative Services can be held. The present proposal is to disassemble the memorial, place it in storage for a number (?) of years pending completion of the Station and then reconstruct it on the present inadequate, and by then, substantially reduced site at the entrance to the Station.

The Melbourne Metro Rail Authority 'Environment Effects Statement' states—

“The concept design for the re-siting of the Memorial to the west of the station box with stairs and platforms immediately to its east appears to be an unsatisfactory outcome which compromises the setting of the structure a change to the setting and presentation of the memorial is likely to result from its relocation on the site and there would be a consequent adverse impact on its aesthetic values.”

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria—

enter negotiations with the Trustees of the Shrine of Remembrance in order to have the Victorian Boer War (South African Soldiers) Memorial moved without delay from the present site to a new location amongst Memorials for other conflicts within the precincts of the Shrine of Remembrance.

By Mr FREGON (Mount Waverley) (1012 signatures)

FAIRFIELD RAIL SPUR

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria The Petition of

The Friends of Fairfield Rail Spur who are residents of Alphington and Fairfield in the electorate of Northcote

draw to the attention of the House

our concerns about future use of the Fairfield Rail Spur (also known as VicTrack Fairfield Siding, located near the intersection of Grange Road and Heidelberg Road). The community has been using and maintaining pathways that cross this land and run beside the historic Outer Circle Railway Line for the last 103 years. The pathways are vital for creating access to shops and services in Fairfield and it was always expected that the land would be returned to the community for use after completion of the Grange Road Level Crossing Removal.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria

act to ensure that the Fairfield Rail Spur is returned to the community for public use. The land should be used to connect the community with a direct shared user path and park through the length of the site and provide an open space for health and well-being.

By Ms THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (1743 signatures)

Tabled.

Ordered that petition lodged by member for Ivanhoe be considered tomorrow on motion of Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe).

Ordered that petition lodged by member for Northcote be considered tomorrow on motion of Ms THEOPHANOUS (Northcote).

Committees**SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE***Alert Digest No. 9*

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) (12:09): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, being *Alert Digest* No. 9 of 2019, on the following bills:

Assisted Reproductive Treatment Amendment (Consent) Bill 2019

Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment Bill 2019

Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2019

Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2019

Flora and Fauna Guarantee Amendment Bill 2019

Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Amendment Bill 2019

Local Government (South Gippsland Shire Council) Act 2019

State Taxation Acts Amendment Bill 2019

together with appendices.

Ordered to be published.

Documents**DOCUMENTS**

Tabled by Clerk:

Auditor-General—Annual Plan 2019–20

Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police—Report 2018 under s 96 of the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981*

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978:

Orders under s 17B granting licences over:

Albert Park

Kardinia Park Memorial Pool Reserve

Cranbourne Wetlands Nature Conservation Reserve

Order under s 17D granting a lease over Albert Park

Inquiries Act 2014—Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants—Progress Report—Ordered to be published

Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984—Notice under s 32(3)(a)(iii) in relation to Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) (Mineral Industries) Regulations 2019 (*Gazette S287, 4 July 2019*)

Melbourne Cricket Ground Trust—Report year ended 31 March 2019

Members of Parliament (Standards) Act 1978—Register of Interests—Returns submitted by Members of the Legislative Assembly—Ordinary Returns 28 July 2019—Ordered to be published (two volumes)

Ombudsman:

Investigation into State Trustees—Ordered to be published

Investigation into Wellington Shire Council's handling of Ninety Mile Beach subdivisions—Ordered to be published

Parliamentary Budget Officer—Operational Plan 2019–20

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

Alpine Resorts—C28

Banyule—GC129

Bass Coast—C151, C156

Boroondara—C276, GC126, GC130

Brimbank—GC132

Campaspe—C112

Cardinia—C220

Casey—C224, C266, C267

Darebin—C183, GC132

Golden Plains—C74

Greater Bendigo—GC132

Greater Dandenong—C221, GC132

Greater Geelong—C375

Hobsons Bay—GC132

Hume—C205, C236, GC129

Knox—GC132

Frankston—GC129

French Island and Sandstone Island—C7

Kingston—C166, GC129

Latrobe—C113

Manningham—GC129

Maribyrnong—GC129, GC130

Maroondah—C126, C135

Melbourne—GC118, GC130

Mitchell—GC129, GC134

Monash—GC132

Moreland—GC130
Mornington—C264
Murrindindi—C65
Port Phillip—C173, GC118, GC132
South Gippsland—C121
Stonnington—GC126, GC130
Surf Coast—GC129
Wellington—C106
Whitehorse—C223, C224, GC132
Whittlesea—GC129, GC134
Wodonga—C98
Wyndham—GC130
Yarra—GC132
Yarra Ranges—C163, GC130

Professional Standards Act 2003—Instrument Amending the Australian Property Institute Valuers Professional Standards Scheme (*Gazette G27, 4 July 2019*)

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Audit Act 1994—SRs 55, 56
Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005—SR 60
Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017—SR 53
Criminal Procedure Act 2009—SR 49
Family Violence Protection Act 2008—SR 59
Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Act 2019—SR 62
Heavy Vehicle National Law Application Act 2013—SR 67
Improving Cancer Outcomes Act 2014—SR 50
Long Service Benefits Portability Act 2018—SR 52
Magistrates' Court Act 1989—SRs 49, 59
Marine Safety Act 2010—SR 61
Melbourne City Link Act 1995—SR 68
Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990—SR 48
Personal Safety Intervention Orders Act 2010—SR 59
Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008—SR 47
Racing Act 1958—SR 66
Rail Safety (Local Operations) Act 2006—SR 63
Road Safety Act 1986—SR 54
Tobacco Act 1987—SR 51
Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983—SR 57
Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998—SRs 58, 64
Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Standards Act 2019—SR 65

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:

Documents under s 15 in relation to:

Rail Safety National Law National Regulations (Fees) Variation Regulations 2019
Rail Safety National Law National Regulations Variation Regulations 2019

Statutory Rules 36, 40, 41, 45, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 68

Documents under s 16B in relation to:

Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017—Determination of accreditation and registration fees

Electricity Industry Act 2000—Order under s 17

Fundraising Act 1998—Fundraising exemption order

Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983—Determination of accreditation and registration fees

Victorian Inspectorate—Inspection Report under the *Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003*

Wrongs Act 1958—Notice under s 28LXA (*Gazette S268, 28 June 2019*).

The Clerk tabled the following proclamation fixing operative dates under Sessional Order 16:

Disability (National Disability Insurance Scheme Transition) Amendment Act 2019—Division 2 of Part 2, Division 4 of Part 4 and ss 252, 253, 254, 255, 257, 261(1), 263, 264, 265(1), 266, 268, 270, 272, 273, 274(1) and 275—1 July 2019; ss 145(1), (2) and (3) and 214 and Divisions 1 and 2 of Part 3—2 July 2019 (*Gazette S254, 25 June 2019*)

Disability Service Safeguards Act 2018—Sections 1 and 2 and Parts 18 (except ss 300 and 301), 19 and 20—1 July 2019 (*Gazette S254, 25 June 2019*)

Education Legislation Amendment (Victorian Institute of Teaching, TAFE and Other Matters) Act 2018—Sections 37, 41, 44 and 72(2)—30 June 2019 (*Gazette S239, 18 June 2019*)

Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence Protection and Other Matters) Act 2018—Sections 14(1), 17, 18, 20, 21, 28 and 29, the remaining provisions of Parts 5 and 6 and Part 7—31 July 2019 (*Gazette S306, 30 July 2019*)

Residential Tenancies Amendment Act 2018—Sections 34(5) (except paragraphs (a) and (b)) and 53(4) and Division 2 of Part 18—19 June 2019 (*Gazette S228, 12 June 2019*)

Transport Legislation Amendment (Better Roads Victoria and Other Amendments) Act 2019—Division 2 of Part 5, ss 45 and 47—8 July 2019 (*Gazette S282, 2 July 2019*).

Bills

FIREFIGHTERS' PRESUMPTIVE RIGHTS COMPENSATION AND FIRE SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (REFORM) BILL 2019

Council's agreement

The SPEAKER: I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2019 without amendment.

Address to Parliament

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Address-in-reply

The SPEAKER (12:12): I wish to advise the house that I presented to the Governor on 24 June 2019 the address of the Legislative Assembly agreed to on 2 May 2019 in reply to her speech on the opening of Parliament. The Governor was pleased to make the following reply:

In the name of and on behalf of Her Majesty the Queen I thank you for your expressions of loyalty to Our Most Gracious Sovereign contained in the address you have just presented to me.

I fully rely on your wisdom in deliberating upon the important measures to be brought under your consideration and I earnestly hope that the results of your labours will be conducive to the advancement and prosperity of this state.

Bills

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL) BILL 2019
DISABILITY (NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME TRANSITION)
AMENDMENT BILL 2019
FIREFIGHTERS' PRESUMPTIVE RIGHTS COMPENSATION AND FIRE SERVICES
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (REFORM) BILL 2019

Royal assent

The SPEAKER (12:13): I advise the house that the Governor has given royal assent to the Local Government (South Gippsland Shire Council) Bill 2019, the Disability (National Disability Insurance Scheme Transition) Amendment Bill 2019—

Interjections from gallery.

The SPEAKER: Order! The house will pause while the protestors are cleared from the gallery.

Interjections from gallery.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am suspending the sitting of the house for the period of 15 minutes until the galleries are cleared.

Sitting suspended 12.14 pm until 12.31 pm.

The SPEAKER: I was informing the house that the Governor has given royal assent to the Local Government (South Gippsland Shire Council) Bill 2019, the Disability (National Disability Insurance Scheme Transition) Amendment Bill 2019 and the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2019, which were presented to her by the Clerk of the Parliaments.

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AMENDMENT BILL 2019
FLORA AND FAUNA GUARANTEE AMENDMENT BILL 2019

Appropriation

The SPEAKER (12:31): I have received messages from the Governor recommending appropriations for the purposes of the Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2019 and the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Amendment Bill 2019.

Joint sitting of Parliament

VICTORIAN HEALTH PROMOTION FOUNDATION
VICTORIAN RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING FOUNDATION
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL VACANCY

The SPEAKER (12:31): I wish to advise the house that I have received the following letters, and I am required to read the letters, so please bear with me.

Dear Speaker

MEMBERSHIP—VICTORIAN HEALTH PROMOTION FOUNDATION

The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation ('the Foundation') is established under Section 16 of the *Tobacco Act 1987* (the Act) to promote good health and advance disease prevention in the community.

Under Section 21(1)(f) of the Act, three (3) members of the Foundation are members of either the Legislative Assembly or the Legislative Council and elected by both Houses jointly.

Last year the former Minister for Health, the Hon Jill Hennessy MP, wrote to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council requesting a joint sitting of Parliament in relation to the appointment

of a Parliamentary member to the Foundation following the resignation of Ms Colleen Hartland, MLC. As yet a joint sitting has not been progressed.

The sitting terms for the two remaining Parliamentary representatives on the Board, the Hon Wendy Lovell MLC and Ms Natalie Suleyman MP, ended on 11 April 2019. As such I request that a joint sitting, to elect all three Parliamentary members, on or around 14 August 2019, be organised.

I would be grateful if you could place this matter on the agenda for a joint sitting of both Houses.

I have forwarded a similar request to the President of the Legislative Council.

Yours sincerely

Jenny Mikakos MP

Minister for Health

Minister for Ambulance Services

I have received a further letter:

Dear Speaker

ELECTION OF MEMBERS TO THE BOARD OF THE VICTORIAN RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING FOUNDATION

The Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation Act 2011 (VRGF Act) provides for three members of the Board of the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation (the Foundation) to be members of the Legislative Assembly or the Legislative Council elected jointly.

Section 11 of the VRGF Act provides that an elected member holds office for either four years after the member's election to the Board or until a House of Parliament is prorogued or the Legislative Assembly is dissolved.

I would be grateful if arrangements could be made for a joint sitting to occur, at the earliest time that is convenient for both Houses of Parliament, to elect three parliamentary members to the Board of the Foundation to fill the vacancies created when the Legislative Assembly was dissolved in November 2018.

I am writing similarly to the President of the Legislative Council and will send a copy of this letter to the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly.

Yours sincerely

Hon Marlene Kairouz MP

Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation

Minister for Suburban Development

I have received the following message from the Legislative Council:

The Legislative Council informs the Legislative Assembly that they have agreed to the following resolution:

That this house meets the Legislative Assembly for the purpose of sitting and voting together to:

- (1) choose a person to hold the seat in the Legislative Council rendered vacant by the resignation of the Honourable Philip Dalidakis;
- (2) elect members for appointment to the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation;
- (3) elect members for appointment to the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation board.

and proposes that the time and place of such meeting be the Legislative Assembly chamber on Wednesday, 14 August 2019, at 6.15 pm.

with which they request the agreement of the Legislative Assembly.

That is signed by the President.

Ordered that message be taken into consideration immediately.

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure) (12:35):
I move:

That this house agrees to the Legislative Council's proposal for a joint sitting on Wednesday, 14 August, at 6.15 pm in the Legislative Assembly chamber for the purpose of sitting and voting together to:

- (1) choose a person to hold the seat in the Legislative Council rendered vacant by the resignation of the Honourable Philip Dalidakis;

- (2) elect three members of Parliament to the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation; and
- (3) elect three members of Parliament to the board of the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation.

Motion agreed to.

The SPEAKER: A message will be sent to the Legislative Council informing them accordingly.

Motions**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure) (12:36):
I move, by leave:

That this house authorises the Speaker to give an acknowledgment of country each sitting day.

Motion agreed to.**Business of the house****PROGRAM**

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure) (12:37):
I move:

That, under standing order 94(2), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 5.00 pm on Thursday, 15 August 2019:

Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment Bill 2019

Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2019

Flora and Fauna Guarantee Amendment Bill 2019.

I will make a few observations on the government business program that I have just moved. There are three bills, as you can see, on the government business program. Each of them go to important policy matters that I am sure will see strong debate here in the chamber, particularly some of the measures in the Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2019. It is the culmination of some significant policy work that has been led by the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change on strengthening the powers of the Environment Protection Authority Victoria, which is both important from a regulatory point of view but also in supporting the communities that interact with the EPA in different forms.

I should also indicate to the house that the budget papers take-note motion that is sitting in the government business section of the notice paper will also be a feature of our business over the course of this week. We will encourage all members to continue to make their strong and vigorous contributions on the outstanding fifth budget of the Andrews Labor government and to talk positively and strongly about the various measures that are contained in the budget for their local communities, because it is a great budget, Speaker, and we are delighted to keep talking about the fifth budget of the Andrews Labor government.

Mr R Smith interjected.

Ms ALLAN: That is the word on the street. I will not allow myself to get distracted by the member for Warrandyte, but the word on the street is that this is a great budget. We have seen record lows in our regional unemployment rate; we are seeing great investment in our construction pipeline. There is a lot to talk about in this budget, which is why we want to keep talking about it during the course of our government business program for this week in addition to the three bills that I have mentioned, which, as I have already indicated, I am sure will invite some strong policy debate in the chamber this week.

Two other matters, Speaker. I would like to thank the chamber for its cooperation in the adjustment to question time for today to accommodate representatives from this place, particularly our two leaders—the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition—attending the funeral of a former Chief Commissioner

of Victoria Police, Mick Miller. I do thank the house for its cooperation in moving question time to 2 o'clock.

Those of us like the Manager of Opposition Business would remember well that not that long ago, in the olden days, 2 o'clock used to be the normal question time for this place, so it is a little bit *Back to the Future* for some of us. I am sure it will still be a great question time for those who are here or tuning in at home. Also I would like to thank various members of this place and indeed the upper house for their cooperation in finalising the Parliament's nominations for the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation board and the VicHealth board. As the motion has just been put to the Parliament, we look forward to 6.15 tomorrow evening and welcoming our friends from the Legislative Council to the joint sitting. Also those of us on this side look forward to welcoming our new member for South Eastern Metropolitan Region to the Parliament and wishing him all the best.

So we have plenty of action this week in the government business program. It is a strong agenda. It continues the strong policy work that the Andrews Labor government is delivering for the community of Victoria, and I look forward, as I always do at this part of the proceedings, with optimism to the strong and unanimous support of all in the chamber for what is a great government business program.

Mr WELLS (Rowville) (12:41): The Leader of the House will be very pleased to know that the opposition will not be opposing the government business program for the first week back after the winter break. We have looked at it, and as we have said, we have decided that we will not be opposing it. The point that the manager of government business made in regard to question time being put off to 2.00 pm is something we actually strongly supported because Mick Miller was one of the great chief commissioners of police in the history of this state. Not only did he have an outstanding record as a young police officer and as he progressed through the ranks, but he modernised the Victorian police force to what it is today. A couple years ago I sat next to him at a scout function and he was as sharp as a whip—unbelievable. For his age he was an incredible man and was still up to date on every single current affairs issue in this state. So I am pleased that the Premier, the Minister for Police, the Leader of the Opposition and our Shadow Minister for Police were able to attend that and by agreement put question time off until 2.00 pm.

At 6.15 pm tomorrow we will be meeting as joint houses in this chamber to replace the Honourable Phil Dalidakis. Phil Dalidakis is someone I will actually miss because he was the co-convenor of the parliamentary friends of the St Kilda footy club—the mighty St Kilda footy club. I believe that it was a very tough battle to replace him, and the Minister for Mental Health, I understand after great negotiations, was selected into that position. Congratulations to him. But as I said, we will miss Phil Dalidakis and his commitment to that club.

The three bills that we are debating this week are the Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2019, the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Amendment Bill 2019 and the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment Bill 2019. On the last bill that I have mentioned, the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment Bill 2019, obviously a number of MPs, if not all MPs, have received a significant number of emails, correspondence and phone calls about this particular bill. There are wideranging views within the community, so my understanding is that that will be a full and fulsome debate.

The manager of government business also mentioned that the take-note motion on the budget will continue. I am not sure whether we actually have any more to contribute on that. I think all those that have wanted to speak have actually spoken. So with those few comments, we will not be opposing the government business program.

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) (12:44): I certainly welcome the spirit of bipartisanship from those opposite in not opposing the government business program. There are a few arrangements that have changed in relation to today, and of course we also pass on our condolences to the family of the former

Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police, Mick Miller, AO, LVO, QPM. It is most appropriate that there is parliamentary representation at the service today.

Just touching on a couple of other elements that have been mentioned by both the Leader of the House and the Manager of Opposition Business, the joint sitting in relation to the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation and the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation will take place tomorrow. For those of us who had success on the weekend in the retro round of the AFL, we are going retro in the Parliament with question time back to 2.00 pm today, for those of us who remember those interesting times.

I note also in particular the Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2019. There are a couple of environment bills that I was pleased to be involved in as a past parliamentary secretary for the environment—and particularly thank my ministerial colleagues for the work that they have done across the government in the review of the Environment Protection Authority Victoria, a very significant piece of work given the EPA was established back in 1971 and the ministerial advisory council work that reported after 10 months on 16 May 2016.

This bill that comes before the house this week relates particularly to a lot of the modernising framework in the legislation for the EPA as a part of that review to ensure that the EPA continues to meet the expectations of the community but also industry and others in the community who rely on having a tough environmental cop out there in Victoria. Clearly there was a need to not only review the operations of the EPA but particularly look at whether it is meeting the standards and the expectations of the community and also responding to and supporting industry in the work that it does—certainly a lot more about industry's relationship and reliance and investments that it makes to work with the regulator but also the expectations of people in the community about what they want their EPA to be able to do. Of course, accepting 40 of the 48 recommendations in full, seven in principle and one in part was, I suppose, a large part of the work that has helped bring to fruition the EPA bill that we will debate this week. We certainly welcome that.

Not only that, but there is the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Amendment Bill 2019, which of course comes out of a significant amount of work that has been done to review that act to have a look at how we protect Victoria's environment and the *Biodiversity 2037* strategy that the government has been working on. We retain in that act the objective to guarantee the survival of all of Victoria's flora and fauna. I think if memory serves me right it was the minister's predecessor, the former member for Bundoora, Sherryl Garbutt, in her role as a past minister for the environment who did very significant work in her time around reviewing the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988.

I think it is only appropriate, again, that it is a Labor government that is taking on the task of reviewing that legislation and making sure that it reflects modern times and is nimble and adapts to the changing pressures. We have also read this week about our open spaces and the continuing pressures that flora and fauna are under, particularly with a growing population in Victoria, and the need to make sure that we strengthen that act and make sure that it is reflective of current practice and the significant work we are doing as we pitch towards *Biodiversity 2037*. I think that also reflects a very strong commitment to the environment from our government, underpinned by significant consultation work and recommendations to the Parliament. That has informed these reviews and the new legislative framework for both of these acts, and I certainly commend that activity and that legislative program that are based on some long-term and substantial work from our government.

Not only that, I have already made my contribution on the budget papers and I encourage other members to take up that opportunity. There will also be an opportunity to debate the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment Bill 2019, which I know members have certainly had the opportunity to be briefed on and engage local communities on those matters. So I commend the government business program to the house.

Mr D O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (12:49): I take up the point made by the member for Ivanhoe encouraging people to debate the budget papers. Those of us who have been through the Public

Accounts and Estimates (PAEC) exercise this year have probably already had enough of it, so I will politely decline to continue to debate the budget papers. I note that we are still going here in August, looking at the take-note motion on the budget—probably because the government's budget sank without a trace when it was released, so they are desperately trying to keep it going and talk up what they are doing. But we saw through the PAEC process that there are many, many flaws in the budget.

I am pleased, though, to speak briefly on the government business program. We are a little bit delayed because of some shenanigans a moment ago. I am sure it is disorderly to refer to such matters, but I did note the comments about respecting elders. I would just say to those who are protesting: equally, have some respect for this place. Have some respect for this as an institution. I absolutely respect and support your right to protest and will fight to the death to ensure that you can have your view, but there are ways and means to have your view in this Parliament, and disrupting the Parliament, leading to it being shut down and indeed damaging the building itself, I do not think is going to do your cause any good.

On the business program, as the Manager of Opposition Business has said, we will not be opposing it. I note though there are three bills on the agenda and two of them are bills that we have previously debated in this place. I have commented before that this is supposedly the great reforming government and yet here we are with three bills, and as we have had for most of this year, two-thirds of them are actually bills from the previous Parliament. So that is interesting in itself. There will be a number of them that will be, I think, hotly debated. I look forward to hearing from both sides on that.

There is only one thing I will add. That is, that I would like to see some important issues in my electorate debated here in the chamber. The number one issue at the moment remains drought. I am pleased to report that we did have rain in Gippsland over the weekend—indeed parts of my electorate had far too much rain. But I really want to raise it because it is important that the government and the Minister for Agriculture and the Premier understand that the drought is not over. You get an inch of rain or so in Melbourne, that does not mean the drought is over.

I know the member for Gippsland East in particular remains concerned given the event we had on the weekend where there was over 100 millimetres in the Latrobe Valley and parts of West and South Gippsland. He got 7 millimetres at Bairnsdale. Certainly around Sale there was only about 17 millilitres at my place, and that is an issue that I think the government should remain focused on. It is not on the agenda this week, but it is something that this Parliament still needs to be considerate of. As I said, we are not opposing the business program, and I will leave my comments there.

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) (12:52): It is my pleasure to rise to speak on the government business program. It is great to be back after a significant winter break. I just want to call the member for Gippsland South and make the point that not all reform requires legislative reform. In fact one of the hallmarks of this government has been its significant reform agenda. So much of that is able to occur in our communities, like the fantastic announcement on the weekend of our Smile Squad vans. Three cheers for the Minister for Health in the other place for the delivery of this significant program that is going to make a real impact on the health and wellbeing of young people, as well as saving families \$400 a child in dental fees. I did want to make the point that a lot of important business happens outside of this place. However, I am glad that those on the other side of the house are not opposing this program.

As it has already been mentioned, can I join the member for Rowville in also sending my condolences to the Miller family. I note that in this place there are a number of former police officers, and as members know, I also have a connection to Victoria Police. My partner, Graham, is also attending that funeral today at the police academy. So again it is opportune to take time to acknowledge the contribution of one of Victoria Police's finest.

When we think about our business program, we have three bills before us, two of which of course have come back from the last Parliament. They did not make it through, such was the number of bills that we had in our first term. So I am glad to see that the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment Bill 2019 and the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Amendment Bill 2019 are back before the

house. Like the member for Ivanhoe, I was also able to reflect on my time in the previous term as Parliamentary Secretary for Health, where I co-chaired the LGBTI health task force on behalf of both the Minister for Health and the Minister for Equality, who is here in the chamber today. Certainly I understood from my time in that role the deep significance of the births, deaths and marriages bill, and I look forward to debate on it this week.

The Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2019 of course also looks to introducing a commitment that we have given to the people of Victoria to ban single-use plastic bags. This is an issue on which I have received lots of correspondence, some of which I look forward to sharing with the house when I make my contribution.

As has already been noted, we will have a joint sitting this week to attend to a number of important things, not least of which is the election of members to the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation board and the VicHealth board and also welcoming a new member to the other place.

It is a good and important government business program. It is good to be back in the chamber for the resumption of Parliament after our winter recess. I look forward to the contributions of members of this house on this significant legislative program, and I commend this program to the house.

Mr TILLEY (Benambra) (12:56): I want to make a quick contribution to the government business program. As members have said in previous contributions, in this place we have three bills for debate, which will retrospectively change the genitals that you were born with, will talk about climate change and will ban plastic bags, in principle. We will deal with and dispense with those bills as the week progresses.

Also, with the take-note motion on this year's budget, the opposition has pretty well exhausted its contributions to that, but I am aware that the member for Shepparton has the call and has about another minute to complete her contribution and the member for Morwell is keen to get on and make his contribution on behalf of his respective electorate.

In relation to some administrative matters here, there has been work between the Government Whip and the Leader of the House and likewise with the Manager of Opposition Business on pairing arrangements. There have been some pairing arrangements, but I would like to note on the record that we will not be providing a pair for the member for Burwood at any stage during this sitting week. However, there are a couple of others that we will deal with.

On that note, and as we are aware in this house, the opposition will not be opposing the government business program. But I make an observation for this week. Most weeks we see that there is some sort of a theme, but I went to my financial institution to make sure that my regular payments were going through and made the interesting observation that it is Scam Awareness Week. We know that on the government side of this house they are the professionals when it comes to scams. Whether it is the red shirts scam, the branch-stacking scams, the ripping off second residence allowance scams or printing scams, you lot are red-hot in that regard. Anyway it is a bit of a sore point. The member for Macedon claimed that the current Labor government is the great reformer, but what does not get debated—and you would think in this week that the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation would be provided with an opportunity to bring a bill into the house to—

Ms Allan: Speaker, I actually feel I am doing a favour for the member for Benambra and saving him from himself in quite an embarrassing display. Although we have become accustomed to having a reasonably broad conversation on the government business program, it is important for it to have some relevance to the motion that was put. I fear the member for Benambra has strayed far and wide from that task, and I ask you to bring him back to addressing the substance of the government business program, lest he invite further observations about some behaviours on his own side.

The SPEAKER: Order! Firstly, I ask the members for Bayswater and Macedon not to interject across the chamber while a member is on their feet, but I do ask the member for Benambra to come back to the government business program debate.

Mr TILLEY: Thanks, Speaker, for the opportunity. Ministers of the Crown are given the opportunity to bring a bill into this place, and it would be a great opportunity this week for particularly the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation to bring a bill into this place to address some of the issues that relate to her portfolio and the statutes within the state of Victoria.

What we are not debating, certainly, is opportunities. We are not talking about feral deer; we are not talking about the 1 million around the state of Victoria. We are not bringing bills into this place in relation to recycling. We are not addressing the issues in relation to recycling. The failure of the solar panels scheme that we have seen in this state—we are not addressing those issues while we deal with these three pretty basic, benign, mundane bills.

On that note, let us get on with the business. We have been interrupted enough by those protesters up the top. I will make mention in dispatches: certainly while I did not serve under Chief Commissioner Mick Miller, but as an external customer with another statutory investigative body, under his tutelage, under his leadership, Victoria Police in that day was the nation's best police force, and the legacy that he has left for the state of Victoria is incredible. It must and should be remembered.

However, I will say that subsequently, in the years under those Labor appointments, some of those chief commissioners of police—we are seeing a royal commission in the state of Victoria at present, and heaven help you when that all comes out.

Motion agreed to.

Members statements

LYNNE WANNAN

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Public Transport) (13:01): I rise to commemorate the life of Lynne Wannan, AM, and offer my condolences to her husband, Hayden; her daughter Eliza, here today; and Tom and family. Lynne was passionate about the west, about having good services and infrastructure and about improving the educational and life opportunities of young people. Sadly, Lynne passed away in June.

As the new member for Williamstown, I am acutely aware of Lynne's legacy in the community. In the 1970s she was involved in the Western Region Council for Social Development. In the 80s, she was manager of community services in Sunshine and oversaw much-needed youth programs. She also helped establish Victoria University, of which she was founding deputy chancellor. With Terry Bracks, she started Western Chances, which has helped over 3000 young people in the west to finish and extend their education and career opportunities. Lynne was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 2007 for services in the area of social policy, education and children's services, and she was inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women in 2009.

Lynne was a nationally recognised expert and advocate in early childhood services. She served as chair of the Adult, Community and Further Education Board, she served on the Victorian Skills Commission and she was a director of the Victorian Office for the Community Sector. Lynne was much loved by her family and friends and will be greatly missed.

ST JOHN'S KINDERGARTEN, CROYDON

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) (13:03): I rise today to pay credit where credit is due: to all of the hardworking parents, early childhood teachers and organisers who provide excellent care and education for our preschool-age children. In particular I would like to mention St John's Kindergarten, Croydon, who provide an outstanding service for the Croydon community yet have struggled to secure financial support to assist with ongoing issues at their kinder. St John's have been in contact with local

council, state government and the relevant departments, only to be bounced around with no answers or assistance in sight. They are a government-run not-for-profit kindergarten, but because they are not located in a council building, there is no funding pool available to them.

The kindergarten operates on a very tight budget and was in desperate need of urgent funding to pay for the replacement of pipes in their bathroom so the facility remained safe for the 66 children that attend. While they were waiting for assistance, the pipe ruptured, forcing the kinder to exhaust every single dollar they had fundraised and saved to pay for the bathroom. I am aware that the children's facilities capital program is now taking applications for minor and major works for upgrades to facilities, but this is too late for St John's as they cannot make an application for funding to undertake works that have already been completed. This seems entirely unfair and unjust. On behalf of St John's Kindergarten in Croydon and given the nature of this issue, I encourage the Andrews government and the minister to please consider providing them with some emergency relief funding to assist with the daily operation of their facility. A relatively small amount of money would go a long way in assisting St John's Kindergarten and would deliver real benefits to the kids and the kinder community.

GENDER DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Equality, Minister for Creative Industries) (13:04): This week the global screen icon that is *Neighbours* is filming its first episode featuring a transgender actor—none other than Young Victorian of the Year and advocate for trans and gender-diverse rights Georgie Stone. We have also seen Cricket Australia adopt new guidelines on ensuring gender-diverse and non-binary cricketers can be included in Australia's number one game, making it truly a sport for all Australians.

We have also seen Rebekah Robertson, a long-time advocate for and supporter of families with transgender children, about to release her heartfelt story of an ordinary loving family coming to terms with the possibilities of raising a transgender child in their family. In that work Ms Robertson reflects on the stigma, discrimination and fear that underpins much of the kneejerk opposition to trans and gender-diverse people's right to be recognised truly as who they are. She comments:

... it's my fervent hope that people with open minds and hearts can ... better understand the issues surrounding transgender people ... I want readers to understand the power of authenticity, of being true to yourself. Transgender people are human beings. Their rights, dignity and humanity need to be protected by family, friends, schools, medical practitioners, people of faith and governments.

It is time, as Rebekah says, and I again quote:

... to see past ... the headlines, the rhetoric, the politics—and understand that the things that may seem to divide us are created by fear and nothing more.

Surely it is time to put aside fear and support gender-diverse Victorians.

SOLAR HOMES PACKAGE

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (13:06): I again call for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change and the Premier to fix the mess that they have created with the Victorian solar rebate scheme. I continue to be inundated with complaints from frustrated residents of the Ovens Valley who were promised solar rebates at the last election and now cannot get into the scheme. This botched program needs to be completely reviewed by an independent auditor, with recommendations to the government on how this mess can be fixed. Installers and retailers in my electorate and others are going broke and putting off staff because of this solar rebate mess. Labor continues to say one thing before an election and something completely different after the election. Admit there is a problem, fix the mess and apologise to Victorians.

OVENS VALLEY FLOOD DAMAGE

Mr McCURDY: It is now over eight months since Tarrowingee and surrounds were flooded by an extreme storm event. Creeks and property were destroyed by this 1-in-100-year event. Still the

Minister for Agriculture will not support these farmers who have lost so much. Regional Victoria is the main artery for Melbourne and yet agriculture continues to be ignored, whether it is drought-affected farmers in East Gippsland or flood-affected farmers in northern Victoria. It is time the minister supported her constituents, who helped her become the Minister for Agriculture.

ANIMAL RIGHTS ACTIVISM

Mr McCURDY: I urge all businesses in the Ovens Valley to have their say in the upcoming farm trespass inquiry. We must all band together to stop illegal access onto properties in the name of animal welfare. Victoria is one of the most over-regulated economies in the world. Animal welfare is paramount to our economic and future success and it is already well monitored. However, if we stand aside and let vegan activists and other minority organisations deliberately break the law, it will bite us all in the future. Your business could be targeted next, so I encourage you to join me at the upcoming Wangaratta hearings, make a submission or at the very least show your support for those who are at risk of vegan and other invasions.

MARIO D'ELIA

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (13:07): Recently I attended the retirement function of Mario D'Elia, who stepped down from the partnership at PwC. Mario has made an outstanding contribution to our society and our community as an adviser to the state government on infrastructure projects for decades. Mario's fingerprints are all over this city and this state, and I have no doubt he will have much more to give over the coming years. Mario, thank you so much for everything that you have done to make our state what it is today.

ESSENDON DISTRICT AQUATIC

Mr PEARSON: I was delighted to be afforded the opportunity to speak at the Essendon District Aquatic presentation night recently. John Stathis runs a great squad, and it was wonderful for the students' efforts to be recognised and rewarded. A big shout-out to all the parents who are committed to ensuring that their children can be the best that they can be.

ESSENDON ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Mr PEARSON: I was delighted to have the Minister for Education in my electorate recently to officially open the recently renovated Ascot Vale Primary School as well as the rebuilt Strathmore Primary School. I went to the 2014 election and committed that we would rebuild Strathmore Primary School, and that is exactly what we have done. It was terrific to be able to see the finished product.

SUE WEST

Mr PEARSON: A big shout-out to Sue West from my office, who recently celebrated her 50th birthday. I was delighted to attend a very enjoyable lunch. It was a great day of celebrations, and I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to be a part of it.

ESSENDON NORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr PEARSON: Over the break I was able to inspect the works currently underway at Essendon North Primary School where we are rebuilding the school oval. The work will hopefully be completed by the start of term 4 this year, and I have no doubt that it will be well utilised by the students as the school celebrates its centenary next year.

ESSENDON HOCKEY PRIDE CUP

Mr PEARSON: Finally, I was delighted to attend the Essendon Hockey Pride Cup event recently. It was a wonderful day.

ZION HOUSE

Mr R SMITH (Warrandyte) (13:09): Today I rise to speak about the fantastic work that Zion House do in the Warrandyte electorate and the wider community. Zion House is a non-profit organisation committed to working with women with life-controlling behaviours and supporting them as they go through these difficult circumstances. Sarah and Jacqui first started Zion House in Warrandyte with a simple meeting space for individual and small-group mentoring services, with a holistic focus on healthy lifestyle choices. Zion House is now holding their flagship nine-week 'Shine' program, focusing on worth, strength and purpose. This program has been made possible with the generous support of the local Warrandyte Community Bank and has had 65 women participate.

Zion House is committed to making a community atmosphere for these women and does so through their weekly social gatherings, allowing these women to obtain a sense of belonging. As a growing organisation, Zion House is looking to expand its reach and, as such, needs a new space to hold larger group meetings and office space to continue their great work. I ask the Minister for Women to meet with Jacqui and Sarah from Zion House to see firsthand the great work they are doing and see what assistance the government can offer to support this growing and vital service that Zion House offers the wider community. Indeed, if any other member in this house believes they can support Zion House, please let me know. Once again, I want to put on the record my thanks and congratulations to Zion House for the tremendous work that they are doing.

LEN AND MARLENE ORR

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) (13:10): On behalf of the people of Bullarto, thank you to Len and Marlene Orr. Len and Marlene recently celebrated 40 years of service to the Bullarto hall as members of the volunteer management committee. Over these years the Orrs have been instrumental in fundraising for the hall's maintenance and upkeep, including through the enormously successful Bullarto Tractor Pull, which has run for the past 25 years. The Bullarto hall was built back in 1906 by Thomas Orr. It is a beautiful hall that holds cherished memories for so many in our community. Again, thank you to Len and Marlene.

JAYNE GUILMARTIN

Ms THOMAS: Thank you, Jayne Guilmartin, for your service to the 1st Gisborne Scouts. Jayne has been the hardworking group leader at 1st Gisborne Scouts for the past five years and has been leader for an impressive 16 years. Under Jayne's watch, scouting in Gisborne has gone from strength to strength, with an incredible 130 children and young people engaged from joey scouts to rovers. Thank you, Jayne, for building leadership, resilience, a sense of wonder and a love of adventure in our young people.

TOM GLEESON

Ms THOMAS: Now, here is something no-one else in this place gets to say: congratulations to my constituent gold Logie Award winner Tom Gleeson! Tom, you caused mayhem, some say you broke the Logies. You won gold for the ABC, and you showed us all how to win the vote. We now await the fulfilment of your campaign promises, especially the construction of the life-sized gold Logie statue outside the Romsey IGA. Again, congratulations, Tom. The Macedon Ranges is proud of you.

CONTAINER DEPOSIT SCHEME

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) (13:11): I rise to urge the government to implement a bottles and cans refund scheme in Victoria. Victoria is now the only state or territory not to have put in place or planned to put in place a refund scheme. Why is Victoria lagging on such an important environmental reform at a time when we are engulfed in a waste and recycling crisis, when bottles and cans are polluting our waterways, our local parks and our streets, and when it has the overwhelming support of the Victorian people, including residents in my own electorate of Pahran? The only people now standing in the way

of this seem to be the state government, and some in the beverage industry who are mainly concerned about their profits and not the pollution caused by their products.

The Greens have been pushing for a refund scheme for a long time now. In 2009 former Greens MP Colleen Hartland introduced a private members bill which was passed in the upper house but blocked by the then Labor government from being debated. And whilst the Liberals supported our bill in opposition, they did not in government, instead referring our bill to a parliamentary committee. There has been talk from a government and an opposition that it needs to be a national scheme. Well, we now have every other state or territory on board, and that excuse just does not wash any more. It is now time for all parties—government, opposition and other parties—to support and put in place a bottle and can refund scheme to protect our environment and to help fix the waste and recycling crisis.

TAYLORS LAKES LIONS CLUB

Ms HUTCHINS (Sydenham) (13:13): The Taylors Lakes Lions Club do so much for our local community, including raising money for kids cancer research, helping build park facilities and organising local community events. It was my pleasure to attend the 2019 Taylors Lakes Lions Club changeover dinner just a few weeks ago, both as the local MP and as a member of the Lions Club of Taylors Lakes.

They need to be proud of all their achievements, including recently raising over \$9000 for kids cancer research, providing 100 bags of sanitary items for women in need, providing community grants to local groups and helping build a local park through their Adopt a Park program. I would like to congratulate the hardworking members of the club, including past president Neil Hunichen, incoming president Stephen Caruana, secretary Phil Clinkaberry and board members Maria Perez, Beverley Wilson, Ian Klukun, Heather Morgan and Uros Rasic. I look forward to continue working with our local Lions club to make a better community.

COPPERFIELD COLLEGE

Ms HUTCHINS: On 1 August I had the privilege of attending the Bowery theatre company to watch the spectacular performance of *Grease* by Copperfield College—so much energy, so much talent and the best Rizzo I have seen in years. That version of *Summer Loving* that those kids did should go down in local history. It was absolutely amazing. I would like to congratulate all the students and teachers involved on a very successful event.

TONY IREMONGER

Mr T SMITH (Kew) (13:14): I rise to express my sincere sorrow at the death of my good friend and Liberal Party member Tony Iremonger, who passed away way too young at the age of 58. Tony joined the Liberal Party in 2010. He was a stalwart of the party and had a deep understanding and commitment to the Liberal values of choice and self-reliance. Tony was a tireless and dedicated supporter of the Liberal cause over many years, not only in Kew but of course in Kooyong and in the Victorian division generally. Tony was secretary of the North Balwyn branch and subsequently the Canterbury branch. He was always willing to lend a hand and was always at listening posts, campaigning and handing out at pre-poll and captaining polling booths.

When not supporting the Liberal Party, Tony was a certified practising accountant and corporate governance professional who had a broad range of experience in both small and medium-sized enterprises and ASX-listed companies. He was born a Kiwi. He migrated to Australia when he was an undergraduate at Auckland University and completed his tertiary education at the University of Melbourne. He loved music and was a huge fan of Bob Dylan.

Having grown up in New Zealand on a farm, Tony loved the great outdoors, and it was on a hiking trip to Wilsons Promontory that he died suddenly on 13 June 2019. We were absolutely shocked to hear this very sad news. He had been a friend of mine and a friend of the member for Kooyong, Josh Frydenberg, and he was a man of the utmost dignity and loyalty. Many Liberals attended Tony's

funeral on 4 July in Bulleen. Tony leaves behind his wife, Jian, and his son, Nicholas, of whom he was extremely proud.

SIGMUND JÖRGENSEN

Ms WARD (Eltham) (13:16): I rise to pay tribute to the life of Sigmund Jörgensen, an Eltham icon. Our community and culture in Eltham would not be the same without the Jörgensen family and Montsalvat, and especially Sigmund. His passing very much marks, sadly, the end of an era. He created communities around him, dipping in and out of others, shaping, encouraging and sometimes whacking them into a community which was inspired, exciting and wonderful. Whilst Sig was part of the Eltham ALP branch community, we also felt part of the of the Montsalvat community with our shared values of inclusion, of progressive ideas and of creativity. Sigmund also helped and supported an astonishing amount of people, especially in the arts but also in community activism. Sigmund was about progress, new ideas and making society a better place to live in. He was a catalyst for change, which is why he connected so strongly with the Labor Party. He will be missed. My love to Sue and Sig's extended family.

ELTHAM TENNIS CLUB

Ms WARD: Eltham Tennis Club (ETC) celebrated its 50th anniversary on 29 June, providing the club with an opportunity to thank those who had made contributions to both the club's formation and success. Following on from a public meeting in 1969 the Eltham Tennis Club began without tennis courts or money, yet now has 400 members and seven courts under lights. Congratulations to Laurie Sparkes, who became the club's inaugural Legend. Laurie has been a valuable contributor to the club since 1969 and has held a number of roles, including president, vice-president, secretary and member of the selection committee. Thank you to all at ETC who helped create such a special night for their members and families and helped create a very special family-oriented tennis club.

ELTHAM FOOTBALL CLUB

Ms WARD: Thank you to the wonderfully community-minded Eltham Football Club who held their annual Breast Cancer Network Australia fundraising lunch recently. The food, entertainment and especially the stories were fantastic and nearly \$6000 was raised for BCNA. Thank you to Kirsten Pilatti, CEO of BCNA, for her terrific speech. I also thank the many local businesses that donated to this lunch, including Aunty Pam Pedersen for her donation of a signed Richmond Dreamtime jumper. Thanks to everyone who contributed.

SHEPPARTON EDUCATION PLAN

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (13:18): Many in this place will have heard me advocate for better educational outcomes for young people in regional areas and in particular for those living within the Greater Shepparton region. There is an abundance of evidence showing that students in regional areas have poorer outcomes than those in metropolitan areas. I was shocked to learn after being elected that four of our secondary colleges in Greater Shepparton had outcomes well below the Victorian state average and are continuing to decline.

In addition to this, three of our four secondary colleges had experienced seriously declining enrolments over many years. This trend had been clearly evident for a long time. But what advocacy was there from any government over those years or indeed from our own local Liberal and National Party representatives to raise this matter? Where was the advocacy on behalf of our young people to help them achieve and obtain access to the very best educational opportunities? There was no such advocacy.

My goal at all times had been to seek that all children and young people have a positive future and that our families, schools and community will help them get there through learning and caring. Never before have we had the prospect of such a significant investment in the future of education provision for our young people. It will not be easy. There will be some pain with such transformative change, but I believe the Shepparton education plan is a project that will ensure our children's future. We all

want our young people to have the chance to get the very best education possible, and I ask all our families and our community to continue to support achieving this outcome.

CASEY TITANS BASKETBALL AND CASEY EAGLES SOCCER CLUBS

Ms RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (13:19): I rise to tell you of the terrific honour I had of joining my favourite young people at an awards night for the Casey Titans. The Casey Titans basketball and Casey Eagles soccer clubs were started by Nyuon Makuei to nurture and develop the students' unique talents and gifts to create an inclusive, multicultural Australia. These young men and women, mostly of Cranbourne, are amazing ambassadors for our Casey community, so it was a great privilege to join them for their awards night dinner. Most of the young people have South Sudanese heritage.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the students and recognise the nominees for the Dr Leek Makuei award for academic excellence: Sarah Gony, Pinyjwok Amum, Deng Makuei and Fogi Obai. Congratulations to Akau Majok from St Peter's College, Cranbourne, for winning this award.

I would like to recognise the nominations for the Kuany Kuany award: Tam Ndebele, Ajok Malou, Teggywok Otaw and Wal Deng. I congratulate Latio Eyabo from St Peter's College for winning this award. It was a great joy for me to share in this evening and to support their journey to participate in the National Junior Classic tournament in Sydney. I followed their road trip on Facebook and was so pleased to see the young men sightseeing, cooking and enjoying spending time together.

I would like to pay credit to our South Sudanese leaders, including Dr Leek Makuei, Andrew Gai, Nyuon Makuei and St Peter's own Deng Chuor, and St Peter's principal, Chris Black, for his commitment to these wonderful young people. The clubs are a credit to our community, to their families, their school and their club. I am proud to have them in our community.

ROTARY CLUB OF LILYDALE

Ms VALLENCE (Evelyn) (13:21): It is with pleasure that I acknowledge the Rotary Club of Lilydale and all the volunteer members for their incredible service to our community. I was delighted to attend the Lilydale Rotary annual changeover meeting recently, and I congratulate Ann Wheeler on becoming president and congratulate outgoing president Ron Haines on his year of service. Lilydale Rotary's monthly craft and produce market has been running for over 10 years and has raised over \$140 000, which has been invested in various Rotary projects. Last year the club helped drought-stricken farmers in Victoria by purchasing and delivering around 100 bales of much-needed hay to rural communities. The club has also donated sailing boats to enable people with disabilities to get involved in sailing at Lillydale Lake. Thank you for your hard work and immense contribution to our community.

ROTARY CLUB OF WANDIN

Ms VALLENCE: It is with pleasure I acknowledge the Rotary Club of Wandin and all the volunteer members for their incredible service to our community. I was delighted to attend the Wandin Rotary annual changeover meeting recently. I congratulate Dennis Hoehne on becoming president, and congratulate the outgoing president, Heinz Budweg, on his year of service. The Rotary Club of Wandin does so much for the local and international community. Last year Wandin Rotary helped fund and facilitate 44 children in the Philippines to undergo surgery for cleft palate. The club also organises the Wandin Custom Car and Bike Show—one of my favourite local events—from October to March, with thousands of people attending. The show's success over the last few years has seen them raise and donate \$70 000 to the Royal Children's Hospital.

MCKINNON SECONDARY COLLEGE

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (13:22): I recently had the pleasure of seeing McKinnon Secondary College's production of *Legally Blonde*. Congratulations to the main cast: Phoebe Lock, Kya Kahan-

Taylor, Tia Finn, Ericks Stephanuks, Michael Birkett, Ben Jason-Easton, Michelle Androsenko, Anthea Dimas and Liam Atchison. I would also like to acknowledge the ensemble and the orchestra, but I want to skip through to students who worked behind the scenes: Oscar Lanigan, Mia Duong, Roxie Stirling, Taylor Patten-Welsh, Ruby Cormick, Myles Kelemen, Caleb Goldwaser, Hadyn Collier, Jessica Karpisek, Sabri Bayanta, Caitlin Irving, Jack Hodgson, Savanna Wegman, Sai Waller, Coco Greenberg, Ellie Taig, Catherine Braniska, Poppy Elliott, Jack Dunn, Belle Rundle, Arianne Lindsay, Hila Zaacks, Linh Tong, Aditi Patil, Isabelle Groom, Jenny Cheon, Anika Karra, Isabella Chang-Wolman, Diana Pashko, Eryka Castro, Liv Whitehead, Ashleigh Hoffman, Tamanna Sharma, Lola Smith, Sasha Finn, Sofia Atchison, Laura Inall, Peggy Quaife, Jasmine Parry, Sai Waller, Jessica Salisbury, Yael Greenberg, Kayla Graham, Roisin Lyon, Luciana Martinez, David Hanzopolous, Persephone Gardiner, Emilia Mason, Katrin Watkins, Ruby Powell, Laura Wharton, Ariel Greenberg, Nicholas Llvanos, Daniel Calabrese, Luke Johnstone and Thomas Katsambanis. This was the biggest group of students that McKinnon has ever had in a musical production. Congratulations to them all. Omigod, you guys!

SOLAR HOMES PACKAGE

Mr NEWBURY (Brighton) (13:25): The solar industry small businesses in my community are hurting. Elwood resident David Tolliday, a senior solar TAFE instructor and small business man, told me:

The Solar Victoria program is a disaster and causing untold damage in solar businesses in Victoria. People are losing their jobs, businesses are closing, and the added stress and uncertainty is a real concern for mental health.

BRIGHTON GOLF CLUB

Mr NEWBURY: Each year the Brighton Golf Club ladies hold a charity day. This year the ladies raised almost \$7500 for Sacred Heart Mission. I recently volunteered for lunch service at the mission. They serve lunch for up to 400 people each day. The Brighton Golf Club ladies should be congratulated, especially considering they are not a large club. Congratulations to president Marilyn Jamieson and the whole team.

WILSON STREET KINDERGARTEN, BRIGHTON

Mr NEWBURY: One day each week Wilson Street Kindergarten runs Bush Kindergarten. Bush kinder is preschool education for children held exclusively outdoors and encourages children to play, explore and learn in the natural environment. I recently joined the group as they built, climbed, and had a lot of fun. Congratulations to Debbie Roper and the team at Wilson Street Kindergarten on the initiative.

ROYAL BRIGHTON YACHT CLUB

Mr NEWBURY: Congratulations to Royal Brighton Yacht Club, which has been awarded the title of Victorian Yacht Club of the Year. In other terrific news, the club will be hosting the 2023 Etchells World Yachting Championships. The championship is one of the yachting world's most coveted trophies. The club has excelled in membership growth, top quality services and facilities.

DINGO DISCOVERY SANCTUARY AND RESEARCH CENTRE

Mr McGHIE (Melton) (13:25): On Saturday, 6 July, I was delighted to attend and officially open this year's Dingo Puppy Encounters at the Dingo Discovery Sanctuary and Research Centre in Toolern Vale.

Mr Edbrooke: Where was my invite?

Mr McGHIE: Next time. The sanctuary is owned and operated by the Australian Dingo Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation with the following aims: highlight the critical ecological role dingoes play as Australia's apex land predator; educate the public about the persecution of dingoes in the wild; and

maintain a captive breeding population for non-invasive research and potential future reintroduction projects. The iconic Australian dingo is the most misunderstood and persecuted of all Australian native species. This much-loved, native wild canid performs an important ecological function as Australia's only apex land predator. Abundant emerging science has shown that the dingo's positive role in maintaining ecological health is a win-win for the environment, wildlife and farmers alike.

Listed both as a threatened species in the state of Victoria as well as by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the main focus of the Australian Dingo Foundation is to end the slaughter of dingoes in the wild. To achieve this outcome the Australian Dingo Foundation works with leading international and Australian research scientists to conduct a range of non-invasive research as well as to facilitate educational programs. Over 40 dingos reside at the sanctuary and visitors are often greeted with a vast array of wildlife. Before joining adult dingoes or energetic and playful puppies out in a field, visitors are given a fun and interesting presentation on the mission of the establishment, what makes dingos special and how they can help ensure their survival in the wild.

BORONIA TRAIN STATION

Mr TAYLOR (Bayswater) (13:27): I gladly rise today to pose this question: which station was grade separated in 1998, over 20 years ago now, and has not had much in terms of significant investment in infrastructure, begins with the letter 'B' and exists right in the heart of my electorate? The answer is Boronia station. Yes, the good community of Boronia and beyond have spoken time and time again about much-needed upgrades for this tired station precinct. That is why one of the first requests I made in this place was for the Minister for Public Transport to come down and see it for herself and for me to share with her some of the community's thoughts around not only the station but the wider transport precinct which is at the heart of Boronia's activity centre.

I was glad to recently welcome the minister and a representative from the Department of Transport and to take them through and explain to them what some of the community's aspirations for the Boronia precinct are. I shared this visit on social media, and it has been viewed some 6000 times, had close to 50 comments and growing, and has been one of the most highly engaged posts, with people sharing their thoughts on what they believe needs to be done.

Boronia is one of the great suburbs in my electorate, and the station is a great focal point that has a great deal of potential. As I have said previously in this place, it would be a shame to miss the opportunity that has been presented to turn this area into a more vibrant, more active and a living community hub. The community knows, and I know, that it is time to look towards a new Boronia station precinct, creating a transport, work and living hub that our community can indeed be proud of. I look forward to continuing to work with the minister and the community to revitalise this important community precinct.

MOUNT WAVERLEY ELECTORATE ANNIVERSARIES

Mr FREGON (Mount Waverley) (13:28): It would seem that it is anniversary season in Mount Waverley district. Firstly, I would like to start off with my congratulations to Janice and Norman Parsons, who are celebrating 60 years of marriage on 15 August. Norm and Jan have been involved in the local community, especially the Waverley Garden Club, and we see Norm every month as he comes to collect their printing. They both have attended the club meetings together for longer than their newsletter editor can recall. They settled in Glen Waverley not long after marriage. They have raised their three children there, who will all be coming together to celebrate this special occasion.

Secondly, I would like to congratulate Colleen and Max Thiele on their 60th wedding anniversary. Colleen and Max are two dedicated volunteers in our local community, who have given their time to the local Good Shepherd parish, including volunteering for the piety stall. The parish had nothing but warm words to say about Colleen and Max.

Last but certainly not least, I would like to congratulate Philip and Laraine Smith, who are celebrating 50 years of marriage on 16 August. These two people really are an amazing couple who have beaten the odds. Two years into their marriage, with Laraine eight months pregnant, Philip broke his neck in an accident and became a quadriplegic. Soon after, they were blessed with the birth of their daughter Kelly. When I spoke to Kelly she had nothing but pride and admiration for her parents love for each other. The life that they have led together and the family they have built is a testament to the love that they share. A happy anniversary to all.

GEELONG ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) (13:30): I was pleased to join the Minister for Education on a visit to three schools in the Geelong electorate recently. Thanks to the minister we have delivered on our commitment to education in Geelong.

First up was Geelong High School to open the completed stages of the \$22.7 million upgrade, which includes the CA Love Hall with its new lighting, audio presentation systems, digital projector and kitchenette; and the Kroger building, also completely transformed, with new classrooms, library, canteen and wellbeing area, giving students a great environment to learn, create and relax. It was great to have students, teachers, staff and the Kroger family there to celebrate the school opening.

Next was Oberon South Primary School, where we announced that from 2021 students will have a new \$4.59 million school on the Oberon High School site. Not only will the children have new first-class education facilities but families will also find it easier to have a single drop-off for their children at school and the local kindergarten nearby.

The final visit was to the brand-new, state-of-the-art Whittington Primary School. Thanks to the strong commitment by the Minister for Education, the Whittington community are full of pride in their new school. I want to congratulate—*(Time expired)*

Bills

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AMENDMENT BILL 2019

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Ms D'AMBROSIO:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) (13:32): It is a pleasure to rise to open the debate on behalf of the coalition on the Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2019 which, as the long title tells us, is a bill to amend the Environment Protection Act 1970 to prohibit the provision of certain plastic bags, to prevent the provision of misleading information relating to plastic bags and to make technical and consequential amendments to the Environment Protection Amendment Act 2018. Of course what that really means is that this bill undertakes two separate and quite distinct functions: the first is to introduce a ban on a particular type of plastic bag, specifically shopping bags; and the second is a series of amendments to an act which has not even commenced operation yet—the Environment Protection Amendment Act 2018.

Before I dive into the weeds on the bill, I want to acknowledge the briefing that was received by the opposition on this bill, arranged through the minister's office. It was, as we have come to expect, a comprehensive briefing, and I thank the minister for arranging it and making that opportunity available.

The minister in her second-reading speech talked at length about plastic bags and banning plastic bags, and I intend to come back to that issue in a little while. But there was one other paragraph in the second-reading speech that people may have missed, particularly seeing that second-reading speeches are no longer read but simply incorporated. That paragraph reads:

The Bill will also correct minor technical errors in the Environment Protection Amendment Act 2018, expected to commence on the first of July 2020. That Act was passed to comprehensively reform Victoria's environment protection laws. The technical amendments will ensure the new legislation operates as intended.

That is one very short paragraph in a second-reading speech of four pages. I thought that was interesting, because this is a bill of 48 clauses—three of them are the usual clauses that we see appearing in every bill, seven of them actually relate to banning plastic bags and 38 of the clauses in this bill correct what are euphemistically called 'minor technical errors'.

Now, as part of my process of working through this bill, I have reviewed each and every one of those 38 clauses. I do not intend to go through them—

Members interjecting.

Mr MORRIS: I have got the time. I could do it, but I will take mercy on the house and not regale members with all of those 38 clauses.

There are two points to be made. The first is that I agree these changes are necessary. They are relatively minor in nature and they do solve some issues. The point, though, as far as I am concerned, is that the opposition would really rather the government got their legislation right in the first place. We do not need to have 38 changes to an act that has not even commenced operation—I mean, seriously!

I am sure it has happened before, but I certainly do not recall in my time in any other circumstances where there has been a requirement to bring in 38 clauses of a bill to change legislation that has yet to commence operation. It is a pretty ordinary aspect of this bill. With respect, if I could suggest to the minister and perhaps to her colleagues in the cabinet: less haste, more speed might help us here. The reality is the government has an obligation to bring in a bill that is technically correct.

I am happy to debate policy issues—that is what this Parliament is all about—but I do not think it is an unreasonable expectation that when the government brings in a bill and says it is going to achieve X, Y and Z, that they actually get that right. That is not an unreasonable expectation, and it is not just about the operation of the Parliament. The changes to the Environment Protection Act 2017 are significant and they are important, and it is not only the Parliament that needs to get it right. It is the public that needs to get it right, particularly businesses that are operating in an environment where they may come under the purview of the Environment Protection Act, and of course with the move to a duties-based act that is going to pick up many, many more commercial operations I would expect, so it is important to get it right.

You have only got to look at the advice that is being prepared by the major law firms for their various clients and the conjecture about how particular clauses may be interpreted to appreciate just what a significant change this is, and it does not help if the Parliament, particularly the government, cannot get the legislation right in the first place. This is take two. Hopefully it is the last time we will see these particular provisions before the house.

Back to what I consider to be the substantive part of this bill, and that is part 2 of the bill, clauses 3 to 9, and the banning of plastic bags. I am very pleased to be able to say that the Liberal Party and the National Party in coalition will be supporting this bill, because we recognise that plastic pollution is a major environmental threat and we will always support practical measures that are aimed at fixing particular issues. Now I am not suggesting for a moment that this bill is the panacea for all the ills that flow from plastic pollution; it is a very small part of the major puzzle, but it is an important part of the puzzle and until we start seeking to actively tackle these challenges we will not make any serious impact.

The figures when it comes to plastic bags frankly are just amazing. Plastic bags are ubiquitous in the most absolute sense. They are literally everywhere and in every household they are used for so many different things, but they eventually find their way into places where they cause environmental damage.

I believe at one point Australians were using 10 million new single-use plastic bags every day. That is a scary number. It really is. That is four bags for every person—adult, child, newborn—in the country every single day. It is a scary number. One hundred and fifty million bags a year end up in the waterways and ultimately in the oceans, or at least they did before the major supermarkets took the lead and actively reduced the numbers; I am sure there are still plenty ending up where they should not. And of course most of the kerbside operators—where we still have a functioning kerbside system—do not accept plastic bags.

To the extent that the current kerbside recycling system is effective—and unfortunately that is up for question because, as the Auditor-General confirmed, we simply do not have accurate figures on what we are recycling; we know what is sent for recycling but we do not know the tonnage each year that is actually recycled—what we do know about single-use plastic bags is that virtually none of them find their way into the recycling system. At the most 3 per cent of plastic bags get recycled in this country, the single-use plastic bags. At best something over 90 per cent finish up in landfill. The rest finish up in the streams and waterways and eventually find their way into the ocean.

Of course the issue with these plastics is they are not biodegradable. Yes, it breaks down, but it breaks down into smaller pieces. It breaks down into microplastics, but it is not biodegradable. It does not go away, and of course the smaller the pieces that it breaks down into, the more damage it can do in an environmental sense. It never goes away; it just becomes microplastics.

The other point, I think, is almost as important—that is, with any plastics that are not recycled, but particularly with single-use plastics, you use them once and they are gone, and this is not a renewable resource or not renewable in millennia effectively. We are, I am advised, consuming 17 million barrels of oil each year to generate plastics. Now that is not just single-use plastics, that is not just milk bottles, that is all plastics, but every plastic product that we produce that does not get recycled is a wasted resource because it is gone, and that is just absolutely crazy. It makes no sense at all.

The other point I want to make is a number of people have said to me, ‘Look, why do you need to lead on this?’, ‘Why do we need to be out in front?’. Well, I think it is pretty obvious we are not. We are ahead of New South Wales, to be fair, but South Australia, Queensland, the ACT and Western Australia all have bans in place. If you look at Europe, most of the members of the European Union have significant taxes on bags. The one that does not have a significant tax on bags is the Netherlands, and they have banned the use of these bags completely.

The bill before us is banning bags under 35 microns. In New Zealand they have gone to 70 microns. I am not advocating for that; I am simply saying this is a step. It is a first step, but it is not the step. Recently Canada announced a ban from 2021. California of course introduced their ban in 2016, and in New York State, while many local authorities already have bans in place, by March next year they will have, again, a statewide ban, and so on—Hawaii et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

The other reason I think we need to be in this space is frankly Victorians get it. They understand the convenience of plastic bags but they also appreciate the damage that that convenience can cause the environment. They do not want to leave the heavy lifting to others around the world. They want to be involved. They want to be doing the right thing. They want us as a Parliament to provide leadership. They expect nothing less of us, and it is up to us to do it.

So what is in the bill? Really, as I said, apart from the 38 extraneous clauses cleaning up the mess from imperfect legislation that was passed last year, it is really a pretty straightforward bill. Initially to be done under the Environment Protection Act 1970 by legislation, my understanding is when the new Environment Protection Authority Victoria act finally comes into operation these sorts of measures can be undertaken by regulation, but at the moment we need to do it by legislation.

There are a couple of definitions in the bill. A ‘banned plastic bag’ is defined. Essentially it is a bag that is used at point of sale of retail, with handles and that is either wholly or partly plastic, whether it

is compostable or not. It has a thickness, as I mentioned earlier, of less than 35 micrometres, or is a prescribed banned plastic bag. Interestingly at this point, those bags used at a supermarket to pick up fresh fruit items or vegetable items are not banned. They are referred to in this bill as 'barrier bags'. There is a class of exempt bags which includes barrier bags.

There are provisions in there relating to a pollution abatement notice. There are requirements on retailers not to provide these banned bags, and I understand there has been some work done with the Australian Retailers Association in this regard. There will be some disadvantage to businesses with the introduction of this. I think the environmental upside does outweigh the inconvenience, but it is important to recognise the inconvenience to make sure that we have transitional arrangements in place that minimise that inconvenience and minimise that cost, particularly to small businesses, who often have less capacity to be as adaptive as their larger competitors with large staff that can be applied to dealing with these problems.

Once the bill commences operation a penalty will be in place for allowing a banned plastic bag for persons who effectively take goods out of the shop in one of those bags—60 penalty units for a person and 300 penalty units for a corporation. There are provisions relating to misleading information, powers of authorised officers and powers to make regulations as well.

I think that really takes us back to where we started. This is, in my view, an important step, but as I said it is really only the first step in dealing with the problem of plastics. It is a battle that I suspect is going to need to be fought for some time. But we on this side of the house, the Liberal Party and National Party in coalition, are very happy to support the bill.

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) (13:50): I am very excited to be back after the winter break and see all of my colleagues that I have been following vicariously through Facebook and Instagram doing all the work locally. It is great to be amongst a fantastic group of people again.

Mr Staikos interjected.

Mr EDBROOKE: Don't you start, member for Bentleigh.

I am also very excited today to be standing in this house and talking about the Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2019 because this is a bill that, in my opinion, has been a long time coming. As the previous speaker, the member for Mornington, outlined, the bill addresses the growing issue and omnipresent nature of plastics in our environment. This legislation that we are debating today will implement a ban on lightweight plastic bags, not including the bags needed for hygienic and sterile purposes of course in supermarkets. It is an important milestone in tackling the long-term problem of plastics in our community and environment.

I would challenge anyone in this chamber today to go down to a beach, an estuary, a river, even a dam on most farms, and not find some plastic that might have been there for a day or two, maybe even 50 years. In a lot of ways plastic has been a fantastic invention: it is cheap, it has got many commercial purposes. But for people like myself and even in my generation, I do not think many of us thought about where that plastic was going when we were growing up. We did not think much about recycling; we did not know much about recycling. I think we might have just been on the cusp of hearing about the ozone layer but did not really know much about global warming. To some extent—and I will talk about this in a minute—it is up to our generation and forthcoming generations to actually act. This I see as a step in the right direction for sure.

We have consulted closely with the Victorian community, and I can say from suburbs like Mornington and Frankston, we are on the coast and people are very, very conscious of the environment. I am sure that the member for Mornington has many people with environmental issues coming to his office, and I do as well, so I am very, very proud to be standing here talking in support of this bill and learning that it has got bipartisan support as well.

We have taken advice from many jurisdictions in Australia and nationally as well, and this legislation builds on bans by other retailers such as Woolworths and Coles, who put a plastic bag ban in place in July this year. I must admit, when you think about the use of plastic in a cultural sense, and probably from a sociological perspective, we only started using plastic bags for groceries in 1977. Generations before us, including my parents and my grandparents, used paper. If there was plastic, it generally was not single-use and disposable like we have today with disposable utensils, disposable cups, disposable bags—you name it, I am sure there is a disposable—disposable pens; it all has to go somewhere.

Of course the ban is going to reduce pollution in Victoria. As I said, it is a first step to lessening those consequential negative impacts of plastic on our environment and on our wildlife. We are only talking since 1977 about plastic bags, but there has been a cultural shift towards leaning on so much convenience. I must admit that going to the shops these days I have seen how quickly people have been able to adapt at Coles and Woolworths to bringing their own bags. Some people might have forgotten and will run out to their car, but everyone seems fairly patient. You do have the odd person grumbling, but I think they do get that they are doing their bit as well. I think that it has been fairly well received, and I think people understand why we need to take this step as a Victorian government right now.

Why do we have to take that step? Well, in looking up some of the facts about plastics in our environment globally, the figures and the data are quite shocking. Five trillion plastic bags are used around the world every year. That is 160 000 plastic bags used every second globally. It is very hard to get your head around the amount of plastic bags that have been used in the last couple of minutes since I have been speaking. Alongside the amount of plastic bags, that amount of plastic bags per year could be tied together and run around the globe seven times. An average family over four shopping trips use about 60 disposable bags, but we know that none of them are really biodegradable. They are photodegradable, and what happens there is that they do degrade over many, many years, but they become smaller toxic particles in our environment as well. So of those supermarket bags that end up in landfill it is generally about 97 per cent of the bags that are produced. The average plastic bag is used for 12 minutes—just 12 minutes. It takes about 1000 years for that plastic bag to break down, and as I said, it is still not breaking down and biodegrading; it is breaking down into smaller toxic particles in our environment.

Where does all this plastic go if it is not going to landfill? We know that there have been some horrific findings lately. Some scientists have come out with the fact that in the North Pacific Ocean there is six times more plastic debris than there is plankton. Over 44 per cent of seabirds have ingested or become entangled in plastic. In 2008 a sperm whale was found beached in California with 22 kilos of plastic debris in its gut.

We have probably all heard of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, which is a floating landfill twice the size of Texas in the Pacific Ocean, mostly composed of plastic. We have had some great momentum over the last few years to curb single-use disposable plastics, and I think of course plastic bags make up the majority of that. It needs to be taken very seriously, and it is being taken very seriously by this government.

Right now some of us watch a show like *Chernobyl*, and it is very interesting, but we sit there and we say, 'How did they let that happen? With all that empirical evidence, with the evidence in front of them, how did they put their politics before people's lives and the environment?'. My fear is that in 20 years time we will have another generation watching a documentary and sitting there saying to themselves, 'In light of all the empirical evidence that was there, in the light of children protesting in the streets, how did they not take more action on the banning of single-use plastics, and why did they leave it to us?'.

I will say with confidence that we have a generation of youth, the next generation, that is quite capable of taking up—they are a fairly sophisticated generation, I think—this fight and saying, 'It is not in the too-hard basket. It must be done'. Indeed even in my household my daughter is asking questions after

seeing a movie on a school excursion called *2040*. She is asking questions like, ‘Why do people still use Glad wrap? Why isn’t everyone using keep cups? Why aren’t we introducing a container deposit scheme like New South Wales?’ I forget what it is called, but it does seem to some extent successful—the return and earn scheme in New South Wales. I know you cannot rely on quick fixes, but kids are asking, ‘Why aren’t we doing this now? Why aren’t we taking this action?’ To be honest, they are really good questions and we need to find those answers. Certainly I do not think it is our role as custodians of our environment and our community to leave those jobs to future generations.

Business interrupted under resolution of the house on Tuesday, 13 August.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

SOLAR HOMES PACKAGE

Mr M O’BRIEN (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition) (14:00): My question is to the Minister for Solar Homes. John Grimes, CEO of the Smart Energy Council, has said about the solar energy rebate scheme:

It’s heartbreaking—one man is at his wit’s end with the business on the line, as well is his life savings and his house. He’s just sacked good loyal employees. That is what the whole industry is facing.

Despite there being many such examples, the minister has said:

The fact is this: this is a successful program that has surpassed all of our expectations.

How many more businesses will be destroyed, how many more jobs will be lost before the minister listens and fixes this mess that she has created?

Ms D’AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (14:01): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. We need to remember that when we talk about the Solar Homes program it is actually delivering a record number of installations to the industry, and it is delivering a record number of rebates to Victorian families, saving them—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Premier for his assistance in the smooth running of the house, and I ask the member for Warrandyte to direct his point of order through the Chair.

Mr R Smith: On a point of order, Speaker, after 24 seconds the minister has already told untruths. The amount of installs has actually halved. The minister should actually come out and tell the truth.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat. There is no point of order.

Ms D’AMBROSIO: I have been very clear about this, and we have been. Solar Homes is about putting power back in the hands of Victorian families who otherwise would not have been able to afford to access solar power, saving them on average \$890 a year. Where we have also been very clear is that we have worked consistently and continued to work with the industry to assist them to adapt to the changing circumstances that they are facing.

Members interjecting.

Ms D’AMBROSIO: The fact remains, Speaker, that this is a highly successful program delivering record numbers of installations. When we talk about installations we are actually talking about work—

The SPEAKER: I ask the minister to resume her seat, and I ask members to my left to stop shouting across the chamber.

Mr M O’Brien: On a point of order relating to relevance, Speaker, my question was how many more businesses will be destroyed and how many more jobs will be lost. The minister has not turned

her mind to that question, which is key because there are people out there who are literally losing their jobs because of this minister's bungling. She needs to answer that question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister is being relevant to the question that has been asked.

Ms D'AMBROSIO: Speaker, thank you very much. Look, we have all been very clear, working with the industry and continuing to meet with them, and we have been very responsive to industry. Responsiveness includes the fact that we went from a system where in the first phase of the program rebates were released all at once, and they requested a release of rebates on a monthly basis. The fact remains that today there are far more installations in the system that are occurring right now, which equals work, than there were two financial years ago. The record speaks for itself. We will continue to work with the industry to assist in streamlining it and making it better, but let us be clear about what the focus of this scheme is—

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the minister to resume her seat.

Mr R Smith: On a point of order, Speaker, if the minister is so confident of her figures, could she table the document that she is using—where she got these figures from? Could she table that document for members of the house?

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

Ms D'AMBROSIO: I refer those opposite to industry records—not government records, industry records—that tell us the number of installations. We have gone from a period of installations in 2017–18 that were over 31 000 in one financial year, jumping to a record in the last financial year, when our rebates started, to record installations of 54 500—

Members interjecting.

Ms D'AMBROSIO: From 31 000 to 54 000—absolutely.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members on my right! Member for Sunbury!

Before calling the member for Warrandyte, I warn the member that he has had two points of order that have not been points of order. I ask him to make sure this point of order is a legitimate point of order.

Mr R Smith: Speaker, I cannot anticipate your ruling before I get up and make a statement.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am simply warning the member for Warrandyte that he has had two strikes—three strikes and he will be out.

Mr R Smith: For what?

The SPEAKER: For raising frivolous—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gembrook will leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

Member for Gembrook withdrew from chamber.

Mr R Smith: Do I have a set number of points of order I can take?

The SPEAKER: Order! I will not tolerate the use of frivolous points of order during question time. Your point of order is?

Mr R Smith: The point of order is simply that the minister is quoting from a document in front of her, a chart that we can all see. Can she table that document as per the forms of the house?

The SPEAKER: Order! Is the minister quoting from a document or referring to notes?

Ms D'AMBROSIO: Speaker, I am clearly referring to my notes.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The minister has concluded her answer.

Mr M O'BRIEN (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition) (14:07): The CEO of the Smart Energy Council, Mr Grimes, has described himself as counsellor in chief because of the pressures and anguish solar businesses have experienced as a result of this government's rebate scheme. He has referred a number of solar business owners to Beyond Blue and Lifeline, as has the government's own accreditation agency, the Clean Energy Council. Yet the minister has attacked solar installers for 'poor business practices'. When will the minister stop blaming the victims of her botched solar scheme and just fix it?

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (14:07): The Leader of the Opposition is absolutely wrong. Victorians are voting with their feet on this scheme. We have record numbers of people—

Members interjecting.

Mr M O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, I want to know: is the minister accusing me of lying or accusing John Grimes of lying when he says he is referring his members to Lifeline and Beyond Blue?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr M O'Brien: Who is the minister saying is lying—me or John Grimes?

The SPEAKER: Order! I understand the point the Leader of the Opposition is raising, but it is not a point of order.

Ms D'AMBROSIO: We have been clear right from the beginning: our objective in this scheme is to make it easier for Victorians to get solar panels on their roof, reducing power bills. In the process of doing that we have made it absolutely clear that our objective is to ensure that quality and safety come first and foremost. We make absolutely no apology for insisting on that, because that is what Victorians expect good governments to do.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: SCHOOL DENTAL SERVICES

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:08): I am delighted to be able to update the house on the rollout ahead of schedule of the government's free public school dental program—ahead of schedule—a fantastic program, one that we committed to at the election last year and one that we are delighted to be rolling out across all government schools over the next three and a half years. There is a fleet of dental vans which are ready to visit 22 schools in the first instance in the Box Hill, South Barwon, Cranbourne and Wodonga regions. At those 22 schools those students will receive check-ups and follow-up dental care free of charge. This program saves parents \$400 per child per year.

Those opposite are not big supporters of this program; they are opposed to this, as with most things, but this is ahead of schedule and it is going to deliver the best oral health outcomes we have ever seen for children and young people across Victoria. When we think about health outcomes right throughout life's journey, good oral health, good dental health early on, is a critical marker for the sorts of health outcomes that people have throughout their entire life. This is, as I said, a \$321.9 million investment. The first 22 schools and all government schools—so about 650 000 students—will share in the full

rollout of this program in 2022. The Leader of the Opposition, again, is opposed to this program. It is so very disappointing, so very disappointing—

Members interjecting.

Mr M O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, I am being verballed by the Premier. The point was: this government took a promise to the election that was \$70 million higher. They have cut \$70 million. It is another broken promise.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order, but I do ask the Premier to remember that ministers statements are not an opportunity to attack the opposition.

Mr ANDREWS: I think there are a few behind him saying much worse about him than I am. Anyway, we will not be deterred by the opposition of some. We will continue to roll this program out. It is great for kids, great for oral health, great for the cost of living and great for Victorian families.

SOLAR HOMES PACKAGE

Mr R SMITH (Warrandyte) (14:11): My question is to the Minister for Solar Homes. In June this year the Premier stated that the solar panel rebate scheme would create 5500 new jobs. In just one example, Sky Energy Systems has had to lay off 40 staff since the scheme commenced. With the Smart Energy Council reporting that there have already been over 200 jobs lost in the industry, will the minister finally admit that her botched scheme has cost jobs, not created them?

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (14:11): I thank the member for his question, but I have to say that he is wrong. You cannot have more installations without actually creating more jobs. That is the simple explanation figure. We are delivering a record number of—

Mr R Smith: On a point of order, Speaker, is the minister contending that the Smart Energy Council are lying when they say that there have been 200 jobs lost in the industry? Is that her contention?

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I have warned the member for Warrandyte about raising frivolous points of order.

Mr Wells: On a point of order, Speaker, and with the greatest respect, you cannot anticipate what a member of Parliament is going to say in their point of order. Earlier you said that there had been two strikes, which inhibits the member making any further points of order. Now, you may have a different ruling, the government may have a different ruling, but if the member for Warrandyte believes what he is putting forward is a point of order, then he should be allowed to put that point of order.

The SPEAKER: Order! I just refer the honourable member to the fact that I allowed the member for Warrandyte to raise the point of order and ruled on it. So I am happy to hear points of order, but I will not allow members to continuously raise frivolous points of order. They need to be relevant to the standing orders and sessional orders of the house.

Ms D'AMBROSIO: As I was saying, you cannot drive more installations without creating more jobs. That is a simple fact—record installations that Victorians have never, ever seen before and that the industry has never seen before. We will continue to roll out the scheme because we know that Victorians want it and they are voting for it with their feet.

Mr R SMITH (Warrandyte) (14:13): In a survey conducted by the Smart Energy Council, 77 per cent of respondents said they either had or would be making staff redundant as a result of the government's botched rebate program. Before more workers lose their jobs and more businesses hit the wall, will the minister actually listen to the solar industry and fix this mess that she created?

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (14:14): I thank the member for the supplementary question, and what I say is this: we are absolutely aware of that survey. We are. You ask the question about how many jobs have been created. When you actually have a look at how many jobs have been created since August last year, which is when the rebate scheme came in, there have been a significant number of jobs that have been created. It is the particular point in time that the Smart Energy Council has chosen to survey its members which seems to present a different picture. I repeat: you cannot have more installations without having created more jobs. And we will do it: absolutely more installations, more rebates than ever before.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: RECYCLING RELIEF PACKAGE

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (14:15): I am absolutely delighted to update the house on our recycling relief package and to deliver on our commitment to increasing the Victorian renewable energy target to 50 per cent by 2030. The Prime Minister acknowledged at the Council of Australian Governments last week that waste and recycling is a national issue, and we welcome their \$20 million announcement today. This complements our strong actions in Victoria. We are providing \$11.3 million in immediate financial relief to councils affected by the SKM closure and investing in infrastructure to improve the quality of recycled materials, and we will work with councils and industry on a major overhaul of kerbside collection. This may include extra bins for households, but there are other ways to reduce contamination of recycled materials.

Our announcement today comes on top of our record investment of \$135 million towards the recycling sector. We have invested more than \$700 million over five budgets from the Sustainability Fund and there is more to come. This compares to a paltry \$15 million in their entire four years in government. Today we have given notice of a bill to legislate for a renewable energy target of 50 per cent by 2030, as promised at last year's election. This will create over 24 000 jobs and drive an additional \$5.8 billion in economic activity across the state, reducing power costs and reducing carbon emissions. Our government is getting on with ensuring that Victoria remains the renewable energy capital of this country. When we make a commitment we absolutely deliver in bucketloads, and we will continue to drive the investment in renewable energy in this state and of course in the recycling sector.

The SPEAKER: Before calling the next question, I welcome to the gallery the Honourable Veena Bhatnagar, the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Fiji, who is also the Assistant Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation. Welcome to the Victorian Parliament.

WASTE AND RECYCLING MANAGEMENT

Mr M O'BRIEN (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition) (14:17): My question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. To ensure that the government does not profit from the current recycling crisis in Victoria, will the government now suspend the collection of the bin tax immediately until this crisis is resolved?

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (14:17): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I think the opposition leader needs to explore and have a look at our announcement of this morning in fact, when we are absolutely providing immediate relief to councils. We are delivering to them what they asked us to do in the many engagements, consultations and meetings that we have had with them over a period of time as they manage through their contracts with SKM and beyond.

It is absolutely clear the investment that we are making today is about returning that necessary funding to them to assist them to cover the costs over a 12-week period, sorry, four—over a period of time to ensure that they—

Members interjecting.

Ms D'AMBROSIO: Those opposite are getting their jollies off, Speaker—

Mr R Smith: On a point of order, Speaker, just for clarity, could the minister tell us what that period of time might be?

Members interjecting.

Ms D'AMBROSIO: The Premier has certainly taken the words out of my mouth. They know exactly what our commitment is. It is a four-month commitment to return significant funds to the 33 local councils that are affected by the SKM closure. They have absolutely welcomed this commitment. You only have to have a look at the Municipal Association of Victoria release this morning that welcomes it and the many, many commentaries from councils and mayors along the way because we are delivering what they have asked us to do.

Mr M O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, on the question of relevance, the question was: will the government suspend the collection of this bin tax until this crisis is resolved? It does invite a definite answer, and I invite you to ask the minister to give us one.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am not able to direct the minister how to answer the question, just that she is relevant.

Ms D'AMBROSIO: I have been absolutely clear about what our commitment is. Our announcement—

Members interjecting.

Ms D'AMBROSIO: Those opposite are getting hyper-excited, but the reality is we are working with councils to deliver what they have requested of us, and that is exactly what we are delivering plus also working on the longer term commitments that we need to ensure that we get across to ensure that we actually develop and have a sustainable recycling industry in the future, and local governments have welcomed our announcement this morning.

Mr M O'BRIEN (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition) (14:20): Why is the minister telling Victorians to do their bit for the environment by separating their recyclables when, because of this government's recycling crisis, in many areas it all gets sent to the tip, and because the minister will not suspend the bin tax, they have to pay for the privilege?

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (14:20): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the supplementary question. I think this supplementary question, and in fact the one before, actually predates our commitment this morning because we are delivering to local governments what they have asked us to do. We will get on with working with them across all levels of government so that we can actually get this recycling sector into a robust position and a sustainable one working across all three levels of government.

Mr M O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, recycling is being sent to the tip. I have asked the minister: why should Victorians have to pay for that privilege? I ask you to invite her to answer that question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister has concluded her answer.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: NEW SCHOOLS

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk—Minister for Education) (14:21): I rise to update the house on the Andrews Labor government's commitment to delivering new schools right across our state. We have already opened 21 new schools in 2017 and 2018. We made a commitment to build and open 100 new schools over the next eight years. We have already opened nine of those schools this year, 11 more will open next year, 14 in 2021 and 13 will open in 2022. But there is something more important than bricks and mortar, and that is leadership.

I am pleased to inform the house that principals have now been appointed at all the new schools that will open next year. They are: Armstrong Creek West Primary School, and I visited that stunning school with a member earlier this month, Botanic Ridge Primary School in Cranbourne, Casey Fields Primary School in Cranbourne, Clyde North East Primary School in Bass, Craigieburn South Secondary School in Yuroke, Davis Creek Primary School in Tarneit, Keysborough South Primary School in Keysborough, Lucas Primary School in Ripon, Point Cook South Senior Secondary School in Altona, Wyndham South Primary School in Werribee, and Beveridge Primary School, where the existing principal will oversee both of those campuses.

These principals will be highly visible leaders of their school communities, engaging with local families, appointing key staff, creating a culture of excellence in their brand-new schools. No-one would describe these principals as being invisible. No-one will be asking, 'What have they done?'. As some members would agree—where is the member for Gembrook?—that question is more appropriately asked of the Leader of the Opposition. These new principals, in stark contrast, have the backing and support of their schools.

CONTAINER DEPOSIT SCHEME

Dr READ (Brunswick) (14:24): My question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. In 1977 South Australia set up the first container refund scheme, the Northern Territory followed in 2012, New South Wales in 2017, the ACT and Queensland in 2018, Western Australia the next year and Tasmania by 2022. Victoria is the only state that has not committed to a container refund scheme. Under the New South Wales scheme, 2 billion bottles and cans were returned in 19 months, litter from drink containers has dropped by 57 per cent, schools and sporting groups have benefited and it has changed people's thinking and behaviour towards litter. It generates a clean and valuable stream of waste that can be recycled. The evidence is in: container refund schemes work. What is the minister's justification for blocking a national approach to this issue?

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (14:25): I thank the member for Brunswick for his question. I absolutely deny this notion that somehow I am blocking reform at a national level; it is absolutely not the case at all. We are absolutely committed to a national agenda when it comes to reform in the recycling sector, and the Premier absolutely showed that national leadership, together with other colleagues and with the Prime Minister, at COAG on Friday. We are absolutely committed to this agenda.

We have been calling for national leadership now for a long time, and we are actually very pleased that the commonwealth government has now articulated a commitment to working together. Similarly, our approach has been to co-opt local governments towards that effort too, and that is exactly what we have done today. We have reached a significant point to actually have a properly integrated response coordinated through a national effort for us to do more and better in terms of our recycling. There are many options that are available to deal with what is a very complex issue. Of course there is no silver bullet that can fix everything, but a whole range of issues and options are available to government which we are all considering absolutely, right from the point of reducing the waste that is created, repurposing it, making sure that we can actually separate out what can be often at a national level a very contaminated stream of recycled materials. We know that.

That is why doing things in a methodical way that deals with a whole chain of points, right across the whole issue, ranging from reducing waste to repurposing it, remanufacturing it and re-using it, is an essential component of our circular economy policy, which we will be releasing in draft form in the coming weeks. We will be finalising the full policy by the end of the year with actions attached.

Dr Read: On a point of order, Speaker, I just wonder if you could remind the minister that I did ask about a container deposit scheme.

The SPEAKER: Order! I think the member's point of order was around relevance, but the minister is being relevant to the question asked. The minister has concluded her answer.

Dr READ (Brunswick) (14:28): Soon bottles and cans will have labels on them saying ‘10 per cent refund available at point of purchase’—except in Victoria. The Parliamentary Budget Office estimated the cost of introducing a refund for container scheme would be around \$9 million over four years and that it would raise an estimated \$250 million over the same period, largely from uncollected deposits. This revenue could establish much-needed local recycling facilities. Given your recent commitment to ban exports of recycling, isn’t this revenue needed to help set up our recycling industry here in Victoria, or will you finally use the Sustainability Fund for this?

Ms D’AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (14:28): I thank the member for the supplementary question. There are many, many designs that are available and have been implemented around container deposit schemes. What is important, though—and really the member belled himself out, frankly, when he said, ‘Well, what about this?’. The fact is you actually do need to deal with a whole range of complex issues right across the waste stream, end markets included, and you need to develop an end market for recycled materials. Whether it is containers or whether it is other types of recyclable materials, that is an important component of any system that you put in place which is about a circular economy. We will continue our work in delivering on the commitments that we have already made. We are developing our circular economy policy, which is out for consultation right now, and we will be releasing a draft policy statement shortly and then finalising that in an action statement.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: ECONOMY

Mr PALLAS (Werribee—Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations) (14:30): I rise to update the house on how Victoria’s economy is leading the nation. The CommSec *State of the States* report, released late last month, found that Victoria is the standalone state leading the nation. We were first on jobs, first on economic growth, first on retail trade and first on construction work. We have been first overall for five consecutive quarters. Driven by the Andrews Labor government’s unprecedented infrastructure build, the latest data has shown that Victoria’s economic growth in the March quarter was up by 26.6 per cent over the decade-long average.

But Victoria has not always been this successful. We all remember that in the 20 months that the member for Malvern was the Treasurer, economic growth in this state had almost stalled. We had high unemployment, we had low economic growth and we were the fifth-ranked state in the nation. Today of course Victoria is ranked first, a ranking only ever attained by the Andrews Labor government.

In July 2014 youth unemployment in Victoria had just hit a 15-year high. Regional unemployment of course had peaked at 6.6 per cent, and today we know it is now a record low of 3.8 per cent. Victoria wasted four long, lost years under the coalition government, and the member for Malvern delivered the only budget deficit the state has seen in 20 years.

Mr M O’Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, I am happy for the Treasurer to spin; I am just not happy for him to lie. That is it.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer shall not use a ministers statement as an opportunity to attack the opposition.

Mr PALLAS: This government has created more than six times the number of jobs created by those opposite. We have almost tripled the state’s infrastructure spend. The Andrews government has made the Victorian economy the strongest in the nation, and we did that by never looking back and by getting on with things.

SUSTAINABILITY FUND

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) (14:32): My question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. Minister, what was the balance of the Sustainability Fund as at 30 June 2019?

Ms Neville interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Police and Emergency Services!

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (14:33): I thank the member for Mornington for his question. My understanding is that these figures are available in the budget papers, and I certainly refer him to the budget papers, but I am happy to articulate what that is just to help him out.

Mr Andrews interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the Premier to order.

Mr M O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, the question was about the status of the fund as at 30 June 2019. That is not covered in the budget papers because the budget was brought down before that date.

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

Ms D'AMBROSIO: I understand the point of the member for Mornington in his question. I am happy to be told otherwise, but my advice is that it is approximately \$397 million.

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) (14:34): Minister, with thousands of tonnes of recyclables now being sent to landfill, how much additional revenue will your government make at the expense of councils, businesses and households?

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (14:34): I thank the member for Mornington for the supplementary question. Again, I believe that these questions were actually written before our announcement was made this morning. Our announcement made this morning directly goes to that very question of additional costs incurred by local councils affected by the SKM closure.

Mr M O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, the member for Mornington's question was about additional revenue. It was not about expenditure or net revenue; it was about how much additional revenue will come into the fund as result of recyclables entering landfill. That is a perfectly fair question, and the member is entitled to an answer.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am not able to direct the minister how to answer the question. She was relevant to the question asked. The minister has concluded her answer.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: LEVEL CROSSING REMOVALS

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure) (14:35): I am delighted to advise the house that it has been business as usual for the government when it comes to removing level crossings over the winter break. We have been busy removing level crossings. And guess what, Speaker? The Opposition has been busy complaining about each and every one of those level crossings.

Speaker, you may recall that 29 level crossings have already been removed. I know the member for Preston is very happy to know that number 30 is about to go at Reservoir. I know the member for Altona is delighted that number 31 is about to be gone for good at Laverton. And the member for Carrum? Numbers 32 and 33 level crossings are about to go at Carrum. We have got tens of thousands of Victorian workers working tens of thousands of hours to get rid of these dangerous and congested deathtraps. And there is more to come, with work proceeding apace on many more of our 75 level crossing sites.

The member for Hawthorn knows about the work that is going on at Toorak Road, one of the most congested and dangerous crossings in the state. At Chelsea—I know the member for Carrum knows this well—we are removing five level crossings as part of one package of work, and that will see not one level crossing between Edithvale and Seaford along the Frankston line.

The Deputy Premier was pretty excited last Monday when I joined him at Mooroolbark station, where we announced that the level crossings at Lilydale and Mooroolbark will be gone—an elevated rail line, new stations and extra car parking, which I know the Minister for Public Transport loves. The local paper did a poll: 81 per cent of the community think it is great. The member for Evelyn has a different view: ‘They’re wrong. They’re wrong. Those level crossings should stay’, according to the member for Evelyn. We are going to get on and remove each and every level crossing that we committed to removing.

Mr Battin: On a point of order, Speaker, during question time I was asked to leave the chamber for a period of 1 hour for questioning how many points of order this side of the house was allowed to actually do, and I was gagged. It is difficult enough in this Parliament when the Andrews government have only sat 25 days since they were elected back in November last year. It is making it very difficult to question the government. I know they do not like to give answers, but if a person on this side questions you in relation to how many times we can do points of order and then gets asked to leave without any warning, which has been quite standard in this place, I am just asking for some direction: what is your ruling as to how many times we can do a point of order? And, two: are you going to be giving warnings to people who are interjecting across the chamber, or is the new policy that you just get thrown out when they question you?

The SPEAKER: When members shout at me in the chair they will be removed from the chamber without warning—

Mr Battin interjected.

The SPEAKER: I will not have members debate me from the chair. The member for Gembrook was asked to leave the chamber because he was shouting at the Chair while I was trying to deal with the ruling for the member for Warrandyte. I will not have members on any side of the house shout at the Chair while I am in the business of ruling.

The other part of the point of order that you raise is in relation to members being able to take points of order. Members can take a point of order at any opportunity that they wish, but there is a very clear ruling in *Rulings from the Chair* on procedures for raising points of order—that is, that members should not take points of order to deliberately disrupt the proceedings of the house. I was warning the member for Warrandyte that consistently raising points of order that are not points of order I would consider to be disrupting the proceedings of the house. After the member for Gembrook left the chamber, I allowed the member for Warrandyte to raise another point of order, which I ruled on. I consider the matter closed.

Mr Wakeling: On a point of order, I would just like to draw your attention to outstanding matters 479, 481, 732 and 766, which still remain unanswered, with some dating back to 30 May.

The SPEAKER: I will follow those matters up and come back to the member.

Constituency questions

WARRANDYTE ELECTORATE

Mr R SMITH (Warrandyte) (14:40): (866) My question is to the Minister for Roads in the other place. I refer to my correspondence with the minister regarding the Mullens Road and Yarra Street intersection and the need for a pedestrian refuge. While the community appreciates the installation of the new signage when approaching the intersection, this can only be seen as a temporary fix, with pedestrian safety still at risk whilst trying to cross the road safely. Recently Yarra Street, Warrandyte has seen the installation of a pedestrian refuge not more than 100 metres from a pedestrian light crossing to allow safe crossing between bus stops. I ask on behalf of the residents of Warrandyte that the minister have the Department of Transport fast-track the installation of a pedestrian refuge at the intersection of Mullens Road and Yarra Street to ensure that pedestrians have a safe place to cross.

BROADMEADOWS ELECTORATE

Mr McGuire (Broadmeadows) (14:41): (867) My question is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. What information can the minister provide on transport plans for the state district of Broadmeadows? Constituency concerns centre on the redevelopment of the Broadmeadows train station and increasing services on the Upfield line. The Broadmeadows Revitalisation Board has delivered a plan to redefine the heart of Broadmeadows. A deal is imminent to pave the way for the redevelopment of the town centre. A whole-of-government strategy and collaboration with Hume City Council is now required for planning and land acquisition, commercial partnerships, arterial road upgrades and place making around the Broadmeadows railway station. The Ringwood station redevelopment provides a model. Such a plan would also provide the opportunity for hundreds of car parks in the Broadmeadows railway station precinct, vital for population growth, and add value to the two new elevated stations planned at Moreland and Coburg and the Glenroy railway station redevelopment, and also the removal of four level crossings on the Upfield line. Such investments are significant and vital for Melbourne's north.

GIPPSLAND EAST ELECTORATE

Mr T Bull (Gippsland East) (14:42): (868) My constituency question is to the Minister for Agriculture, and the information I seek is the detail of the next round of drought support for farmers in my electorate. Large areas of the state received considerable rainfall over the past week to 10 days—up to 135 millimetres in some places. Bairnsdale received only 7 millimetres. The drought is still very significant in my area. We are about 150 millimetres down on last year's rainfall total. New South Wales's drought support dwarfs Victoria's. The minister will not make a decision on council rate subsidies; she will not make a decision on fodder subsidies. We are in real trouble. We need help in our area. I ask the minister to please outline what her next round of drought supports will be, but more importantly when they will be made available to the farmers in my community.

IVANHOE ELECTORATE

Mr Carbines (Ivanhoe) (14:43): (869) My constituency question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. I seek the latest information on progress to install road safety cameras at Banyule Road and Rosanna Road, and Darebin Street and Rosanna Road. Much construction work has been concluded. Testing and calibrating has been underway at those sites in recent months. I am aware that digital signage will soon be installed to warn motorists. It is the precedent that the cameras will soon be operational, and then of course advising that the cameras are operating. So I do seek the latest information from the minister on the progress of those works. Safety on Rosanna Road is a very significant issue for my community. This will go a long way to ensuring those who visit and travel through my electorate and the Banyule council area understand that they need to obey the law when it comes to road safety.

GEMBROOK ELECTORATE

Mr Battin (Gembrook) (14:44): (870) My question is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. The federal government have provided much-needed funding for train station car parks at Officer and Beaconsfield railway stations. Thanks to the federal member for La Trobe, Jason Wood, \$15 million was provided for each project—ample money for the additional 1000 car parks in total. It came as a shock when looking at the 2019–20 budget that there has been no listing of these projects and there is nothing in the forward estimates for the essential works to get these car parks started.

Several constituents in my electorate contact me each week regarding the great need for additional car parks at Beaconsfield and Officer. Six families a day are moving into Cardinia, and each week the government delays construction of the car parks the streets surrounding train stations are getting more and more congested. The problem at Beaconsfield has gotten so bad that residents are struggling to put their bins out. Minister, can you please provide a time line on construction of the additional car parks at the Officer and Beaconsfield railway stations?

PASCOE VALE ELECTORATE

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) (14:45): (871) My constituency question is for the Minister for Training and Skills, and my question is: how are people seeking asylum and refugees supported to access TAFE and training opportunities in Victoria, in particular members of my community? The Andrews Labor government understands the importance of a great education, and those of us on this side of the house recognise the need to invest and create education opportunities. Committing to the Education State is about ensuring that everyone is given the best opportunity in life and the chance to succeed. Recently I met with members of the Pascoe Vale and Glenroy community, in particular members of the local Iranian community, who spoke to me about the difficulties that can be experienced by newly arrived and multicultural communities in accessing training and education opportunities. Newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers often have complex needs in navigating life in Australia. Therefore I seek information on how we can make it easier for them to access training and education opportunities, particularly higher education opportunities.

MILDURA ELECTORATE

Ms CUPPER (Mildura) (14:46): (872) My constituency question is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. What is the latest information on the government's efforts to ensure the Murray Basin rail project is completed? Farmers along the Sea Lake and Manangatang lines are deeply concerned about the viability of transporting grain by rail in the coming harvest. Performing routine maintenance on the track, no matter how well-intentioned, will make no difference to the viability of rail as broad gauge in any condition is not going to attract the number of contractors needed for transport prices to be competitive. Without standardisation it will be more cost-effective for farmers to transport their grain by road. That means thousands of additional B-doubles on highly dilapidated roads. It means heightened safety risk to drivers, passengers, families and kids. The Manangatang and Sea Lake lines are critical infrastructure, and we need a clear plan from the government to resolve the funding shortfall and complete the project.

SOUTH BARWON ELECTORATE

Mr CHEESEMAM (South Barwon) (14:47): (873) My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Minister for Road Safety and the TAC, Jaala Pulford in the other place. I recently had the pleasure of touring and inspecting the construction works being done on the intersection of Surf Coast Highway, Messmate Road and South Beach Road to deliver a new roundabout. Labor is investing \$2.5 million in a new roundabout to improve safety and traffic flow through this intersection. Every morning I drive past the works, and while they certainly cause some inconvenience, I know it will be worth it once the new roundabout is constructed—even if it saves just one single life. My question to the minister is: how unsafe is this intersection, and when can my constituents expect this fantastic new project to be completed?

EVELYN ELECTORATE

Ms VALLENCE (Evelyn) (14:47): (874) My question is to the Minister for Solar Homes on behalf of constituents Glen and Debra Clark of Mount Evelyn, who own and operate a small business in solar power design and installation. The Clarks' business is one of the top retailers accredited with the Clean Energy Council, but they have told me of the woes of the disastrous solar rebate scheme, which has taken an immense toll on their business, including the need to, sadly, lay off staff. Minister, the Clarks simply ask: will you acknowledge the government's new solar rebate scheme is disastrous for the industry, resulting in job losses; has stifled the market, minimising the uptake of solar; and means the government will be unlikely to reach its stated renewable energy targets; and will you take urgent action to amend the rebate scheme or scrap it to ensure the survival of the solar power industry and fix the administrative and technical problems of the Solar Victoria online portal that the Clarks have outlined which have delayed payments? Minister, I note that both the Clarks' letter and my letter to you on this serious matter have so far been ignored, and we would respect an answer.

YAN YEAN ELECTORATE

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (14:48): (875) My constituency question is to the Minister for Public Transport. Can the minister advise when community information sessions will occur ahead of the Mernda to Craigieburn bus service that was funded in this year's budget? Due to an incomplete local road network, residents in the Fairview estate were not included in the 2018 Plenty Valley bus network improvements, which coincided with the beginning of Mernda rail services. This extra, funded service now offers the opportunity for further refinements to this very well patronised bus network to deliver services to newer areas of the 3754 postcode.

Rulings by the Chair

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The SPEAKER (14:49): We now move back to government business. Before doing so, I would just like to provide some guidance or a ruling in relation to questions on notice. I would like to remind members that standing order 57(1)(a) states that a member asking a question must not offer an argument or an opinion on the matter. Standing order 57(2) states that all questions must be direct and succinct. The rules for asking questions on notice further state that questions must not contain arguments, opinions, inferences or imputations. These rules can be found on the back of the 'Notice of question' form located at the end of the table or in the Procedure Guide.

I am concerned by the increasing number of members who are using questions on notice as an opportunity to make comment and add extraneous content to the question. This has also had the effect of making these questions longer than they need to be. Questions that include such content may be edited to ensure that they meet the criteria or may be ruled out of order.

Bills

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AMENDMENT BILL 2019

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Ms RYAN (Euroa) (14:50): I am delighted to rise today on the Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2019. The function of this bill is to introduce a ban on lightweight plastic shopping bags. I think it is interesting to note that in doing this we are actually following a number of other jurisdictions and other countries around the world. In fact Bangladesh was the first country to actually introduce a ban on plastic shopping bags, back in 2002, so considering that we are now—

Mr R Smith interjected.

Ms RYAN: The member for Warrandyte says we take our environmental cues from Bangladesh.

I think it does show that we are actually perhaps quite slow in introducing this. Obviously we have a slightly better—perhaps only slightly at the moment—waste system than Bangladesh, who obviously had a very real need to implement such a ban 17 years ago, but that has been followed by a number of other jurisdictions like China, Israel, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Papua New Guinea, among others.

I think overwhelmingly people see the decision to ban single-use plastic bags as a fairly commonsense kind of decision. That is certainly the feedback I get from around my own electorate, and I think there is a real concern about passing a problem on to future generations if we do not actually act to reduce the amount of waste within the environment and that very consumer-driven kind of attitude of using something once and then throwing it out.

I was interested to note that through the public consultation process there were some 8000 submissions received, I believe, and I am always a bit wary about statistics because I think there are particular interest groups who are always very active perhaps in making submissions around a particular issue,

but overwhelmingly the feedback out of that consultation was that the Victorian public supported a ban on single-use plastic bags. I think 96 per cent of respondents said that they would like to see single-use plastic bags banned, 3 per cent were against it and 1 per cent said that they did not know.

A lot of the common reasons that people gave were harm to the environment, low rates of re-use and recycling, and also the fact that alternatives are readily available. I know a lot of members of Parliament have probably taken the opportunity to distribute their own recyclable bags as a consequence of this ban coming into place. I think many retailers are also quite supportive, but they were very specific about the need for public education, a transition period to be put in place and the availability of having alternatives available at a reasonable cost.

So I think since the major retailers in particular have taken the step of eliminating plastic bags in their own stores, Coles and Woolworths being the obvious ones, we have witnessed quite a change in behaviour. I find myself I still often forget when I go to the supermarket to take my recyclable bags, and there were a few grumbles at the start when those major retailers decided to eliminate them, but that behaviour change has taken place over the last six months or so, and I think that even sceptics of the scheme would now say that perhaps it is a good thing.

I am very proud of the fact that the Strathbogie Youth Parliament team in this year's Youth Parliament in fact successfully passed a bill to ban single-use plastic bags, and their proposal was that the government implement a single-use plastic bag commission and that the government put in place a recycling initiative that would see excess plastic bags already being used being put into road bitumen. I think it shows that particularly younger generations are very active about this, and they want the government to move and to do something about it. That team comprised of Zachary St Pierre, Benjamin Lewis, Malachi Wild, Jade Donnison, Lachlan Matthews-Gunn and Dylan Chambers, and I particularly congratulate them for their leadership in our local community in putting forward that idea and I think representing the view of their generation.

In a broader sense I do have to say that I have some concern about the environment minister's ability to implement some of these changes. I think we have seen a number of disasters on her watch, the Solar Homes package being one such issue, which of course is prominent at the moment. We saw in the most recent ballot allocation for rebates for the Solar Homes program that they were chewed up in just 90 minutes, and then it closed. We have now got companies facing huge job losses and huge peaks and troughs in work that they cannot deal with. Locally I have had a number of those companies come to me expressing their very real concern about the failures and the botched rollout of that program. I think we all acknowledge that solar is a good thing, but the government has well and truly stuffed up the implementation of that program.

Unfortunately the difficulties the minister has had there have also rolled over into the recycling space, which is very pertinent to this bill. We have now got councils sending their recycling to landfill because they have got nowhere else to put it. I suppose in the context of this bill, on one hand the Parliament is doing something good in seeking to ban single-use plastic bags, but that is a drop in the ocean when our recycling system in this state is in such a dire place at the moment because of inaction from the government and a lack of leadership. That is really what we are seeing when we have got councils begging for the state government to show leadership and show action in this space, and all we get is another bin. We know that the government is sitting on hundreds of millions of dollars in the Sustainability Fund which it is not investing for the purposes for which it was collected. As a consequence we now have a serious crisis, and I do think that Victorians feel quite betrayed by what is happening in the recycling space at the moment.

I was certainly shocked to discover that we were sending all of our recycling offshore, and I think it reflects very poorly on us as a society and as a state that we would simply shift our problem off to other, in many cases, poorer countries to deal with the problems of a First World country. I certainly welcome the fact that the Prime Minister is taking a very active role in endeavouring to provide solutions there, but I do think that it is a real problem that the current government has not even bothered

to produce or develop a waste management policy. I think it is arrogant in the extreme to see the minister turn around and blame those recycling companies like SKM who have folded, when the reality is that she has shown a real lack of leadership.

In my own community, Strathbogie and Mitchell do not use SKM. They use another company, Visy, but there is a flow-on impact for them if this issue does not get sorted out, and it is possible that we will feel the impacts of this statewide crisis in my own community.

The other thing I would say in the short time I have remaining is that there are innovative ideas out there which I think that the government has ignored. I know in my own patch I met with somebody just the other day who is quite interested in building a plastic waste-to-fuel project around Nagambie, and he has had no engagement from the government. We are not short of ideas and we are not short on innovation in this state. Innovation is something that traditionally we have prided ourselves on, but the government is not backing these ideas to help turn them into a commercial reality to help ensure that we reduce the amount of waste that we are sending to landfill. The project that is proposed around Nagambie would help eliminate end-of-life plastic and put it back into fuel.

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Public Transport) (15:00): I am pleased to rise today to speak on this bill, and I congratulate the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change on this important legislation that fulfils an election commitment of this government to ban all lightweight single-use plastic bags in Victoria, a ban that we are putting in place by the end of 2019.

We are doing this by amending the Environment Protection Act 1970 and regulations under the Environment Protection Act 2017 to prevent retailers from supplying shoppers with lightweight plastic bags, and this includes biodegradable, degradable and compostable plastic bags. We are also stopping confusion about what might be an okay plastic bag and what is not by prohibiting retailers, wholesalers and manufacturers from giving shoppers misleading information about the composition of a banned plastic bag or whether a bag is banned, and to ensure compliance we are strengthening the capacity of authorised officers to enforce the ban by giving them better powers of entry and inspection of premises.

I am very proud to be a member of a government that not only says it cares about the environment but is prepared to tackle such an all pervasive problem, too often viewed as intractable, of single-use plastic items that, once discarded, have a detrimental impact on our environment. Only a Labor government has the will to take on hard problems, both social and environmental, that when solved make a huge difference to our community and people's lives.

So why ban single-use plastic bags? Well, the statistics on plastic bags are staggering, with about 1.6 billion lightweight plastic shopping bags and 133 million thick plastic bags used in Victoria each year. Whilst Victorians are good at reusing plastic bags, we also know that re-used plastic bags eventually end up as landfill, often trapped in vegetation after having been blown away or sloshing around in our creeks and rivers and of course in Port Phillip Bay. It would be mindboggling for anyone not to have seen pictures of or read about the cruel and devastating impact that plastics have on our aquatic fauna. Who can forget images of turtles eating plastic bags, mistaking them for jellyfish; or reports of malnourished flesh-footed shearwater fledglings being fed an array of plastics mistaken by their parents for food? Seabirds, turtles and marine mammals are particularly susceptible to getting tangled in or swallowing plastic bags. CSIRO figures state that globally approximately one-third of marine turtles have probably ingested debris, with most of that debris being plastic, and that by 2050 plastic ingestion in sea birds may reach as high as 95 per cent.

But we also know there is an even more sinister impact from discarded plastic bags or in fact plastics in general. Over time they break down into smaller and smaller particles known as microplastics, which pollute the environment and are ingested by small animals. This significantly impacts not only the health of these animals but that of the entire ecosystem as toxic pollutants such as heavy metals are transmitted

up the food chain. And it doesn't stop there. Recent studies in Canada and Australia have found that, on the conservative side, ingestion of microplastics per person is akin to eating a credit card each week. Only reducing the number of lightweight plastic bags that Victorians use and ultimately throw away will help tackle what is a confronting future as well a consequence of plastic pollution. We looked at and learned from how other states introduced similar bans, and we are banning those bags made in whole or part of plastics where any part of the bag has a thickness of more than 35 microns or less. Those bags are easily blown away and easily break down into microplastics.

A commitment to amend the act and regulations and to give effect to the ban has been thoroughly thought through. As I said, we looked at and learned from how other states introduced similar bans as we wanted to ensure consistency for retailers and suppliers, particularly for those who operate nationally. We looked to practices overseas and, most importantly, we consulted with the Victorian community. I want to congratulate the minister on the highly successful consultation, which received over 8000 submissions, with more than 96 per cent of those supporting a ban on lightweight single-use plastic bags. Two-thirds of those responding also supported including biodegradable, degradable and compostable shopping bags in the ban. Switching to biodegradable plastic bags would not address these environmental problems caused by plastics as these bags break down into small pieces of plastic and cause the same problems for marine life and our oceans and waterways as conventional plastic bags. So I know that here in Victoria the community overwhelmingly supports action on our plastic addiction.

I also want to congratulate the minister on the National Retail Association delivering a comprehensive engagement, education and information program that will support retailers during the implementation of this ban. This program has a strong focus on helping small to medium-sized businesses by providing face-to-face engagement via 100 tours and workshops across Victoria. It also provides advice on practical things they can do to get ready, including preparing their customers, alternative bags that are allowed and other in-shop resources.

We know how hard it can be to change long-held habits, particularly in the absence of alternatives. We also know that through good community campaigns people's habits can change. We have seen how willing Victorians are to change their patterns of behaviour and habits when provided with evidence of the harmful effects of plastic. The recent report of the Port Phillip EcoCentre Clean Bay Blueprint research project, funded by this government's Port Phillip Bay Fund, showed there has been a reduction in the number of straws in the Yarra River. As the report's authors noted, straws are amongst the most common items found washed up on beaches worldwide. This is a phenomenal outcome of the community, businesses and local governments like Melbourne City Council's Queen Victoria Market and South Melbourne Market working together to reduce the use of plastic straws. And whilst we still have a long way to go to reduce the overall quantum of rubbish, including plastics coming into the bay, it is extremely heartening to see what can happen when the Victorian community and businesses work together and what can be achieved when government aids rather than hinders. I am confident that the forthcoming ban will not only reduce plastic pollution; it will build awareness of the issue by encouraging all Victorians to change habits, embrace re-usable bags and use them in their daily lives.

This bill is also about helping and recognising the hard work and commitment of the hundreds and hundreds of Victorian volunteer-based community and environmental groups whose members freely give up their time. One of those volunteer groups is the Friends of Lower Kororoit Creek. For those unfamiliar with Lower Kororoit Creek, it is that part of Kororoit Creek that flows south of Geelong Road, passing through Brooklyn, Altona North, Altona and finally into Port Phillip Bay. It forms the natural boundary between my electorate of Williamstown and Altona, represented by my friend the honourable Attorney-General. Those who are familiar with Kororoit Creek know that the creek used to be surrounded by industry, with nearby factories and abattoirs using the waterway for waste disposal. Last month on National Tree Day I had the absolute pleasure, alongside my friend the minister, of spending time planting trees with the Friends of Lower Kororoit Creek and celebrating the fantastic work they do.

In the year 2000, having noticed the terrible state of the creek, the amazing Geoff Mitchelmore enlisted friends and started this volunteer group. Through their efforts what once was a wasteland littered with shopping trolleys, dumped cars, rubble, rubbish and of course plastic bags has become a vibrant waterway that people in the western suburbs of Melbourne enjoy. The Attorney-General and I have both had the privilege to participate in these efforts. We know that along the way rebuilding efforts have been waylaid by a constant need to clean up plastic bags stuck in vegetation, soil, banks and water of the creek. This bill says to our volunteer organisations such as Friends of Lower Kororoit Creek that the Andrews Labor government is working with you. We have listened to you and we are working with you.

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) (15:10): I rise to speak on the Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2019, which is a bill to ban certain single-use plastic bags here in Victoria. This is a bill that the Greens strongly support. In fact it is something that my Greens colleagues and I have been pushing for for a long time as we fight to get plastics out of our rivers and oceans. In fact I am told that 17 years ago Bob Brown actually introduced a bill into the federal Parliament to help reduce plastic bags in our community. And it was two years ago that former Greens MP Nina Springle introduced a bill in the Victorian Parliament to ban plastic bags, which we campaigned extensively for. Of the many campaigns that we did run in the last term that was far and away one of the most popular campaigns, including in the Prahran electorate, my electorate, where we held a 'ban the bag' forum where we heard from speakers from the Port Phillip EcoCentre about just why this was so important. Even more recently when I did my electorate-wide survey, as many members do in their own electorates, stopping plastic pollution and fixing the waste crisis was one of the top priorities for my constituents.

Why is this such an important reform? We have heard each speaker refer to the voluminous statistics about plastics out there in the oceans, and I think we need a few more just to kick this along. We know that the Yarra River is being clogged with plastic waste that is being carried by stormwater. Three clean-up blitzes, involving 320 volunteers, over the past year have removed 20 tonnes of waste from the river. As any volunteer will tell you, whether it is on the Yarra River, whether it is beach patrol on our beaches, whether it is volunteers on Clean Up Australia Day, they are finding some plastic out there in our rivers, in our parks and on our streets.

What we know as well is that the Yarra River is one of the biggest sources of rubbish going into Port Phillip Bay. In fact in June last year a 2.4-metre pygmy sperm whale which was pregnant washed up in distress on the beach in Williamstown and was later found to have a stomach full of plastic. Across Australia, and in fact across the globe, Australians use and throw away an estimated 4 billion lightweight plastic bags per year—that is 10 million bags per day.

We have got the Great Pacific Garbage Patch which stretches from the east coast of Japan to the west coast of America—ocean currents cause rubbish, mainly plastic, to concentrate there. Plastic is having a devastating effect on the Great Barrier Reef. It is estimated that there are 5.25 trillion plastic particles floating in the sea and 90 per cent of all seabirds have got plastic in their guts. Half of all sea turtles are being harmed by plastic waste. By 2050 there will be more plastic than fish in the sea. Every day 250 marine animals and 2700 seabirds are choking to death on plastic pollution in our oceans. These are incredibly distressing facts, and I am so glad that there is so much more consciousness of these facts out there in the community. That is, I think, what is driving a lot of the change and is certainly driving a lot of the community support behind this bill.

What has been happening in response to this? Well, here in Victoria we are introducing this bill, but we are behind the rest of Australia and behind the rest of the world. Besides New South Wales, Victoria is the only state or territory not to have implemented a ban. We have got South Australia, Tasmania—and I know the Greens, when they were in a coalition government there, certainly pushed that in their time in office and got that through—the Northern Territory and the ACT that have imposed bans on single-use plastic bags. South Australia's plastic bag ban has been in place since 2009 and within just six months of that ban 200 million bags were prevented from entering landfill.

More than 50 countries and states have adopted the ban on the production and sale of plastic bags, so around the world India, China, Mexico, Bangladesh, Brazil, Somalia, Uganda, Kenya, South Africa, Botswana and Rwanda as well as a number of states in the USA have banned the bags. Just a shout-out to Bangladesh—the member for Warrandyte interjected when the member for Euroa was speaking and referenced Bangladesh, joking that we should or should not take our environmental advice from Bangladesh, but just to point out, Bangladesh is one of the world's most densely populated countries and a low-lying country that is heavily reliant on its waterways and very susceptible to natural disasters and the impacts of climate change, so perhaps we should be taking some of our environmental cues from the country of Bangladesh.

We have also seen responses from local government and local councils. Local councils right here in Victoria have passed a number of motions in support of banning the plastic bag and have even taken action on their own events and their own facilities in terms of banning not just plastic bags but other plastics as well—straws, cutlery and those sorts of things.

Then we have retailers. We have had the big retailers but we have also had, for example, the Prahran Market and the South Melbourne Market banning single-use plastic bags. The retailers Coles and Woolworths have prevented an estimated 1.5 million bags ending up in our environment. Apparently within three months there has been an 80 per cent drop in the consumption of plastic bags nationwide, according to the National Retail Association. Of course shoppers themselves had been leading the charge in this before retailers or governments acted. I know shoppers still forget their bags and have to do the walk of shame, but I think more and more people are remembering their bags. They get the frustration sometimes of getting the order from a Coles or Woolworth's delivery coming in plastic bags, but I think those sorts of gaps are what this bill is going to address.

When the Greens introduced our bill in the previous Parliament it was subsequently voted down by the government and the opposition, but in fact my understanding is that the day before it was due to be debated we had an announcement from the government, during the Northcote by-election, that the bag would be banned, which we welcomed. It starts on 1 November this year and bans retailers from giving out plastic supermarket bags—those ones with the handles and 35 micrometres thick or less. I think we do need to look at the thicker bags and just see how it is implemented. I certainly do not think this is set and forget. There are also some exemptions in terms of fresh produce and whatnot, so I certainly think that once, hopefully, this bill passes, we do need to keep watching just how it is implemented.

Plastic bin liners and small, clear plastic bags used for fresh fruit and vegetables and animal waste will be exempt from this ban. There are offences for providing false information about banned bags and there are also some technical amendments within this bill to the Environment Protection Amendment Act 2018, which is yet to come into force. What it means is that we will not see these single-use plastic bags flowing out into the sea and our oceans anymore and certainly not going into landfill where they can sit for hundreds of years after just a few minutes of use.

But there is more to do—there is more to do that has been occurring across the world and in fact in our local councils that are taking action in terms of reducing plastic waste. We have got drink and food containers, microfibres, balloons, plastic straws, cutlery, coffee cups, plastic cling wrap and a range of plastic packaging. One of the things that often comes up with constituents is all of this plastic packaging that you get when you buy stuff—that needs to be addressed. So this bill, as others have mentioned, is a step—it is one step—but there is so much more to do, particularly as we are in the middle of a waste crisis, a waste crisis that this government saw coming. They saw it coming.

We have got tonnes of recycling ending up in landfill or in dangerous stockpiles across the city. The government is still sitting on this now almost \$400 million in its Sustainability Fund to address this crisis. We simply just do not understand why the government is not moving more quickly on this. We had the minister being asked a pretty straightforward question by the member for Brunswick about

why she is not implementing a container deposit scheme, and I tell you what, the answer did not fill one with great confidence that this crisis is going to be addressed rapidly.

So, yes, we have got a step now with the plastic bag ban to come in on 1 November. We now need more plastics to be addressed by further legislation. A container deposit scheme needs to be implemented. Victoria is now the only state or territory not to have a container deposit scheme or not to have promised one. On our costings coming through from the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) it would cost just \$9 million to implement and would generate revenue from unclaimed deposits of around \$244 million, and of course that would go straight back into the waste and recycling systems.

We have got kerbside recycling for food and organic waste. This is one of my favourites. It comes up a lot in the Prahran electorate. So many people living in apartments do not want to put their food into the waste stream. Of course this is the most polluting form of waste when it ends up in landfill, producing greenhouse gases, and it does need a statewide response. Some councils can make it work from a financial perspective, but other councils, particularly in the inner city where there are apartments and the like, just cannot make it work. That is why we need a statewide approach to food and organic kerbside recycling.

We need to invest in infrastructure and create that circular economy. From our costings, again from the PBO, it would cost just \$50 million to create a plastic recycling plant, and that would take around half of Victoria's plastic recycling and of course generate revenue as well. The minister was talking a lot about how we need to create a market for these recycled products, which we do, so get on with it; you need to be starting mandatory procurement targets, and you can start with your government agencies. There are so many. Whether it is in infrastructure or whether it is in food, there is so much that can be done in terms of creating this industry.

Finally, I will end with this: it certainly is not through a waste-to-energy plant, something that would take up around about half of all landfill—a polluting waste-to-energy plant that is not in line with how we need to be doing recycling and reducing waste in Victoria.

I want to congratulate all the organisations and people who in any which way have signed up to support and join the campaign to ban the bag. This is very much your victory. It is a step in the right direction, but there is so much more to do.

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) (15:23): I am pleased to rise this afternoon to speak on this important bill. This legislation will introduce a ban on all single-use lightweight plastic shopping bags with a thickness of 35 microns or less—they will be banned—including bags made from degradable, biodegradable and compostable plastic. The ban will apply to bags being provided at retail outlets, including supermarkets, fashion boutiques, fast-food outlets, convenience stores and service stations. The bill provides for a ban via amendments to the Environment Protection Act 1970 to commence in late 2019.

Similar to most other Australian jurisdictions, the bill introduces two offences: for a retailer to sell or provide a banned plastic bag to a person to carry or transport goods sold or provided by the retailer from the retail premises; and for a person to supply or manufacture plastic bags, whether by act or omission, and provide to any other person information that the person knows or should reasonably know is false or misleading about the composition of a banned plastic bag or whether or not a plastic bag is a banned plastic bag.

This is a terrific bill and one that responds to the concerns expressed by many people in my community. It is an important milestone in tackling problematic plastics and delivering positive outcomes for our natural environment, native wildlife, waste streams and public amenity.

The ban will not only reduce plastic pollution, it will build awareness of the issue by encouraging all Victorians to embrace re-usable bags and use them in daily shopping activities. I am not the only person in the house who from time to time will forget to take my re-usable bags to the supermarket. I

have actually made a point of ensuring that I have a number of my own bags emblazoned with my name now in the boot of my car, and these bags are available for my constituents at my electorate office. But from time to time there are people who will forget their bags, and we need to be understanding of that. This is about a behaviour change process that is well under way. I am very pleased to say that 76 per cent of Victorians are already taking their own bags when shopping. It would be my expectation that as people continue to grow accustomed to this, by the time that this bill takes effect people will be taking their own re-usable bags with them.

One of the things I found interesting in preparing for this contribution was to understand that there are some cohorts that are still challenged by this, and it is young Victorians. Fifty-four per cent of them are still not taking their bags, and similarly 57 per cent of people on higher household incomes are still more likely to rely on single-use plastic bags. So we have got a couple of target groups that we need to work on, but I know that Victorians want to do the right thing and are passionate about action to protect our environment, and I do not think we will have any difficulty with consumers in implementing this ban. It has been supported by an intensive retailer and community engagement and education campaign. Since March 2019 the National Retail Association has been engaging with Victorian retailers to help them prepare for this change.

As I said, we know that here in Victoria the community has overwhelmingly supported action on our plastic addiction. Indeed over the three-month public consultation the government received more than 8000 individual responses. I of course, like many in this place, received many myself. I would like to put on the record a note that I received from one of my younger constituents:

My name is Nicole Makin; I go to Sacred Heart College in Kyneton, I want to express my concerns about the fact, that we have not banned plastic bags yet in our state.

Right now we are one of the three states that haven't banned them yet, this includes NSW, VIC and WA, but following 2018 NSW will no longer be part of this group, leaving us and WA left to banned plastic bags.

Every day we use 10 million, plastic bags and 4-6 billion annually, that is enough to fill the MCG to the top two times, because we use so many plastic bags most of the time we have no idea what to do with them, so most of them end up in landfill when they could be used for other thing like bin liners, or maybe they could be reused, even if we don't ban them yet, we can still find ways to reuse them.

Please consider what I said and, help Australia get rid of plastic bag, once and for all.

So I say to Nicole: I am glad to make this contribution in this place today, and I thank you for your advocacy to me. And I thank the many others of my constituents who contacted me on this issue. As Nicole has told us, in fact Australians have used many, many plastic bags every day, and of particular concern are those that end up in our oceans and waterways.

One of the issues that people have spoken to me about I think is probably important to clarify. People have said to me, 'Well, what about the biodegradable bags? Why are we banning those as well?'. As I understand it—and I think it is important that people are made aware of this fact—degradable, biodegradable and compostable plastic still have significant impacts on our environment. Switching to biodegradable plastic bags does not address the environmental problem that is caused by plastics. While these bags do break down, they break down into small pieces of plastic and cause the same problems for marine life and our oceans and waterways as conventional plastic bags. Certainly I will be ensuring that people in my community understand that it is important that we also ban these biodegradable plastic bags.

I am very proud of the work that our government is doing right now to tackle one of the great challenges of our time, and that is this issue about waste management and disposal. This is a global challenge, let us be clear about it. It is not our problem alone to solve here in Victoria. It is one that the whole world is facing and indeed, as the Prime Minister recently noted, it is a problem for the whole of Australia. We can no longer just pack our waste off to China. This has caused massive disruption, there is no doubt about that, but this disruption causes each and every one of us to think differently

about ways in which we can move forward with recycling and move forward with re-using items and, importantly, think about how we can reduce our consumption.

Now our government has committed \$135 million to ensure the sustainability of the recycling industry in Victoria. In fact only today the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change has announced further support for local government to ensure that they receive financial support during this period where we manage the closure of SKM. It is a complicated and complex problem, but this bill is an important one. It says to the people of Victoria that this is a government that is committed to doing what it can to reduce the proliferation of plastics that are dangerous to our environment. We are a government, as I said, that is committed to a whole range of innovations in this space.

I did want to briefly mention Envirostream, which is a business in New Gisborne—a fantastic global-leading business that is currently recycling 95 per cent of all battery matter, so it is an e-waste point. The minister for environment came to visit Envirostream. They are exporting the component parts to Korea, and then they come back to us again as batteries. This is a perfect example of a circular economy in action. We have also—this government—made an investment in Hepburn shire in a waste-to-energy project. This is a fantastic project that is providing power to heat our Daylesford hospital as a consequence of the work that the shire is doing, supported by the Victorian government.

Finally, I did want to say that the banning of plastic bags is good news for the terrific people of the Boomerang Bags movement. Across my electorate Boomerang Bags have really taken hold. Across Kyneton, Romsey Lancefield and Riddells Creek communities are getting together and sewing re-usable bags. I am proud to say I have one from each of these groups in the back of my car, with my own branded bags that are available from my electorate office. As I said, the banning of the plastic bag will provide further impetus to Boomerang Bags, which is a great community organisation, a social enterprise bringing people together to work collectively for the betterment of our environment. I commend this bill to the house. It is a really terrific piece of legislation.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (15:33): I rise to comment on the Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2019, and I am pleased that the coalition will be supporting the banning of the use of single-use plastic bags, those bags with a thickness of 35 microns or less whether or not they are made from degradable, biodegradable and compostable plastic. This is a really important move and certainly it is something that I know a number of my constituents in Caulfield feel very strongly about. In fact just on 12 months ago we started a bit of a campaign of giving out bags that could be re-used at supermarkets, knowing that the supermarkets themselves would be following an initiative of banning plastic bags.

I think is really important to point out that we did have two of the major supermarkets lead very strongly in banning these bags. That is where I think it is very important to have individuals take up the action in protecting the environment and businesses also getting involved when they know it makes sense. And this does make sense. We saw the survey that was done: over 90 per cent of people supported banning of the plastic bag. There are certainly better ways of doing this. Rather than waste, there is nothing better than getting into the habit of re-using bags, taking them with you to the supermarket and ensuring that they are not thrown out after one or two uses. And that is the change that has happened. We have seen, through the National Retail Association and the work they have done, an 80 per cent reduction in these bags since the campaign was implemented, which shows that these things work. Certainly other speakers around the chamber today have said that it can become difficult to get used to. When you are used to one type of behaviour, it is very hard to adjust that, but once you get used to it then it certainly does become part of your daily life and ultimately it protects the environment, which is absolutely crucial.

In the past we have seen Australians use up to 10 million plastic bags each and every year, That is 4 billion a year, and of these approximately 150 million end up in the oceans and waterways, contributing to an estimated 8 million tonnes of plastic dumped into the oceans every year. And this is something we want to avoid. A number of years ago when I had a business we worked very closely

with the Dolphin Research Institute in Port Phillip Bay. Jeff Weir has been a very strong advocate for protecting the bay for probably 20-plus years. And Jeff would be the first person to tell you what the harmful effects are of having plastic ending up in the ocean. And that is why we need to protect our marine life, we need to protect our oceans, we need to protect tourism and, ultimately, we need to protect our planet. And that can be done with these very proactive steps that people can take that do not necessarily require a huge cost but are just a change of habit. And that is why we need to be looking at this in a whole range of different ways.

We have heard people talk about the circular economy and there are things like product stewardship. I note from working with an organisation called Close the Loop, which recycles toner cartridges and mobile phones and what have you, where you take a product at end of life and turn that product into a park bench or some other type of material. Ultimately the manufacturer has actually paid for that as part of initially creating it, and that is part of that product stewardship that Close the Loop have been very, very successful at developing out in Broadmeadows. I was very proud to be involved in helping them in the very, very early days and seeing an organisation like that absolutely grow. That is where we need to be. We need to be focused on where we can help individuals take responsibility for ensuring our planet is clean by the actions that they take themselves. There are, in many cases, little things that people do whether it be using a keep cup or whether it be a different straw that you use. There are little things that people can do in terms of changing their behaviour that can make a huge change to benefit our planet.

We often hear of grand schemes and certainly young people being focused on the bigger issues. But one of the things that I would really like to see young people work on and certainly that I would like to work with young people on, which we are doing in our electorate, is the things that they can affect today—not tomorrow or in 10 years, but what they can do today. Whether it be recycling programs in their schools, whether it be solar programs and looking at the way they use energy in their schools and in their homes, these are things that young people can affect today and these are what young people should be involved in—whether it be kitchen gardens that they could be operating also in their schools or whether it be composting, which is something that young people should be involved in.

I quite often give Glen Eira City Council a hard time, and I know, Acting Speaker Dimopoulos, this is one of your councils as well. Glen Eira council initiated the kitchen caddy program where food scraps can be dumped into your green bin—a great initiative. Rather than ending up in the waste bin, they can be put in the green bin and be recycled appropriately. This was a very, very simple initiative and I know the mayor, Jamie Hyams, worked very hard in educating the community to ensure that this was happening.

But there are a number of issues at the moment that the government has on its hands, issues that unfortunately they are not managing well when it comes to recycling. We have seen the recycling crisis hit our state in a big way. Certainly Scott Morrison has got involved in this, but ultimately the state should be responsible, when it comes to collection of the landfill levy, the bin tax, to invest it in recycling programs to ensure that waste can be properly recycled and managed and not end up in landfill. The recycling crisis hit earlier this year, with one of my councils—the City of Port Phillip—being at the back end of that where their recycled material ended up in landfill. Twenty-two thousand tonnes of material that should have been recycled ending up in landfill is the equivalent of 11 MCGs—11 MCGs that should have been recycled but were not—ultimately because the Andrews Labor government failed in their due diligence in managing this issue. This should be something that all Victorians should be really upset about.

We have been doing some surveys in Caulfield and it has been a huge issue—probably one of the largest issues that we are facing right now. My constituents in Caulfield are telling me that they are unhappy with the Andrews Labor government in that they have not managed recycling and waste management in our state appropriately when our constituents, the people of Caulfield, put their stuff in the yellow bin, thinking that they are doing their bit for the environment, and that ends up in landfill

and is not recycled. That ultimately is a failure, and that is why many of my constituents are telling me that they are very, very unhappy at the moment with what is going on.

I would like to give a bit of a shout-out to a number of people who are doing some great work. Love Our Street 3162 is a campaign that meets one hour a month to clean up the streets, and they have collected tonnes and tonnes of product and are certainly doing their bit for the environment. I want to thank those people—Gretchen, Julie, Ruth and Sophie—who do a fantastic job with Love Our Street. Also in Elwood we have the Plogging Group, which is jogging and also picking up rubbish. It is a great initiative that also keeps you fit. I understand that they have collected 658 kilograms of rubbish in the year that they have been set up. I also want to shout out to the World Mission Society Church of God, the youth and adult worker volunteer program. I met with them on the St Kilda Road foreshore only a few months ago and they ended up with over 150 volunteers, all there to clean up their beach. They run active, ongoing recycling programs and environment clean-up programs all around Victoria. They are very, very strong in this. They have pledged to try and save our planet with these really strong initiatives and I commend them.

It all starts with people's individual actions in taking the initiative and doing their bit. This is part of it in terms of thinking about waste rather than just throwing something away and grabbing something else. Plastic bags being banned is the start of a very important thing. There are a number of other things that we should be doing in terms of supporting the circular economy, as I said today. This is very, very important, but I believe that it is really up to the individual being incentivised in any way by government with the right programs to ensure we do not have a recycling crisis like the one that unfortunately we have at the moment that is being led by the Andrews Labor government.

Mr EREN (Lara) (15:43): It is great to be back in this place and of course we are straight into it with a wonderful bill before the house which protects our environment and protects our future for future generations. I want to commend the minister responsible for this bill for her hard work and the due diligence she gives to this very important portfolio, because there is so much at stake.

This bill, which is the Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2019, is a very important bill, as I have indicated, in relation to not only how we deal with recycling in terms of the added pressures that are brought to bear on our state. I know the previous speaker mentioned the Andrews government and the action we are taking that they are not happy about, but you wish that once in a while the opposition could pick up the phone and call their colleagues in Canberra, because I think it is not just our problem. This is a national problem and they need to deal with it nationally. We can do the best that we can as a state government, which we are doing, and I will go through in detail some of the initiatives that we have in this state, the state with the strongest economy and with the fastest growing population. All of those things are because we are a good state government. People want to live in this state because it has a strong economy, lots of job prospects and of course the wonderful communities that we are in terms of population growth. There is a reason why people are moving here. It is because it is a great place to live, work and raise your family. That is why the bill before the house is so important—to make sure that future generations have the opportunities that we have and enjoy the environment that we have at the moment.

I want to point out that as the former minister for tourism I know how important tourism is and the industry itself is. One of the assets that we have in publicising our state to those interstate and international tourists is our natural environment and of course we want to maintain that reputation that we have of having a natural environment that has people coming to this state from other states and territories, and indeed internationally, to have a look at what we have on offer. That is why this bill goes a long way to protecting our environment in the short, medium and long term.

This legislation will introduce a ban on single-use lightweight plastic shopping bags with a thickness of 35 microns or less. This will include bags that are made from degradable, biodegradable and compostable plastic. This ban will apply to bags being provided at retail outlets, including supermarkets, fashion boutiques, fast-food outlets, convenience stores and service stations.

Similar to other jurisdictions across the nation, the bill introduces two offences, and I want to get this on the record so that the people who are involved with this industry can fully understand what is at stake if they do the wrong thing and breach the law that has come before this house. The offences are: a retailer to sell or provide a banned plastic bag to a person to carry or transport goods sold or provided by the retailer from the retail premises—a supply offence. A person who supplies or manufactures plastic bags, whether by act or omission, provide to any other person information that person knows or should reasonably know is false or misleading about the composition of the banned plastic bag—information offence.

The bill also makes amendments to the Environment Protection Amendment Act 2018 to rectify minor errors that create inconsistencies and/or will allow for unintended consequences. This ban is an important milestone, as I have indicated, in the government's commitment to tackling problematic plastics and delivering positive outcomes for our natural environment, native wildlife, waste streams and public amenities. We always, as a good government, consult widely, and that is why there were literally thousands of individual responses to the consultation process with the wider community, which is why we are here today putting this legislation before the house. We know that Victorian communities are overwhelmingly supportive of action being taken on our plastic bag addiction, and in creating this legislation we held a three-month consultation process. We had over 8000 individual responses. In those responses there was overwhelming support to ban plastic bags.

The Victorian community wants to see decisive action to reduce plastic pollution, and that is exactly what this bill will deliver. It is good to know that 76 per cent of Victorians are already taking the initiative by taking their own bags when they go shopping. On occasions we all forget. You sort of have it in the boot, you take it out, you use it, you take the shopping in and then you forget to put back in the boot. I think I have got about 300 re-usable bags at home. Of course, as the previous speakers have indicated, we have re-usable, environmentally friendly shopping bags at our electorate offices; our constituents come in, take advantage of and use them appropriately.

This ban will not only reduce plastic pollution but will build awareness of the issues by encouraging all Victorians to embrace re-usable bags and use them in their daily shopping. It will also, importantly, reduce the rate of contamination from plastic bags in kerbside recycling bins and improve sorting, reprocessing and the quality of recyclables. We all know that although plastic is lightweight and low cost, it does not go away easily. It breaks into many pieces and ends up in landfill or as litter, and it can cause long-term harm to the environment and indeed wildlife. In fact *National Geographic* magazine reported last year that of all the plastic ever produced, 90 per cent has not been recycled. Plastic is an urgent environmental problem, clearly. Our government recognises that this is a complex issue which requires strong consultation with the community. I have mentioned that we have done that and we have taken some of the ideas that were presented by those 8000 individual submissions and formulated this policy that we have today.

We are currently experiencing the closure of the biggest mixed plastic recycling market in the world. I am not sure if many people were aware that the recycling that we had done was done in China until China said, 'We're not doing it anymore'. I am not sure how many members of our population knew that this was happening in China, but it is now our problem. Obviously, as I have indicated earlier, it is not just a state problem; it is a national problem and we need the assistance of the national government to ensure that we can accommodate the growth in our population and accommodate the growth in our economy to make sure that we are acting appropriately when it comes to the environment.

I have had my fair share of problems relating to recycling in my electorate. We saw a recycler close its doors in December 2017, which caused all sorts of problems. The Environment Protection Authority Victoria is now taking severe action against this operator, C & D Recycling, and we as the government have committed \$30 million for a clean-up. There is 350 000 cubic metres of waste inappropriately stacked up, stocked up, at that location, which is causing a fair bit of angst not only to the local community in my electorate of Lara but also throughout Geelong. Obviously we know the

dire consequences if, God forbid, a fire were to start at a location like that. It would be devastating not only to the local area but indeed to the wider Geelong area, so \$30 million has been allocated. It is not going to happen overnight, but the clean-up has begun. Clearly we need to take action, and we are taking action in relation to that.

I am also proud to be part of this government, which announced yesterday that it is tackling ongoing waste management issues with \$11.3 million to provide immediate financial relief to councils and invest in infrastructure to improve the quality of 100 000 tonnes of recycled material. This short-term financial relief supports councils immediately while all levels of government work together on a longer term solution that must be included in an overhaul of kerbside recycling.

In the limited time I have left, we are as a government very much focused and concentrating on this very important issue. We understand its importance not only for the residents of our state and indeed for our industries but also importantly for our future generations. We want to ensure that my great, great-great-grandkids have something to be proud of.

Without further ado, I support the bill, and I wish it a speedy passage through this house and indeed the other house.

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) (15:53): I support the banning of plastic bags, I know my community supports the banning of plastic bags and I know the schools in my electorate support the banning of plastic bags. There is nothing surer because of the way it was spoken about recently when I was in my office with the Emerald Secondary College Stop Trashing Our Planet team. This is a group of young people who are looking to put their voice out there and make sure they have an impact on the environment because, as they say, this is for their future and this issue is so important. Ethan, Christian, Ruby and Jaicob attended. Unfortunately Lena, who was supposed to come, was unwell. These students came to my office. We do a podcast about local issues and things that are happening locally. Their conversation that day was around things they want to do to protect the environment. They spoke about banning straws; they spoke about plastic bags; they spoke about container deposit schemes. They are even going so far as working with the school, with the support of their teachers and principal Jodie Doble, to try and raise money to buy a reverse vending machine for the school.

The program that they run at that school is at the moment if you go out and buy at the canteen a number of drinks, you can return the bottles or the cans to the canteen. If you return a certain number, which I think is 20, you get a free drink—to create an environment of encouraging young people in their school to bring rubbish in. These are year 8, 9 and 10 students at a local school in my electorate who understand that they need to start with education, and that education can a lot of the time be led by young people.

They spoke about the environmental impact of plastics going out into the ocean. I will not quote Ethan's quote of the day because, I will be honest, off the top of my head I cannot remember the exact number, but he spoke about when a whale was caught and they pulled that whale out, the amount of plastic that was inside its guts—

Mr Edbrooke: Twenty-two kilos.

Mr BATTIN: Twenty-two kilos was inside that whale—thank you very much for that—which is shocking. When you think about what we are ingesting, the people who eat seafood, it is obviously what the animal life within the oceans is eating as well and the effect that is going to have on the environment. These students understand that they need to make a change, and they are also trying to educate the community around them.

One part of their plan is they would also like to see a reverse vending machine in Emerald itself, which they want in order to run the program, so they can get some actual statistics, some figures, as to what is happening in the local community so they can continue their campaign and their push for what they want to see change through our environment. I have to say that during the podcast—we will do a

promotion for it, but it is called the 'Brad's Brew' podcast if you want to jump on board—we were talking to those young kids and they actually educated us a lot on some of the things that they are learning in schools.

I am only 43 years old, but we do not have to go back that long when you listen to some of the changes that are happening in schools, with environment captains. Instead of just school captains and house captains, we have got wetland warriors, we have got frog bogs, we have got the students who are taking care of that. They are learning so much more about the impact that we have on the earth and the impact that we have on pollution. It is so important that they get an understanding of how they can make small changes and big changes. I note the member for Caulfield said, 'Talk about things you can do today', but I think it is really important too that young people are talking and thinking about the things that they can do tomorrow, the things they can change in the future and re-educating not just themselves but obviously me—and the next generation above me as well so they can get that information going back to them. They think that is very, very important.

One government that is listening in relation to the banning of plastics in Australia is the South Australian government, with David Speirs, MP, and Premier Steven Marshall, who are probably leading the way in the discussions they are having around banning plastics and banning plastic straws. I think we could all take a leaf out of their book on just going out there and doing it rather than talking about it—getting into action and making sure that we are bringing in the legislation to ensure that we are protecting the environment.

David Speirs is a member of Parliament and a minister over in South Australia and he represents an area along the coast, so he has seen firsthand and understands the vital importance of making change within the community. What they have shown over there is that no matter who does it—it does not matter if it is Liberal or Labor—when we are talking about these issues that can have an impact on us and everyone in the next generation, we have got to take into consideration how we can work together, and that includes working with your communities, to deliver the outcomes that are best for your local community.

When we are talking about the environment one part that I always have a concern about is that when we go out there we hear many in the community talk about the environment or our economy. The reality is you cannot have one without the other. They actually work closely together. I have been to various countries—you can use India and Indonesia as examples. Countries that are struggling in parts of their community with the economy, you will find, also tend to have the worst outcomes for the environment. Anyone who has travelled through parts of India will know that there are parts of India where the economy is struggling. People cannot get a job. People are worried about putting food on the table. They are living in houses that you would not normally say are fit for people to live in, and they are struggling every day. These tend to be the areas where you have an impact on the environment that is quite negative. So it is important we have an economy to support our environment. And that economy has to be growing. It has to be creating a better and bigger middle class not just in those countries but around the world because that is the support that it can get. Then we can see long-term investment in the environment that is going to have an impact globally.

China is obviously going more and more across to a larger economy. They are going to have more and more middle class in their economy over there, and we are seeing changes. Are they the changes we all want to see? There is probably more that can be done, but the reality is that we are seeing changes with a bigger middle class. The more that people are comfortable at home and can put food on the table, the more they can turn their minds to other things that will protect the environment and provide outcomes for everyone, and I think it is really important that we continue to do that.

I will finish up my contribution today by saying that the banning of plastic bags is not just something that is good for Victoria, it is not just something that is good for my electorate, and it is not just something that is good for Melbourne—it is something that is good for the entire country, and we need the entire country to have a look at it from state to state. But banning plastic bags will make a

difference, and I implore every single member of Parliament to go and speak to that next generation, the ones that are talking about programs to protect their future, the ones that are learning more and more about it, and also work with them to explain how important our economy is, because if we do not have that economy, we cannot have the support to invest in programs in the future to make sure we are protecting our environment long-term.

Mr J BULL (Sunbury) (16:00): Thank you very much, Acting Speaker Dimopoulos. I am delighted to see you, delighted to see you in the chair and absolutely delighted to be back in the house, to be contributing to debate on this very important bill, the Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2019.

This government, the Andrews Labor government, knows and understands the importance of our natural environment, its protection and the impact of doing enough—or probably more importantly not doing enough—for future generations to come. I am pleased that this bill has received support from both sides of the house. There should not be a debate. There is no debate, no secret, no point of contention that our environment is of course under significant pressure.

Acting Speaker, as you know, as the world evolves, as populations grow, as our land use management and planning, our manufacturing processes, our transport and our way of life change, our environment is of course forced to change with us. There is no doubt that significant human impact is made on our environment. There is no better example of this than climate change, and I am incredibly proud that this government, the Andrews Labor government, in our previous term introduced the VRET—the Victorian renewable energy target—of 25 per cent by 2020, 40 per cent by 2025 and the introduction of the target of 50 per cent by 2030. These are not just baseless figures, Acting Speaker. As you know, having these targets drive investment, real and tangible investment, that results in a greater output and greater production of renewable energy through solar and through wind, and what I think is of critical importance alongside of the new technology is the ability to drive the jobs market in areas where we know jobs are critically important—in rural and regional Victoria. That is something that I think is terrific for the state. This government also knows that we have a broader responsibility, a profound responsibility, to the people of this state and to future generations to come and we know that it is important to address those challenges.

Some in this house may also know, because I have mentioned it in previous contributions, that I am a really keen scuba diver and I have had the great opportunity and the great chance to dive in some great places all over the world. Recently I actually had a chance to join the Minister for Roads and Minister for Fishing and Boating on a dive in Port Phillip Bay to look at some really important projects around reef restoration and filtering of the water of Port Phillip Bay.

But I think what is most concerning is that over the years what you do notice under the water is an increasing level of plastics; you see this through diving in a whole range of various waters. On a trip a few years ago I remember being out in waves on a surfboard and literally swimming through plastic. There had been some significant rains in the area through the stormwater system and swimmers were actually wading through plastic. There is really nothing much worse than that. If we are able to feel the level of plastic in the water, you can only imagine the damage and the impact on the marine life and the biodiversity right through the system.

As you know, Acting Speaker, these plastics have huge impacts on marine life, as I mentioned, on biodiversity and on the long-term health of our waterways. That is why this bill is so critically important and why I am very pleased to be speaking today on this piece of legislation. As other members have mentioned, the bill will introduce a ban on single-use lightweight plastic bags—shopping bags with a thickness of 35 microns or less, including bags made from biodegradable and compostable plastic. The ban will apply to bags being provided at retail outlets, including supermarkets, fashion boutiques, fast-food outlets, convenience stores and service stations.

From listening to earlier contributions, this really is about a readjustment period for Victorians and I think for people across the country. I was just listening to the speaker before the previous speaker and hearing about the adjustment of actually remembering to take your re-usable bags to the supermarket; I think on quite a few occasions I have done the same thing. You do see people going in and out of their cars, already making the adjustment to better shopping bags—re-usable shopping bags. I think that we are very much creatures of habit. It is important to educate but also to provide alternative options that are sound options for people. I think it is important that the community is with us on this, and I might say a little bit more about that later in the contribution.

The bill provides for a ban via amendments to the Environment Protection Act 1970 to commence in late 2019 and regulations under the Environment Protection Act 2017, expected to commence in July 2020. Similar to in most other Australian jurisdictions, the bill introduces two offences—for a retailer who sells or provides a banned plastic bag to a person to carry or transport goods, and for a person who supplies or manufactures plastic bags who, whether by act or omission, provides to any other person information that the person knows or should reasonably know is false or misleading about the composition of a banned plastic bag or whether or not the plastic bag is banned in that instance.

As I mentioned earlier, we know that the community, importantly, is with us on this decision. There was overwhelming support in the three-month public consultation period, with over 8000 individual responses. The community want to see decisive action to reduce plastic pollution, and that is exactly what this bill will deliver.

Going back to the readjustment period, I understand that it will take some time. But I think on balance this is a very important step and part of a broader picture, a broader suite of reforms. When we look at the Victorian renewable energy target, when we look at the announcements around recycling made today, do they present challenges? Yes. Do we walk away from those challenges? No. We are a government that has demonstrated that, in the five years that we have been in office each and every day. The challenges that do arise are great and many, but we are always willing to work with the community to take the best advice available through science, research, those that work in the industry and all of our communities to make good, responsible, dynamic, nimble, reasonable decisions that benefit this state.

In the time I have got remaining I will mention, as I know other members have mentioned, some of the, frankly, frightening statistics: 10 million plastic bags are used every day across Australia—astonishingly, 4 billion every year—and 150 million end up in our oceans and our waterways, contributing to an estimated 8 million tonnes of plastic dumped into the ocean every year.

Although plastic is a lightweight and low-cost product, Acting Speaker Dimopoulos, as you know, it does not break down and its impact is long-lasting and devastating. We know that plastics do play an important part in our daily lives, being strong and lightweight, and they have a huge variety of uses. What is important is that we continue to look at that science, look at the investment, work with industry and work with the community to get the very best possible outcomes, the very best possible solutions through policy, which we can bring to this house each and every day to continue to make Victoria the best state in Australia to live in.

We will always work with science, work with industry and work with stakeholders to improve every element of public policy that we can. This is a critically important piece of legislation because it will reduce our consumption of plastic bags and inherently make our environment a better place. It will make Victoria a better place, and that is why I am very proud to commend the bill to the house.

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (16:10): I rise to speak on the Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2019 and flag that the opposition is supporting this bill. The bill has two key objectives. Obviously the first one is about the banning of lightweight plastic shopping bags, and there is also the second objective about correcting some minor technical errors in the Environment Protection Amendment Act 2018, which is a bit of a concern because that was only last year. We have obviously rushed

something through without doing all the due diligence, seeing that there are errors that have needed to be corrected so soon.

Back to the substantive objective of the banning of plastic bags. If we look specifically at what the legislation is doing, it will introduce a ban on all single-use lightweight plastic shopping bags with a thickness of 35 microns, so that is pretty thin. This includes bags that are made from degradable, biodegradable and compostable plastic. Typically we get these bags when we are doing supermarket shopping or buying from various retail outlets, often fast food or fashion, and markets will often use these lightweight plastic bags. So this ban will apply to those retail outlets, and there are some offences along the way with this as well.

For a very long time I have been a strong opponent of single-use plastic bags, and I have certainly been a long-time subscriber to using alternative methods. Back in the mid-1980s I would use string bags. Sometimes they caused a bit of grief when you were doing fruit and vegetable shopping because things would often stick out of the sides. Now I find that I have got other lightweight bags in my handbag all the time and in the car, and I have done this for decades and decades and have never taken up the option of a plastic bag from a supermarket. Doing market shopping I would usually carry a basket and put my fruit and vegetables directly into that to avoid using a plastic bag. There are many alternatives, so when this was mooted and a lot of people were very worried about how this might impact them and their habit of how they do things, I thought that this could be done fairly smoothly. In fact I think we found that the major retailers moved on this before the government did. We saw Woolworths and Coles in particular take the initiative to change the practices in their shops.

In fact on the day that they introduced the changes that would come into effect, I visited the Coles in Healesville to see how it was going on day one, and what was really quite remarkable was that it went extremely smoothly. There was not one criticism given to the staff there. I spoke to people on the checkouts and the express and to the managers, and it had gone swimmingly. People had come in with their re-usable bags. Some of those re-usable bags were plastic, some of them might have been the member for Eildon bags or others might have been ones that they had picked up through various different outlets. We see that now too. You go to the supermarket, people get out of their car and typically they will take four or five bags if they are doing a larger shop into the supermarket with them.

In Warburton for some time and in other small towns they have used the concept of boomerang bags. They would have them at the shopping centre, so if you did not have a bag you would go in and you could pick up a bag that was there. Often they were homemade, and you could take them home and when you came back next time you could put it back if you brought your own bags. I have also seen many country towns, including Warburton, that have undertaken bag-making workshops, or at fetes and things like that—they have had people there on the sewing machines out to do that because there are alternatives, and I think a lot of these alternatives work really well.

Why is this legislation needed? The key concerns for me have always been about the environmental impacts of plastic. I am not sure how much everyone knows about plastic. We all know it is very versatile, it is very lightweight and it is easy for transporting, and the costs are quite comparable to heavier tins and things like that. But like most plastics that rely on something that comes out of the ground, plastic bags have their start in life out of crude oil. With the transformation to polyethylene or polythene, if you have a look you can see that for a re-usable drink bottle, or actually not even—a disposable drink bottle—the amount of crude oil to make one drink bottle is actually quite staggering when you can see what is required. So I think this can also have an impact on the amount of oil that is required to make the plastics.

On top of that we have their longer life and the issues that they have with not breaking down, and they end up in our waterways. I find this really quite distressing. They end up in our lakes, rivers and then ultimately in the bays and in the oceans. Some of the stories that you hear are really quite horrendous. There is an example that is particularly heartbreaking of a turtle in Queensland in a marina on the Sunshine Coast that was not getting any better. It kept getting fed and kept coming up to the boat and

was clearly not well. When it did die the autopsy revealed that what had happened was that it had ingested a plastic bag that had filled the lining of its stomach so any bit of food that went in was actually going into the plastic bag and was not making it into the body of the turtle. I found that really quite disturbing. One of the impacts that we are going to see with the banning of plastic bags is on the amount of pollution. There are millions of tonnes that make it into our waterways, and having that removed is certainly a good thing.

This is not going to be smooth sailing for everybody. I know that some businesses have worried about the costs of replacing plastic bags, because not only are they very lightweight but they are also very cheap and easy to use. So for a number of businesses—and I think the major retailers would also say this—there will be a cost in this area for them to offer thicker bags; they will have to put a cost on them if people are going to be using those bags and not bringing their own in. But there are many small business outlets in the city for takeaway foods. Melbourne has a very outdoorsy culture, and there are lots of people buying food on the run. In the shopping centres there are loads of little outlets, and typically if you have got your Indian or Chinese takeaway, they put it in the plastic container and they are worried it is going to seep out, so they will put it into a plastic bag as well. They do that and pop the spork in without thinking about whether you have an alternative.

I think a lot of these small businesses will struggle to implement this. They probably struggle to make a good living already. I think we do need to make sure that we help those businesses along the way so that they can change their habits, because not only is it our habits as users—consumers, at the end of the day—but it is often their habits as businesses as to how quickly they will pop things in a plastic bag and give it to you, even when you have an alternative with you. So there is a little bit of education that needs to be done along the way, but I think we certainly can get there.

I also want to make note that we have used the 35-micron unit and in New Zealand they have used 70, which is twice as heavy. We have opted for the very, very light end there. When we talk about habits as well, a lot of us in our households would say, 'Look, we use those plastic bags a second and a third time'. Typically people would put rubbish in them, re-using them as bin liners, and it has been raised whether or not the sales of bin liners might increase as a result and that that might be a heavier plastic, so we may not have a net overall balance.

I have found that certainly in our house we have never had to buy—and I do not buy—any commercial plastics that are re-usable. I have not used Glad wrap for decades.

Ms Britnell: How impressive is that!

Ms McLEISH: It is very impressive. I have not used plastic bags either, and we have got by absolutely fine, without question. Sometimes I need to remind the family that they could do a little bit better there. They will often forget a plastic bag, but it is certainly something that people can do. There are other alternatives. Sometimes when you buy other things they might have plastic wrapping around them. There are things you can do so you do not need to use single-use plastic bags in the household. We have found it very easy. As I said, I have practised these behaviours since the mid-1980s, so I am a long-time supporter of reducing our reliance on plastic in this way. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (16:20): Unlike the member for Eildon, I have not been carrying around string bags since the 1980s, but that is a very, very good effort. It is a pleasure to speak on this bill and a pleasure to be back, and I have noticed a few more members with beards. Member for Frankston, you are looking very good, might I say. But it is a pleasure to speak on the Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2019, a bill that I think represents an important step forward in protecting our environment, protecting our oceans and our waterways and of course our native wildlife.

This bill bans single-use lightweight plastic shopping bags with a thickness of 35 microns or less. It is a ban that applies to bags being provided at retail outlets, including supermarkets, fashion boutiques, fast-food outlets, convenience stores and service stations. One thing that I know to be true of Victorians

is that we can adapt for a good cause. Victorians will change lifelong habits. They will alter their lifestyles in order to live more sustainably, and I think maybe the greatest example to date of that was during the Bracks government's term regarding water restrictions. The people of Victoria knew there was a need to save water. We were in terrible drought conditions. Our catchments were at perilously low levels. We had a government of course at the time that communicated that message well. Even when those water restrictions were lifted Victorians did not change their habits in many ways. In fact Victorians continue to this day, many years after the end of those water restrictions, to be careful in their water use.

I think what we are seeing here now is something very similar. Even before this ban on single-use lightweight plastic bags has been put in place, even before the two major supermarkets banned single-use lightweight plastic bags from their own operations, Victorians started to do the right thing. As has been quoted several times during the debate today—but I will quote it again—76 per cent of Victorians are already taking their own re-usable bags with them to go shopping. A number of members have said that they have often forgotten to bring re-usable bags with them to the supermarket. That has happened to me just once since the two major supermarkets had announced their bans. It was actually at Coles in Bentleigh. It was a little bit awkward because just that morning I literally gave out I think 200 or 300 red bags with my name on them outside that same supermarket. So the supermarket staff did have a bit of a chuckle to themselves that I have literally got thousands of these bags but forgot to bring one. I have not forgotten since. You can walk into any supermarket and you can observe those changing habits, that behavioural change that will go a long way to protecting our environment.

It is important for a number of reasons, but especially because plastic production is expected to nearly quadruple by 2050. In the past Australians have used up to 10 million plastic bags every day, or 4 billion a year, and around 150 million of those ended up in our oceans and waterways, contributing to an estimated 8 million tonnes of plastic dumped in the ocean every year. It has been estimated that the ocean surface waters alone could contain over 5 trillion plastic pieces weighing over 250 000 tonnes. Around 1.5 million tonnes of plastic are used in Australia, which is about 65 kilos of plastic per head of population, yet 90 per cent of plastic in Australia has never been recycled.

I think it is important that we are debating this legislation now, not just because of the need to ban lightweight single-use bags but because of course of the issue of recycling, in particular kerbside recycling, is very topical at the moment. Obviously we have an immediate problem to fix, and that is a situation where 14 or 15 local councils are sending their recyclable materials at the moment. But I think this is an opportunity for further behavioural change, for us as Victorians to do things very differently. I suppose up until 18 months ago—or two years ago, whenever it was—when China stopped taking our unsorted and in many cases contaminated recyclables we thought that we could fill up our yellow-topped recycling bins, as they are coloured in the City of Glen Eira where I live, and put them on the kerb and that was the job done, we had done our bit for the environment. But as we have found out, it is not that simple, and our behaviours, our habits, definitely need to change. We need to produce less waste in the first place.

Of course, as we heard in question time today in fact, Victoria needs a circular economy. Victoria needs a bolstered circular economy, and I am proud that the Andrews Labor government is facilitating that. Banning single-use lightweight plastic bags, as I said, is great on its own and will go a long way to protecting particularly our waterways, but we as individuals need to look at our own habits without us always having to introduce new laws or needing to regulate. If I can use one example which really does frustrate me at times, it is just how many people purchase plastic-bottled water when we live in a city and a state that actually has the best drinking water in the world on tap. I have never understood that. Members will see me walking around Parliament with my aluminium Batman drink bottle because I just do not buy plastic-bottled water. I think that there are simple ways that we can reduce our waste.

The government's \$135 million investment in ensuring the sustainability of the recycling industry in Victoria also includes education and spreading that message. I think that is going to be very important. We have got an immediate problem to fix at the moment, but more broadly it is an issue that all Victorians from all walks of life need to take some responsibility for and need to change our own habits and behaviours on.

This intervention I just mentioned will bolster the capacity of the recycling sector, and it invests in Victoria's circular economy. I might run through some examples of that in a moment, but I should also mention that this government is creating its own circular economy policy and action plan which will be released late in 2019. But if I can just mention maybe one example on that that really goes to the issue of organic waste materials, part of that \$135 million investment has been into, for example, a composting facility in Dandenong South because this government of course has been facilitating a movement from people using their green bins for garden and lawn cuttings to using their green bins for food waste as well. In fact the City of Glen Eira I think was one of the first councils to sign up to this new arrangement. The City of Glen Eira, in my electorate, actually offers a free kitchen caddy for food scraps, where people can then dispose of food waste in their green bins. That is then sent to that Dandenong South facility and is turned into compost that is sent to farms, parks and gardens.

Organic waste accounts for around 42 per cent of waste in Victoria. In the City of Glen Eira for some reason it is higher; it is around 50 per cent, or almost 31 000 tonnes of garbage. Auditing found around half of that to be food waste—around 300 tonnes per week—and we all know the very harmful effects to the environment of having that sort of waste in our landfills.

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (16:30): I support banning plastic bags. There is actually no debate here. It is something we should have done a long time ago, and I think we can do a lot more than just banning plastic bags. In fact I think it is good that as a community we are already talking with our feet and we are seeing that community members and shoppers are taking bags with them to go into supermarkets. It is just a cultural shift; that is simply all it is. And that is my point about doing more. Coming off a farm and living in the country, it is quite natural for me to never use a bin liner. It is just not something we have ever really done, because you wash the bin when you empty it and you put the scraps in a scrap bin to take to the chooks and the pigs and you put the meat in separately so you can give it to the dogs. I would never dream of not doing it that way; it is just how we live our life. We would also never turn the dishwasher on unless it was full because we do not waste water. So it is the sort of concepts that are natural.

I might be getting old but I can clearly remember grocery shopping and brown paper bags. There was a time not so long ago that we did not have plastic bags. It has actually always amused—no, that is not the right word—astounded me, amazed me. It is probably more concerning now that we understand what has actually happened with plastic getting into the environment. But as I have gotten older I have watched things like biscuits getting more and more plastic inserts inside the packets. Once upon a time they were not there and if a biscuit was broken, it was not a big deal—and apples, oranges, mandarins and bananas did not all have little stickers on them. I do not want to increase costs to producers, but I question why that is necessary. It is those small plastics that are actually getting into our ocean as well. So if we want to be serious, there is just so much more we can do.

Port Fairy, in my electorate, has actually been plastic bag free for 10 years. I will give credit to a lady by the name of Genevieve Grant who led that charge. That was 10 years ago. At the Port Fairy school fair they sell a great coffee and make quite a lot of money out of that, and nobody even thinks that it is going to be in a disposable cup. They are all in ceramic cups and the parents and community members wash the cups, and it works normally. It is quite a logical process when you think about it. We all got a little bit carried away with our polystyrene cups and our plastic and thinking that we could just throw it away.

I remember when I did my Nuffield scholarship and was very fortunate to be able to travel around the world and look at food policy and all sorts of aspects of where we will go in the future when it comes

to food. I happened to be on the Mediterranean, and I was absolutely shocked because the Mediterranean—a bit of trivia here—actually only empties the water once every 100 years. So every droplet comes in and it is 100 years before it is actually expelled. The amount of plastic bags that were floating around the beautiful yachts was extraordinary. I was shocked. In Australia we have been quite fortunate in the way we have sort of taught people to dispose of litter properly, but it really stood out to me—it is not only about hiding litter, it is about not producing litter.

That is where I think we should have a real campaign as a community. We have done well with plastic bags. This is a community movement that has ended up banning plastic bags, and a community movement of actually making sure corporations start to think about whether they need to put two layers of plastic around things. I bought a packet of Dove soap the other day, and it was plastic upon plastic. It was impossible to get into the two bars of soap. It is frustrating. I mean, we do not need it. Why are we doing it? A box was fine. It did not need plastic around the box as well. There are so many ways that we as community members can put pressure on corporations to actually think harder about what plastic gets put around. I know it prevents damage and spoiling from weather et cetera, but we can do it because we have done it in the past and it worked well 30 or 40 years ago.

I do want to mention that this plastic ban will be a challenge. I was in the Salvos the other day. My daughter and I like to do op-shopping—her more than me because she is a skinny little thing and can pick up better clothes than I can—but I was talking to the Salvos. I took some of my bags in to help them out. They were quite concerned about this change. They asked, ‘Will we be able to bring re-used plastic bags in? Will you and I be able to take plastic bags that we have bought and have too many of, and will they be able to use it?’. They are quite concerned, so we do need to make sure that we support people through this change. I think we are doing that quite well. I actually want to give a plug to Leanne, who manages the Salvos in Warrnambool and does a fantastic job. I met her the other day and clearly that operation is a wonderful contributor to our community. So well done to you, Leanne, for what you do there.

I think the other thing we need to consider with environmental management is actually recognising that we can do more. Waste to energy—I was at a meeting the other day and there are some gentlemen in my community who are absolutely passionate about really thinking hard about what Europe is doing. I have seen it overseas as part of that scholarship that I mentioned before. Waste to energy is something that we really do need to consider. In parts of the world like south-west Victoria, we now have a crisis because the Andrews Labor government has ignored the fact that five years ago we knew China was going to ban plastics, and it gave them \$13 million 18 months ago as a bandaid solution to get the pressure off the story. Today we hear \$11 million is being given to 78 councils. I think it is about \$140 000 each, so it is going to give them a two-month reprieve. That is not the answer. The answer is actually getting behind some projects like waste to energy.

But government, I think, has a role to play in coordinating the rubbish in an area so that it is viable. We have litter on the forest floors as well that can feed into these projects, but we need to make sure that government plays a role in ensuring that all of the councils cooperate, and that makes the projects viable. We have got investors ready to go, so it can actually be done quite effectively.

I also want to talk about how important this plastic ban is to our beaches. We have got a group called Beach Patrol 3280, which is the postcode for Warrnambool, and 3284, which is the postcode for Port Fairy. You all know how beautiful our beaches are right around South-West Coast, so it is so important that we make sure that plastic on our beaches is picked up. I will keep coming back to: it should not be there in the first place. But I want to give a shout-out to the Beach Patrol people and Good Will Nurdle Hunting, who have done an extraordinary job cleaning up our beaches and raising awareness, because that is where we really have to go harder. When you talk to the 15-year-olds who say, ‘Yeah, I really care about the environment’ I think we have got to say, ‘Well, prove it. Come on, guys—really think through what we can do better and remember to take your plastic bags’. It is easy to pay 15 cents but it is harder to actually take the bags from the car and actually walk in and put them back in the car

after you have unpacked the groceries. Really put some pressure on people to think about how they can do better.

So I am proud to support this bill here today. I am disappointed that the government have had five years to get their act together, and that recycling that we as a community have been putting a huge effort into over the last 20 years at least—what I think most of us as community members did not know—was actually going offshore to China and we were not dealing with it ourselves. It is even more disappointing to learn that the government had five years notice. With five years notice there is really no excuse for recycling going into the tip today. It is even more disgusting that the government are charging the bin tax when that is going into the tip and not into recycling. There is \$370 million-odd we heard in question time today that is available. It was \$540 million or something, so the government has had the time. They have put some of that money into a website for the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, so that is not helping the environment.

So again I support the banning of plastic bags. As I say, there is absolutely no debate—this is what the community have been asking us to do, and the future of the environment is just too important to ignore. The community are ready for change and they have shown us that by speaking with their feet and going to supermarkets armed with their bags ready to go. They are saying this, I feel, every single day. Certainly in my office I get emails every single day about the importance of the environment. There is no debate that it is absolutely critical that we are here supporting the environment, and I am very proud to be here today supporting this ban for the benefit of the environment, the benefit of my grandchildren—one and a bit—and I am sure my great-grandchildren into the future. So it is many, many generations.

As a farmer it was always at the forefront of our minds—working with the environment. Anyone who tried to work against it was crucified by the environment. So the environment is king and we all know that every single day we get up, we make sure—or we should—that we respect the environment. It is much smarter than we will ever be as human beings, and all we can do is understand that we do have an impact here but we can work with that impact and make sure that we are constantly researching better ways to work with the environment, not against it. So I finish on the note that I support banning plastic bags.

Mr FREGON (Mount Waverley) (16:40): I rise to also speak on the Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2019. The main purpose of this bill before us, as everyone has stated, is to introduce a ban on lightweight single-use plastic shopping bags. It is good to see that we have support from both sides of the house. Common sense is sometimes common.

Most of us could not imagine a world where we do not utilise the benefits of plastic. It is light, it is inexpensive, it protects and preserves, and it is now fundamental to our modern lives. It is used in everything from bubble wrap to prosthetic limbs, in toys to heavy industry. Even trains on our own Glen Waverley line are now travelling over plastic recycled sleepers made here in Victoria when they go through Richmond station. That said, with the abundant availability of plastic, we find ourselves all too quick to overuse and throw away this resource. Our world is filled with single-use plastic items, and we use them momentarily, but they can take hundreds of years to break down. So the more we throw away, the more problems we as a society are making for ourselves. Reducing the amount of these bags, as this bill does, therefore reduces this problem.

We have already seen the effects we can expect from this bill having seen the Coles and Woolworths changes last year. Over 12 months ago these bags that will now be banned were removed from two of our major supermarkets, and whilst I am still trying to remind myself to remove bags from under the sink and put them in the car—which I am working on—it is good to see some of my colleagues here are ahead of me. We need to bring these re-usable bags with us, and I need to put them in my car to go to my local supermarket down at Pinewood or Hamilton Place. In fact I can also thank the minister and this bill for reminding me to do that.

The bill we are debating today brings us to an important milestone in the ongoing process of tackling problematic plastics in our environment. It is one step of many along a path but an important step for our natural environment. The ban builds on the overwhelming support from our community, shown by the uptake of the use of re-usable plastic bags, and assists us in moving forward towards more sustainable alternatives. Since last July as I go to buy milk, bread or whatever I find myself considering the environment just a little bit more because of the fact that we are using these bags. I also see this effect on the parents and children at schools that I visit in Mount Waverley. Recently I spoke to children at Holy Family Primary School and was pleased to see their strong interest in environmental matters and issues. Also our own Parliament has been running a role-play on banning plastic bags with primary school children in this very chamber. These kids are growing up with environmental issues and concerns front and centre of their thinking. On a recent trip to Palm Cove my own daughter argued that we had to go snorkelling on the Great Barrier Reef because she was concerned that it may not be the same the next time we had the chance to go. So our kids are growing up with these environmental issues very much in their minds.

Our government has worked closely with Victorian communities and businesses during the development of this plastic bag ban. The buy-in that we see from the public is a testament to that consultation and buy-in from the public. We as a state are not alone in this ban. Learning from the experience of other jurisdictions both in Australia and overseas has brought us here today with a ban that will produce the right outcomes for Victoria.

Some retailers in Victoria, as I have mentioned before, have already stopped providing lightweight single-use plastic bags, and I think it is fair to give them a shout-out for doing what they have done. The ban will not only reduce plastic pollution but assist with the health of our environment. This ban, not unlike the changes from retailers last year, builds awareness and shows the Victorian public that their government is moving to a more sustainable Victoria. We must encourage avoidance and re-use at all times, and in this way this bill is another step towards a circular economy.

The focus on a circular economy and its principles is being shown by our work in developing a circular economic policy and action plan for Victoria to be released later this year. We all want to see minimisation of waste and to know that we are making the most of our resources. Moving to a more circular economy will grow the economy, increase jobs and reduce impacts on the environment. In Mount Waverley we have a local men's shed that is working on a re-use and recycle plan. This is something I am keen to see in practice. Not only does this project assist with the recycling of useful goods but also, as does all the work they do at the shed, it assists greatly with the mental health and social inclusion of our senior men in our community. So a big shout-out to Greg and all the blokes down at the shed.

The ban, once in place, will remove these single-use bags from our recycling bins, and by doing this will assist in the ease of recycling companies to sort and reprocess during recycling. We are joining the list of other states that have also banned these plastic bags and have aligned our approach with that taken in these other jurisdictions. This will ensure consistency for retailers and suppliers and therefore make the adoption of this change easier for those who operate in a national market.

It is no surprise that this ban causes a change for some retailers. This has been considered, and so to ensure our retailers and small businesses are ready for the ban, the government has engaged the National Retail Association, which will deliver an education and engagement program over the next year. Drawing on their years of experience in the sector, the National Retail Association will provide face-to-face engagement with stakeholders in a program which will encourage long-term sustainable packaging solutions. This implementation program, like others that they have run in Queensland and Western Australia, will also assist in promoting the ban to consumers.

Sustainability Victoria states that the government received over 8000 submissions in three months of public consultation on plastic pollution in 2017–18. From this we can clearly state that the Victorian community takes the issue of plastic pollution seriously. From this process we have received an

enormous show of support for a ban on lightweight plastic shopping bags, with more than 96 per cent of submissions received supporting a ban. That is a fairly staggering number of people who agree on one thing.

We also heard that the Victorian community wants more action on plastic pollution. It is clear from public responses that the public wants to see more work in this space, and that is exactly what this government is delivering. Not only are we committed to decreasing plastic pollution entering our environment, as this bill does, but we do so knowing the Victorian public are with us. I have no doubt that we are tackling this problem head-on, and I thank the minister for not only this bill but the quantity of work we are seeing in this area moving us to a circular economy. I note that the inquiry into recycling and waste management will be reporting its findings towards the end of this year, and I look forward to reading through that report and seeing where we go.

We need to move away from a throwaway mentality. I know when my kids' school asked parents to use less wrapping for school lunches, this was not necessarily simple for some, like me. For my part, I am not totally there yet—I still find this awkward—but it is the right way to go, and those of us who are a little recalcitrant in this area and find it a bit difficult have to change with the times for the good of our environment. It is another example of how much we are relying on plastics, but it reminds me that we need to think about where it goes once we have used it.

Plastic is not the bad guy in this debate, but we need to be aware of the problems that its usage and our reliance on it causes. Our government is aware that we must utilise these benefits without compromising the Victorian environment. We need to align our systems around a common vision. So where we can eliminate plastic we do not need and instead use sustainable alternatives, we should do that. We should support innovation in plastic production where the full life of the plastic is considered and is part of the manufacturing decision-making.

This way we can continue on the path that we are on so that what we make continues to be used and never becomes waste or pollution. Our government is committed to developing and implementing policies that will reduce plastic waste and transition us to a state with a circular economy. We are facing challenges in our recycling industry. Our government is tackling these challenges head on: reducing plastic pollution with a \$34.9 million package of recycling reforms in the 2019–20 budget and assisting our councils with \$11.3 million to provide immediate financial relief and allow them to invest in infrastructure to improve the quality of our recycling system. This bill delivers to Victoria what we have been hearing loudly and clearly from 96 per cent of Victorians or more: people want this ban. They want these plastic bags out of the shops and out from under the sink, and now they will be gone. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) (16:50): In *UN News*, in an article titled ‘World must unite against “preventable tragedy” of ocean pollution: UN chief’, the UN chief said:

‘The oceans make our blue planet unique in our solar system—and not just visually,’ he said adding that they help regulate ‘the global climate and are the ultimate source of the water that sustains all life on Earth, from coral reefs to snow-covered mountains, from tropical rain forests to mighty rivers, and even deserts.’

... ‘the ability of the oceans to provide their essential services is being threatened by climate change, pollution and unsustainable use.’

Plastic pollution alone is reeking tremendous havoc on the marine resources of the world ...

Eighty per cent of all pollution in the sea comes from land, including some eight million tons of plastic waste each year, that have cost the lives of one million seabirds and 100 000 marine mammals. Moreover, it causes \$8 billion in damage annually to marine ecosystems.

Pollution, said Mr. Guterres, ‘chokes waterways, harms communities that depend on fishing and tourism, kills turtles and birds, whales and dolphins, and finds its way to the most remote areas of the planet and throughout the food chain on which we ultimately rely.’

‘Unless we change course, plastic waste could soon outweigh all the fish in the oceans,’ Mr. Guterres added.

Thank you, Acting Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on this very important bill. When we think about plastic pollution it is important to note that more than 9 billion tonnes of plastic has been produced since the 1950s. It is light, it is inexpensive and it is cheaper than other materials from which we make the things that we ultimately rely on. It is also very durable: it lasts for up to thousands of years. And our continued reliance on disposable and single-use plastic is overwhelming our environment.

A journal article in *Environmental Politics* titled 'Doing away with plastic shopping bags: international patterns of norm emergence and policy implementation', says that:

Beyond energy and climate impacts, the persistence of plastic bags in the environment has been a particular problem. Plastic bags can take up to 1000 years to break down ... creating problems on a number of fronts. First, they contribute to unsightly litter in public spaces, exacerbated by their light weight and parachute-shaped design which makes them travel easily through the air and in waterways. Second, they pose a public health and safety threat because they can act as breeding grounds for malaria-carrying mosquitoes and can clog sewers and storm-water drains. Third, they pose threats to wildlife that may become entangled in them or inadvertently eat them. Finally, when they do ultimately break down, they do not biodegrade; instead they *photodegrade*—meaning that they break down into smaller and smaller pieces. These small pieces can be consumed by wildlife ...

Single-use plastic items have become commonplace in our society, yet they can take hundreds of years to break up in the environment. This plastic pollution is affecting our land, it is affecting our waterways and it is affecting our oceans. Specifically, plastic bag litter is significantly affecting wildlife in the marine environment. Tens of thousands of whales, birds, seals and turtles are killed every year from plastic bag litter as they often mistake plastic bags for food such as jellyfish. Once ingested the plastic cannot be digested or passed by an animal, so it stays in the gut. Indeed seabirds can have a surprising amount of plastic in their gut. A *Conversation* article, 'Seabirds are eating plastic litter in our oceans—but not only where you'd expect' found:

Working on islands off Australia, we have found birds with plastics making up 8% of their body weight. Imagine a person weighing 62 kg having almost 5 kg of plastic in their digestive tract. And then think about how large that lump would be, given that many types of plastic are designed to be as lightweight as possible.

The more plastic a seabird encounters, the more it tends to eat, which means that one of the best predictors of the amount of plastic in a seabird's gut is the concentration of ocean plastic in the region where it lives. This finding points the way to a solution: reducing the amount of plastic that goes into the ocean would directly reduce the amount that seabirds (and other wildlife) accidentally eat.

Indeed that is what this bill is about. Because it takes so long for plastic to break down, it is also important to note that once an animal dies and decays after ingesting the plastic, the plastic is then freed back into the marine environment to carry on killing other wildlife. It continues and it continues. When plastic and so-called biodegradable plastic bags do break down, they simply break into smaller and smaller pieces of plastic, making every size of particle a problem from the plastic bags that are filling up the stomachs of whales and turtles to the smaller shreds that end up killing young seabirds, stuffed into them by their desperate parents, to the microplastics that are recognised by the Environment Protection Authority as an emerging pollutant of concern and the nanoparticles that are being ingested. When plastic waste ends up in the environment it becomes increasingly problematic to manage. Reducing the number of plastic bags we are using is an important part of addressing the overall problem of plastic pollution in Victoria.

Much of Australia, indeed the world, is ahead of us in this regard. According to the United Nations Environment Programme up to 5 trillion plastic bags are consumed each year. On 20 July Panama became the latest to ban single-use plastic bags, and more than 90 countries have similar restrictions. Tanzania and New Zealand recently also implemented such bans and another 36 regulate them with levies and fees. Bans on plastic bags are widely spread in Africa. Throughout the world people recognise that this is a problem, and here in Victoria, that is why this bill is so important. It will legislate a ban on lightweight single-use plastic shopping bags in Victoria. It will apply to bags being provided at retail outlets, including supermarkets, fashion boutiques, fast-food outlets, convenience stores and

service stations. The ban will encourage greater uptake of re-usable bags, building on the momentum that has been growing in our communities towards embracing more sustainable bag alternatives.

In my own community of Pascoe Vale customers are already taking their re-usable bags to the shops in droves. Indeed the demand for our shopping bags throughout campaigning over the last year was particularly strong. People want to use re-usable bags. We are an electorate that is passionate about doing our bit to reduce plastic pollution. I would like to particularly commend the Friends of Merri Creek, the Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek and the Friends of Edgars Creek, who have also advocated very strongly in our community for minimising the plastic waste going into our local waterways.

The bill bans the provision of all lightweight plastic shopping bags made in whole or in part of plastic where any part of the bag has a thickness of 35 microns or less. It will include biodegradable, degradable and compostable plastic bags, as we know they all have comparable impacts on the environment. The legislation also prohibits retailers, wholesalers and manufacturers from providing false or misleading information about the composition of a banned plastic bag or where a bag is banned. This includes the omission of information that a retailer, wholesaler or manufacturer should reasonably know about a bag's composition or whether it is in fact a banned or exempt plastic bag.

In talking about retailers banning bags, I would like to take a moment to recognise the importance of not bagging the staff who are informing people of the banning of bags. As someone who represented workers in the retail industry and workers who have long supported the use of re-usable bags but have often encountered customers who may not always accept that the staff are sometimes the messengers and that change can be difficult, but that customers are getting used to taking their bags from home or buying re-usable ones, I send a friendly reminder not to take out their frustrations on the staff that are serving them. Perhaps a matter that is not as commonly talked about when using re-usable bags in shops is actually making sure that the bags that we are asking staff to put things into are clean. Our union members would report to us that it was commonplace for people to turn up with their re-usable bags full of last week's shopping or even perhaps with footy training dirt in the bottom of their bags. So in implementing this really important initiative it is important that we do not bag the staff who are the messengers and that we respect them when they are filling the re-usable bags for us.

This is a really important bill. It is one that goes to the heart of the welfare of animals in our community and in our society. It is a bill that goes straight to the heart of protecting our environment in the long term. I am very pleased to commend this bill to the house.

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) (16:59): It gives me pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak on the Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2019, a very newsworthy piece of legislation at the moment, particularly with much of the media commentary around recycling and the use of materials within Victoria and Australia and the challenges we have at the moment in terms of recycling. The legislation itself introduces a ban on all single-use lightweight plastic shopping bags—shopping bags with a thickness of 35 microns or less will be banned. The types of bags include degradable, biodegradable and compostable plastic bags. The ban will apply to those bags that are being provided at retail outlets, including supermarkets, fashion boutiques, service stations, convenience stores and fast-food outlets. The bill also makes some technical amendments, but the focus of my contribution will be on the banning of the single-use plastic shopping bags.

As many members have said in their contributions, it is a positive thing to ensure that we minimise the use of plastic bags in our communities and in society. We know that far too often we have all observed and witnessed many stories where impacts upon the environment and animals and wildlife occur and are unsightly on top of that. It is something that we should be looking to minimise and reduce, and this bill does exactly that.

The ban, which applies to a number of different retail outlets, comes into effect, as I understand it, in early November. A fine will apply if there is a breach of the rules. I think it is really important that the information gets out to the public and to our retailers to ensure that they are acutely aware of what the

rules and the legislation actually are. As I say, I think it is a positive move, it is a positive step, and it is incumbent upon the government and relevant departments and agencies to ensure that people are aware of the rules. The member for Pascoe Vale quite rightly just pointed out that the people who are working in those environments are the ones who will invariably have to advise consumers of the new legislation, and of course the last thing we want to see is customers being upset when they are not able to be provided with plastic bags because it will be against the law.

I guess one concern I do have—I normally use some independent supermarkets to do my shopping—is that if they do have a stockpile of bags that will not comply post 1 November, are there any avenues through which they can dispose of them legally and without too much cost and without too much harm to the environment? That is certainly something that I think needs to be considered.

Also I note that in terms of the legislation it does not apply to the bags where people invariably place their fruit and vegetables—the small plastic bags. It is an interesting point because just recently I had the pleasure to be at Traralgon College where the year 8 students were running an entrepreneurial program. One of the issues that they were trying to deal with or provide solutions to was this very issue of how we find other options rather than using plastic bags for fruit and vegetables in supermarkets. I know the students involved in that came up against some real challenges, and that, particularly talking to the major supermarket retailers, it was a really difficult conundrum. One would have to be cynical in suggesting that it may be a cost issue more than an environment issue when implementing any new strategy. Hopefully into the future and post this legislation being passed we do find new measures and we do find solutions for plastic bags that are used for fruit and vegetables and we find better solutions like we are finding with this at the moment.

In terms of the National Retail Association, as I understand it, they are going to be rolling out an educational program for all retailers. Again, it is important from a rural and regional perspective that all of those who fall under the banner of convenience stores—fish and chip shops, petrol stations, supermarkets, fashion shops et cetera—are across this legislation in detail by making sure that a strong marketing campaign is in place to ensure that those businesses and indeed their consumers are acutely aware of these new laws that are in place.

I will not take too much more time other than to say this is a sensible piece of legislation. Abolishing plastic shopping bags of this particular nature is a sensible thing to do. I know there is not too much time before the legislation is enacted, so it is important that we as a community, as businesses and as shoppers know the rules when they come into place. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms HALL (Footscray) (17:05): I am very pleased today to speak in support of the Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2019. I strongly support this bill, introducing a ban on all single-use lightweight plastic shopping bags with a thickness of 35 microns or less, including degradable, biodegradable and compostable bags. Plastic and microplastics are a huge threat to our environment and to our wildlife, and this includes the degradable, biodegradable and compostable bags. I spent Clean Up Australia Day this year in March in a kayak on the Maribyrnong River. Even though it was a beautiful sunny day spent with passionate and committed local residents cleaning up the river, I could not completely enjoy it because I was horrified. We were there to clean up the river, and on that day alone we collected nearly 300 kilograms of rubbish, most of it plastic waste, including single-use plastic bags.

There are many groups involved in reducing plastic waste in the electorate of Footscray, and I would like to begin my contribution by acknowledging those groups and thanking them for everything they do each and every day to reduce plastic waste in our community. The Footscray Rubbish Runners are a terrific group of people who get out for a run—I think it is monthly. They come together from across Footscray, they run on a different route each time they get together and they collect rubbish. I would also like to acknowledge the Footscray Riverside Action Group, who for many years now have been strong advocates for cleaning up the Maribyrnong River and collecting plastic waste in particular.

There are many alternatives to single-use plastic bags, including boomerang bags. These are re-usable cloth bags made out of recycled fabrics by volunteers who get together at neighbourhood houses and community centres to make them, and then they distribute them to retailers within the Footscray electorate for people to use when they forget their plastic bags at the supermarket. I would like to acknowledge two groups that make these bags: the Maribyrnong Boomerang Bags and the Braybrook community centre. Thank you for everything you do in our community to reduce reliance on plastic bags.

But of course the government has a very important role, and this bill is an important milestone in protecting our natural resources and public amenity. This bill will apply to bags provided at retail outlets, including supermarkets, fast-food outlets, convenience stores, service stations and fashion boutiques. We talk a lot about corporate responsibility, especially regarding the environment and this planet we share, and this ban prevents retailers from providing shoppers with a plastic bag that has been banned. It will also prevent retailers, wholesalers and manufacturers from providing false or misleading information about the composition of a banned plastic bag. We have worked closely with the Victorian business and consumer communities, and we have studied other states where similar bans have been implemented. This has allowed us to design a ban that is nationally consistent for the benefit of suppliers and retailers and will produce excellent outcomes for Victoria.

Since March this year the National Retail Association has been engaging with retailers to help prepare them for this transition. Our community consultation has been extensive and shaped our goals and time lines accordingly. The three-month public consultation attracted an overwhelming response of more than 8000 individual submissions, and more than 96 per cent of those were supporting a ban. Victoria has spoken and we have listened. Seventy-six per cent of Victorians already take re-usable bags with them when they go shopping, and to any residents of Footscray who would like to collect a re-usable bag, if you are on the way to the Footscray market, please drop by my office and collect a re-usable bag that you can take with you.

Because so many Victorians are taking re-usable bags to the shops with them, we may not notice the ban when it is implemented, but we will notice it when we look at our waterways and see the improvements to our wildlife, because the truth is we use a lot of plastic bags. Australians have used up to 10 million plastic bags a day, or 4 billion every year. Approximately 150 million of these end up in our oceans and our waterways, including my community's treasured Maribyrnong River, contributing an estimated 8 million tonnes of plastic dumped into the ocean each year. This plastic does not just go away; it usually degrades into microplastics, creating further pollution—pollution that is harder to collect—or is eaten by unsuspecting wildlife. Biodegradable bags are not exempt from these problems, and compostable bags only break down in specific conditions. They are not the solution either. To reduce the impact of plastic waste throughout Victoria we just have to use less plastic.

We have to think about our actions both as individuals and as a government, and the recycled plastic sleepers used by Metro Trains Melbourne and V/Line trains is an excellent example of doing just that. The sleepers are made out of polystyrene and agricultural plastic waste that would otherwise go to landfill, including cotton bale wrap and vineyard covers. The environmental benefits do not end there. These sleepers require significantly less energy to manufacture compared to timber, concrete or steel alternatives. They are made from an existing and durable resource that would otherwise go to waste, and they can be recycled at the end of their life span. This prevents the further extraction of oil, which is essential to the production of most plastics, which are only used once. This is a fantastic example of the circular economy working well, and I look forward to the government releasing its policy soon on the circular economy. I am very proud that this government has supported this program with railway sleepers, investing \$630 000 to support this fantastic initiative.

The plastic bag ban will reduce plastic pollution, build awareness of the issue and encourage Victorians to make re-usable shopping bags a regular part of life. Within Footscray I have recently met with representatives of an organisation called PlaSTEAMed, another Victorian company looking to revolutionise the way we think about and use plastics. PlaSTEAMed is setting up a single-use plastics

recycling project starting at Footscray City Primary School, where people will be able to bring along plastic bottles, such as water bottles, and they will go through the recycling process, essentially being melted down and converted into something that can be re-used by the school community—for example, in 3D printing. This is a great way that our community is demonstrating leadership, and I am very proud to be part of a government that is supporting this kind of leadership and innovation in its policies.

Whether it is as individuals or as a government, we must do whatever we can and play whatever role we can to protect our environment and our natural resources. Even an action as simple as remembering to take your canvas bag to the supermarket can have a flow-on effect of incalculable measure. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (17:14): I rise to make a contribution on this important piece of legislation. We are all aware of this issue. I think it has been on our agendas for a very long time, in particular out in our communities and clearly at a government level. I believe there is a strong desire in the broader community to deal with the issue of plastic bags in our environment. This bill will prohibit the provision of certain plastic bags by retailers and false and misleading information relating to plastic bags, and it will also make a range of other consequential amendments to the main act.

It is worth noting the definition of ‘banned plastic bag’, as set out in clause 4 of the bill. This term means a bag, other than an exempt plastic bag, with handles, and that comprises, either wholly or in part, plastic, whether or not that plastic is biodegradable, degradable or compostable and has a thickness of 35 micrometres or less at any part of the bag. The definition includes biodegradable, degradable and compostable bags, but the inclusion of these bags is not to limit the scope but rather to avoid the sort of confusion that is likely to occur otherwise. The definition allows for specific types of bags to be prescribed as banned plastic bags where a need for certainty might arise in the future.

Plastic has become an indispensable part of our modern-day life. We rely on it in so many ways. Obviously shopping is one of those very obvious activities where we have been provided with plastic bags for our own convenience for so many years. We have heard many accounts of how people have gradually changed their behaviour. The kitchen is just another place where the use of plastic is so prevalent, whether it be our garbage bags, our compost bags or our Glad wrap to cover and help preserve food or to wrap lunches.

It is interesting to reflect on how humans can change their behaviour. We have seen how effective campaigns can be to change people’s behaviour. That has been extraordinarily evident with the Quit campaign. The banning of plastic bags has been something discussed for many years and has been a long time coming to Victoria. This is particularly so when one considers that they banned plastic bags in Bangladesh some 25 years ago. Other states and territories are also on board.

So how are people coping with the gradual removal? And how will they cope with the sudden removal when this legislation is enacted? One of the things that I have noticed over the years is that people are certainly bringing their own bags in large numbers to the supermarket. When you walk through a supermarket car park and look in the back seats of people’s cars, or indeed just about anywhere, there are supermarket bags tucked on the back seat or behind the front seats. I think people are becoming very aware of the need to be ready for that quick stop or the big supermarket shop.

Community groups in my electorate for several years have been selling Boomerang Bags. I have to say that I thought they were peculiar to my electorate, but they are everywhere, very clearly, and for good reason. Community groups have been engaged in making them for a long time. They are free to pick up at a lot of independent supermarkets. The very name of them suggests that you are meant to take them back, but they are readily available to you.

Just last week in our local newspaper there was an article about a young woman who has opened the first zero waste shop in Shepparton. Ms Kelly Dreyer has been passionate for a long time about the

issue of dealing with waste. She has three young children, and she was noticing just how much plastic was being used in her home. Having just recently opened the store she said she was delighted to see the number of people who are coming into the shop with their own jars, their own containers, to purchase food in bulk—food such as flowers, grains, nuts, seeds, teas, herbs spices and even breakfast cereals. People actually want better ways to do things, to manage the environmental challenges, and businesses such as these are really grasping the opportunity to tune into what people are looking for and to help them find a more environmentally friendly way of doing business.

We are told that this bill represents just one in a suite of proposals that the government is working on to reduce plastic pollution and move towards a more circular economy to deal with waste and encourage re-use and recovery of product. I think we have all seen some great stories, including the one I saw on television the other day where they are making railway sleepers in Mildura from plastic by-products. Those sorts of initiatives are out there, and it is great to see people wanting to adopt them. We had a large farm area covered in tyres at Numurkah over the course of the last few years, and it is only this year that all those tyres have been removed. Of course they present an opportunity for significant recycling in the making of other products.

We have been very slow, I think, in Australia to face the challenges of recycling. I recently felt quite ashamed when I was looking on television and saw an Indonesian village worker burning plastic, drawing it from a bale of disgusting rubbish that we in Australia had exported to that country. So we have not dealt with our own problem. We have been exporting it for years, and we have not even been doing that well. I think China has brought home to us very clearly recently, by stopping the import of our rubbish, the fact that we could not even be bothered to separate it satisfactorily. We could not be bothered to make sure that our rubbish was not contaminated with product that would prevent it being recycled. So we have really been blindsided by this issue, and we are now having to face a situation that is really critical out there in our communities. We are finding ourselves truly and literally in a mess.

In Shepparton at our home properties we have three garbage bins. This enables us to separate recyclables, green waste and rubbish. It has been an interesting journey. Greater Shepparton City Council introduced this several years ago to encourage that separation of waste product, and it was very successful. Of course they, like everyone, are faced with the issues around what we are going to do with our waste product at the moment, but that has led to people becoming much more aware. I know that people have become very engaged in separating their recyclables into the blue and their others into the green. Many now have very little rubbish in their actual rubbish bin, so I think that is a very pleasing outcome.

Waste and plastics in our waterways, we all know—and I have heard many of the other members speak about this—is a shocking problem. Out in my electorate it is similarly one, because we have two major rivers and various creeks. Of course people who are very dedicated to looking after them are constantly raising issues with me about the rubbish and waste that they find in our rivers. We know that causes a lot of damage to wildlife in our river systems and ultimately in the sea.

Several years ago I took a trip up to northern Queensland, a camping trip, and had a camp set up near Chilli Beach. This is a magnificent stretch of beach in northern Queensland, and when I walked out onto it I was horrified to see the amount of rubbish that had been deposited there all up and down the beach by passing boats and ships which were just disposing of their rubbish by throwing it overboard. A pristine, beautiful beach in northern Queensland was effectively a rubbish dump, and people were going back down with bags wanting to clean it up because they were truly horrified to see that such a thing could happen in such a remote place.

We need to address the issue of refunds on bottles and cans. I was listening to ABC radio in Albury just the other day, and apparently it is an offence for people in Victoria to take their cans and bottles over the border and collect refunds there, which sounds like a pretty extraordinary situation. It is best that there is a national approach to it, and the sooner the better.

I think we are now acutely aware that our environment is delicate and it is precious and that we have got to stop trashing it. We have been doing it for years, and it really must stop. I believe there is great support for a change of behaviour and for innovation in this area. I note that from the consultations that were undertaken in relation to this bill the government says that so many widely supported it, whether it be industry groups, environmental groups, consumers, local government or others. The appetite is certainly there. This is a start, but there is so much more to be done. I am pleased to support the bill before the house.

Mr McGuire (Broadmeadows) (17:24): Australia must fast-track a circular economy. Turning waste into energy is critical, and the sooner we are able to deliver on this result, the better it will be to protect our communities from health risks, improve the environment and, hopefully as well, cut energy costs. This is a particularly crucial issue to my constituents. There have been fires in waste stockpiles in Coolaroo and Campbellfield. If you remember the Coolaroo fire of two years ago, it burnt for almost two weeks and sent toxic smoke plumes right across Melbourne—as far as St Kilda on some reports. We are now in a situation where China has forced this to a crisis point by their cutbacks to importing our waste. This is the issue that we are confronting.

The Andrews Labor government has taken a strong position to try and address these matters through the minister and also in the Parliament with an inquiry. It was really good to see that at the COAG meeting there was a coordinated approach and a united strategy for Australia to work towards banning recyclable waste being exported overseas. The ban, while it will not be immediate, will include all levels of government giving their environment ministers the role of figuring out a time frame for plastics, paper, metals and glass to be taken out of the broader waste system. This is a good national initiative and a good collaboration. I am sure the Australian public are delighted to see that we have this approach.

Because of the significance of this issue, particularly to my constituents, I have been looking internationally at what is the world's best practice, what the options are that we have and particularly how technology can actually drive these initiatives. If you have a look at what they have done in Copenhagen, they have a giant incinerator there, and they are actually importing waste from the UK. Their argument, which will obviously have to be put to the test to make sure it stands up to scientific scrutiny, is that the steam that is emitted from this giant incinerator actually has less pollutants than the ambient air around Copenhagen.

If this can be proven and the science stacks up, I think that this is potentially at least one piece of technology that we could look at—as I said, there will be others from other places internationally as well—or examine and see whether we can actually turn this around and say, 'Okay, instead of the waste being a liability, can this be turned into an asset, and can we actually then look at how we can harness the waste into energy and use it in that way? Do we have the ability to actually do that?'. If you have a look at what Copenhagen is trying to do, by 2025 this once grimy industrial city is aiming to be net carbon-neutral, meaning that it plans to generate more renewable energy than it consumes dirty energy. This is what they are attempting to do.

There was an interesting article in the *New York Times* earlier this year about why this matters. It goes to the issue that half of humanity now lives in cities and the vast share of planet-warming gases comes from cities, so the big fixes for climate change need to come from cities too. They are both a problem and a potential source of solutions. This is now where Australia is, because of the sets of circumstances beyond our control with what has happened with China and other countries saying they do not want to take our waste anymore. Can we turn adversity into an opportunity? Can we look at what needs to be done and how we deliver it? Of course this will have to happen over a long period of time—there will be short, medium and long-term strategies—but in the case of Copenhagen, which I do want to cite because I think it is worth examining, what they are trying to do is change people's behaviour, which is also being addressed in this bill, from how people get around to how they heat their homes and how they treat their rubbish.

The city has already cut its emissions by 42 per cent from 2005 levels, mainly by moving away from using fossil fuels to generate heat and electricity. This is the critical point. If we can actually say, 'Okay, we have all these councils; we have this waste. They are stuck trying to work out what happens if a company fails, closes its doors or faces a punitive response for being outside the law. What happens then? Can we look at how to best convert waste to energy?'. I think this is a model worth examining. I have actually scrutinised this, and we need to see the science to make sure that it stacks up and it is bulletproof. I just think that this is at least one example, and I know there are others internationally. The model would be to look at what is world's best practice, what is fit for our purposes and what can be adapted. But it is an issue that concerns all of us, and I think that that is the critical point that needs to be addressed. If we have a look at this bill before the Parliament, this is another piece of legislation in a suite of reforms that is being put forward to address this ongoing problem.

We know that in Victoria the community supports action to cut out what has now been called the 'plastic addiction'. During the three-month public consultation period the government received more than 8000 individual responses in overwhelming support of banning plastic bags. The Victorian community wants to see decisive action to reduce plastic pollution, and that is what this bill, as yet another piece of legislation in a whole suite of reforms, delivers. Seventy-six per cent of Victorians are already taking bags when shopping, so the change and the socialisation of this is occurring. That is positive. To put it into perspective, in the past Australians have used up to 10 million plastic bags every day. That is an extraordinary figure—that is 4 billion every year. We are creatures of habit. You can get into these habits. You just put your hand in the cupboard for the plastic bag, or you go and do the shopping and pull it off to wrap up things that do not even need it. Then that has a domino effect, and that is the behaviour we are trying to address.

About 150 million plastic bags end up in our oceans and waterways, contributing to an estimated 8 million tonnes of plastic dumped into the ocean every year. This is unsustainable. Although the plastic is lightweight and low cost, it does not go away. It breaks into pieces and ends up in landfill or as litter and can cause long-term harm to the environment and wildlife. That is the chain reaction. How do we intervene? How do we address custom and practice? How do we switch to preventative action? How do we then address what people do with their waste? Then, longer term, can we have a strategy that turns that into energy, and can that be harnessed? Wouldn't it be great to have cuts to energy bills for communities, particularly those where we are trying to bring the industries back? If we could get a coordinated strategy on that, I think it would be in the public interest. It would be good for the environment, it would help climate change issues, it would address the personal issue of feeling at least some satisfaction that the way we manage this is in the public interest and in the national interest and it could hopefully reduce the cost of power. I think that would really deliver the circular economy argument and help people so that their change of behaviour delivers a benefit to all of those areas: the environment, our personal lives and the cost of living. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr HALSE (Ringwood) (17:34): It is a delight to be back in this chamber today after a few weeks off and to hear the fine contributions of the members in this chamber. There have been a number of fine contributions from both sides of the house and one from the member for Broadmeadows just then.

I too have the issue that the member for Lara indicated, with a range of re-usable plastic bags that seem to sit in the back of my automobile. I am always in search of those. I would like to also note the contribution of the member for Footscray and the emphasis on the community's desire to see this piece of legislation, this good piece of public policy, turned into law. So I rise to speak on this bill, the Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2019, which will introduce a ban on all single-use lightweight plastic shopping bags with a thickness of 35 microns or less, as my colleagues have noted.

This is a fantastic initiative, and it will go a long way towards reducing our overall plastic waste. I am sad to say it, but plastic pollution has become a global epidemic. As others have noted today the *National Geographic* magazine reported in June 2018 that of all the plastic ever produced on the planet, over 90 per cent has never been recycled. That is an alarming statistic. Every year thousands

of tonnes of that unrecycled plastic waste enters our aquatic ecosystems, choking marine life, affecting our oceans and creating environmental catastrophes like the Pacific trash vortex. This is a natural disaster that alone should be cause for a global emergency.

The best scientific estimates of this issue suggest that the Pacific trash vortex covers an area, astonishingly, of somewhere between 700 000 square kilometres and 15 million square kilometres. That would mean that this largely plastic-filled mass could potentially be nearly the size of the state of Russia. It is one pelagic concentration of plastic and chemical sludge. While that single blight on a global scale should be cause for concern, it is a metaphorical drop in the ocean of plastic waste, with an estimated 5 trillion plastic pieces circulating in our global waterways collectively weighing over 250 000 tonnes.

Recently the United Nations Ocean Conference has estimated that the oceans might contain more weight in plastic than fish by the year 2050. Again this is an alarming projection. While we are not the only contributors to this looming ecological disaster, our nation and our state has certainly been contributing to this overall problem. There is now approximately 65 kilograms of plastic for every Australian.

It is not all bad. After all, plastics do form an essential part of our life and are essential to a number of everyday items in packaging and transport and the health care, construction and electronics industries. However, the same does not apply to single-use plastic bags. Even bags that are biodegradable, as my colleagues have noted, will only break down in certain composting conditions. They take a very long time to break down.

The harm caused by plastic bags to ocean marine life, to local ecosystems, to waterways and to native flora and fauna can be enormous. Indeed when plastics do break down via photo-degeneration, microplastics and other harmful chemicals are increasingly entering our food chains, and this is something that is particularly concerning. Given that plastic waste represents around 10 per cent of all waste disposed of to landfill in Victoria and a large amount of plastic comes from these single-use plastic bags, this bill will go a long way towards reducing our overall waste footprint.

This bill is another example of the Andrews Labor government delivering positive outcomes for Victoria's natural environments and ecosystems. The ban will remove single-use plastic bags from retail outlets like supermarkets, fashion boutiques, fast-food outlets, convenience stores and service stations. It also prohibits retailers, wholesalers and manufacturers from providing false or misleading information about the composition of a banned plastic bag.

But this has not been a top-down process or a top-down decision. The state government has worked closely with key stakeholders, retailers and suppliers to inform them, to design this policy and to give them time for its implementation. The National Retail Association has worked hard to support thousands of small to medium businesses across Victoria to plan for and adapt to this important change. We have also listened to the Victorian people, and my colleagues have cited statistics about the support for this in the wider community. Victorians have made their overwhelming support of this ban known to this government and to local MPs, and in fact in the district of Ringwood we have had significant support for this piece of legislation. Not only have we listened to the Victorian people, but we have also gone through a period of consultation and received more than 8000 individual responses. Again an overwhelming number of those responses support the banning of plastic bags. This vocal support is consistent with consumer behaviour as we seek to reduce our waste and as we seek to use re-usable bags and potentially to use no bags as we shop, as we know that 76 per cent of Victorians are already taking re-usable bags to the shops. In fact many MPs in this chamber have bags with their names and faces all over them.

This local support is consistent with consumer behaviour, and it makes this project a great piece of public policy. It is good for government, it is good for local businesses, it is good for consumers and it is good for our planet; in fact there is very little it is not good for. It is a smart reform, and I do

commend this bill to the house. I would like to say to those in Ringwood that have lobbied me so significantly on this issue that it is good that this bill today is before the chamber and that I look forward to getting to Ringwood Lake soon again to do our annual Ringwood Lake plastic bag clean-up.

Mr CHEESEMAM (South Barwon) (17:43): It is with some pleasure that I rise today to speak on the Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2019. I would like to put this bill into the context of the journey that we as a society have undertaken for the last 20 years. I can strongly recall the early efforts of the Bracks Labor government that was elected in 1999. At that point in time I was fortunate to be a councillor with the City of Ballarat and indeed was fortunate to be a director of the Central Highlands waste management group.

A network of these groups was set up by the Victorian government in partnership with local government throughout Victoria to better manage our waste management system, right from educating and informing the community about how we as a society should deal with waste to how we manage our landfills and how we of course implement a sustainable waste management program. In the time I was on that body as a councillor representing the City of Ballarat we introduced initially the two-lid system, where we had a general waste bin and certainly in the context of the City of Ballarat the yellow-lid bin, which was where we would dispose of our recyclables, whether that be aluminium cans, plastic, glass, cardboard or the like.

The journey that our communities in that period went through, I think, was remarkable. There was initially resistance, but as society became informed of the facts people very quickly embraced that system. Later on, and I cannot recall the precise year, a third bin was introduced in our region, and I am pretty confident in most other local government regions, to deal with vegetation—so our kitchen scraps, our garden scraps and the like—which would then be composted and often sold back to communities as topsoil and the like. That was a fantastic journey. It was pleasing to see the leadership of the state Labor government in implementing those arrangements in partnership with our local government bodies.

Having said that, some 20 years later I suspect in many ways we have not implemented what we then called the three Rs—they were to reduce, to re-use and then as a last measure to recycle. I suspect we are still producing as much waste today per Australian as we were back then. Pleasingly, we of course are recycling our waste, but I do not think we have focused on that first R, which is to reduce. I think we have a longer journey to undertake. I think we have more reform that we need to implement to focus on that first R—the reduction R. This measure, I think, very much is an important step to that.

Like many people, and many people in this chamber, I have had the opportunity to travel to some remote parts of Australia, and I have been appalled at the amount of waste, particularly plastic waste, that I have seen in remote locations. The reality is that a lot of that plastic waste indeed will be on those beaches or in our oceans for an eon. We need to as a community, as a society, very much focus on reduction. If we get that right, then I think it makes the management of our waste system so much easier. I am sure all of us have seen reports in the media of whales that have washed up on beaches globally and unfortunately those magnificent mammals have consumed large volumes of plastic where they have unfortunately mistaken plastic bottles, plastic bags and the like as part of their food stream. We have seen reports of that. We have seen mammals washed up—magnificent whales that have consumed so much plastic that they no longer have the capacity to consume sufficient seafood.

I therefore very much support this amendment. I think it is a necessary amendment to begin the journey that we as a society need to undertake, which is the reduction of our reliance on plastics. I very much support the direction of the minister and the work that she has undertaken to better understand our waste management stream, to identify new uses for plastics, glass and the like, to create new products that we can use to help build our community and to do it in a way that is environmentally sustainable and that leads to better consumer behaviour. I think importantly that sends a very strong message to a very powerful lobby in our community, the business lobby, which has in many ways for a long time

resisted the modernisation of our waste management stream. They have not shown the leadership that I wish they had.

I must also note that we very much need in a very strong way to continue to lobby the commonwealth government. Most of the regulation that I think this country needs and most of the public policy that our society needs really needs to be driven by a commonwealth Parliament, by the commonwealth government, particularly in terms of working with our business sector to reduce the amount of waste that is produced for our society. I find it extraordinary that when I go to the supermarket often the only way I can buy a cucumber is wrapped in plastic. I think that is completely unnecessary. It is unwarranted, and that plastic wrapping will literally, if it is not disposed of appropriately or correctly, last in our environment, potentially doing untold harm, for eons. We very much need to make sure that we focus strongly over the next few years on reduction. I think the commonwealth needs to show more leadership on that. I am very pleased to say that I think society very much wants to push parliaments around Australia to show leadership and to implement reform so that we are far less dependent on and far less producing of waste.

Mr HAMER (Box Hill) (17:53): I also rise to speak on the Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2019. This is an important bill and one that delivers on our promise to ban lightweight single-use plastic bags across Victoria. I am delighted to speak on it today because the Box Hill community is deeply concerned about our environment and what we pass on to future generations.

This bill will implement a ban on plastic shopping bags across Victoria with a thickness of 35 microns or less. Importantly the ban includes bags that are biodegradable, degradable and compostable. This is an important part of the bill, because these bags still have a significant and adverse impact on the environment and components of these bags can persist in the natural environment for many years. And similar to other jurisdictions, the bill introduces two new offences to ensure compliance and a level playing field for affected businesses. The bill will implement a fine for retailers who provide a banned bag to consumers as well as a prohibition against suppliers of plastic bags from providing false or misleading information about the composition of a banned plastic bag or whether a bag is banned. The bill also contains minor technical corrections to the Environment Protection Amendment Act 2018. I welcome these changes because it will allow the comprehensive reforms passed by the previous Parliament to operate as intended.

Plastic bags have become part of our day-to-day lives. For many years there was an expectation on the part of consumers that groceries and other food products would be bagged for ease of transport. After their initial use the large majority of these bags would end up in the rubbish bin and eventually in landfill or be picked up by the wind and end up in local rivers or streams, where they would stay and stay.

Perhaps there is no better way to explain the problem than with a 40-year-old single-use bag from KFC. Volunteers from the Sunshine Coast Clean Up Divers group recently found a bag a little damaged but still recognisable after four decades. And that is the problem—plastic bags are disposable, they move easily and they simply do not go away. Whether they end up in the land or the ocean, they can persist for centuries.

In researching this bill I have sought to understand the science to explain how a plastic bag is made, how it degrades and why it is important that we try and reduce the number of plastic bags in circulation. As mentioned, this bill seeks to ban plastic shopping bags, including those which are degradable, biodegradable and compostable. Standard plastic bags are made from high-density polyethylene, a material that requires a considerable amount of non-renewable resources to produce, including oil and natural gas. Degradable bags are made from similar petrochemical-based materials to conventional plastic but with compounds added that cause them to disintegrate gradually in the presence of oxygen. Biodegradable bags are made from plant-based materials, such as corn and wheat starch, rather than petroleum. While consuming renewable resources, their use consumes resources that could otherwise be directed towards food production.

In addition to the material used in the manufacture of these products the production of plastic bags requires significant amounts of energy. According to an ABS report from 2004, around 0.48 megajoules of energy is consumed to make one high-density polyethylene singlet bag, including the energy content of the bag. To put this in context, the production of 1000 plastic bags consumes the same amount of energy as is required to drive a car between Melbourne and Ballarat.

While the production and manufacture of plastic bags has a significant impact on the environment, the primary challenge that this bill is seeking to address is the end-of-life-cycle cost of plastic bags to our environment. Even though polyethylene cannot biodegrade, it does break down when subject to ultraviolet radiation from the sun—a process known as photodegradation. When exposed to sunshine, polyethylene's polymer chains become brittle and crack, eventually turning what was a plastic bag into microplastics. These granules may never fully decompose, and some scientists fear that their build-up in marine and land environments may infiltrate and compromise every step in the food chain. A plastic bag might be gone in 100 years, but its environmental legacy may last forever.

Degradable bags are just as bad. A recent Senate inquiry into the threat of marine plastic pollution in Australia found that the degradable bag option is as bad for the environment as regular plastic bags. The main difference between degradable bags and regular bags is, as mentioned, the inclusion of additional compounds to speed up the degradation process. However, these bags still break down into microplastics.

Biodegradable plastics take three to six months to decompose fully. That is much quicker than their synthetic counterparts, which take several hundred years. Exactly how long a biodegradable bag takes to break down depends on various factors, such as temperature and the amount of moisture present. They often then degrade into a sludge of toxic chemicals. They also need certain conditions required for the bag to begin the biodegradation process. Firstly, temperatures need to reach 50 degrees Celsius. Secondly, the bag needs to be exposed to ultraviolet light. It is difficult to achieve these conditions in the ocean. If biodegradable bags are sent to landfill, they break down without oxygen to produce methane, a greenhouse gas with a warming capacity 21 times more powerful than carbon dioxide.

The environmental impact of plastic bag pollution, in both their undegraded and degraded states, is alarming. Australians used up to 10 million lightweight plastic bags every day, approximately 4 billion every year, yet they are used on average for just 12 minutes each. Of these, approximately 150 million end up in our oceans and waterways, contributing to an estimated 8 million tonnes of plastic dumped into the ocean every year.

A significant number of the 4 billion bags used end up in landfill, and around 10 million end up as litter, polluting our environment and endangering our wildlife. This long-overdue reform will address those significant challenges once and for all. It is clear that marine wildlife right across Australia is being affected, including the very foundation of our marine ecosystem. This bill will not solve all of the problems facing our marine life, but it is a strong start, and I commend the Andrews government and the minister for their boldness in introducing these reforms.

Given the boldness of these reforms and the potential impact to the business community, consultation is vital to make sure we get it right. The National Retail Association has been working closely with the government and its members to make sure there is full knowledge of the new requirements, including the prohibition against even selling a single-use bag, as many retailers currently do.

Having reviewed the amount of information that has been provided to the business community, I am confident that there is ample information available to ensure maximum compliance. To be sure, any retailer who may be found in breach of the new regulations, should this bill become law, would find little sympathy if they try to use ignorance as an excuse.

I welcome the important work that the business community has done to make sure this reform works from day one. And when we asked the community what they thought, through extensive consultation,

nearly 8000 Victorians responded. Their opinion was overwhelming: over 96 per cent of responses supported a ban on single-use plastic bags.

I very much doubt we could find near unanimous support on many issues, and that the issue before us today is one of them shows how important it is. We know the community has already shifted away from single-use plastic bags, with 76 per cent of Victorians taking a bag when they go shopping. That is important because a culture shift is needed by people of all ages to really make this ban work. As I said earlier, it was once the case that being provided with a plastic bag was merely a given. I am delighted that a culture shift has emerged, and I welcome this bill because it will further encourage that shift if passed.

I would like to again thank the Andrews government and the minister for their hard work in bringing these reforms to this place. It was no doubt a difficult task, and one that required much work with various stakeholders and members of our community. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (18:03): It gives me great pleasure to join this debate on the Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2019. I am really pleased that we are taking action. I am just so, so pleased that we are taking action. I live in a beautiful community called Diamond Creek, and it is based on the Diamond Creek, which is a tributary of our Yarra. I think it is a great shame when you look back at the colonising people that settled Melbourne for our purposes, displacing the traditional owners, and it was us that began turning the beautiful Birrarung into a drain, into a tip. It is really incumbent on us to turn that around in so many ways.

There has been action on the Yarra and its tributaries now for decades. We see the work in community groups and in friends groups—in the Yarra Riverkeeper Association—and so many people are more focused on the importance of our waterways. Of course what is in those waterways ends up in our beautiful Port Phillip Bay. This is the same for many other watercourses across Victoria and then of course our oceans across the planet.

There is something that makes me sad. I moved earlier this year to a townhouse right on the banks of the Diamond Creek. Most days I am really happy living right alongside there and seeing the great beauty, the birdlife, the trees and the various native animals that are around there and the respectful way that people treat the area, particularly people walking their dogs, respecting the fact that wildlife ought not be disturbed. But what does make me sad is that not enough people in the community pay attention to re-usable bags and single-use plastic bags and other plastic products like straws.

Close to the Diamond Creek where I live is the commercial centre of Diamond Creek, where we have our supermarkets and our takeaway food places. I commend the Coles supermarket because they have a plastic recycling opportunity there for people to go and return their single-use plastic bags. But really we have to get down to using less of them or not using these things at all.

I like to spend less time in the car because I really want to make less of an impact on the planet, so I use public transport whenever I can and I walk to the station. It makes me really sad when I see the amount of plastic bags and takeaway food containers—sadly, McDonald's is right next to the train station—around the train station, and between the train station and our beautiful creek there is just so much plastic packaging that I know ends up in our creek. We have a platypus in an urban creek; on the metropolitan train line we have this beautiful township that has a platypus in the creek. But we all need collectively to do more to raise people's awareness when they are shopping to actually think about those single-use plastic bags, think about straws and think about coffee cups.

I really want to acknowledge the work of Craig Reucassel and the team on ABC television, because I have to say that in my ignorance, until their *War on Waste* program, which I only became aware of it one day when I was walking up here to Parliament and they were filming their episode which talked about coffee cups, I did not know that coffee cups were not recyclable. I must say that I thought, 'I should be more educated than this; I am a legislator'. I was really appalled with myself because I think

most of us in here function and are fuelled on caffeine. So I made a pledge to myself that I was going to join Plastic Free July and that I was going to not use any more single-use coffee cups, because they are not, as I thought, recyclable because they have a plastic lining in them. You cannot put them in the recycling with the paper. I was thinking that it was only the plastic top that was creating the problem. Since that time—and it has been about two years—I have erred on about eight occasions and used a single-use coffee cup. Given that I am someone who has at least one each and every day of the week and of the year, I have made a difference. I think we all should start adding up those things that we can make a difference with.

When we moved to the property that we are living in now on the banks of the Diamond Creek we did not have a green bin. I thought, ‘Do we really need that big green bin?’. I discovered this magnificent product called a bokashi bin. We moved to the new place in January. The bokashi bin is about double the size of your normal green scraps bin that you would have in your kitchen, and it fits under our sink. We eat a lot of fruit and vegies in our family and we eat a lot of eggs—all of those things—but every single bit of food waste can go into the bokashi bin. It is a magnificent product. It gives you a grainy sort of leafy dry thing that you put in layers when you are putting the food in and it has a little tap at the bottom. You empty the tap every week or so; you put that in a bucket, dilute it with water and put it on your garden, and it is a magnificent fertiliser.

With all the food that we eat—we do eat out sometimes but we eat a lot of fresh food and vegies—we have had to empty that bokashi bin three times since we moved in, and previously we would have been putting the green bin out each week and putting in some vegie scraps. I am phobic about rodents, but we have managed to change our behaviour there.

I really want to commend the local community groups that are making a difference, particularly the bag groups that have worked in preparation for this change. All of the other speakers before me have talked about the details of this bill, so I thought I would just pat some people on the back in my community. Boomerang Bags Nillumbik was established a bit over two years ago, and I was really pleased to attend their launch in Hurstbridge. I want to thank the magnificent volunteers who on a weekly basis have been sewing re-usable bags ever since then. I want to thank the Hurstbridge and Districts Community Bendigo Bank for their sponsorship that has helped with the costs for this group. These volunteers have engaged schools, students and community groups in bag production. These bags are things of great beauty, and what else would you expect in creative and artistic Nillumbik!

Up in Whittlesea township they have also had a similar fabulous group of volunteers, and they actually let me come and hang out with them one afternoon. Some members here will know that I really love sewing and I like to upcycle bits and bobs. It is one of my little hobbies. I spent an afternoon sewing with a group of like-minded people, talking about how we can do things to reduce the waste in our planet and the damage to our environment, making sure that our waterways and our platypi and our fish and everything else are going to have a longer life and be the beautiful part of our environment that they need.

There is another product that we have used in our family. I see that the Minister for Public Transport is at the table and she knows that all our projects have begun using social enterprises. The Mernda rail project used Who Gives a Crap toilet paper. I have got to say our household has been using that for about three or four years. It is made by a social enterprise. It is made of recycled paper and they wrap it in paper. Try to buy those essentials that are not wrapped in plastic. We need to look around for those sorts of solutions, but it is possible. I have drawn inspiration from both my grandmothers who were farm women, who knew that you could not just throw things away because it would damage your environment, it would damage your food production. I want to commend everyone that has been involved in the development of this bill: the minister, her staff, the public servants, everyone else that has spoken on this bill—you have done a great job. We need to keep doing more. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr MAAS (Narre Warren South) (18:13): I too rise to speak on the Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2019. I would actually like to pick up on the comments that the member for Yan Yean made in relation to the bokashi bin. I too have recently changed my habits and have been composting food waste. It was actually at the behest of the local council, which offered an economic incentive to households in the community to enable that change of habit to occur, and it has been a very, very positive thing for my household and for the community. Changing habits is indeed what this bill is all about.

The bill delivers on the commitment which was made by the Andrews Labor government to introduce a ban on lightweight plastic shopping bags. The ban is one of many different initiatives supporting this government's agenda to reduce plastic pollution and to shift from a linear model of resource consumption to that of a circular economy of waste minimisation through re-use and recovery.

The *Recycling Industry Strategic Plan* sets the vision and the goals for kerbside recycling in Victoria, including reducing contamination in the kerbside recycling stream. Plastic bags are just one of the contaminants in kerbside recycling bins, and the ban will assist in addressing this particular challenge. The government is also committed to releasing a plastic pollution plan in 2019 and developing a circular economy policy for release in 2020.

In looking at overall objectives the bill is an important milestone in progressing the state's comprehensive long-term waste resource recovery and environment protection objectives. The bill introduces a ban on lightweight plastic shopping bags that has six primary aims: to encourage retailers and consumers to use re-usable shopping bags; to reduce plastic litter and the consequential negative impact on our environment, wildlife and amenity; to reduce the rate of contamination from plastic bags in kerbside recycling bins and improve sorting, reprocessing and the quality of recyclable packaging; to increase awareness of unnecessary problematic single-use plastic items and encourage the use of more sustainable products and packaging; to provide increased consistency for retailers, suppliers and consumers in line with plastic bag bans in other Australian jurisdictions; and, finally, to support global efforts to improve the productive use of finite resources, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and tackle the impacts of single-use plastics. The bill also rectifies some minor errors in the Environment Protection Amendment Act 2018, so that the amended Environment Protection Act 2017 can operate as was originally intended.

So we move to what the bill will do. The bill will implement a ban on lightweight plastic shopping bags throughout the state. It is an important milestone in tackling problematic plastics in our environment and will deliver positive outcomes for the environment, animal life and waste stream, as well as our public amenity. The ban will further encourage the greater uptake of re-usable bags and build on positive momentum that has been growing in our communities towards embracing more sustainable alternatives. In doing so this bill bans the provision of all lightweight plastic shopping bags made in whole or in part of plastic where any part of the bag has a thickness of 35 microns or less. The ban will include biodegradable, degradable and compostable plastic bags, as we know they have comparable impacts on the environment. The ban will result in significant behaviour change by preventing retailers from providing shoppers with a banned plastic bag. The ban also prohibits retailers, wholesalers and manufacturers from providing false or misleading information about the composition of a banned plastic bag or whether a bag is banned.

In introducing this bill the government has consulted widely and looked at what other jurisdictions have done at both national and global levels, and consultation is of course key. To ensure that a ban on lightweight plastic bags would result in a sustained reduction of plastic bag litter in Victoria the government consulted with the community and businesses rather than moving straight to the implementation of a ban. Through this process government learned, from retailers, consumers and other governments that have already implemented plastic bag bans, to develop a ban that is fair, effective and long-lasting.

A pre-ban survey of 284 small to medium-sized retailers, undertaken in February of this year by the National Retail Association, found that more than three in four retailers supported the ban and one in two retailers strongly supported the ban. That survey provided an important insight into target audiences within the community who warrant closer engagement to ensure they too make the necessary changes before the ban comes into effect.

In terms of the wider Victorian community, we know that they take the issue of plastic pollution very seriously. Our public consultation on plastic pollution, which was held back in 2018, received over 8000 submissions, more than any public consultation undertaken by the government in that year. Respondents expressed strong support for a ban on lightweight plastic shopping bags, with more than 96 per cent of submissions supporting a ban. So the key take-outs from that are that there is strong support for the banning of plastic bags, there is support for broader action to reduce other types of plastic pollution, there are benefits of national consistency in closing loopholes and there is a need for education on plastic bag use and other plastic pollution.

As I have said, we worked closely with the Victorian community and businesses during the development of this legislation. Our major retailers, who have already introduced single-use plastic bags, namely Coles and Woolworths, we know are very supportive of this ban on plastic bags. Some 70 per cent of Coles customers now bring their own re-usable bags every time they shop, demonstrating a very clear change in behaviour. In terms of Woolworths, they have said that one year after they phased out single-use plastic bags it is clear that Australians have formed new habits and embraced a vastly more sustainable way of shopping with re-usable bags.

So shifting Victoria to a more circular economy can reduce waste generation, increase re-use and recycling of resources and improve waste management. Our circular economy policy and action plan will provide clear policy direction on resource productivity in Victoria. It will consider how governments, businesses and households can all avoid waste, make better use of materials and resources, prolong the life of infrastructure and products, and increase re-use and recycling.

In terms of the application of the ban, the ban on selling or providing a banned plastic bag will apply to all retailers, including markets and online stores where the customer can collect the goods from the retail premises. The ban will also prohibit a retailer, wholesaler or manufacturer from providing or omitting information that the retailer, wholesaler or manufacturer knows or should reasonably know is false or misleading about the composition of a banned plastic bag, whether a bag is a banned plastic bag or whether a bag is an exempt plastic bag. The ban of course will come into effect from 1 November unless it is proclaimed earlier.

Finally, the government will be supporting retailers to implement this ban, and the government has engaged the National Retail Association to help retailers transition away from lightweight plastic bags. The 12-month engagement program focuses on in-store, face-to-face engagement with small-to-medium-sized businesses throughout Victoria, providing information about the ban as well as sustainable packaging alternatives.

This is a government that listens. It is a government that consults widely and enacts laws for the benefit of our community and that of future generations too. With the proposed banned plastic bags only being manufactured overseas the positive impact will also be felt in our transitioning economy, and on that basis I commend the bill to the house.

Mr BRAYNE (Nepean) (18:23): I am here to speak on the Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2019. This bill seeks to do a couple of things: teach environmental habits, create a more plastic-conscious population and see less plastic input into our oceans. These aims are achieved through legislating to introduce a ban on lightweight shopping bags.

Having lived on the Mornington Peninsula my entire life, I can tell you all that the plastic that is often used throughout Melbourne, the plastic bags often used throughout suburbs of our state, often ends up

along the shores of our beaches in Nepean. I regularly meet with people on the Mornington Peninsula who dedicate their own time, even last week when that wind was cruel and that rain was so harsh, to collecting the rubbish along the Dromana, Rosebud and Rye beaches. Josie Jones, Mornington Peninsula Citizen of the Year, is a super trooper at this, regularly traversing Dromana beach searching—but in reality not needing to search far—to collect rubbish. I have been with Josie to do this, as seen in the recent Monash University documentary *A Brayne in Parliament*, which you can watch on Facebook. The plastic bags make up one part of the plastic debris that washes up on our shores. There are bottles, bottle lids, cigarettes, straws—those bloody straws—and plenty of others.

Mechelle Cheers from Rye along with Sacha Guggenheimer and Josie also ran this year's Seaside Scavenge. This was a huge exercise in rubbish collection, with the kilograms of rubbish collected able to be converted into tokens for coffees, light snacks et cetera. Fortunately by the time I got down there the rubbish along the beach had largely been exhausted, so I walked along Point Nepean Road for about an hour and a half—unbelievable amounts of trash. I will never understand why people are just so careless when they come down to our Mornington Peninsula and think they can just throw trash out the window.

Lyn from Nurdles No More has also spoken to me multiple times about the topic of nurdles. Nurdles are small bits of plastic that are used to create milk bottles, plastic containers and multiple other plastic items. Regrettably these are often washed away from industrial factories. They end up in the water and usually end up on the beaches down on the peninsula. They are such small bits of plastic, which means fish and birds confuse them for bits of food. The peninsula is full of people who spend thousands of hours of their time picking up this plastic material that ends up on our beaches. This ban goes some way to addressing this monumental environmental challenge.

We know this ban will be difficult for some. I recall when the ban by the supermarkets came into effect. My friend Alex Gates, who formerly worked at Ritchies IGA in Mount Eliza, which is actually occasionally visited by Hugh Jackman, told me how some of the customers would abuse him over there being no plastic bags. Not Hugh Jackman—I am sure Hugh Jackman would be a big plastic bag hater. He would hate plastic bags. Please show respect to your local supermarket clerks, and we will show respect for our environment and our marine life by supporting this ban.

Perhaps one of the reservations might be how this is going to affect the retail industry, already under so much pressure. Notable is that the National Retail Association found that more than three in four retailers support the ban and one in two retailers strongly support the ban, because the members who make up this association also have to live with a pollution-filled world—and a pollution-filled world is typically bad for business.

I am so glad that this is a bipartisan bill. It should be on all political parties to support efforts to remove this mentality that we can use an item and then throw it away. When something is thrown away it is good to remind ourselves that there is no 'away'. There is one planet. Our future generations—my kids, your kids—will thank us for this legislation.

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (18:27): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

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

Council's agreement

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Kilkenny): I have received messages from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment Bill 2019 and the Essential Services Commission Amendment (Governance, Procedural and Administrative Improvements) Bill 2019 without amendment.

Business of the house

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (18:28): I move:

That the consideration of government business, orders of the day 2 and 3, be postponed until later this day.

Motion agreed to.

Motions

BUDGET PAPERS 2019–20

Debate resumed on motion of Mr DONNELLAN:

That this house takes note of the 2019–20 budget papers.

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (18:29): The budget was unable to address the long-awaited Shepparton bypass, because we are yet to see the business case, which has been in development now for two years. The federal government committed \$208 million to this project prior to the federal election in May, and last week the federal member for Nicholls recommitted these funds. It is long past time for the business case to be released so Greater Shepparton can be provided with the certainty that we need in relation to this major project. The pivotal part of the bypass is to get a connection from the Midland Highway at Mooroopna, a second river crossing and one that joins the Goulburn Valley Highway again as it travels north. One of the main reasons for this is that in our City of Greater Shepparton and also in Mooroopna we have a situation where we have B-doubles, huge trucks, thundering down our main streets as they travel east–west and north–south. This would provide the opportunity to get those trucks out of the major thoroughfare through our town. It raises safety issues and many others. It is a significant project that will really change the amenity of our community but also astronomically add to the economic value of our community by increasing the speed and ability for heavy transport to pass through our town.

Treasurer, your first term saw you invest generously in the Greater Shepparton region, and so many of those projects are currently rolling out. I ask you to build on this investment in the future.

Mr HAMER (Box Hill) (18:30): It gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak on the 2019–20 Victorian state budget. This is a budget that keeps the promises we made to the Victorian people. It is a budget that delivers a surplus and funds the projects that Victorians voted for and need. It is a budget that delivers record investments in infrastructure and core services that Victorians deserve, and it is a budget that delivers for all Victorians and, most importantly, a budget that delivers for the people of Box Hill.

Victoria is the engine room of the nation when it comes to jobs growth, with more than 470 000 jobs created since the Andrews Labor government was first elected. Our latest budget delivered the strongest surplus of all the states, and it keeps the promises we made to Victorians—funding the projects that Victorians voted for and need while cutting payroll taxes to help business. We will continue our unprecedented investment in health, education, roads, public transport and infrastructure

because it is not only what Victorians voted for but it helps create jobs. This is why Victoria has been named the top economic performer in the nation, relegating our northern neighbours to second place, in the most recent CommSec *State of the States* report. This result is driven by the Andrews Labor government's unprecedented infrastructure build and investment in the Victorian community.

Now, back in June I was all fired up and raring to go to make my contribution to this debate, but I am so glad that I waited, because not only can I talk about what the budget is going to deliver for the people of Victoria and the people of Box Hill, but now I can actually talk about what the budget is actually delivering for my community. For starters, let us take this government's \$6.6 billion commitment to fund the removal of further level crossings across the metropolitan area, taking the government's total commitment to 75 level crossing removals by 2025. The Level Crossing Removal Project is synonymous with getting on and removing level crossings that for years had led to tragic fatalities and serious injuries, contributed to road congestion and prevented additional train services from operating.

There are two level crossings in the Box Hill electorate—Union Road, Surrey Hills, and Mont Albert Road, Mont Albert—and both have their own stories to tell. At the Union Road level crossing two women were tragically killed in 2016 after their car became stuck between the boom gates in heavy traffic and was hit by an express train. While thankfully this has been the only incident resulting in a fatality, many residents have provided me with their stories of near misses and close shaves. At the Mont Albert level crossing the proximity of both Surrey Hills and Mont Albert stations, together with the presence of an express track, means that in the morning and evening peak road users can be stuck at the crossing for 5 to 10 minutes while as many as five or six trains pass through. Blocking a main east–west connection such as Mont Albert Road causes significant queuing not just on Mont Albert Road itself but through the local network.

Residents of the Box Hill electorate have been cursing these level crossings for years—generations even. The 1978–79 annual report of the Country Roads Board records the following:

In 1974 the Abolition of Level Crossings Committee comprising the Engineer in Chief, CRB, Chief Civil Engineer, Victorian Railways and Chief Engineer, Public Works Department, recommended that the Board be the co-ordinating and construction authority for a direct road connection from Warrigal Road to Union Road, eliminating the railway level crossing at Union Road, Surrey Hills.

This recommendation was based on the predicted traffic delays and accident potential at the level crossing. Due to local concerns, the board decided to prepare an environment effects statement and to re-examine the need for a road overpass of the railway. The report continued:

The investigations concluded that in view of the relatively short delays and good safety record at the existing level crossing in Union Road, the high cost and environmental effects of an overpass, and the fact that other road improvement alternatives ... could satisfactorily handle expected future traffic:

...

On Friday, 6th April, 1979, the Minister of Transport, the Hon Robert Maclellan, MLA, announced that the proposed elimination of the railway level crossing would not proceed in the light of the Board's further investigations ...

So while 40 years ago the Hamer government decided not to proceed with the level crossing removal at Union Road, I am glad that it will be a Hamer in the current government that will remove the Union Road level crossing. During the winter break geotechnical investigations at both these sites commenced, to help inform the planning of the design.

This year's budget also committed \$300 million to undertake detailed planning and prepare a business case for stage 1 of the Suburban Rail Loop. The Suburban Rail Loop is a transformational project that will change the way that we move around Melbourne and will change the way that we think about Melbourne—not just as a city with a strong central core, but one with multiple foci, each highly accessible and providing high-quality jobs close to where people live. The first stage of the project will link Melbourne's eastern and south-eastern suburbs. I look forward to being able to take the train

from my office to visit all my friends along the corridor—the member for Mordialloc, the member for Clarinda, the member for Oakleigh, the member for Mount Waverley and of course the member for Burwood. It was terrific to join the Premier and the Minister for Transport Infrastructure last month to get this project underway, with drilling getting started in the heart of Box Hill.

This budget also includes \$370 000 for planning works for the next stage of the strategic cycling corridor in the eastern suburbs, from Box Hill to Hawthorn, enabling me to head west to visit another of my good friends, the member for Hawthorn. Now, I am not sure how often the member for Hawthorn gets out on two wheels, but I cannot thank him enough for his advocacy for this project and his recognition of the importance of this project to improving cycling infrastructure in the eastern suburbs.

This project will connect with the Box Hill to Ringwood cycling path that is currently under construction. The section between Sagoe Lane and Middleborough Road is now open to cyclists and pedestrians. The new signals at Springvale Road at Nunawading station have been installed, and we are just waiting for the power to be connected for the signals to go live. The final section near Laburnum station is making great progress following recent meetings with council and cycle user groups. I am looking forward to this path being completed so I can ride all the way from my electorate office to that of another good friend, the member for Ringwood.

In terms of education, this year's budget delivers a \$1.8 billion investment in schools across the state. The most important one for me is the \$6.05 million that has been invested in Koonung Secondary College. This funding will see the demolition and rebuild of the main classroom wing at the school. Koonung Secondary College is a fantastic local school with an outstanding program and a cutting-edge curriculum, and it consistently produces excellent VCE results. A small amount of funding it received a few years ago was used to create new senior school STEM classrooms and a teaching kitchen, and these are a source of much pride for the school community. However, its main classroom buildings are in desperate need of an upgrade, and during the election campaign and in the six or so months since being elected, if there has been one common theme I have heard from the residents of Box Hill electorate it is this: 'When are you going to do something about Koonung?'. While this would be expected from staff, parents and students, this query also came from ex-staff, ex-students and former parents. Even staff and parents of students from other schools readily admitted that while they would like funding for their school, Koonung really needs it. In June the Deputy Premier and I visited the school to announce this significant investment, and the local community just cannot stop talking about what an important fillip this is to the school.

Another great initiative of this budget is the \$882 million of funding to deliver on the government's commitment to ensure every three-year-old has access to at least 5 hours per week of kindergarten. When children participate in high-quality early childhood education it lays strong foundations for their learning and social and emotional development. Research shows that children who attend at least two years of preschool are more likely to outperform their peers at age 15. My own children are just starting out on their education journey. The older child has just completed two years of kinder, and the younger one has just experienced his first six months of three-year-old kinder. The confidence that both of them show and that both have developed through experiencing the kinder program is simply astounding.

This budget is also investing in healthy smiles for our kids, beginning with the rollout of free dental care for Victorian students across our state. Oral disease is one of the most common and expensive diseases to treat, but it is also the most preventable. Across Australia a quarter of all children have untreated tooth decay. In Victoria dental conditions are the highest single cause of preventable hospitalisations for kids under 10. Tooth decay is over five times more prevalent than asthma among children. Establishing sound oral health care from an early age gives children the best chance of maintaining good oral health in adulthood. It keeps kids healthy and happy, and avoids a trip to the hospital emergency department when serious problems develop. The Smile Squad delivers on our commitment to invest \$321 million over four years to improve dental health for all Victorian primary and secondary public school students. The free Smile Squad will drive down big dental costs for

families, with bills expected to be slashed by \$400 each year for each child. It will also free up more than 100 000 places for adults in the public dental system each year, reducing wait times.

On Sunday I was delighted to have the Premier, Deputy Premier and Minister for Health brave the snow and icy conditions to join me at Box Hill North Primary School for the launch of the Andrews government's free dental care program. Can I pay particular credit to Kaye Albon, principal of Box Hill North Primary School, and to the parents and students who came out on a cold winter's day to help launch this fantastic program. To me, asking students to come to school in school uniform just so they could go to the dentist may not have been the greatest sales pitch, but come they did, and for those who watched the news on Sunday night, I am sure you would agree that the students did a magnificent job.

I will quickly finish on a number of other local community highlights that we have in the budget: two off-leash parks, one in Boroondara and one in the City of Whitehorse, that will provide much-needed space for our four-legged friends across the electorate; \$1 million for a Sikh community centre in Blackburn; and funding for important celebrations for the Greek community and for the Chinese New Year Festival, which is the biggest of its kind in Victoria. With all these projects, the budget delivers for Victoria and delivers for the Box Hill electorate. I commend the budget to the house.

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) (18:43): It gives me pleasure to rise to give a response to the budget papers. It is a few months after the budget itself, but nonetheless this is a great opportunity to talk about the budget and how it impacts upon the Morwell electorate and to say a little bit from a statewide perspective. I would describe the budget as a bit of a mixed bag. It is a little bit like Christmas time, when you get what you ask for in many cases but in some other cases you do not, and there are a few surprises along the way.

From a Victorian perspective, I guess, overall there are some concerns with regard to the increased and additional taxes that have been applied to many businesses and people within our community. Cost-of-living expenses are a significant issue for many, many businesses and people, and whilst I commend the government for their infrastructure investment across the state, which is pleasing to see, ultimately it comes at a cost. It is concerning to see the significant increases in costs, particularly around our public service, and at the same time seeing diminishing property revenue coming into government coffers. At some stage or some point in the future all these infrastructure projects, including public servants and others, are going to have to be paid for. That is just a concern that I flag more generally to this chamber this evening.

But I do want to focus a lot of my commentary on the Morwell electorate, and firstly, I will focus on some of the positives. I might say before I commence that I have been disappointed in the past with some budgets from this government, particularly two years ago when there was an extra \$252 million of taxes on Latrobe Valley power generators. That was a bad decision and something that we have really struggled to recover from, which I will talk about more in my contribution. Thankfully the budget in May did not target a specific industry or a specific region with high unemployment by increasing taxes.

Nonetheless, it is pleasing to see in the budget some planning money for a Latrobe Regional Hospital (LRH) upgrade. We have just basically completed stage 2A of the hospital, for which funding was provided under the former coalition government. To see the next stage of LRH commence, particularly through its planning stage, will be fantastic for the region. It is actually now, I think, the largest employer within Latrobe city, and that will grow and expand in the future. But from a patient point of view, having services locally whereby those requiring health services do not have to attend Melbourne clinics or seek professionals in Melbourne is really important. I commend the government for having that \$7 million of planning money to start with.

I might say in the same context—it is digressing slightly—Gippsland Rotary Centenary House is basically an accommodation facility and its support of people who are suffering from cancer by

enabling them to stay at Latrobe Regional Hospital while they undergo cancer treatment is a fantastic initiative, so just a cheerio and call-out to all associated with Gippsland Rotary Centenary House.

The reduction of payroll tax for regional businesses is certainly something that would be welcome to those that are eligible, and increasing the tax-free threshold to \$700 000 at least is a start for those businesses who have to pay payroll tax. It would be described, I guess, as an insidious tax by many businesses, but nonetheless it is good to see some improvement in that, particularly for regional businesses.

There is some investment in our schools. Churchill Primary School and Kosciuszko Street Primary School in Traralgon are fantastic schools, and they will benefit from those developments. While I am talking about schools, we still do not have any answers from the government with respect to Latrobe Special Developmental School. In last year's budget there was \$6 million allocated to the redevelopment of Traralgon College and Latrobe Special Developmental School. As you can appreciate, the \$6 million, while welcome, will not provide for the redevelopment of both of those schools. Latrobe Special Developmental School are very adamant that they need and want a standalone school. So from my point of view it was disappointing not to see additional money to accommodate and support Latrobe Special Developmental School with a standalone school into the future that is desperately needed.

It is pleasing to see some funding for sporting facilities such as the Traralgon basketball stadium, the Gippsland Plains rail trail, Traralgon City Soccer Club and the Traralgon tennis club, and while not necessarily in my electorate there is \$10.2 million towards the Hope Restart facility in Bairnsdale. This is an important facility and something that I have been calling for in the region for a long time. It is a residential facility for drug and alcohol rehabilitation. The facility is very important basically because east of Pakenham there is not a single bed to support and help people who are dealing with drug and alcohol addiction. And whilst it is not in the budget, I do note and commend the government—to a point, if I can say that—on their investment in a youth drug and alcohol residential facility in the Latrobe Valley. But unfortunately that is only confined to youth. Personally I would love to see that expanded to all ages. But nonetheless, it is a start, and I give the minister and the government credit for that.

I guess the things that are missing from the budget are disappointing. Before the budget was actually announced by the Treasurer of course we all had our little wish lists, and it was with some disappointment that I saw there was really no support for Latrobe city farmers. I appreciate the fact that we have had a lot of rain and people might not understand that and think, 'Oh well, it's rained and the drought's over', but the reality on the ground is far different. There are so many farmers in my community who are really doing it extremely tough. There are just appalling conditions. It is just as bare as inside the chamber here. There is no feed. The feed that is available is extraordinarily expensive. Farmers' health, mental health and economic wellbeing are really being put to the test.

The point I raise here is that I appreciate that the government has some drought support programs in place, but some of those programs are not accessible for Latrobe City Council-based farmers. I just do not get it. I know it is not just this current government, but to apply arbitrary lines across municipal boundaries I think is just wrong. You are either in drought or you are not. The issue I have is that a neighbour on one side of the road is eligible for certain supports and assistance, but the neighbour across the road, who is dealing with just the same conditions, is not. I think we really need to look at that and look at it seriously, because there are a number of farmers who are really struggling in the Latrobe City Council area.

Also, the farmers I talk to say to me that they have never seen the drought as bad, yet 10 years ago, under Premier Brumby at that time, we had municipal rate relief. Why isn't the same being applied now? It is really disappointing from my point of view, and on behalf of the farmers in my community, that those types of programs have not been initiated.

I note the Minister for Public Transport is at the table. She will enjoy me talking about V/Line services. From my perspective I know there are a lot of investments and upgrades that are happening on the line. Obviously the Gippsland commuters have had to contend with continual disruptions and delays, and that has meant enormous frustration for many commuters, particularly regular commuters. What I would like—again I am talking about a wish list here—is to make sure that our travel times are improved into the future. With the regional rail upgrades at the moment I suspect that that is not going to be the case. From a Gippsland point of view, when you see Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo receiving significant amounts of money for upgrades to improve their services and dedicated lines and the same not applying to Gippsland, that is really disappointing. Really, at the moment, when you look at it in detail, Gippsland commuters are paying more to travel fewer kilometres with inferior services. We really need to break that nexus.

There is some money across the Gippsland region for crisis accommodation, and that is really important. It is really a little bit unclear as to how that money might be spent. One of the biggest issues that is constantly coming through my office at the moment is the issue of homelessness. We have just gone through Homelessness Week, and I have observed in my office more and more people coming through who really need crisis accommodation. We need to continue to support those agencies who are helping in that space.

The budget is disappointing again from a Hazelwood Pondage point of view. We all know Hazelwood power station has closed. We have tried to get the government to commit to a feasibility study. That would not be a major cost. But at the moment that particular community asset is closed. It has been closed for a while. We have had 5000 signatures that I have tabled in this Parliament to try and have it reopened or, even before it is reopened, have a feasibility study. You have got groups and organisations like the Latrobe Valley Yacht Club and the Latrobe Valley Game Fishing Club. You have got the Sailability program that helps young people with a disability with sailing activities. You have got the Latrobe Valley powerboat club. You have got the Latrobe Valley Triathlon Club.

They are all stakeholders in that group, and they are basically being kicked off the site. Some of these groups and organisations have got nowhere to go. They are the stakeholders, but it is also from a business and community point of view that we are missing out. It just defies logic and belief that we just cannot get the government to commit to a feasibility study, which is a low minimum cost in the bigger scheme of things to understand what the issues are with the pondage and having it reopened. Engie say there are wall stability issues, but we say that as a community we need to explore every single option for having that unique body of water reopened for current and future generations to use.

In the budget itself there is not a lot about Latrobe Valley jobs. That is absolutely critical in our community. We know that since Hazelwood power station closed and the Carter Holt Harvey timber mill closed in Morwell two years ago, on the government's own statistics there are around 570 former workers and contractors who are currently employed in non-full-time positions or are actively looking for work—570. That tells you something about the necessity to come up with good ideas about creating jobs in our community.

What is disappointing is the fact that we have businesses in our community right now who want to grow, want to expand and want to create jobs but are unable to do so because of the bureaucratic mess that exists, particularly in the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. We have four quarries in my electorate—Matthews Quarries, Latrobe Valley Blue Metal, Latrobe Valley Sands and Maryvale Sand and Trading Supplies—who all want to grow and expand, who have all got limited life, who all provide material to infrastructure projects in this state and who have all tried to do their best to take the first step but have always put up with a stop sign in front of them. It is simply unbelievable. I raised this issue 12 months ago with the Treasurer, asking him to meet with some of these organisations, which he refused to do. I mean, the peak body is saying that unless we do something about this we will not only lose jobs in Victoria but we will be importing material from other states, and we cannot let that happen. These issues still sit here today, and it is simply not good enough.

Also we have approved projects that have already gone through the realm of local development, such as the Lake Narracan precinct project and the Morwell north-west development zone. One is an industrial zone; one is a future residential zone. They have been approved. They are sitting there ready to go, but we need help from the government to get infrastructure to site. At a minimal cost to the government we could start those developments tomorrow. That would create hundreds of jobs, build local infrastructure and improve the local economic outcome for the Latrobe Valley community tenfold if we were able to do that. There are programs that exist in other states, such as the Catalyst program that exists in Queensland, which the government here could adopt tomorrow to support such initiatives to get off the ground, but they continue to be blocked.

One of those particular projects, the Morwell north-west development, has been approved since 2011 and simply sits stagnant. We really need support now in getting water, sewerage and roads built to those particular developments so they can get off the ground, create local jobs, create local infrastructure and really give the Latrobe Valley economy a significant boost at the same time.

So I will finish where I started. This budget is a bit of a mixed bag. Hopefully some of those initiatives that I have proposed will be taken seriously.

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) (18:58): I am very pleased to rise in support of the 2019–20 Victorian budget and start my contribution, if not finish it. So this budget is great for the people of Victoria. It will certainly keep me busy as the Parliamentary Secretary for Road Infrastructure, and it continues to deliver for my electorate of Yuroke. Last term saw the Andrews Labor government start to catch up on all of the outstanding priorities in Yuroke after the four years of absolute neglect by the former Liberal government between 2010 and 2014, and I am thrilled that this government is continuing to provide the needed investment in my electorate in Melbourne's outer northern suburbs.

Yuroke is a rapidly growing electorate, and it is home to some of the fastest growing suburbs in the country. When I was first elected in 2014 there were slightly less than 44 000 voters. Last November that figure had increased to more than 58 000 voters, with a population of around 100 000 people. Residents celebrate our diversity and enjoy both established outer suburbs and some of our newer suburbs, where they are indeed our modern-day pioneers.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

ROCHESTER SECONDARY COLLEGE

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) (18:59): (876) My adjournment issue tonight is for the Minister for Education, and it concerns Rochester Secondary College, which is obviously in Rochester. I have been approached by a number of parents in Rochester who would like to see Rochester Secondary College become part of the Doctors in Secondary Schools program. If I look at the list of the schools in northern Victoria that are in that program, there are not any schools in the Campaspe shire that the Murray Primary Health Network actually services. The people of Rochester have raised this with me. Rochester is a town, like a lot of towns, where the challenge is to have enough doctors. They believe that the town and particularly the school students would benefit from having a doctor one day a week at their school as part of the Doctors in Secondary Schools program. It is something that is needed for the particular town of Rochester.

As I understand it, the school-based GP bulk-bills the consultations through Medicare, so there is not an issue of cost for the families that are involved but there is the opportunity for students to have the benefit of that doctor service while they are at school if they have got issues that they need to see a

doctor about. So I would urge the Minister for Education to look favourably at having Rochester Secondary College actually included in the doctors in schools program in the future.

DIGGERS REST PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr J BULL (Sunbury) (19:01): (877) My adjournment matter is for the dedicated and hardworking Minister for Education. The action I seek is that the minister visit my electorate to join me at Diggers Rest Primary School, a wonderful local school in my community. I would like the minister to see firsthand the work that has recently been completed at the school and discuss ways that the school could be improved even further.

Speaker, as you would very much be aware, Diggers Rest is a growing community in my electorate. Once a very small stop for miners on the way heading north, this great little community, tucked beside the Calder Freeway, is rapidly growing, with new families moving into the area each and every day. I am thrilled to see new families coming in, a new town centre on the way, an upgrade to the recreation reserve, significant improvements for the local footy club, with new lights, and an upgrade of the Stan Payne Reserve. Importantly the recreation reserve upgrade is now in the planning phase, and I am working with Melton City Council to see it delivered as soon as possible.

Currently Diggers Rest Primary School has many terrific facilities, but they are facilities that I think can be upgraded even further. Currently the enrolment is 285 students, with an anticipated growth rate to nearly 500 students by 2022—significant growth indeed. Recently I had the opportunity to meet with principal Rachelle Hedger and leading teacher Shaun Sims to discuss steps for the school to improve and ways the Andrews Labor government can improve the school even further.

I am really proud of our record investment in schools over the last five years. These developments are incredibly important, and I look forward to seeing the minister visit my electorate.

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR HEALTH, PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND RECREATION

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (19:03): (878) The matter I wish to raise is for the Minister for Education, and it relates to the distribution of politically inaccurate and offensive materials by the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation, known as ACHPER. The action that I seek is that the minister withdraw all funding from ACHPER.

Last month ACHPER distributed a package of school-assessed coursework, and the task included one sample exam claiming:

An example of an individual being persecuted for their religion could be the Arab families living in Israel who practise the Islam religion rather than the Jewish religion.

This offensive and completely inaccurate response was first noticed by a Mount Scopus college student whose family were born in Israel and were horrified by the outrageously false and misleading VCE exam materials. The principal of Mount Scopus Memorial College, Rabbi James Kennard, has raised this matter with ACHPER, but to date no apology has been forthcoming nor a clear explanation provided as to how such libellous and offensive materials were approved and circulated by ACHPER.

With a 59 per cent increase in anti-Semitic incidents in Australia in 2017–18 compared to the previous year, such materials merely act to heighten hostility towards the Jewish community, particularly when directed to the broader student body, who may not be informed as to the many complexities of Middle Eastern politics. I note in 2016 we had a similar anti-Semitic incident when the VCE authority had an outrageously misleading play depicting Israel as a blood-thirsty, evil war machine. These biased materials were once again clearly pushing a political agenda to VCE students.

I wrote to the minister about these issues about four weeks ago and received a response yesterday. Whilst the minister has acknowledged these materials are offensive and have no place in our schools, he was quick to distance himself from ACHPER, saying it is an independent body, and he expressed

concern about it. I have since been made aware that the Victorian Department of Education and Training is listed on its website as a funding partner of ACHPER, confirming that this organisation is financially supported by the Victorian state government. Therefore the action I am seeking is that the minister withdraw state government financial support until a written apology is received from ACHPER, until ACHPER advises what actions they have taken regarding the disseminated anti-Semitic, libellous materials and until they advise what clear steps they will be taking to ensure politically biased materials are not distributed under their name in the future.

IVANHOE ELECTORATE SHOPPING VILLAGES

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) (19:05): (879) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Small Business in the other place. I ask the Minister for Small Business to visit the Ivanhoe electorate in particular to meet with small businesses in my electorate. Ivanhoe is a place that is made up of a number of villages—Rosanna shopping village, East Ivanhoe shopping village, the Heidelberg traders, McLeod village, the Ivanhoe centre, the Ivanhoe village and of course the mighty mall in West Heidelberg. While the Northland mecca in the northern suburbs, in the Preston electorate, is not far from my electorate, my electorate is definitely made up of a range of shopping strips and village shopping strips, as you would well know, Speaker, being from the neighbouring electorate of Bundoora. There are a lot of family businesses and a lot of people that work very hard in the community. It is quite an interesting dynamic, particularly along the train line in my electorate, which services the six train stations that are effectively those village hubs, outside of the mall, along the train line. I think it would be really important if—this is the action I seek of course—the Minister for Small Business visits my electorate, meets with those small business trader associations and understands their different dynamics.

As I am sure the government ensures for many of its commitments, in my electorate the eggs are not all in one basket. They are spread across six or seven different communities, particularly around the train stations—outside of the mall—where a lot of small businesses and families are making a go of it and employing local people. I see that every day when I visit them. It is people from the local schools who are working in those shops, and it is local families. I am really keen to make sure that the minister has an understanding of the work that they are doing and how we can support them.

I want to commend Banyule City Council for its economic development work in investing in those local trader associations and also for the work that it does to support those businesses. It is quite unique, I think, in a community and an electorate such as mine to have six or seven shopping and trader villages supported by local residents. As a Rosanna resident using the Rosanna village very regularly, I see along that train line and around those six stations a pretty good indication that they are the community hubs and that that is where life is all happening in my community. I want to make sure that the small business minister is doing all we can as a government to support them in their work and that the people who live locally that employ local people are supported by local constituents in my electorate. I welcome a visit from the Minister for Small Business on these matters.

HOMELESSNESS POLICY

Ms VALLENCE (Evelyn) (19:08): (880) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Housing and Minister for Planning. The action I seek is for him to urgently intervene to clarify how section 64 of the Building Act 1993 is to be applied in relation to churches providing short-term shelter for homeless persons. I ask the minister to take action to allow churches to remain places of temporary shelter for the homeless. Victorian lives are depending on it.

A truly remarkable community volunteer organisation in my electorate of Evelyn called Stable One runs a winter night shelter with over 150 volunteers and eight participating churches that provide temporary refuge for homeless people locally during the cold winter months, providing nutritious meals, wash facilities, counselling and fellowship in a warm and safe environment. I have supported

Stable One for years and have seen firsthand the sheer commitment of volunteers in making their guests feel valued, ably led by the amazing Jenny Willetts and Trevor Ingamells.

However, Stable One has been dealt a serious blow by the mindless bureaucracy of this Labor government. After consulting with the Victorian Building Authority (VBA), local council staff have told Stable One that they will not issue temporary occupation permits for church buildings to house the homeless unless—and at major cost—they pay architects and draftspersons to draw up new plans for each individual church, submit countless policies and applications for review and extensively upgrade facilities, just to name a few requirements. This is despite these very same buildings being used to shelter the homeless for the last three years without any such requirements.

Minister, it seems these requirements are completely disproportionate and unnecessary to the services this charitable organisation is trying to provide to those who are the most vulnerable in our community. A night of shelter in a local church is by far a better option than being exposed to the elements in a local park, outside public toilets or in a car. Minister, I urge you to make clear the application of section 64 of the Building Act 1993, because this whole scenario is made worse by the homeless people in my electorate knowing that councils in other parts of Victoria are interpreting this section of the Building Act completely differently and issuing occupation permits to churches and volunteer groups without imposing such onerous requirements.

The Labor government and the VBA stand by and let people live in apartments and attend childcare services in buildings that are wrapped in combustible cladding but will not let churches in Evelyn provide shelter for the homeless. It is just another example of how this Labor government is failing on the serious challenges of homelessness.

Minister, when Stable One wrote to you in May you had a junior departmental officer respond with government propaganda that failed entirely to address the issues and their requests. Minister, it is time to stop hiding behind this bureaucracy. Make clear the application of section 64 of the Building Act, and enable the most vulnerable in our community to access these winter night shelters at these amazing local churches.

CRAIGIEBURN STATION CAR PARKING

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) (19:11): (881) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Public Transport, and the action I seek is for the minister to provide an update on the next steps to be taken in the delivery of 745 new parking spaces for Craigieburn commuters. The government's commitment to deliver these new spaces will significantly improve access to Craigieburn station and builds on the more than 150 spaces already delivered since late 2016. With community consultation completed late last year and the concept design released in April, many residents in my electorate are eager to learn more about the next steps in delivering this much-needed additional parking. I look forward to hearing from the minister and sharing her response with my community.

SOLAR HOMES PACKAGE

Dr READ (Brunswick) (19:12): (882) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change and Minister for Solar Homes, and the action I seek is a restructure of the Solar Homes program to enable greater reductions in greenhouse emissions by installing more solar panels more cost-effectively.

Average annual rainfall across Victoria has declined by 100 to 600 millimetres in the past 50 years. Bushfires are starting earlier in spring and burning later in autumn, and they are burning hotter. Droughts and fires are costing us dearly and will steadily erode state budgets in the years to come as temperatures rise. We face a climate emergency, yet we burn over a million tonnes of coal a week. We do not talk about it much, but that is creating about half of the state's greenhouse emissions.

The Labor government have trumpeted their Solar Homes program as their flagship response to climate change. We need renewable energy to replace coal power, so the Solar Homes program is

vital, but the community needs to see we are getting the greatest possible emission reductions for every dollar we spend. Losing community confidence in renewable energy and climate action will set us back for years, so it must not fail. The program stopped in April, resumed in July for three days and then in August subsidies ran out in under 2 hours. The government has a responsibility to future generations to get this right.

Industry groups say buyers are choosing to wait, putting installers out of work. Some installers have contacted me, saying they are laying off staff, and some are going out of business. The current ration of generous subsidies appears to be doing more harm than good to the industry and to have been inadvertently suppressing installations since April. Clearly there is a demand for solar panels and the government needs to respond to community demand for ambitious climate action. So bring forward some of the spending planned for future years, increase the number of rebates, and if it is too expensive, consider reducing the size of the rebates and/or tightening the means test. Or purchase some panels for schools and public housing as well, to create work and cut power bills for those who need it most.

It will cost money, but inaction will cost more. Think of the cost of doing too little, too late to fight global heating and think of the effects on farms, forests, fisheries, foreshores and future generations, and investing in the Solar Homes program sounds like more than a bargain; it sounds essential.

BALLARAT FORENSIC POLICE HUB

Ms ADDISON (Wendouree) (19:15): (883) I direct my adjournment matter to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and the action I seek is for the minister to join me in Winter Valley in the Wendouree electorate to inspect the new forensic hub and meet the highly trained staff helping to fight crime in our community. The new forensic lab is a great asset for Victoria. It is located in the Ballarat West emergency services precinct next to the \$8 million Ballarat West police complex and the \$5.8 million Lucas fire station that the minister opened earlier this year.

I look forward to inspecting the new state-of-the-art forensic facility, which will speed up forensic testing and help investigate crime faster in Ballarat and western Victoria. As a result of this new facility and breakthroughs in forensic technology, important scientific work will be completed closer to frontline police units. This is great news for our community, as the time it takes to get the evidence back to police and prosecutors in the region will be significantly reduced as we will no longer need to transport thousands of crime scene exhibits all the way to Melbourne to be examined.

I wish to thank the minister and the Andrews Labor government for investing \$11.6 million in Ballarat and Morwell to establish these vital regional forensics labs. I look forward to hearing a response from the minister and hope to see her in Ballarat very soon.

MELBA COLLEGE FORMER JUNIOR SCHOOL SITE

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) (19:17): (884) I rise today to draw to the attention of the Minister for Education the urgent need for more decisive action in moving the plans for the former Melba College Junior School campus on Croydon Road, Croydon, forward at a faster pace. The action I seek is for the minister to provide me with a briefing on the future plans for this site together with information and a time frame for the relocation of Croydon Community School to this site. For the last year and a half residents and community members have watched as vandals and squatters have desecrated the former Croydon High School-cum-Melba College junior school site. The Victorian School Building Authority, the VSBA, moved in after pressure from my office, boarding up the windows to try and reduce the vandalism. The action was no more than a bandaid approach and has not deterred the destruction of the vandals, as they are now pulling off the side panels from the lower sides of the vacant buildings and coming up into the former classrooms via the floorboards.

Neighbours have filmed the vandals as they continue to graffiti the site, and when they have approached they have been threatened personally as well as receiving threats to their personal property. Information relating to these vandals has been passed on to local police. However, the vandals know

there is nothing the local community can do about it so they continue to trespass and further damage the site. I am aware that the VSBA and the Department of Education and Training have entered into a shared-use agreement with Maroondah City Council for the use and management of the gymnasium, oval, bushland and outdoor playing surface. However, the physical handover of the keys has not taken place due to the significant amount of damage that has occurred to the gymnasium. My office wrote to the VSBA in July looking for a time frame on when the damage to the gym will be repaired and when the council can start using this space. This correspondence was passed on to the minister's office and I am still waiting on a response.

I am aware that the long-term use of the site is for the relocation of Croydon Community School. There is speculation that the existing site will be used for the relocation of the school, and there are conversations about the site being demolished and a new school being built. Neither of these options will be undertaken unless funding is allocated to the school, and based on the lack of any funding in this year's state budget, this will not be happening any time in the near future. The community is acutely aware that the longer the site remains vacant, the more damage is done and the greater expense is incurred by the state. I call on the minister to provide me with a full briefing on the detailed plans for this site so that I can continue to keep the deserving local residents of Croydon informed on this very important matter.

WOODMANS HILL SECONDARY COLLEGE

Ms SETTLE (Buninyong) (19:19): (885) The adjournment matter I raise is for the Minister for Education. The action that I seek is for the minister to visit a wonderful school in my electorate, Woodmans Hill Secondary College. Woodmans Hill has some of the finest teachers in the area, and most importantly they offer a student-centred education that ensures the students have a voice and feel a strong connection to their school.

The Andrews government is committed to seeing our children receive the best possible start in life, and nowhere is this more apparent than in our commitment to regional areas. Last year work commenced on upgrades to Woodmans Hill school worth \$6.2 million, funded by the Andrews Labor government. These upgrades include a new performing arts centre, which includes a 250-seat auditorium. There is also a cafe, a new home economics classroom as well as new science and technology buildings. These upgrades are welcomed by the community, who are glad to know that they have a government that cares about regional Victoria. Given the excitement around these upgrades and the positive impact that they will have for generations to come, I would request that the Minister for Education visit and inspect this wonderful school. I ask the minister to see firsthand the difference these upgrades have made to such an excellent school.

RESPONSES

Ms NEVILLE (Bellarine—Minister for Water, Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (19:21): I thank the member for Wendouree for raising a matter with me about the forensic hubs. Victoria really leads the country in terms of our forensic services. The Morwell and Ballarat hubs were major uplifts, as have been our mobile forensic vans which are now on the road. These are significant investments in our regional communities, and it absolutely is about saving police time but also helping our forensic services play a really critical role in solving and disrupting crime in Victoria and doing it much more quickly, being at hand in the local community. As the member pointed out, I opened the new fire station at Lucas right there in that hub. I also opened the Ballarat West police station. So not only will I be pleased to visit but perhaps the member and I could also officially open the forensic hub in Ballarat very, very soon.

A number of other members have raised a range of issues with ministers, and I will pass those issues on.

ADJOURNMENT

Tuesday, 13 August 2019

Legislative Assembly

2555

The SPEAKER: The house is now adjourned.

House adjourned 7.22 pm.