

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

THURSDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2020

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable KEN LAY, AO, APM

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Attorney-General, Minister for Workplace Safety and Minister for the Coordination of Justice and Community Safety: COVID-19	The Hon. J Hennessy, MP
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Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence and Minister for Women	The Hon. G Williams, MP
Minister for Planning and Minister for Housing.....	The Hon. RW Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary.....	Ms M Thomas, MP

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

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The Hon. CW BROOKS

Deputy Speaker

Ms JM EDWARDS

Acting Speakers

Ms Blandthorn, Mr J Bull, Mr Carbines, Mr Cheeseman, Ms Connolly, Ms Couzens, Ms Crugnale, Mr Dimopoulos, Mr Edbrooke, Mr Fregon, Ms Kilkenny, Mr McGuire, Ms Richards, Mr Richardson, Ms Settle, Ms Spence, Ms Suleyman, Mr Taylor 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
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Carroll, Mr Benjamin Alan	Niddrie	ALP	Pearson, Mr Daniel James	Essendon	ALP
Cheeseman, Mr Darren Leicester	South Barwon	ALP	Read, Dr Tim	Brunswick	Greens
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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	Melbourne	Greens
Donnellan, Mr Luke Anthony	Narre Warren North	ALP	Scott, Mr Robin David	Preston	ALP
Edbrooke, Mr Paul Andrew	Frankston	ALP	Settle, Ms Michaela	Buninyong	ALP
Edwards, Ms Janice Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Sheed, Ms Suzanna	Shepparton	Ind
Eren, Mr John Hamdi	Lara	ALP	Smith, Mr Ryan	Warrandyte	LP
Foley, Mr Martin Peter	Albert Park	ALP	Smith, Mr Timothy Colin	Kew	LP
Fowles, Mr Will	Burwood	ALP	Southwick, Mr David James	Caulfield	LP
Fregon, Mr Matt	Mount Waverley	ALP	Spence, Ms Rosalind Louise	Yuroke	ALP
Green, Ms Danielle Louise	Yan Yean	ALP	Staikos, Mr Nicholas	Bentleigh	ALP
Guy, Mr Matthew Jason	Bulleen	LP	Staley, Ms Louise Eileen	Ripon	LP
Halfpenny, Ms Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Suleyman, Ms Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Hall, Ms Katie	Footscray	ALP	Tak, Mr Meng Heang	Clarinda	ALP
Halse, Mr Dustin	Ringwood	ALP	Taylor, Mr Jackson	Bayswater	ALP
Hamer, Mr Paul	Box Hill	ALP	Theophanous, Ms Katerina	Northcote	ALP
Hennessy, Ms Jill	Altona	ALP	Thomas, Ms Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Hibbins, Mr Samuel Peter	Prahran	Greens	Tilley, Mr William John	Benambra	LP
Hodgett, Mr David John	Croydon	LP	Vallence, Ms Bridget	Evelyn	LP
Horne, Ms Melissa Margaret	Williamstown	ALP	Wakeling, Mr Nicholas	Ferntree Gully	LP
Hutchins, Ms Natalie Maree Sykes	Sydenham	ALP	Walsh, Mr Peter Lindsay	Murray Plains	Nats
Kairouz, Ms Marlene	Kororoit	ALP	Ward, Ms Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Kealy, Ms Emma Jayne	Lowan	Nats	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Rowville	LP
Kennedy, Mr John Ormond	Hawthorn	ALP	Williams, Ms Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
Kilkenny, Ms Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

Legislative Assembly committees

Economy and Infrastructure Standing Committee

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

Environment and Planning Standing Committee

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

Legal and Social Issues Standing Committee

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

Privileges Committee

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

Standing Orders Committee

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

Joint committees

Dispute Resolution Committee

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

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

Electoral Matters Committee

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

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

House Committee

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

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

Integrity and Oversight Committee

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

Council: Mr Grimley and Ms Shing.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Assembly: Ms Blandthorn, Mr Hibbins, Mr Maas, Mr D O'Brien, Ms Richards, Mr Richardson, Mr Riordan and Ms 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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Thursday, 6 February 2020

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

Announcements**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

The SPEAKER (09:33): 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.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The SPEAKER (09:33): Order! Just before members begin to move about the house, I want to advise members that on 8 March the Victorian Parliament will be celebrating International Women's Day with a community event at Parliament House to recognise the achievements of women in grassroots community sporting programs. I invite all members to nominate a woman from their electorate whose significant contribution is making a difference and inspiring others. The event and nomination details have been distributed to members. I think there are some flyers on your seats and they have also been emailed out.

PHOTOGRAPHING OF PROCEEDINGS

The SPEAKER (09:34): I also wish to advise the house that I have given approval for a photographer to take photos from the microphone operator box during question time today. The photographs will be used by the Parliament for community engagement purposes.

Business of the house**STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS**

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (09:34): By leave, I desire to move:

That so much of standing and sessional orders be suspended today to immediately allow:

- (1) the member for Melbourne to move a motion about how Victoria can increase its action on climate change, in light of the recent bushfires;
- (2) at the conclusion of the motion, the order of business to be:
 - formal business
 - question time
 - statements by members
 - government business
 - adjournment (5.00 pm).

Leave refused.

Petitions

Following petitions presented to house by Clerk:

RURAL AND REGIONAL ROADS SAFETY**TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF VICTORIA**

The petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the Labor Government's proposal to introduce an 80km/h speed limit on our country roads.

This "band aid" policy fails to address the underlying safety issues on our country roads including potholed surfaces and steep drop offs on roadside edges.

Improved road surfaces and increased driver education is required to address our rising road toll, not simply slowing people down.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria ensure an appropriate level of investment is made to halt the degradation of our rural road network and increase driver education to reverse the rising road toll on our country roads.

By Ms KEALY (Lowan) (191 signatures).

KANIVA CHEMICAL WASTE DUMP SITE

TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF VICTORIA

The petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the Labor Government's inaction on the toxic waste dump near Kaniva.

Fifty million litres of deadly toxic waste has been illegally buried on a farm near Kaniva, posing an enormous threat to the underground water supply, crop contamination and the health of local residents.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria ensure the Andrews Labor Government takes urgent action and directs the EPA to clean up Victoria's largest illegal toxic chemic waste dump.

By Ms KEALY (Lowan) (208 signatures).

GRAMPIANS ROCK CLIMBING

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria—Grampians Rock Climbing

This petition of the rock climbing community draws to the attention of the house the need for clarifications and concessions regarding any potential controls and restrictions to rock climbing activities within the Grampians National Park. The petitioners therefore requests that the Legislative Assembly:

1. Grant interim approval to rock climb responsibly within Special Protection Areas,
2. Appropriately consult during the forthcoming Grampians Management Plan process to ensure that rock climbers can assist in protecting individual climbing sites where there is a specific cultural or environmental risk. This consultation should include representation by at least three nominated rock-climbing specialists. Report recommendations from these specialists must be assessed and incorporated into the Grampians Management Plan.

By Ms KEALY (Lowan) (437 signatures).

Tabled.

Ordered that petitions be considered next day on motion of Ms KEALY (Lowan).

Documents

DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET

Victorian Government Annual Report 2019: Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

Ms HENNESSY (Altona—Attorney-General, Minister for Workplace Safety) (09:36): By leave, I table the Victorian government report 2019 on the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

DOCUMENTS

Tabled by Clerk:

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission—Report 2018–19 under s 31 of the *Crimes (Assumed Identities) Act 2004*

Mental Health Act 2014—Electroconvulsive treatment for people in Victoria under the age of 18 years: 2014–19

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004—Order approving the variation of compliance codes

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994—Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rule 2

Victoria Police:

Report 2018–19 under s 31 of the *Crimes (Assumed Identities) Act 2004*

Report 2018–19 under s 42BI of the *Evidence (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1958*

Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013—Order approving the variation of compliance codes.

Business of the house

ADJOURNMENT

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure) (09:37):
I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until Tuesday, 18 February 2020.

Motion agreed to.

Members statements

KYNETON WATER RECLAMATION PLANT

Ms RYAN (Euroa) (09:37): In November last year I tabled a petition on behalf of Kyneton residents who are deeply concerned by the Andrews government's release of class C water into local rivers and streams and also Lake Eppalock. Coliban Water have been releasing treated industrial waste water—class C water—from the Kyneton Water Reclamation Plant into the Campaspe River via Snipes Creek without Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA) approval and outside of licence specifications. Locals are demanding that the government upgrade the Kyneton Water Reclamation Plant to stop these discharges of class C water, which they believe is polluting waterways, threatening the ecology of streams and making water unusable for farmers, fishers, graziers and recreational users of those waterways.

Fourteen-hundred and forty people signed this petition in the hope that the Andrews government and Coliban Water will act. Local farmers like Huntly Barton, who has lived in the area for 50 years, have seen a really significant increase in stock illness and also losses in the past few years with the increased pollution of waterways. Coliban has made a number of these releases of class C water outside of their licence conditions, but the EPA has failed to take any action.

Coliban have now applied to the EPA, as I understand it, to increase the waste-to-river flow ratio. I have questioned both the Minister for Water and the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change about these releases. Both have been silent. Locals came to me because they cannot get advocacy from their local member.

BUSHFIRES

Ms NEVILLE (Bellarine—Minister for Water, Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (09:39): My communities right across Victoria and many people from various Bellarine emergency services organisations have over recent months committed themselves to fighting the fires and assisting those affected. On the Bellarine, without hesitation, people from the CFA and the Red Cross have answered the call to help and protect people, properties and communities. All Bellarine CFA brigades have a long and proud history of serving their communities and the communities right across the state and across our region. They have been active participants in fires like Lara in 1969, Ash Wednesday and Black Saturday. They went to New South Wales recently as well.

This time firefighters, both career and volunteer, from Bellarine went to East Gippsland and the north-east. I would love to name each and every one of those firefighters, but I know they know I acknowledge them and know who they all are. They all came from brigades from Barwon Heads, Drysdale, Leopold, Mannerim, Ocean Grove, Portarlington, Queenscliff and Wallington. As a local member I have been very proud to work with them and for them.

I also pay tribute to the Point Lonsdale/Queenscliff and Leopold branches of the Red Cross. I met, just days after the fire, the Point Lonsdale/Queenscliff group, who were flying into Mallacoota with the Australian Defence Force. A shout-out to Lisa, who provided great leadership. They provided food, comfort and assistance. Thank you to all of those volunteers and career staff who assisted. I also want to thank the families. Much strain is placed on those families. They take on all the responsibility single-handedly. They equally contribute to our state's safety.

PETER ROSS CARTHEW, AM

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (09:40): Peter Ross Carthew, AM, who died on 26 December 2019, was a giant of Ararat's business, sporting, political, community and cultural life. As the citation for his recent posthumous Ararat Ambassador award read:

Mr Carthew co-founded AME Systems and was heavily involved in the community, giving his time to East Grampians Health Service, Ararat Musical Comedy Society, the Victoria Police Blue Ribbon Foundation Ararat Branch, and Ararat Legacy among others.

He also had a political career serving on the Shire of Ararat council and then as Chairman of Commissioners during the council amalgamations.

Peter's greatest legacy was his family: children Davena, Christian and Nicholas, step-children Kylie, Jarrad, Rebekka and Elspeth and 19 grandchildren. I attended Peter's funeral, where St Mary's Ararat was filled well past overflowing. The love for Peter and Peter's love for them and his recently deceased wife, Lynnette, was so evident. While his greatest legacy is his children, his proudest achievement was creating AME Systems, which he moved from Melbourne to Ararat in 1977. This business is a major employer in Ararat. His was a life of family, business and community. The list of community organisations he was part of, and often led, is astounding. Peter Carthew, AM, was a great Australian. I was privileged to know him. His legacy in Ararat is profound and will be enduring.

GABE RICHARDS AND KELLY WILSON

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure) (09:42): I am pleased to rise today to honour two champion female athletes from our community who have celebrated some fabulous milestones recently, and I am talking about two Bendigo Spirit superstars, Gabe Richards and Kelly Wilson. On Friday, 24 January, Gabe Richards played her last game for the Bendigo Spirit. She has been on a fantastic journey. She has been with the Bendigo Spirit from the beginning in 2007, and she has also been the public face of the Bendigo Spirit. She has played 250 WNBL games, celebrated two championships and has had a stint as an Australian Opal. I would like to thank Gabe for her service to the team but also to the community, because she has really supported sport and the career of young girls in our community.

I would also like to acknowledge Kelly Wilson, who has now played the most games of any woman in the WNBL, recently marking game number 395 against Perth Lynx in the same game as Gabe. Kelly has also been a long-term Bendigo Spirit player, and she and Gabe are good mates. I want to finish with a quote from Gabe:

As someone who embodied what the Spirit and this community was about and as helping put basketball on the map here and developing a pathway for juniors.

Not just in Braves colours but right through to the WNBL, they can achieve their basketball goals from right here in Bendigo.

KANGAROO PET FOOD TRIAL

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (09:43): I call on the minister to reverse her decision to halt the kangaroo pet food program in western Victoria. While I agree the program should be halted in areas devastated by bushfire in order to protect our wildlife, we have been fortunate this fire season to have not been heavily impacted by bushfire. Far western Victoria is simply too great a distance from the bushfire-affected areas to provide support for the natural translocation of wildlife, and we are experiencing continued heavy damage, including to property, pasture, fragile ecosystems and native flora and fauna

by plague numbers of kangaroos. I ask that the minister immediately reverse the suspension of the kangaroo pet food program in western Victoria, where the bushfires have no impact on kangaroo numbers.

RAIL FREIGHT SERVICES

Ms KEALY: The future of the rail freight services in western Victoria are in limbo following Labor's 20 per cent cut to the mode shift incentive scheme and the failure by Labor to maintain our freight and rail lines. Despite the minister's statements otherwise, when Labor came to government the MSIS's budget was \$5 million a year. It is now just \$4 million, with no funding allocated from 1 July 2020. Further repairs to the Dimboola–Rainbow freight line have been abandoned by Labor, and the line is now closed. With a bumper harvest of around 200 000 tonnes coming from this area, the rail line closure means an additional 6000 B-double movements on our already crumbling, narrow roads around Rainbow and Jeparit. I call on the minister to prioritise full rail freight and immediately fix our freight lines, fix our roads and reverse her decision to scrap the mode shift incentive scheme.

ST JOSEPH'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, PENSHURST

Ms KEALY: The Peshurst community recently supplied me with a petition bearing 150 signatures calling for the installation of electronic school speed signs in Martin Street, Peshurst. I invite the minister to attend St Joseph's Primary School in Peshurst to see firsthand the dangerous crossing conditions which are putting the lives of young people at risk so she can reconsider her decision to not install electronic speed signs in Peshurst.

KOROROIT ELECTORATE SIKH AND HINDU COMMUNITIES

Ms KAIROUZ (Kororoit—Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Suburban Development) (09:45): In my own community of Kororoit, families and community groups have been active in fundraising for the bushfire appeal. I would like to particularly mention my good friend Gurdarshan Singh and members of the Sikh community from the Gurdwara Sahib in Plumpton, which raised \$13 000 for the bushfire appeal. The Gurdwara Sahib provides a number of services to the community, including religious services, sports and cultural and social services. They provide camps for Sikhs in the north-west that promote multiculturalism and interfaith harmony and provide Sunday language classes for children. They promote women's empowerment, tours for senior citizens around Melbourne and also participate in tree planting and cleaning in and around local parks. They have served food to thousands and thousands of people through their community kitchen in Plumpton, and most recently the Sikh community demonstrated incredible community spirit by raising much needed funds, donating food and clothes, visiting relief centres hours away, preparing food for volunteers and supporting animals who have lost their habitat. This is the true spirit of Sikhism: being honest, working hard and sharing with others, and this is well and truly shown during these challenging times.

I would also like to also acknowledge the Kundrathu Kumaran Temple in Rockbank and the Tamil Hindu community, who donated \$10 000, the Sri Durga Temple in Rockbank and the Hindu community, who made a very generous contribution. I thank you all for your generosity and community spirit. It is up to all of us to keep working together to ensure that these communities can be rebuilt.

CAPE BRIDGEWATER KOALA DEATHS

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (09:46): I want to put on the record my condemnation of the abhorrent act of cruelty that led to a number of koala deaths at Cape Bridgewater in my electorate. Animal cruelty is not acceptable in any instance, and those responsible must face the full brunt of the law. I am pleased that an investigation has been launched, and I want to assure those people who have contacted me as the local member that I will not stop pursuing this matter until those people responsible have been dealt with appropriately.

I also want to take this opportunity to call for better management of koala populations in plantation areas and for better management of private plantations that have been harvested and where the land has been handed back to the owner. An issue was flagged with me by a Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning official some 18 months ago that as the harvest progressed the growing koala populations would be forced to move into smaller areas of habitat and may indeed face a shortage of suitable food sources.

I call on the minister to urgently address this situation, to better manage koala populations in plantation areas and to ensure that harvested private plantations then continue to be monitored and regulated in some way. This should never have happened. The eyes of the world are on my electorate for all the wrong reasons—reasons that are abhorrent—because a national emblem has been treated cruelly. I and, I am sure, every member of this place and every member of my community agree that this can never happen again.

GREAT STUPA OF UNIVERSAL COMPASSION

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) (09:48): Suspended from a crane in a cage over 50 metres in the air, I was privileged to join Ian Green, OAM, chair of the Great Stupa, the mayor, Margaret O'Rourke and the member for Bendigo East to unveil the final piece of the Great Stupa of Universal Compassion. This Buddhist temple is the largest of its kind in the Western world and has been a driving dream and ambition of Ian Green and his wife, Judy, for around 20 years. It is a place of worship, peace and inclusion. Nestled amongst the bushland in Myers Flat, it recognises many different faiths and inspires visitors with greater understanding and respect for the many faiths of our world. There have been many donors to and supporters of this iconic stupa from across the world. The Great Stupa has become one of Bendigo's and the region's top tourist attractions with over 25 000 visitors each year. Now that the stupa is complete, there will be many more visitors to this magnificent structure.

Congratulations to Ian and Judy Green. It takes enormous courage to have a vision as bold as the stupa, to stay the distance and to see it become a reality. I was pleased to secure over \$2.5 million from the Andrews Labor government to support the completion of the stupa. The completion of this stupa crowns a unique and majestic tourist venue, enhancing the visitor experience and cementing Bendigo's position as an international travel destination and a place of multicultural and multifaith expression.

BUSHFIRES

Ms EDWARDS: I also want to sincerely thank all the career and volunteer emergency services personnel from my electorate who have been on the firegrounds across East Gippsland and in the north-east. We are so grateful and thankful for all that you do.

BRIGHTON BAPTIST CHURCH

Mr NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:49): The Baptist church in Brighton showed immediate leadership in Bayside during the summer fires, becoming a hub for the collection of donated items for fire-affected communities. Led by Pastor Sean, many community groups, like Brighton Primary footy dads and Cluden Cricket Club, worked tirelessly. Almost 300 volunteers sorted and packed 1200 cartons of goods—a real inspiration.

OPERATION ANGEL

Mr NEWBURY: Operation Angel is a niche humanitarian relief and disaster assistance organisation that was set up over summer in Brighton to prepare humanitarian packs for firefighters and evacuees. Over 15 000 packs were prepared. Thank you to the organisation's chief executive officer, Jacqueline Pascarl, and the hundreds of volunteers. A big thankyou too to St Andrew's Church and Trinity Brighton Uniting Church for providing hall space.

1ST/14TH BRIGHTON SEA SCOUTS

Mr NEWBURY: The 1st/14th Brighton Sea Scouts recently hosted internationally visiting scouts who had been forced to evacuate Canberra during the summer bushfires. Despite the travel changes, scouts from Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Scotland—who were desperate for me to try on a kilt—and the United Kingdom had a terrific time. Thank you, Brighton Sea Scouts, for being wonderful hosts and ambassadors for Melbourne.

BRIGHTON LITTLE ATHLETICS CLUB

Mr NEWBURY: Brighton Little Athletics Club—or BLAC, as they are known in my community—recently celebrated their 50th anniversary. The club is a powerhouse in Brighton, and over 300 members and 500 parents are actively involved. Led by president Mark Barling, the club has gone from strength to strength. I wish the club all the very best for the season and the next 50 years.

JILL GALLAGHER

Ms HUTCHINS (Sydenham) (09:51): I want to take the time to sincerely thank Jill Gallagher. Jill is the outgoing Victorian treaty advancement commissioner. She is an incredibly proud Gunditjmara woman who throughout her whole working life has shown an unwavering dedication to the causes of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victorians. Jill has the most sincere and genuine love for the people, the culture and the country to which she belongs.

In 2018 Jill was tasked with creating the First Peoples' Assembly, a task that had never been done before here in Australia. Throughout her term as commissioner she has been the leader in Victoria that we really needed. Jill and her team have inspired many First Nations people to engage with the treaty process—to enrol, to stand as candidates and to vote. She has held herself with integrity, compassion and respect along that journey. For instance, Jill and her team went to every prison in Victoria to ensure First Nations people who are incarcerated were able to have their voice heard in the voting process. Acts such as these have defined her term and her role as the commissioner—to do all she could to ensure that everyone had the ability to be engaged in the time frame they were given.

I want to sincerely thank everyone at the commission and all of the people that worked on the vote, and I hope that you are all as proud as I was at the inaugural meeting of the First Peoples' Assembly in December last year. I wish you and your team, Jill, well into the future. On behalf of my colleagues and Victoria, we thank you.

SANDRINGHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (09:52): On Saturday, 1 February, this year, just after 4.00 am a fire started at Sandringham Primary School. The fire engulfed a significant part of some of the oldest buildings of the school, a school that has served our community continuously for 165 years. Seventy-two hours after the blaze, all students and staff have temporarily relocated to Sandringham East Primary School and Sandringham College. Their education continues.

It is often in our darkest moments that the warmth and generosity of the Bayside community shines brightest. I thank the 40 firefighters, police and emergency service personnel who contained the fire so quickly. I thank Sandringham Primary's new principal, Louise Neave, for her steadfast leadership in the face of adversity, together with all students and parents, school council president Lisa Foran and former principal Margaret Hird. I thank principals Amy Porter and Laureen Walton for opening up their schools to the Sandringham Primary students and staff. I thank neighbouring principals Sheryl Skewes, Sherril Duffy, Debby Chaves, Marcelle van Maanen, Sam Tyndall, Erin Macdonald and others. I thank the army of 300 locals who on Sunday gathered to unload and set up temporary classrooms. I thank the education minister, his deputy chief of staff, Chris Carpenter, the education department and the Victorian School Building Authority for their swift response and support.

While this event is a tragic one, we are at our best when we unite and come together to support those in need. We will rebuild. It is said that it takes a village to raise a child, and how true this is, especially at this time for my community.

BILL SLADE

Ms CRUGNALE (Bass) (09:54): I stand to honour Bill Slade, who died on the fireground north of Omeo on 11 January. A highly skilled and experienced firefighter with 40 years of service with Parks Victoria, he was relied upon for his expertise and trusted judgement. He was the glue that bound his Wonthaggi team together. He brought out their best in an emergency, in nature, in fires and in life. He excelled in mentoring young firefighters. Bill was a revered life member and former player at Killy Bass footy club. He was so proud of his family: wife, Carol, and children, Ethan and Stephanie.

Tributes have flooded in in these past few difficult weeks: mighty work ethic, ripper bloke, always lending a hand. Colleagues recall the shirt tucked half in, half out, the wonky glasses matching his wonky finger and a set of 200 keys dancing on a piece of red rope. His demeanour was happy, gentle. When someone was having a rough day, they would be teamed with Bill for some R and R. Bill just could not sit still, unless of course the cricket was on the telly.

The achievements were many: the eradication of foxes on Phillip Island, manning controlled burns in parks and reserves, and monitoring and revegetating our precious Bass coastline. A testament to his service was the crowd of 2000 people at his funeral and the sea of green uniforms in the guard of honour that followed. My sincerest condolences to Bill's family, his colleagues, his friends and all who loved him and walked beside him.

AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) (09:55): On Australia Day I had the privilege to attend a number of Australia Day events, and what a wonderful opportunity it was to reflect upon the magnificent country in which we live and celebrate our Australian values. I feel incredibly blessed to be an Australian and to also represent the diverse and dedicated community of my electorate. Warm wishes go to all those who were deserving recipients of awards on this special day, including those at Latrobe city's citizenship and awards ceremony.

A big congratulations go to Citizen of the Year Terry Hunter; Young Citizen of the Year Lincoln Ingravalle; the Event of the Year, Tom Curtain's Speak Up tour; and the Community Service of the Year recipient, Gippsland Rotary Centenary House. A number of recognition awards were also presented to worthy recipients, including Dr Carole Broxham, Luke Van Der Meulen, Peter Smith, Danica Di Ciero, Taylah Kilpatrick, Jakey Sting Rae, AtWork Australia, Louise Ponton and the Moe SES unit.

A Medal of the Order of Australia, general division, was awarded to Ms Susan Gaye Clutterbuck for her lifelong dedication to providing quality audiology care in our community as well as a commitment to the regulation of the sector. She receives this award after only retiring in 2019 after nearly four decades of service. Susan and her husband, Neil, have dedicated much of their lives to the audiology sector and to the Gippsland community more broadly.

Reverend Dr John Morgan was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia this year for his work in education and service to the Church. Currently an associate priest for the Anglican parish of Moe-Newborough, Dr Morgan has dedicated his life to service and an impressive academic career of research and teaching. *(Time expired)*

CADEL EVANS GREAT OCEAN ROAD RACE

Mr CHEESEMAN (South Barwon) (09:57): I would like to take a moment to celebrate the Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Race, a marvellous sporting event that does a round circuit of my electorate and shows off some of the most scenic parts of Geelong and the Surf Coast. Congratulations to the elite

women's winner, Liane Lippert, and the elite men's winner, Dries Devenyns, for outstanding performances. This race is an opportunity for the entire world to see our part of Victoria and brings tourists and sightseers from far afield. Tourism is one of the most important industries on the Surf Coast and is the lifeblood of many communities like the Surf Coast and the Great Ocean Road.

On a sadder note I would like to wish the best and a speedy recovery to those participants who were hospitalised after a nasty pile-up in the Barrabool Hills in my electorate on Sunday afternoon.

BUSHFIRES

Mr BURGESS (Hastings) (09:57): I would like to extend my sincere condolences and those of my community to the people from all over Australia who lost loved ones, pets, property and livestock during our nation's horrific bushfires. I would also like to thank our great nation's defence forces and our wonderful emergency services, in particular our brave CFA volunteers. Each one of us would readily give our lives to save the lives of people we love, our friends and neighbours. It is an entirely different thing, though, that these brave men and women willingly put their lives on the line for people they have never met and probably will never meet. That is another level of brave; that is heroic.

I would also like to thank a great number of people, both local and from across our nation, who donated money and belongings and those who donated their time and are still donating their time and energy to raise funds for people and families of the regions so badly devastated.

Locally, I would also like to thank the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, local community organisations, generous individuals, businesses and sporting clubs for their efforts to assist the Mallacoota bushfire evacuees, who were transported to an emergency relief centre based in Somerville Recreation Centre by our wonderful defence forces during early January. During this period MV *Sycamore* and HMAS *Choules* evacuated 1334 people from Mallacoota to BlueScope in Western Port and HMAS *Cerberus*. These people were then moved to Somerville, where shire CEO John Baker and I joined the highly effective and efficient team to greet them. *(Time expired)*

COBURG NORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) (09:59): A new school year is exciting, but it is especially exciting when you get to walk into brand-new facilities like those at Coburg North Primary School. On Friday I joined principal Monika Gruss, student leaders and parent representatives for the official opening and the smoking ceremony with Aunty Di Kerr at Coburg North Primary School. It was back in 2014 that then school council president Blair Hocking bailed me up at a campaign stall at a market and told me about the need for investment in Coburg North Primary School. From Blair Hocking, Joe Harrison, Kate Copping, Owen West, Benji Lee and numerous other school council members and supporters there has been ongoing advocacy for this school for a number of years.

Both the Minister for Education and the Treasurer came and saw firsthand the needs at Coburg North Primary School. They understood how the population there was booming, and they understood the need for an upgraded facility. It is really important that we invest in facilities like this, and the \$6.7 million that we put into Coburg North Primary School has meant that these students now have first-class learning facilities to match the world-class teaching that happens there. There is an upgraded games hall, a new junior learning centre and a science, technology, engineering, arts and maths hub, and the excitement in this year's student leaders as they led me around and showed me these completed facilities was really inspiring and impressive and reminds all of us why we are here in this place.

BROADMEADOWS ELECTORATE REVITALISATION

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (10:01): I am delighted to announce the next instalment in the big-picture vision to revitalise Broadmeadows. Works on more than \$1 million for improvements to the Broadmeadows railway station and to make it safer for passengers begin within days. This is part of the \$14.3 million investment from the Andrews Labor government, and it is part of the broader

revitalisation of the Broadmeadows precinct to cater for increased population growth and to position Broadmeadows as a key hub in Melbourne's north.

This is why it beggars belief that the City of Hume did not apply for funding from the Victorian government's Growing Suburbs Fund for these projects. I have been advised that the Revitalising Broadmeadows report, which included and in fact featured the redevelopment of this, complied with these imperatives and would have been a higher value for funding, in my view. It would also add to my campaign to have Broadmeadows featured in the Australian government's proposed city deal for Melbourne's north and west.

So I call on the Hume City Council to expand these applications and to include Broadmeadows rather than excluding these vulnerable communities from funding opportunities to support the strategies that I have been pursuing for decades now, long before I was even in this Parliament. That has actually resulted in a \$500 million investor coming for the Ford sites, and that will bring back the new industries and jobs—and Broadmeadows is the priority one to deliver such results, which are the best value for spend, are in the public interest and will deliver opportunity.

BUSHFIRES

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) (10:02): I want to acknowledge and thank the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Premier for their hard work during the bushfire period. I also want to acknowledge the firefighters, both career and volunteers, emergency services and those from my electorate who attended to support their fellow Victorians. I would also like to pass on my condolences to those families who lost loved ones during that crisis.

GEELONG ELECTORATE MAJOR EVENTS

Ms COUZENS: Geelong has been booming over the holiday season. The Festival of Sails was a huge success that brought thousands of visitors to Geelong. It is the oldest and largest keelboat and Victoria's oldest sporting event, having taken place in 1844. This was the 177th event, with three days of sailing, onshore entertainment and activities. I also had the pleasure of announcing the Andrews Labor government's support for the Royal Geelong Yacht Club's bid for the 2022 Youth Sailing World Championship. We wish them every success for that bid.

I also attended the AFLW Cats team launch last week and met Melissa Hickey, the skipper of the women's team. It is a great team, and we look forward to their success in this season.

The Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road cycling race was also a great success, attracting thousands to Geelong to watch the elite women's race on Saturday and the elite men's race on Sunday.

The 2020 Victorian Country Track and Field Championships were also held at Landy Field, with 780 athletes.

COUNTRY FIRE AUTHORITY TRUGANINA AND TARNEIT BRIGADES

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarneit) (10:04): Today I have a special mention for the tireless efforts of the men and women from the Truganina and Tarneit fire brigades. Over 60 volunteers and 20 career firefighters in my community have spent the summer serving not only in our own community in Wyndham but hundreds of kilometres away—wherever and whenever they have been needed. They have been on the ground across New South Wales and Victoria, on the front line at its worst, close by in support and in the aftermath of recovery, all without compromising their local presence—ready to answer the next call-out when we have needed them at home.

When asked about this by the *Age* newspaper, Captain Mark Hatton from the Truganina CFA brigade said:

Helping our community—in our local area, that's what we do all year. And then, when the calls come to help other communities, once we know ours are safe, we go and do it.

Because if we don't, who else is going to?

Although the haze might have cleared here above our sunny skies in Melbourne, deployments are still very active and the fire season has a long way to go. So I say to all the men and women who make up our local community's emergency services right across Wyndham—and there are a lot of you—your selfless sacrifice and unwavering commitment to help any community in need has not only made me proud to be your MP but has also made any Australian across our nation very, very proud of you. Thank you.

BAYSWATER ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Mr TAYLOR (Bayswater) (10:05): It is fantastic to be back in this place to talk about my favourite topic: education. Last year there were close to 200 visits to local schools across the Bayswater electorate and millions of dollars of extra investment. There are new buildings, new ovals, new toilets and everything else in between. There has never been more happening in the electorate of Bayswater at our local schools.

It was fantastic getting to know local school communities and the principals and to learn what makes them tick. Of course there were some new initiatives last year: one of them was the Bayswater primary school writing competition. There were about 800 entries across 10 schools, and I promised them that I would read each of the winners out, so here we go: Bayswater North Primary School, Jordan Knapp and Lydia Luri; Bayswater Primary, Gowri Prabhu and Julian Robinson; Bayswater West Primary, Maddy Gunn and Oscar Baron; Boronia Heights Primary, Vylette Girgis; Boronia K-12, Maggie Shores and Samuel Majok; Boronia West Primary, Fiona Huynh; Great Ryrie Primary, Terrwyn Smith and Nathan Mack; Our Lady of Lourdes Primary, Indianna Gilson and Alex Moore; St Joseph's Primary, Orlando Aliotta and Emma Lewis; and The Basin Primary, Paige Draffin and Roy Lee.

The overall winners from grades 4 to 6 were Vylette Girgis from Boronia Heights Primary School and Indianna Gilson from Our Lady of Lourdes. The overall winners from prep to grade 3 were Lydia Luri from Bayswater North Primary and Julian Robinson from Bayswater Primary.

Every single student got a certificate for their trouble and the overall winners got \$200 worth of library books to go to their school as a donation on behalf of their fantastic contributions.

I will always stand up for local schools. We will continue to kick on with the big challenges of making sure the education starts right in my electorate of Bayswater—2020 is going to be even bigger. Here we go.

YARRABAH SCHOOL

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (10:07): I am absolutely pumped that in a couple of Fridays time I will get down to Yarrabah School again to open their administrative building as part of stage 1 of their incredible works. This is a school rebuild that has been years in the making. It is exciting to see the transformation that is occurring at Yarrabah School because inclusion is non-negotiable in the Education State, and we will support all students regardless of their needs and circumstances to be their very best.

Bills

CRIMES AMENDMENT (MANSLAUGHTER AND RELATED OFFENCES) BILL 2020

Statement of compatibility

Ms HENNESSY (Altona—Attorney-General, Minister for Workplace Safety) (10:08): In accordance with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, I table the statement of compatibility with respect to the Crimes Amendment (Manslaughter and Related Offences) Bill 2020.

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, (Charter), I make this Statement of Compatibility with respect to the Crimes Amendment (Manslaughter and Related Offences) Bill 2020 (Bill).

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

Overview

The Bill will amend the *Crimes Act 1958* to:

- increase the maximum penalty for manslaughter, child homicide and workplace manslaughter;
- introduce a new homicide by firearm offence with a maximum penalty of 25 years' imprisonment and standard sentence of 13 years; and
- clarify the relationship between homicide by firearm, child homicide and manslaughter.

The Bill also makes consequential amendments to several Acts, to ensure the law treats homicide by firearm in the same way it treats manslaughter and child homicide.

Human Rights Issues

Human rights protected by the Charter that are relevant to the Bill are:

- The right to life (section 9);
- The right to protection of families and children (section 17);
- The right to security (section 21);
- The right to a fair hearing (section 24);
- The right to be informed of the nature and the reason for a charge (section 25(2)(a)) and
- The protection from a higher penalty (section 27(2)).

For the following reasons, I am satisfied that the Bill is compatible with the Charter and, if any rights are limited, the limitation is reasonable.

Increased maximum penalties

Clauses 3, 4 and 21 of the Bill increase the maximum penalties for manslaughter, child homicide and workplace manslaughter from 20 to 25 years' imprisonment. This lifts the upper boundary of the range of possible sentences that may be imposed for these offences, providing sentencing courts with greater scope to address the most serious cases. As the tragic outcome of these offences is that a person has died, increasing the maximum penalty that applies promotes the right to life (section 9).

Setting higher maximum penalties for these offences also promotes the right to safety and security (section 21). It provides courts with scope to sentence serious offenders to a period of imprisonment which is proportionate to the gravity of their offending, facilitating community safety from further unlawful and dangerous, or criminally negligent, behaviour.

Clause 4 also promotes the right in section 17(2) of the Charter, which provides that every child has the right to such protection as is in their best interests and is needed by them by reason of being of a child. Clause 4 of the Bill recognises that children aged six years and under are particularly vulnerable, and provides courts with scope to impose higher sentences for the most serious cases of child homicide. This sends a strong message to the community that conduct which results in the death of these particularly vulnerable children will not be tolerated.

Clauses 3, 4 and 21 of the Bill are also relevant to, but do not limit, the protection against retrospective criminal laws (section 27(2)). Clause 9 makes clear that the higher maximum penalties for manslaughter, child homicide and homicide by firearm will only apply to offences that are entirely committed after the increases take effect. Offences committed before that date will continue to be guided by the maximum penalty that applied at the time that the offending conduct occurred. As it is intended that the penalty for workplace manslaughter be increased on the same day that the offence itself commences, in practical terms, the offence will commence with a maximum penalty of 25 years' imprisonment.

Homicide by firearm

Clause 5 of the Bill also promotes the right to life and the right to security, by introducing 'homicide by firearm' with a 25 year maximum penalty and 13 year standard sentence. This new offence emphasises that the community expects people who use firearms to do so safely. It sends a strong message about the potentially serious consequences of handling firearms dangerously. In seeking to deter people from engaging in similar life-threatening behaviour, this new offence enhances community safety and promotes the right to life.

Clarifying the relationship between manslaughter offences

Clauses 4 and 5 of the Bill make clear that the prosecution is not prevented from charging an accused with manslaughter when the facts could also support either child homicide or homicide by firearm. For example, where a victim of manslaughter is under the age of six years, clauses 4 and 5 clarify that the prosecution could charge the accused with manslaughter, rather than child homicide, if it considered that to be more appropriate in the circumstances.

These clauses will provide much-needed clarity. However, I recognise that it will also add complexity to some murder trials, engaging the rights in sections 24 and 25 of the Charter. Section 24 provides that every person charged with a criminal offence has the right to have the charge or proceeding decided by a competent, independent and impartial court after a fair and public hearing. Section 25 provides, among other things, that a person charged with a criminal offence is entitled to be informed promptly and in detail of the nature and reason for the charge.

Section 24 of the Charter reinforces the common law right to a fair criminal trial (*Knight v Wise* [2014] VSC 76). It relates to the procedural fairness of the decision, and can sometimes require a trial judge to instruct a jury about an available alternative verdict to the offence charged, whether or not it has been listed on the indictment (*James v The Queen* (2014) 254 CLR 475). Failing to do so can lead to a substantial miscarriage of justice, if the jury could have been satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that the accused was guilty of the less serious charge (*Aston v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 225).

When amended by clause 7 of the Bill, section 421 of the *Crimes Act 1958* will provide that manslaughter, child homicide and homicide by firearm are all alternative verdicts to a charge of murder. As clause 5 of the Bill makes clear, the fact that the death resulted from discharge of a firearm, or the victim was a child under the age of six years, will not preclude the availability of manslaughter as an alternative verdict to murder.

The standard sentence for homicide by firearm will help address this complexity. Judges will need to consider the standard sentence when imposing a sentence for homicide by firearm, but will not need to have regard to this additional factor when sentencing for manslaughter or child homicide. This will encourage the prosecution to consider whether to list homicide by firearm as an alternative charge on a murder indictment, alleviating the complexity that may otherwise arise if a judge considers it necessary to direct the jury on all possible alternative verdicts.

If an alternative charge is not included on the indictment, the prosecution still has a responsibility to inform the trial judge if an alternative offence is open on the evidence (*Jury Directions Act 2015*, section 11). This would prompt a discussion about which alternative offence the judge should direct the jury about, where more than one of the three are supported by the facts. If, as a result of this discussion, the jury is only directed about manslaughter, that is unlikely to lead to a miscarriage of justice. Accordingly, any additional complexity arising from clauses 4 and 5 will be appropriately managed by prosecutorial charging discretion and informed jury directions. It will not limit the accused's right to a fair hearing.

Section 25 of the Charter is also relevant, but not limited by this additional complexity. The complexity will only arise in a small number of cases where a person is charged with murder and more than one possible statutory alternative is available on the facts. However, the right is directed to the charge itself—murder—rather than available alternatives. The Bill does not limit an accused person's right to be informed of the nature and reason for the murder charge.

Hon Jill Hennessy MP
Attorney-General
Minister for Workplace Safety

Second reading

Ms HENNESSY (Altona—Attorney-General, Minister for Workplace Safety) (10:09): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

Incorporated speech as follows:

This Bill strengthens Victoria's homicide laws to ensure that those who commit the most serious crimes receive sentences of imprisonment that better reflect their culpability for causing the death of another.

In particular, the Bill delivers on a Government election commitment to introduce a new offence of 'homicide by firearm' for cases of manslaughter committed by discharging a firearm. It will also introduce tougher penalties for manslaughter and child homicide to better reflect the seriousness of these crimes.

Increasing the maximum penalty for manslaughter and related offences

In Victoria, a person may commit manslaughter by an ‘unlawful and dangerous act’ which causes death if there was an ‘appreciable risk’ of causing serious injury. Manslaughter may also be committed by ‘criminal negligence’, where a person commits an act causing death in circumstances of ‘gross negligence’.

This covers a very wide range of circumstances and degrees of culpability, from deaths which do not involve violence and might look a lot like accidents at the low end, through to deaths where the offender’s conduct was so deliberate and violent that the offence appears much like murder.

However, manslaughter differs from murder in that, for murder to have been committed, the offender must have intended either to kill or to cause really serious injury to the victim. If that intent cannot be proved—and proving it may be very difficult, particularly where there are no witnesses—then an offender, even if originally charged with murder, may be convicted of manslaughter instead.

This outcome can cause confusion and anger, both amongst a victim’s loved ones, and from the wider community—who may, understandably, have difficulty accepting that such an outcome is just. The hurt may be amplified when the offender—despite a demonstrably high degree of culpability—is then sentenced in accordance with established sentencing practice for manslaughter, and thus receives a term of imprisonment that falls far short of expectations.

Currently, the maximum penalty for the manslaughter is 20 years’ imprisonment. This is the lowest maximum penalty for this offence within Australia. Data from the Sentencing Advisory Council shows that, between July 2013 and June 2018, the highest sentence of imprisonment imposed for the offence of manslaughter was 12 years, with a median term of eight years. More recently, two offenders have received sentences of 13 years’ imprisonment, and the highest sentence ever imposed for manslaughter in Victoria was 15 years’ imprisonment.

It is important that our available penalties for manslaughter provide enough scope for the courts to impose sentences which can appropriately reflect the very broad range of culpability—not just at the lower end, but at the top end—for the very worst crimes—as well. The Government is not satisfied that the existing maximum penalties do that.

Accordingly, the Bill will increase the maximum penalty for manslaughter to 25 years’ imprisonment. This is the highest maximum penalty in Victoria short of life imprisonment, which is reserved for the most heinous offences, such as murder.

By increasing the maximum penalty for this offence, the Government intends to send a clear message that past sentences imposed for the most serious offending of this nature have been inadequate. It expects that future sentencing practice, developed with a higher maximum penalty as a guidepost, will better reflect the seriousness of this offence. The higher maximum penalty will give courts broader scope to impose more severe sentences in cases involving high levels of moral culpability. At the same time, courts will retain discretion to impose lower sentences in appropriate cases (such as where the offender has very low moral culpability).

For consistency, the Bill will also increase the maximum penalty for the related offences of child homicide and workplace manslaughter, from 20 to 25 years’ imprisonment. These offences are forms of manslaughter, and it is important that our laws reflect that, objectively, no form of manslaughter is necessarily inherently more serious than another.

Introducing a new homicide by firearm offence

The Bill acquits a Government election commitment to introduce a new offence of ‘homicide by firearm’, with a maximum penalty of 25 years’ imprisonment and a standard sentence of 13 years’ imprisonment.

The new offence addresses concerns about sentences imposed in certain firearm related manslaughters. In recent years, there have been several shooting cases where offenders were sentenced for manslaughter after claiming they did not intend for the firearm to discharge.

These cases have often arisen from circumstances where the offender has shot and killed the victim in an isolated or private place, with no witnesses. While they might originally have been charged with murder—and there may even have been a history of relationship violence—murder has not been able to be proved.

The women—and the victims are, I am sorry to say, almost always women—who have been killed in these cases did no wrong; they did not deserve this; and they must not be forgotten. They include Karen Belej, who was shot and killed by her partner in 2016; Tamara Turner, shot and killed by her partner in 2016; Rekihah O’Donnell, shot and killed by her partner in 2013; and Kara Doyle, also shot and killed by her partner in 2013. Our hearts, and our condolences, go out to the families not only of these women, but all the others who have also been killed in such appalling circumstances.

I have met with the families of some of these victims, I can say that few of us could truly comprehend the grief of a parent who has learned that their daughter has been shot dead by a jealous or violent partner. But I think we could all well understand the anger and confusion they would feel on learning that their child's killer has not been convicted of murder; and has received what—to them—seems a sentence of just a few years' imprisonment.

While it must, of course, continue to be incumbent on the prosecution to prove that any particular killing was murder—and nobody should be convicted of murder that is not proved to have been such—the Government agrees that criminals who use firearms dangerously, and cause another person's death, should receive tougher sentences whether the death was intended or not. The sentencing guideposts for 'homicide by firearm'—that is, the maximum penalty and standard sentence—indicate how seriously the Government considers this type of dangerous activity.

I want particularly to acknowledge the families of Karen Belej and Rekihah O'Donnell, whose dignity and determination in pursuing change has been instrumental. The new offence, which they have called for, will give the courts scope to establish a new sentencing practice for manslaughter cases involving firearms that is independent to sentencing practice for general manslaughter. The label of 'homicide' will also send a clear message that the dangerous handling of firearms will not be tolerated by the law, and that those who handle these dangerous weapons have a responsibility to act with care.

The 13 year standard sentence indicates Parliament's view of the sentence that should be imposed for a 'homicide by firearm' that falls in the middle range of seriousness, when considering only objective factors. This will provide additional guidance to courts about how seriously this type of offending should be treated. It indicates that sentences of more than 13 years' imprisonment should be imposed for very serious offending, while recognising that less serious offending should result in lower sentences.

These reforms cannot address the pain of those families who have lost loved ones, but the Government hopes they will bring some measure of comfort by ensuring that future offenders will receive higher, more appropriate sentences.

Ensuring that the prosecution can charge the most appropriate manslaughter offence

Because homicide by firearm, child homicide and manslaughter are all forms of manslaughter—that is, they all respond to deaths caused where murderous intent was not present or cannot be proved—it is important that the law clarifies the relationship between the three offences, to ensure that the prosecution can charge the most appropriate manslaughter offence in a case.

Child homicide applies where a person kills a child aged under six years in circumstances that would otherwise constitute manslaughter. This offence was introduced in response to concern that the sentences imposed in cases involving the manslaughter of young children, by someone responsible for their care, were too low.

Remarks in the case of *R v Hughes* [2015] VSC 312 led to uncertainty about whether manslaughter remained available as a charge if the victim was under the age of six years. The Bill clarifies the law by making clear that, in a manslaughter case involving the death of a child under six years, the prosecution has discretion to charge either the offence of child homicide, or manslaughter, as it feels appropriate to the specific circumstances.

This helps to avoid some of the complexity that might, for example, otherwise arise if a young child and an adult both died from the same act. The Bill makes clear that in such cases, the prosecution may charge manslaughter in relation to both victims, rather than manslaughter with respect to the adult and child homicide with respect to the child. This reflects the original intention of the child homicide reforms.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Bill also makes clear that in manslaughter cases involving the death of a child under six years caused by firearm, the prosecution can decide whether to charge the offender with manslaughter, child homicide or homicide by firearm.

When an accused seeks to contest a murder charge—for example, because the prosecution has no evidence to prove the accused had murderous intent—and the facts of the charge could support either manslaughter, homicide by firearm, or child homicide as an alternative verdict, the Director of Public Prosecutions may include whichever alternative charge on the indictment that, in her view, is most appropriate in the circumstances of the case, and is in the public interest to include. In the event that the indictment does not indicate an appropriate alternative charge, the procedures set out in Victoria's *Jury Directions Act 2015* will assist the court to navigate these issues when directing the jury.

I commend the Bill to the house.

Mr WELLS (Rowville) (10:09): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned for two weeks. Debate adjourned until Thursday, 20 February.

**PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT
BILL 2020**

Statement of compatibility

Mr WYNNE (Richmond—Minister for Housing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Planning) (10:10): In accordance with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 I table a statement of compatibility in relation to the Project Development and Construction Management Amendment Bill 2020.

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, (the Charter), I make this Statement of Compatibility with respect to the Project Development and Construction Management Amendment Bill 2020.

In my opinion, the Project Development and Construction Management Amendment Bill 2020 as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with human rights as set out in the Charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview

The main purpose of the Bill is to amend the *Project Development and Construction Management Act 1994* (the Act) following the Machinery of Government (MOG) changes of 1 January 2019 (MOG). After the MOG, the Department of Transport became the legal successor to the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources and therefore the body corporate established under section 41A of the Act is now the Secretary to the Department of Transport, by virtue of section 7 of the *Administrative Arrangements Act 1983* although the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions continues to have budget and policy responsibilities for nominated projects.

The Bill establishes a mechanism under the Act to create a new body corporate constituted by the Secretary to the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions and transfer to the new body corporate property, rights and liabilities of the existing Secretary to the Department of Transport body corporate.

The Bill also makes some technical and minor amendments to the Act to further clarify the meaning and operation of the legislation.

Human Rights Issues

The Bill does not engage the Charter Act because it does not raise any human rights issues.

Conclusion

I consider that the Bill is compatible with the Charter Act because it does not raise any human rights issues.

Hon Richard Wynne MP

Minister for Planning

Second reading

Mr WYNNE (Richmond—Minister for Housing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Planning) (10:11): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

Incorporated speech as follows:

The Project Development and Construction Management Amendment Bill 2020 is required because of the Machinery of Government (MOG) changes that took effect on 1 January 2019.

The Department of Transport became the legal successor to the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources in the MOG change. Following on from this, the body corporate established under *Project Development and Construction Management Act 1994* is now the Secretary to the Department of Transport and not the Secretary to the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions.

This has resulted in a number of projects nominated under the *Project Development and Construction Management Act 1994* for which the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions has budget and policy responsibility for, incorrectly sitting in the Department of Transport for example, the Melbourne Convention Centre Development Project; the Melbourne Markets Relocation Project; Biosciences Research Centre Project and Royal Melbourne Showgrounds Redevelopment Project.

The Bill amends the *Project Development and Construction Management Act 1994* to ensure the efficient governance of projects administered by the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions which were affected by the MOG changes by creating a body corporate constituted by the Secretary to the declared Department and providing for the declared Department to be declared by Order in Council under a new section 5AA to the Act. This will allow a new body corporate constituted by the Secretary to the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions to be created by making an Order in Council that nominates the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions as the declared Department.

The Bill inserts a new section 48 into the Act which provides a mechanism to transfer to the new Secretary body corporate property, rights or liabilities of the existing body corporate constituted by the Secretary to the Department of Transport, other than property, rights or liabilities associated with historical transport projects which will be transferred to the Head, Transport for Victoria under the new section 61 of the Act.

The Bill introduces a generic name for the Secretary body corporate, being “Secretary, Project Development”, rather than including the name of a department as part of the name of the body corporate (i.e. Secretary to DJPR), so that the name of the body corporate is not affected by changes to the name of the Department in the future or to address other MOG changes.

The Bill manages the impact of future MOG changes under new Part 8 of the Act to avoid the need for similar legislative changes to the *Project Development and Construction Management Act 1994* where a further MOG change occurs in the following scenarios:

- Where the administration of the Secretary, Project Development is moved to a new Department established under section 10(a) of the *Public Administration Act 2014* or to a different existing Department; or
- Where the name of a Department is changed under section 10(c) of the *Public Administration Act 2014* and the Secretary to that Department is the Secretary, Project Development under the Act.

To ensure greater efficiency in administering project functions under the Act, the Bill removes the requirement in section 11 of the Act to obtain the consent of the Minister for delegations and sub-delegations of the functions of the Secretary, Project Development to officers of the declared Department, which will be DJPR in the first instance. This will increase the efficiency of teams delivering projects under the Act.

The Bill will also make other technical and minor amendments, including the repeal of spent provisions in the *Project Development and Construction Management Act 1994* as well as some consequential amendments to the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

In conclusion, this Bill will ensure the efficient governance of projects administered by the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions which were affected by the MOG and will ensure that all property, rights and liabilities relating to those projects are legally vested in the Secretary to the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions as Secretary, Project Development and that all transport related projects are legally vested with the Head, Transport for Victoria. The passage of the Bill will also provide the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions with the opportunity to deliver new Priority Precincts projects and deal with land under the *Project Development and Construction Management Act 1994* which will have positive economic development outcomes for Victoria by creating new employment opportunities and optimising land use within the Priority Precincts to benefit Victorians.

I commend the Bill to the house.

Mr WELLS (Rowville) (10:11): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned for two weeks. Debate adjourned until Thursday, 20 February.

GENDER EQUALITY BILL 2019*Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Ms WILLIAMS:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

Government amendments circulated by Ms WILLIAMS under standing orders.**Opposition amendments circulated by Ms KEALY under standing orders.**

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (10:13): It is great today to be able to speak on the Gender Equality Bill 2019, and not only that but to speak of the great efforts that women have made not just within this Parliament but across our communities, whether it is in business roles, whether it is as parents. No matter how people contribute, we know that both women and men are coming together in terms of the respect that they earn in the community and their position in the community. There is no doubt that, particularly over my lifetime and over my working career, over the past 40-odd years I have seen a big shift in how women are treated in the workplace. It is wonderful that we are able to talk about gender equality in a way that is positive and not with persecution, but pointing out areas where we can do a little bit better and looking at ways where we can close that gap.

I look around my National Party room, if I may just reflect on that for a moment, and I would like to pay my respects to my amazing female colleagues, the member for Euroa and Melina Bath, who not only are very good friends of mine and amazing supports but also as women provide amazing and unique insights into different issues that come through their electorates, through the state of Victoria and through the party room. They both work enormously hard, and I am certainly very, very proud to call them my National Party friends and family. I know that they are making a huge difference not just within their own communities but for the people of Victoria.

The purpose of this bill is for an act to require the public sector, councils and universities to promote gender equality, to take positive action towards achieving gender equality, to establish a public sector gender equality commissioner and for other purposes.

At the outset I would like to speak on the amendment put by the government in relation to clause 4, line 20, which is to omit 'equality' and to insert 'inequality'. There is absolutely no doubt that you have our full support. We will not be asking for a division on that; we certainly support that and understand that sometimes there are errors that occur through the drafting process.

We have also tabled some amendments to the Gender Equality Bill. I will go through those in greater detail through the course of my contribution today, but there are essentially two elements. One is around the establishment of a commissioner. We believe that that can be done under the minister's direction and guidance, and there are elements within this bill which already outline elements that are the responsibility of the minister. In our view you do not delegate and you cannot outsource gender equality. This is something that must be held within the government and it must be held by the accountable minister. The reason for that is that it is a voice directly into cabinet, and of course we know that in the past the women's portfolio in particular has been under the governance of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. For that reason, we have put forward that amendment.

The other part of the amendment—I do understand that there are a number of amendments that are covered by those two large sections, but the majority part of that is to ensure that there are protections for businesses and for not-for-profit organisations in relation to applying for funding and also through the procurement process. We note that there are a number of protections and supports within the bill in regard to government organisations, and while we certainly accept that that should be the case, there should be an understanding that in some instances there is limited access to resources or there is a limited workforce. Also, there are other issues which are related to just being in regional areas, which provides greater challenges sometimes in achieving targets or quotas or other indicators. As those

targets, quotas and indicators are not outlined as part of the bill, they will be part of regulation that is as yet unknown, and which is to be put by the minister at a later date. We believe that there should be a level of consistency between the application of any indicators, targets or quotas that are established by the minister and that are applicable to government organisations that could flow through and have a significant impact on businesses and not-for-profit organisations in relation to funding but also to procurement.

I would like to now go through the main provisions of the bill. Essentially this is around requiring the public sector, councils and universities to take positive action towards achieving workplace gender equality. This, of course, is a very, very positive step, and it is something that we need to do; however, I think we also need to be very careful that we give due credit to organisations. In particular, I know from my experience of working in the health sector and even from what I see within the electorate of Lowan, within councils and universities enormous steps have already been taken to ensure gender equality within their workplaces and in how they engage with the community. I think it is important that we do reflect upon that and we understand that without legislative enforcement upon these bodies we are already seeing huge steps being made.

I am certainly enormously proud: I have eight councils in my local electorate, and many of those already have in place really positive strategies, which I believe have been referred to as part of this bill and they may come into place in the future around regulations. They have policies in regard to leave for victims of domestic violence. They already have policies in terms of ensuring the gender balance in the number of women and men in the workplace and of course people who are on the gender spectrum. There are other elements around how so many of our CEOs have signed up to what was formerly known as White Ribbon. They are amazing domestic violence advocates. They are always present at the annual White Ribbon march as a protest against domestic violence in our rural communities.

While I know that sometimes there is a stigma that in rural areas you might have that step away from what is termed as ‘progressive’ issues, whatever that means, I certainly see that in my community we have a strong commitment to stamp out domestic violence. We have a strong commitment to support women in so many of our positions—in senior positions, in executive positions—and whether it is an employee position or whether it is the position of mayor or as councillors, we have amazing contributors who are women. They are great leaders. They do things differently—they do not have to be in a power suit, they do not have to behave like men; they can behave like themselves and still make enormous changes, and they are definitely making a difference in our own communities. So that point is something I wanted to reflect upon on subclause (a) in relation to the purposes of the bill.

I would like to reflect at this point on a point that was mentioned in the second-reading speech, which was incorporated into *Hansard* by the Minister for Women, and that is around school councils being exempted by regulation. I absolutely have a full understanding of why that is the case, and I actually got a response, which I am very appreciative of, from the minister’s office in regard to school councils being exempted. The reason for that would be that, and I quote:

... stakeholders in the education sector raised concerns that individual school councils would have significant difficulty in complying with the Bill given varied size and resourcing capacity between school councils across the state.

I think that is a very sensible approach. There certainly needs to be a level of understanding that for smaller organisations and for organisations which have limited resourcing capacity elements of this bill, given we do not know what the details are really around the regulation, could make an enormous difference. We do not want to get to a point where gender equality is resented because it is unfairly discriminating against certain government bodies or, in the instance of the procurement of funding guidelines, certain businesses or organisations. As I said, I will go into that further in the debate, but I note that school councils are not specifically exempted as part of the bill. We are always I guess concerned that the devil can be in the detail—that because this can be amended by regulation there

may be a change to this decision into the future; therefore it would be good if there were specific exemptions for school councils within the legislation. I understand that there may not have been a provision for that in this version of the bill. However, given the minister has given that indication, I think it is important that also we have it in *Hansard* so if it has to be referred back to at a certain point in time, that certainly we have a record of that. We hope that is an enduring position by whoever is in government on the day that regulations are amended or indicators are amended.

My other concern around this section is really about privacy and confidentiality. There has certainly been feedback that I have had, particularly in relation to the gender impact assessments, of questions around what if people are unwilling to disclose their gender. There certainly has been some discussion around this through other items of media interest and through legislation which has come through this chamber, but we should never overrule the individual's right to privacy and confidentiality for the sake of collating information for public distribution and looking at setting up KPIs and a benchmarking system I guess as a measure for the government to say how they are doing in terms of achieving gender equality in the public service. I am concerned that there will be obligations upon individuals to disclose that information. However, I understand that within the legislation there are elements referred to which indicate that the government body or organisation does not have to release that information if it would unfairly identify or indicate the specific genders of individuals within their working group.

I understand that second stage—I certainly support that—but in order for the government body or the defined entity to withhold that information and not publish it, they need to have it in the first place. I think everybody's right to privacy around their own gender really is something we must protect. Therefore I do ask that the minister provide some further information about how that will be protected into the future, because it is not for all and it is not their obligation to report that and to disclose that if they are not comfortable in doing so, and because it really provides no additional benefit to the government itself. In fact I think there still would be a feeling for some that they would be discriminated against should they disclose their gender. We want to make sure that people are not forced to disclose their gender if they feel there would be that discrimination. While I understand the purpose of this bill is to eliminate discrimination, and particularly to promote gender equality, we do need to be careful that we are not putting people at risk through the overall intentions of the bill.

I also had feedback regarding the bureaucratic burden of the reporting requirements, particularly around the gender equality action plans and the gender impact statements. As we know, all of these requirements we have to report through to government take time, they take money, they take enormous resources. There certainly was a question raised over whether the government will provide additional support in relation to change management. For some organisations there will be significant change management, but what other financial support will be available to these organisations as they are required to create these very important action plans and undertake the impact assessments? It will soak up time, it will soak up money, and I know from talking to many government bodies they often feel like they put hours and hours of work—days and weeks of work—into producing documents that go to government and they do not get a lot of feedback. Given that we have covered by this bill universities, we have hospitals, we have councils, some of which are on an extraordinarily limited budget, I do ask that appropriate support and resources are given to all of the organisations impacted by this bill to ensure that there is a proper transition but also that there is not an additional burden put on which is not going to make a tangible difference to gender equality within our workplaces.

That is probably a key point. It was raised particularly by a number of women's organisations and organisations that are against violence against women. It is not about picking holes in this; it is really about making sure that this works. If we are going to put a legislative framework in place, we need to make sure it works.

As I mentioned earlier, if there is some concern around that pressure that is on organisations, and people start to resent gender equality because it takes time away from what they are doing, it takes money away from providing patient care or providing education to younger people, or if it is around

just not having the budget to be able to do it in the first place or the workplace, we are really going backwards as opposed to going forwards in the promotion of gender equality in the workplace.

Again I refer to the equality indicators and to targets and quotas. We have not got any indication at this point in time of what those indicators or targets or quotas will look like. I do note that that refers to clause 15, which is the indicators, and clause 17, which is around targets and quotas. Clause 16 provides the exemption for the defined entities around indicators, and clause 18 provides exemptions for the targets and quotas. There is still an unknown around what those targets and quotas and equality indicators may look like, and while it may not be the intention of the minister, who defines those regulations at a future point in time, it may be simply unachievable for some organisations.

In relation to school councils, I think there are also very, very small local government councils who will also find it quite difficult to meet some of those requirements. That is not through any reason of systemic sexism or gender bias; it is simply because it is extraordinarily difficult to recruit to some of these positions, particularly in rural and regional Victoria. If you get one applicant who has got all the skills and qualifications you need, you do not really care what gender they are or what colour they are or what their religious beliefs are or what their physical abilities or their mental abilities are; you just want somebody in the job. Our employment issue is around an insufficient workforce as opposed to not enough jobs, and so in many ways I think rural and regional Victoria is leading the way in not putting that veil of discrimination over appointments. They actually do appoint by merit in every circumstance. They do not ever pick somebody just because they are a certain gender or have a certain look or are of a certain ethnicity. I think rural and regional Victoria should be celebrated for what they do on that indication. There is a question mark around what those indicators and targets and quotas will be, and that is an element of concern in understanding how that will impact on organisations into the future.

The second element is around the commissioner. As I said earlier, you cannot outsource or delegate gender equality. There have already been a number of really important policies put in place around gender equality. It is somewhat concerning that there is a need to bring it into legislation in order to make the difference. As I stated earlier, I think some organisations are doing an amazing job. There is no doubt that others have got a way to go. However, it is important that if there is policy, whether it is internal government policy, whether it is legislation and brought through legislation, that the directive of the minister is adhered to. It seems like a duplication that we have the commissioner brought into place, given that clause 26(b) and clause 44 both refer to the minister having responsibility and delegating that responsibility to the commissioner. As I stated earlier, I think that having the role of a commissioner is a step aside from cabinet and a step aside from government. I think this is the minister's responsibility, and I do not want to see that responsibility outsourced outside of the cabinet process and the government executive. I think it is actually essential that it is kept inside.

There are also a number of unknowns around the commissioner. We do not know how much this will cost. We do not know the size of the department. We do not know whether it was considered to include this commissioner's role into an existing role or whether it was even considered to retain that with the responsibility of a delegate of the minister, such as the secretary. At the end of the day, creating a new commissioner, creating additional bureaucracy, all comes with an additional cost, and of course it is the taxpayer that foots the bill.

We know that this is not the first priority, but it does make a big difference when women—particularly single women with children—are really struggling at this point in time. To have an additional cost burden from government which may impact on the amount of tax they have to pay and the amount of money they have at the end of the week to pay for their schoolkids' education—to make sure they can go to camp, to make sure they are actually fed and have a roof over their heads—that is something that needs to be balanced with the cost of an additional level of bureaucracy to manage the reporting requirements. When you look at the face of the legislation, there is nothing there that is beyond the capability or the responsibility of the existing department structure.

Ms Williams: Educational role.

Ms KEALY: The minister points out it is the educational role. In my view, I have seen in place the department undertaking educational roles as well or contracting external businesses to help with that education and support information. So they are all very important. However, I think that similar types of activities are already being undertaken within the department, and therefore I cannot see the justification of the huge additional cost—an additional bureaucracy and reporting structure. To be one further step away from the minister could actually end up with further delays in implementing some of these changes.

I now refer to the section around broad general provisions. This is the area of the bill which created the most concern and it is the one that I certainly fielded the most amount of feedback around—that is the incorporation of gender equality into the social procurement policy. I do note that the social procurement policy, which was established in 2017—so it has been going for three years—already includes women’s equality and safety. Again, while there are exemption provisions for government bodies, there are no exemption provisions for businesses applying for funding or the supply of goods and services.

That is why we have put forward the amendment today, and it is in relation to points 66 and 67, which relate to section 48 and section 49 respectively. That really is around assisting to replicate the exemption provisions which are enshrined within this legislation in relation to government bodies and defined entities. It really ensures that we have that obligation of exemption upon businesses and not-for-profit organisations who may be applying for funding for goods or services through their procurement process. They do not want to be discriminated against because of exactly the same reasons that the government has already outlined around why school councils are exempt. They are varied in size, they have extremely limited resources in some circumstances and in particular in regional Victoria they would find it extraordinarily difficult to meet targets and quotas. There is a limited workforce, it is very difficult to attract and retain people to work in the country and the change of one individual leaving an organisation and replacing them with an alternate gender can deeply skew and change the gender balance within an organisation.

So I am simply asking through these amendments that the government, and all members of the chamber, consider that if it is good enough to put in exemptions for government businesses, for defined entities as outlined within this bill, then surely it is good enough to apply that level of exemption and understanding to small businesses in particular. Not-for-profit organisations, which are often run with volunteers at their heart, are also going to in some circumstances find it very, very difficult to meet any regulation that may be imposed by the government through future regulation. This is something that could make or break a business. Particularly when looking at gender equality, the majority of it is around getting more women into senior positions, but there are elements of it which are around getting the balance right in female-dominated industries where we need to bring more men in for, again, that alternate view and to look at how we can balance out the history and make it okay for people who want to follow a career path that has traditionally been the sole caretaker of one specific gender.

That is what we are calling for in these amendments, and that is why we put them forward today. We want to make sure that if you are a small business and you rely on funding from the government, there is a level of understanding that if they cannot meet specific targets and quotas or indicators which are put upon them through regulation by the minister they still will not be starved of government funding—that they will not just be cut out and excluded and discriminated against, and that they can still work towards gender equality. Even if they cannot get to that specific target or quota that has been set or the indicator that has been set, that does not mean that they are being sexist or turning a blind eye to gender equality.

Similarly, as I said earlier, the not-for-profit sector can find it very, very difficult to meet different government guidelines. They are run on the smell of an oily rag, and they do an amazing job in our community. To add an additional layer of bureaucracy, where it is another step and another level of red

tape may be perceived in order to meet requirements to get a procurement opportunity for goods or services from the government—whether it is a funding opportunity which may even assist them to achieve greater gender equality within their business or organisation—is something that needs to be taken into consideration but has been overlooked through the parameters of this bill.

The reason that I am raising this is not just around ensuring fairness—that there is not a level of understanding and respect through the legislation of the impact of unachievable targets and quotas or indicators for small businesses and not-for-profit organisations—but it also comes back to making sure that there is not a level of resentment created inadvertently by the government. If a business has to close because they cannot access government grants anymore, or a not-for-profit organisation has to close because they cannot access a government grant anymore, then we really need to question what the overall outcome of this will be. I know what they would blame. They would come at the end of the day and say, ‘Well, we couldn’t survive; we had to close the doors because we couldn’t meet the gender equality guidelines as we are only small’. They are going to fall back and lay blame and provide a negative environment. I know that is not the intention of the bill; I know that is not what this is striving to achieve. But that is why I am calling for these amendments to be supported by the government to make sure that we actually do take strong steps to influence the private sector and the not-for-profit sector and that we provide the same provisions and exemptions to the private and the not-for-profit sector through procurement and through funding. That has been applied in the bill for the defined government bodies that have been outlined and provided to me.

As I have stated, and just in summary, we certainly support the idea of gender equality—and I will include my own experience. When you look in *Hansard* you will not realise that I am pregnant, and I have managed to achieve gender equality in my own family, in that I have a son, and I will be having a daughter, so we have got a 50-50 quota. Without a target or quota I have managed to achieve gender equality. My amazing partner, Chris, actually will have three girls, so he has been a star when it comes to quotas for women. But we are very, very excited to welcome this little one into the world. It has been wonderful to have the support of my colleagues in relation to being pregnant and being in a shadow minister position. I do thank The Nationals and the Liberals in particular for their support and their excitement about having a baby on the frontbench.

Mr Wells interjected.

Ms KEALY: The member for Rowville wants to know if I will be calling her Kimberly. No, I will not. Sorry, Kim.

Mr McGuire interjected.

Ms KEALY: Or Frances. But I think it is great we have got a workplace and a Parliament where we can treat each other with respect and where we can have a child. This is something that is completely different from what we have seen in the past. So through our own actions we can make a difference, and what you see is what you can be. I do appreciate the opportunity. Look, it will come with challenges, but that is okay; I have got a lot of support around me.

While we certainly do support the overall intentions of the bill, we would like the government to take into account the amendments that we have put forward. They really are around sensible changes and around making sure that we have those protections in place for businesses and for not-for-profit organisations, but also that we do not add additional bureaucracy, financial burden and another level of responsibility and that we do not outsource gender equality, because it is the responsibility of each and every one of us. I think that through our own actions, everybody in this place can be very proud of what they are achieving in their own way to make sure that we do have gender equality right across the state.

Ms HUTCHINS (Sydenham) (10:43): It is my absolute pleasure to be here in the house today to debate the Gender Equality Bill 2019. It is the first of its kind not only here in Victoria but in Australia.

This comes on the shoulders of so many fantastic men and women on this side of the Parliament that have championed this sort of bill over many, many years and the support that the Andrews government has put in place to ensure that we have well-rounded policies and laws that foster gender equality in the workplace, in the home and in the community. This bill continues this work by reducing the gender pay gap and boosting women's participation in the workforce, and this is done through some very specific actions in the bill. The bill requires the Victorian public sector, local councils and universities, as defined entities, to take positive action towards achieving workplace gender equality through the development of a gender equality action plan every four years that delivers strategies and measures to promote gender equality in the workplace based on the results of a workplace gender audit, and prepare public progress reports every second year. What an amazing step forward for working women in this state. We know as a public sector and as a government that we set the standard when it comes to workplace standards. We know that by taking this lead in these areas there will be a flow-on into the private sector. This stuff is not too hard, as the opposition alluded to. This is stuff that real leadership is made of. This is about stepping up and saying that we will drive gender equality in the community and in the workplace by reducing the gender pay gap and boosting women's participation in the workforce.

Now, we are not the first ones to call for this. Back in 1980 Dolly Parton had a number one hit called *9 to 5*, where she called for service and devotion to be recognised in the workplace with a big, fat promotion, and she swore that the boss man was out to get her. This is not new; what we are discussing today is not new. Even just two years ago Taylor Swift, in one of her number one songs, said, 'Would I get there quicker if I was a man?'. These are things that have been called for. Even in 1967, with Aretha Franklin calling for respect—another number one hit. We know in our own communities, in our own households and in our own workplaces that women are sick of being treated as second-class citizens, doing the same work for much less pay. While women comprise roughly 47 per cent of all employees in Australia, they take home on average \$251 less than men each week, full-time adult earnings equivalent. The national pay gap is standing currently at 15.3 per cent and has remained stuck in the region of 15 to 19 per cent for the last two decades.

In 1972, in the year that I was born, we saw federal sex discrimination legislation to prevent this from happening, but it continues to happen. Why is that? We have award systems, and we have enterprise bargaining agreements. They pay under those EBAs the same to men and women, but the reality is that women in the workforce face a whole myriad of other responsibilities and other forms of discrimination in their workplaces. Ninety-five per cent of primary parental care is undertaken by women, and women spend almost three times as much time taking care of children each day compared to men. Often women who return from maternity leave or long service leave face the prospect of redundancy. In 2017 Australia was ranked 35th on the global index measuring gender inequality. That had slipped back from our being ranked at number 15 in 2006. It is time for us to take action. Women account for 68 per cent of primary carers for older people and people with a disability. These are some of the problems, some of the myriad problems, that women face.

Whilst Australia scores very highly in the area of education attainment, for women there is also a lot of progress being made in the areas of economic participation and political empowerment. We still see women lagging behind men in earnings and in senior positions. As a result women are disproportionate to men in their work life, economic aspects, social roles and violence rates in Australia. We do have existing legislation federally—as I mentioned, we have the Sex Discrimination Act 1984, and we also have the work to implement the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 being undertaken by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency, who do a fantastic job at a federal level. But can I say, their work is under-resourced and does need more focus from the federal government. The Workplace Gender Equality Agency could do a power more work with the legislation that we are putting through today if every other state was to take it up or if in fact the federal government got serious about standing up for women and supported a piece of legislation like this.

Women also face differences in earnings because of occupational segregation. We know that there are male-dominated industries and female-dominated industries where the wage differences are very stark. And of course there are women in retirement; women have substantially lower superannuation payouts for retirement than men in Australia. In 2015–16 it was reported that the average super payout for a man was \$270 000 plus, while the average super payout for an Australian woman was \$157 000. This means the average Australian woman has about \$113 000 less on retirement. We know women in the over-55 age group and beyond are those most at risk of facing homelessness in Victoria.

This bill addresses a lot of these issues through putting in place a system that will support women in closing that gender pay gap in Victoria in years to come. The Gender Equality Bill seeks to improve gender equality within Victorian government workplaces by requiring organisations to publicly report their progress, plans, how they are combating sexual harassment, their flexible workplace arrangements, parental leave and career progression practices. They will be required to challenge workplace discrimination and prepare gender equality action plans. This is not being just dreamed up in the office of the good minister at the table—and I want to thank the Minister for Women for bringing this forward and the great work that she has done with it. I also want to pay tribute to Fiona Richardson, a previous Minister for Women, who embedded this as a concept in our gender equality plan as a Victorian government. I think she would be very proud to see this come before the Parliament today in the form that it is in.

We have done a power of work on consultation through this process. We held a citizens jury of 83 members of the general public from all walks of life back in September 2018, made up of people who gave us the go-ahead. A clear majority called for a clear way forward in putting targets and quotas in place through a legislative process.

Can I also acknowledge the great work that has been done by the Equal Workplaces Advisory Council, who have done a power of work on this and have also undertaken their own consultation process. They have really done a great job. Can I thank the chair of that group, Liberty Sanger, for her work there.

One of the key parts of this legislation is the gender equality commissioner and the commission that will be established. Many other speakers will go into the details of what that commissioner will do, but this is the teeth of this legislation. This is the independent organisation and commissioner that will oversee these quotas and this reporting. For the opposition to turn around and say ‘Let’s amend it and take that out and make it a secretary’s report’ just shows their lack of commitment. I do not know why those opposite are so scared of equality. Quite frankly, for many of those opposite the idea of equality makes them panic that they might actually lose something, God forbid. Well, if they had more women in their caucus and they had more women on the front bench, maybe they would have a different position and maybe they would be in full support of this legislation today.

It is not enough just to speak about gender equality. Victorian women deserve action, and that is exactly what this bill does. It shows cause for taking real and immediate action, and I commend the bill to the house. I thank all of those men and women on this side of Parliament who have supported this bill.

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) (10:53): What a day it is today. First up, I do not propose to address any of the arguments and opposition that have been put forward by the lead opposition speaker today, except to say that those views are baseless. They are defunct, and we have well and truly moved beyond them. It is time for those on the other side to stand with us and stand up for gender equality in Victoria.

Today I rise to make a small contribution to the debate on the Gender Equality Bill 2019. I say ‘small’ because I am here in this really privileged position, speaking on this bill, because of the giant determination, the courage, the commitment, the dedication and the fortitude of so many others. To be in this house, a house where in the government women make up nearly 50 per cent of government

benches and where our cabinet for the very first time in this state's history is gender equal, is a really good part of this story.

But there are so many other parts and so many people, and first up I would like to acknowledge our Minister for Women and Minister for Prevention of Family Violence. Our minister has taken on the responsibilities of these portfolios with sure-fire commitment, with intellect and with passion, and her work in no small part has brought us here today. I want to commend and thank her for her work. I know that the minister will not mind me saying this, but the work has been a collaboration of so many others that started many, many years ago—generations in fact. I could go through the history of the state and the advances that have been made to promote the rights of women. Just this week we held a motion for the former Premier, the Honourable John Cain. We heard how he contributed to achieving a fairer world for women and advances in gender equality with more women appointed to cabinet, by establishing the Victorian Women's Trust and through the development of anti-discrimination laws.

And of course we had Joan Kirner. Her contributions to women's rights and gender equality are well documented. She was a champion for women in politics and showed so many of us that women can make it to the top too. She was an activist and an advocate, and through EMILY's List she worked tirelessly to increase the number of women in Parliament. As for EMILY's List, I know there are members here in the gallery today, and I would like to take a moment to acknowledge Leonie Morgan, a long-time campaigner for women's rights, who with the support of women like Kay Setches, Joan Kirner and Candy Broad, established EMILY's List in 1996 to support the preselection and election of progressive women into our parliaments.

The member before me also mentioned our very first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence and Minister for Women, the Honourable Fiona Richardson. I recall back in 2016 watching Fiona address a room. It was just overflowing. It was for the launch of Victoria's first gender equality strategy, *Safe and Strong*. She actually had her children with her on the stage, and I remember thinking how absolutely perfect that was, because driving so much of Fiona's agenda to end family violence and gender inequality was the desire to bring about a better world for the next generations. And to the side I watched her advisers then, Tanja Kovac and Maree Overall, who had devoted themselves and I know continue to devote themselves with so many others to an absolute and resolute commitment for gender equality, and who worked so hard with Fiona on that strategy. I mention that strategy because one of the key components of that strategy was a commitment for legislative change, and today we are honouring that commitment with this bill.

I would also like to acknowledge the member for Sydenham, who as Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence worked exceptionally hard to keep up the work, the pressure, the conversation and the drive to bring about gender equality. There are so many others: the extraordinary women and men in this place, who are wonderful role models for so many Victorians, people who believe in gender equality, who believe in the power of quotas and who want to see change—real change.

Which brings me to today. I think sometimes you do need to just pause and reflect and take in the significance of these moments. I do feel a bit like that today with this bill. With this bill we are creating a new law, a law that is deliberately designed to change our behaviour, our culture and our way of thinking. This is real action. With this law we are intentionally and purposefully aiming to drive systemic, cultural and behavioural change. This law will proactively drive gender equality, and to that end I really believe that this law marks a significant milestone in the history of this Parliament and in the history of Victoria. I think it is good reason for us to pause and to reflect and to celebrate.

The Gender Equality Bill before us brings with it the promise of better opportunities for women in the public sector and fairer and more equitable workplaces. Once passed we know that it will require the public sector, local councils and universities to do better. We are asking them to take positive and real action to achieve workplace gender equality, and we are going to require them to promote gender equality in their policies, their programs and their services.

A really important part of this bill is the establishment of the independent public sector gender equality commissioner. I say that the independence is important because it cannot be hostage to any election cycle. Any proposal by those opposite that we have seen to abolish the commissioner is really a cynical attempt by those opposite to somehow avoid scrutiny by internalising it within the government of the day. We will not accept that. It needs to be—

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

FIRE SERVICES

Mr TILLEY (Benambra) (11:01): My question is to the Premier. On 4 January in Wodonga I was a member of a CFA strike team consisting of a forward command vehicle, five tankers and 20-plus crew fighting uncontrolled fires in the Tintaldra and Walwa areas. A United Firefighters Union-aligned career firefighter called back the CFA forward command vehicle from active firefighting duties to satisfy his own vehicle preference for the following day, leaving the strike team leader without a vehicle or radio. What will the Premier do to ensure that the command of firefighting volunteers is not overruled by a career firefighter who is not actually in charge of the strike team?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (11:02): I thank the member for Benambra for his question. He raises a serious issue. If I can just for one moment indicate that I think everybody has seen the way in which the member for Benambra has conducted himself not only in terms of his duties as a member of this place but also in his capacity as a CFA volunteer. I think that his outstanding performance speaks for itself, but I just wanted to get that on record.

Beyond that, I am more than happy to raise the specific issue that the member for Benambra has raised with me with the chief officer, Steve Warrington, and I will ask him to communicate directly with the member for Benambra on that issue.

I have always said that there will be learnings out of any fire event like this. Even the smallest of fire events can actually provide us with things we need to improve. In a fire event of this scale, this ferocity, so early on in the fire season, with so many hectares burnt but at the same time such—in my judgement and I think in the judgement of many—such a well integrated approach, there will be, however, things to learn and things to improve. That is why the inspector-general for emergency management will have all the powers, the resources and the time needed to conduct a proper review—and he will—and then we will be able to have a debate and a discussion, but hopefully not too much debate. Hopefully we can just get on and give effect to that culture of continuous improvement that I think sets our emergency services apart.

Mr TILLEY (Benambra) (11:03): Just covering off with my supplementary, this demand from an active unionist put the entire strike team at risk because the strike team leader had no vehicle, as I said, or means of communicating with his team. So, Premier, what will you do to ensure that CFA volunteers will not again be placed at risk by union bullying this fire season?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (11:03): With the greatest of respect to the member for Benambra, I am not necessarily wanting to accept the assertion that he has put to me. I am happy to refer the matter on. It is a serious matter—

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Well, in my experience—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Will members come to order!

Mr ANDREWS: We are not going to be lectured on who was there and who was not. I do not think that is a road you want to go down, just quietly.

Mr T Smith interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member for Kew is warned.

Mr ANDREWS: The key point here—

A member interjected.

Mr ANDREWS: I will refer the specifics of the matter to the chief officer. Surely those opposite cannot find fault with him. He was not there either, but he will look into it and do so appropriately. I am not asked to comment on the specifics beyond that. The member for Benambra has asked me whether I will see to it that conduct does not occur across all firegrounds, so I am being very much relevant in saying to him that in my experience all of our firefighters do an outstanding job. Regardless of whether they are members of the union or not, regardless of the colour of the uniform they wear, regardless of whether they are in their home town or someone else's community, I am proud of all of them.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk—Minister for Education) (11:04): Last week at Leongatha Children's Centre we celebrated the very first day of an Australian first: funded three-year-old kindergarten. We are investing \$5 billion for universal subsidised kinder for three-year-old children across Victoria, just as we said we would.

Eighty-five to 90 per cent of a child's brain development occurs by age five. Experts tell us that children who participate in early childhood education have higher cognitive and non-cognitive development than children who do not. There is an entire body of work, including from Nobel laureate economist Professor James Heckman, about the strong correlation between investment in the early years and economic benefit to that individual and to the economy as a whole.

Over 560 children are enrolled in up to 15 hours of funded three-year-old kindergarten programs across our first six local government areas in rural and regional Victoria: Buloke, Hindmarsh, Northern Grampians, Strathbogie, Yarriambiack and South Gippsland. Parents are getting on board. In South Gippsland, for example, 86 per cent of three-year-olds are attending a three-year-old program. This is a massive increase on the 30 per cent that attended the same unfunded programs last year and well above the four-year average for the state.

Next year we are rolling out three-year-old kinder in another 15 local government areas, again in rural and regional Victoria, something that we are proud of. By 2022 for the rest of the state all three-year-old children will be able to participate in at least 5 hours of kinder, scaling up to the full 15-hour program by 2029. We will need 6000 additional teachers and educators. We will need to build or upgrade around 1000 new kindergartens. We are getting on with one of the most profound education reforms in our state's history, a reform only possible under the Andrews Labor government.

ELECTIVE SURGERY WAITING LISTS

Mr M O'BRIEN (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition) (11:07): My question is to the Premier. At a time of record federal government funding for health Victoria's elective surgery waiting lists have blown out—

Members interjecting.

Mr M O'BRIEN: I am glad the members opposite think that elective surgery waiting lists blowing is a source of amusement, but I can assure you, they do not—

Members interjecting.

Mr M O'BRIEN: I will start again. My question is to the Premier. At a time of record federal government funding for health Victoria's elective surgery waiting lists have blown out by 11 000 people since June last year. How is it fair that Victorians in desperate need of cataract surgery, knee and hip replacements and hysterectomies are waiting years because this government has so dismally failed to manage Victoria's health system?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Essendon.

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (11:08): I do thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. He asked me about the health system, and I am very pleased to be able to confirm for all Victorians that our government in each and every year that we have had the great privilege of being in office have delivered additional funding so that we can hire more nurses, more doctors and more paramedics. We make choices, and health is about choices. You could, for instance, choose to go to war with your workforce. You could choose that. I wonder whether that would be in the interests of patients? I do not think so.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Warrandyte and the member for Eltham.

Mr ANDREWS: He would not know what a win looked like, this one—Mr Marginal Seats over here.

Mr R Smith interjected.

Mr ANDREWS: You would do better to say less, I think.

Mr R Smith interjected.

Mr ANDREWS: Well, they should hide you.

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: On serious matters, you could go to war with your workforce; we will not do that. You could cut budgets across the board; we will not do that either. Instead we will continue to invest in record terms so that we can treat more patients and provide better care. Now, that is not to say that there are not challenges in our health system; of course there are. We had a flu season last year, for instance, where there were—

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Apparently the chief health officer here knows better.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the Leader of the Opposition, I again warn all members that they will be removed from the chamber without warning if they keep shouting across the chamber.

Mr M O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, relating to the Premier debating the question. The question was: how is it fair for these Victorians who are waiting for surgery—for knee and hip replacements, for hysterectomies, for cataract surgery—that they are languishing on these waiting lists? And 11 000 more of them have been languishing since last June. I ask you to bring the Premier back to answering that question and answering the question for those Victorians who are suffering as a result.

The SPEAKER: Order! It was a very long question, and the Premier is being relevant to the question that was asked.

Mr ANDREWS: The Leader of the Opposition may think that 67 000 laboratory-confirmed cases of flu and a record number of people presenting to our emergency departments is unrelated to elective surgery. It is directly related. It is because of pressures like that that surgery, for instance, gets cancelled and postponed.

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Well, apparently those opposite know better. They ought to stick to what they know best: cutting budgets and attacking health workers. On the issue of treatment, I am very pleased to be able to confirm for the Leader of the Opposition that despite that pressure in terms of a horror flu season, all category 1 patients received their surgery within 30 days and half within 10 days—

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Well, apparently time to treatment does not matter. How long you wait does not matter, according to the health experts opposite here. And they are getting their surgery quicker than they have ever got it. Apparently that is not relevant; how long you wait is not relevant. The fact that people are waiting less than they have ever waited—

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Just get this straight: the fact that people are waiting less time than ever before—in other words, they are getting their surgery faster than they ever have—apparently is irrelevant according to Dr O'Brien.

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the Premier to use correct titles.

Mr M O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, I am pleased that the Premier is making it clear that he thinks waiting lists do not matter. He thinks waiting lists do not matter at all.

Mr ANDREWS: The Leader of the Opposition and all those opposite and indeed all Victorians can be assured that we will continue to invest in health in record terms, to treat more patients and to treat them faster. We reject the notion of cutting funding and going to war with our workforce. We never have and we never will.

Mr M O'Brien (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition) (11:12): Just since the last election we have seen ambulances ramping, including 11 at one hospital last night. Surgery is cancelled because of unclean surgical equipment, and now, despite the Premier's promises, surgical waitlists have gone up—not down. With 51 000 Victorians languishing on elective surgery waiting lists, when will these lists be brought back under 40 000?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (11:12): I am genuinely indebted to the Leader of the Opposition for raising the issue of ambulance performance. We are very proud of our paramedics, every single one.

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Well, I would not hold your breath waiting for me to take enterprise bargaining agreement advice for the paramedic union from you. Do not do that. It would not be good for your health, I do not think. We will not be lectured by those who cut hospital funding. We will not be lectured by those who decided the best thing to do was to give the bird to our nurses—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier will resume his seat.

Mr M O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, under the standing orders the Premier's answer is supposed to be factual, and I would make available to the house the Fact Check from ABC looking at the former health minister's claims:

Did the Victorian coalition cut a billion from health when last in office?

Wrong. I make that available to the house. No more lies from you, mate.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition knows that that is—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party!

Mr ANDREWS: If only they had got 3 million of those printed instead of their health policy, maybe things would be a little bit different. Goodness me, the ABC Fact Check! The Victorian community have worked—

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: They are great fans of yours. They are wonderful fans of yours. At the end of the day we have increased funding every year. We will continue to do that. We will not be lectured on ambulance performance by those who delivered an ambulance crisis.

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Warrandyte withdrew from chamber.

The SPEAKER: I have warned all members across the chamber to stop shouting.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: METRO TUNNEL

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure) (11:15): This morning I had the great pleasure to join the Premier to visit the future State Library site as part of our fantastic Metro Tunnel project, where construction is well underway deep beneath Swanston Street. What was really special about this morning was that you can see that station box, those trains running through that station. You could really see the project taking shape. Importantly, the State Library station will connect with Melbourne Central station. Trains will be running to the north, to the south, to the east and to the west when we get on and deliver the Metro Tunnel project. For half the year—

Sorry, I am just looking at the time. I might have to start again. Can we fix the clock? I will get to start again, and I am delighted to as well. I am absolutely delighted.

Members interjecting.

Ms ALLAN: Because you know what? Two minutes is not enough to talk about how great the Metro Tunnel project is. For half a year we have been excavating 500 tonnes of rock every day with cutter heads that can smash through rock three times harder than concrete, and all this is happening under the ground while the city is moving above the ground. At the same time, over at Arden, Joan and Meg, our tunnel-boring machines, have dug more than 1.5 kilometres of tunnel between them, and down at Anzac station our tunnel-boring machines Alice and Millie are currently being assembled to get ready for work.

Thousands of Victorians have spent their summer working on this project, and it was great to see the work at South Yarra—1.8 kilometres of new track has been installed and a huge amount of excavation work has gone on there that will connect the existing Cranbourne-Pakenham lines to the Metro Tunnel line in the future. And the workers: I would really like to thank the workforce; we met some of them this morning. They have done a terrific job working 24 hours a day, seven days a week and giving up their summer to get this project delivered, and that site was delivered four days early.

Once complete, the Andrews Labor government's Metro Tunnel project will make room for more than half a million passengers during every peak period, every single week, right across our Melbourne train network—more trains, more often, throughout the suburbs. It will slash travel times by up to 50 minutes a day to those key locations around the city like Parkville and St Kilda Road.

We have seen other approaches, where the only construction on the Metro Tunnel under some was the shelf that they built to store the project on for four long years; that was the approach of those opposite. We take a different approach. We get on with these projects. We are determined to deliver these projects and at the same time employ thousands and thousands of Victorians on these great projects.

WEST GATE TUNNEL

Mr M O'BRIEN (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition) (11:17): My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier guarantee that neither taxpayers nor motorists will pay one extra cent for the West Gate Tunnel?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (11:18): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. This is a critically important project. There is a contract between, essentially, the government and Transurban. Transurban, beyond that, have a contract with their builders. It is the government's expectation that the contract is delivered in full and on time.

Mr M O'BRIEN (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition) (11:18): So that is a no. My supplementary question is to the Premier. Will the West Gate Tunnel be open in 2022 as the government has promised?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (11:18): I believe I have just answered that.

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Go on, get it out of your system. Go on. 'So that is a no'. Goodness me.

Mr M O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, it is very hard to misunderstand the question. If any genuine question calls for a yes or no answer, I would have thought it is something as concise as: will the West Gate Tunnel be open in 2022 as the government has promised? I invite you to ask the Premier to return to the question and actually just give an answer.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier referred to his earlier answer. Does the Premier want to add to his answer?

Mr ANDREWS: I have indicated the project needs to be delivered, and it is our expectation that it will be delivered against the terms of the contract, which has it opening in 2022, because of course we have not found any secret side letters that have been written, for instance, that would totally compromise the project. We have not found any of those, and therefore Transurban and their builders ought deliver the project in accordance with the contract which has it open—and a choice for Victorians they have never had before, the tunnel or the bridge, something we have talked about for decades—in 2022.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: ECONOMY

Mr PALLAS (Werribee—Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations) (11:20): I rise yet again to advise the house of the good news that goes on in terms of the economy of Victoria. It is the seventh straight quarter that the state of Victoria has been rated by CommSec's *State of the States* report as the leading economy in the nation—seven straight wins in nearly two years of dominance. That sort of record would make Novak Djokovic envious.

What got us here? According to CommSec, we are leading the nation in five out of the eight criteria. Importantly, that is both construction and economic growth. It is exactly what the Reserve Bank

governor has insisted occur: keeping debt at a sustainable level in line with what we committed to before the election.

The state's economic performance will allow Victoria to build the infrastructure for tomorrow that will service our state in order to continue to grow and to prosper—more level crossings and of course the airport rail link and North East Link Project, to name but a few. Contrast this with the dark days of November 2010 to 2014, when no major projects were underway, and Victoria fell to fifth on the league ladder of the *State of the States* by CommSec.

Fortunately the people of Victoria refused to allow this state to fall into a malaise. They had a solution to it, and it was the election of a government that was committed to action, purpose and delivery. Make no mistake, Victoria is leading the nation with 530 000 jobs created and big infrastructure that benefits all Victorians and which has set us up for a decade of economic dominance.

NATIVE FOREST LOGGING

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (11:22): My question is to the Premier. Premier, as well as the terrible loss of life and property we saw in the recent bushfires, Australians have been shocked and saddened at the huge loss of wildlife and the forests that they call home. We have lost so much. Some species may have already become extinct; many have been pushed to the brink. Right now I am receiving daily emails and calls from people who are watching even more destruction occur as logging by our state-owned forestry company is still happening in native forests and threatened species habitat just north of Melbourne. Premier, given how much habitat and forest we have lost in these fires, isn't it now time to immediately bring forward the transition out of native forest logging in Victoria?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (11:23): I thank the member for Melbourne for her question. I want to be as sensitive as I can in answering this question, because I know today some people in the forestry industry have learned that because of fire impact on timber that is in coupes that was part of the timber release plan they will be out of work. I want to be as sensitive as I can to them and their families. That is why, for instance, we do have lots of other alternative work in forest management that is quite important, perhaps more important than ever right now. There is salvage timber harvesting that is going on. I know there will be debates on whether there should be more of that, but I think the member for Narracan would acknowledge the fact that we have wasted no time around those salvage issues, because we think that is really important. It is something I think that we might be supported on more broadly than you might think.

On the issue of the impact of these fires on the native timber industry, and indeed the plantation timber industry, from my most recent briefing, I think something like 50 per cent of coupes that were part of the timber release plan have been burnt. The impact will be significant. It gives me no joy to make the point that we have said for a long time now that this industry was in a very fragile set of circumstances, a very fragile position, and a really big fire event would have a significant impact on the future of this industry. I expect that that is exactly what has happened now.

But I am not about the ideology of this. I want to be as outcome driven and evidence driven as we can be, and that means we have to make further assessments about the damage that has been done. I note there is one matter that is in the court and I will not be drawn on at that. But we are going to get the balance right here. We have made our policy announcements. Not everybody supports them. They were predicated on the fact that we could not simply be a victim of circumstance and bumble along thinking that everything was fine with this industry. We said there were many, many risks. One of them was fire; I think we been proven right in predicting that as a substantial risk.

I get no pleasure from that, and that is why I am trying to be as sensitive as possible because this very day people have been told they may well be out—in fact they are out of work. That is very difficult. We will support those families. We will support a transition in this industry and it will be on the time lines we have announced. I have no new time line to announce. But I am happy to concede the point that these fires will have had an impact on the supply of timber already designated for logging, and it

may well have had, in fact almost certainly has had, an impact on timber that may have become available in future timber release plans under the transition that we had put forward. Unless and until we have a proper appraisal of exactly what the impact of these fires has been, I am not going to be making policy up as we go. We are going to work out exactly what the impact is, and if we do need to make a change, we will be completely transparent about it.

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (11:26): I thank the Premier for his answer. I understand that the government is in a difficult position, as is the industry, having negotiated and decided on a position on forests only to have it all go up in smoke in this event. Things have changed dramatically. Both areas designated for protection and areas designated for logging have burnt and over 100 species have lost more than half of their habitat, so people are rightly asking why the government would contribute to that by continuing to allow logging of remaining threatened species habitat. I was also told in a briefing by the department that it may actually be some time until we know the full impact of these fires on endangered species. Given this, and given the uncertainty, will the Victorian government immediately put in place a moratorium on native forest logging that is happening right now, at least until we know the full impact of these fires on habitat and on our endangered species?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (11:27): Again, with the greatest of respect to the member for Melbourne, I do not agree with her characterisation essentially that people in the timber industry are rushing out to cut trees down as fast as they possibly can, somehow seeking to have some advantage out of these fires. I do not accept that. I do not accept that at all. I think that many people in the timber industry are out there operating heavy machinery, putting themselves in harm's way, clearing roads, cutting firebreaks, doing all sorts of important work—and I thank them on behalf of all Victorians for their work. There is no problem. It is not that people are opposed to them or their industry; it is simply that we are facing up to fact that there are massive challenges, and you can either be a victim of those circumstances by ignoring the challenges or you can make the tough call. It is a difficult call. But I would not want the member for Melbourne to think that the government is somehow seeking her sympathy. Yes, these are difficult issues but that is what government is about. The difficulty of the government in getting the balance right in forestry is nothing compared to the difficulty that some families in that industry will have to encounter, communities have had to encounter because of that transition and bushfire.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: MENTAL HEALTH REFORM

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Equality, Minister for Creative Industries) (11:28): I rise to update the house on the progress of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. Everyone in this place knows, I think everyone in this state knows, we have all experienced or have watched someone that we know or love suffer from our dysfunctional at times mental health system. Every Victorian has felt the impact of our mental health system's failings, and yet we know from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System that those failures, sadly, cost lives, tear communities apart and destroy far too many families. That is why we established the first royal commission in this state's long history, indeed in the country's history, into the overall operation of our mental health system. That is why in the interim report late last year the royal commission issued nine very firm recommendations.

I am pleased to update the house that the government has wasted no time in seeking to deliver on those nine interim recommendations. The first of those was to establish an implementation office quickly and to get that as the body that will report through government to the Parliament about delivering on those commitments. Mental Health Reform Victoria began work this week. I was very pleased that the Premier appointed Ms Pam Anders as the CEO and as the chief operating adviser Dr Simon Straface from Alfred Health as the key people. There are a whole range of recommendations associated with the interim report, which that office will now get on and deliver. One of those is a dedicated levy and fund to fund the changes necessary. This government will deliver that, and I use this opportunity to urge the opposition to change their view on that matter.

WEST GATE TUNNEL

Mr M O'BRIEN (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition) (11:30): My question is to the Premier. Where is the PFAS-contaminated toxic waste from the West Gate Tunnel Project going to be dumped?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (11:30): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Dealing with contaminated soil to the highest standards to protect workers, to protect communities, is a priority for our government. As such a process is underway to determine a site in consultation with, in the first instance, those who have primary responsibility for this. That is essentially the Environment Protection Authority Victoria and the builders involved. There is a process that is ongoing. I have no announcements to make in relation to where that spoil will ultimately go because no decision has been made.

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Again, let me put on—

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Yes, indeed. Doncaster rail, Rowville rail, airport rail—shall I go on? So just again for the record, I do not accept the member for Scoresby's—the father of the house—credentials when it comes to infrastructure delivery. I hope Hansard got that. I just want that recorded.

Safety is very important. Dealing with these matters appropriately is very important. No decision has been made. When one is made, then we will be able to have a fuller conversation and to provide the questioner with further details.

Mr M O'BRIEN (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition) (11:32): Will the Premier rule out allowing PFAS-contaminated toxic waste to be dumped in Ravenhall or Maddingley?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (11:32): The first point to make is that it seems that some people's views of this material have changed over time. Apparently you could roll around in it when they were in charge. Apparently you could eat it, nearly. It was all good, no problem. There was no need to do anything about PFAS when they were in charge. Indeed when someone was the Minister for Emergency Services—

Mr M O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is clearly debating the question. I ask you to bring him back to answering it.

The SPEAKER: I do ask the Premier to come back to answering the question.

Mr ANDREWS: It is toxic hypocrisy; that is what it is. This is dangerous material. We will treat it appropriately. We will make sure that the highest standards, from a protection point of view for the environment, people, community and staff, are maintained. If the Leader of the Opposition had been listening to the answer to his first question, where I said no decision has been made about where this material will go, that clearly answers his supplementary question. Well, what the Leader of the Opposition wants is to play political games, and we will not do that with safety.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: LEVEL CROSSING REMOVALS

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (11:33): I am delighted to rise to update the house on the progress that the government is making in removing congested and dangerous level crossings. Of particular interest to honourable members, I am sure none more so than the member for Carrum, is the removal of three dangerous level crossings in her local community. The member for Carrum has done an outstanding job in advocating to her community and working with them to remove these deathtraps, these dangerous and congested level crossings, to build new stations, to create jobs and to transform that part of her busy community.

Now, it is fair to say that some have not necessarily been as supportive of the project as the member for Carrum. It is very pleasing, though, and the member for Carrum informs me that she has had some people come through her office and they indicated to her: ‘Look, it looks amazing. Thank you. We had our doubts, but we’re convinced that it’s come up wonderfully. It’s going so well. Our community will be changed forever and for the better’.

Now, there are many, many people who do not think that getting rid of level crossings, improving traffic management, having a safer environment and providing multiple new stations that are accessible for every single Victorian—some people are absolutely opposed to that. I can remember one person who was absolutely—I cannot think of an adequate descriptor to do justice to the level of opposition that she had to the removal of these level crossings. It was not like she did not know the area. She used to have an office down there on Nepean Highway—absolutely root and branch opposed. They were the worst things that she had ever seen—terrible things. Well, we are getting on and delivering this, because it is the right thing to do. What is more, one might ask the question: what has happened to that principal opponent of these level crossing removals? I never thought I would do it, but can I quote the member for Kew by simply saying, ‘The people don’t get it wrong’. All the best to you, Inga!

Constituency questions

HASTINGS ELECTORATE

Mr BURGESS (Hastings) (11:36): (1827) My question is directed to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and the information I seek is on behalf of my Tooradin constituents regarding the declaration of Foreshore Road in Tooradin. I have previously been advised by the minister that Foreshore Road is built on Crown land permanently reserved for the protection of the coastline. To declare the road, the permanent reservation must first be revoked, which may only occur if specifically provided for in an act of Parliament. The minister has also advised that the proposal will be considered for inclusion in the next applicable bill. Following their discussion with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, my constituents have advised that Foreshore Road, Tooradin, was to be declared in 2015, 2016, 2017 and again in 2018 and that this matter could simply be resolved by the minister prioritising the legislation to be presented to the Victorian Parliament. In 2020, nearly five years on, my Tooradin constituents are asking: will the minister finally act to make this matter a priority?

BURWOOD ELECTORATE

Mr FOWLES (Burwood) (11:37): (1828) My question is directed to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. Minister, just prior to Christmas I found out that United Energy had scheduled a planned outage—a planned outage—for an area of my electorate on Christmas Eve. Needless to say, that outage was absurd—absolutely absurd. After representations made by me to United Energy, happily that decision was reversed, but it was an absolute nonsense that United Energy thought that they could ask residents in my electorate to turn off their fridges on Christmas Eve. My question to the minister is: what mechanisms are available to us to minimise the impact of planned disruptions and to improve the communications of these privatised power companies?

GIPPSLAND SOUTH ELECTORATE

Mr D O’BRIEN (Gippsland South) (11:38): (1829) My question is to the Minister for Public Transport, and I ask: when will the minister commit to providing additional train services on the Bairnsdale line, specifically to Sale? In light of the bushfires, such a decision would be a very good show of support for the Gippsland region, particularly at a time when we are encouraging people to come to Gippsland. We actually have the problem at the moment of strikes affecting V/Line on the Gippsland line. At the moment we have 20 services a day to and from Traralgon but just three to Sale. That is a pathetic performance, and it needs to be improved. We also had the government deliver an appalling performance on the Gippsland line in terms of punctuality. In the last 12 months they have not met their punctuality targets once. Trains to Traralgon were on time just one in two trips and to

Bairnsdale just three in four trips. This is terrible. We actually need additional services to Sale, and I call on the minister to deliver them.

MOUNT WAVERLEY ELECTORATE

Mr FREGON (Mount Waverley) (11:39): (1830) My question is for the Minister for Creative Industries, and I ask: what is the Andrews government doing to continue to grow and encourage our local musicians and artists in the Mount Waverley district? I am very pleased to inform the house that in this year's Triple J Hottest 100, Victorian artists have shone. In the top 10 alone we can lay claim to three artists, in Tones and I, G Flip and Thelma Plum, and also a very healthy representation throughout the count. I do have a small bone to pick with Triple J—that I could not find the Teskey Brothers in the list. We will have to have a look at that next year. Now, I will concede that Thelma Plum was originally from New South Wales, but as she has since moved to Melbourne I think we can proudly call her one of our own. Last year the Victorian representation was a bit slim, so I thank the minister for all the work that Creative Victoria and others have done to get us to this fantastic point. When it comes to our Victorian artists, as Molly would say, 'Do yourself a favour'.

EVELYN ELECTORATE

Ms VALLENCE (Evelyn) (11:40): (1831) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Minister for Road Safety and the TAC on behalf of residents in my community who want to know: when will the government commit funding to fix the dangerous stretch of road of Warburton Highway between Peters and Douthie roads, Seville East? In your last response to me last year you stated VicRoads were investigating ways to improve this section of the highway and would complete their review by July 2019. Half a year has passed since then and nothing has changed. There has been a complete lack of urgency. No action has been taken by the Andrews Labor government and its agencies to make this road safe. Minister, what recommendations were made by VicRoads from their investigation and when will action be taken to fix this road, and can you confirm it has been put in a pipeline project list, as local residents have been told by VicRoads? Motorists are still unable to turn safely into and from their homes, and with the start of the school year there is still no safe way for school students to cross safely from the bus stops. Local residents can no longer wait. Action needs to be taken now. Fix this known dangerous road before another tragedy.

RINGWOOD ELECTORATE

Mr HALSE (Ringwood) (11:41): (1832) My constituency question is for the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education, and I ask: what information can the minister provide regarding the government's inclusive schools program in the electorate of Ringwood? I recently had the pleasure of visiting Antonio Park Primary School in Mitcham with the Premier to announce \$200 000 for a new bush playground under the Victorian government's Inclusive Schools Fund program. The kids were excited by this announcement and have grand plans for the improvement of this much-loved playground area. They were also pretty happy with the icy poles on a 40-degree day. Play is important, and no kid should have to sit out and watch from the sidelines. I look forward to the minister's response.

MORWELL ELECTORATE

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) (11:41): (1833) My constituency question is to the Minister for Jobs, Innovation and Trade. Minister, what is the latest information regarding the fixing of mobile blackspots in regional Victoria and specifically in the communities of Toongabbie and Cowwarr in the Morwell electorate? Residents of these towns have been frustrated for years by the lack of mobile phone reception, and this frustration has been compounded by a number of emergency events over time, including fires and floods. This includes a horrible event last week in which Cowwarr Primary School was destroyed by fire. Members of both the Toongabbie CFA and Cowwarr CFA have frequently raised concerns with me about this very issue. When an emergency event occurs or when one tries to conduct business in the town or on a farm and you do not have mobile phone reception—

well, that is simply not good enough in 2020. I understand responsibility for these matters does not sit solely with the Victorian government, but on behalf of my constituents in the Toongabbie, Cowwarr and other communities in the Morwell electorate I ask the minister to work with the federal government and service providers to finally fix this extremely important safety issue.

BROADMEADOWS ELECTORATE

Mr McGuire (Broadmeadows) (11:42): (1834) My constituency question is to the Minister for Education. What information can he provide about the Andrews Labor government's commitment to expand the school breakfast clubs program, particularly for Broadmeadows? Since its inception it has delivered to 18 schools in my electorate. The research shows that a child's ability to concentrate in class, self-regulate and learn is diminished if they are hungry. It is as simple as that and as significant as that. One in five Australian students lives in a household without enough food for a healthy, active life. Around 20 per cent of students go to school without breakfast at least once a week, and 15 per cent go to school without lunch. Particularly students from low socio-economic backgrounds suffer more significantly, so that is why this is a really important initiative of this government. It really underscores what the Minister for Education was saying in question time as well: the more we invest in our children to give them the best chance in life, the best opportunity, the more it will help them develop, and it will be better for the future for all of us.

BENAMBRA ELECTORATE

Mr Tilley (Benambra) (11:43): (1835) My constituency question is to the Minister for Health in the other place. I ask the minister when she will sign the intergovernmental agreement 2018–2035 to provide certainty to Albury Wodonga Health to allow this unique cross-border health service to care for people on both sides of the Murray River. The minister was in Albury just last week when a funding announcement was derailed by media questions over the future of this alliance with the New South Wales government. This agreement is already two years out of date, and my community is understandably worried. The minister said the agreement would be signed soon, but my constituents have heard that all before. They know the sticking point relates to the funding of capital works on the northern side of the Murray River. But this, as the minister knows, is a Victorian hospital run by the Victorian department that just happens to sit in Albury. My constituents demand certainty. They want a date when you will sign the document or for you to simply approve the agreement and allow this incredible health service to plan for its future.

IVANHOE ELECTORATE

Mr Carbines (Ivanhoe) (11:44): (1836) My constituency question is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education. What is the latest information on the plan to conclude and rectify outstanding works at Viewbank College? This great \$11.5 million project includes new science and technology classrooms and of course its centrepiece, the new performing arts centre, which was opened in 2018 by the Premier. I am pleased to be a past student of Viewbank College. I have attended many brilliant performances at the college by the students—musical productions, musical gala nights and the like—along with hundreds of parents, families and friends. The performing arts centre has also been the hub for many community organisations and for local primary school graduations and the like. It is a real community asset. There are always some bits and pieces to follow up with when you have such a massive project that has enjoyed great support from both the Minister for Education and the Premier, and I am just keen to see those outstanding matters concluded. I look forward to that advice.

Bills

GENDER EQUALITY BILL 2019

*Second reading***Debate resumed.**

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) (11:45): So why are we working so hard to bring about gender equality in Victoria and to introduce this legislation? It sets it out pretty clearly in the bill, and I think it is worth repeating: we believe all Victorians should live in a safe and equal society, we believe all Victorians should have access to equal power, resources and opportunities and we believe all Victorians should be treated with dignity, respect and fairness. This is gender equality. We are doing this and striving for it, and we are not going to stop until we achieve it, because it is the right thing to do, it is the fair thing to do and gender equality brings with it benefits to all Victorians whatever their gender. Gender equality is a basic human right. It also brings prosperity and economic, social and health benefits for Victorians. We know also, particularly from the tireless work of campaigners like Rosie Batty and so many others who contributed to the royal commission on the prevention of family violence, that gender equality is actually a precondition for the prevention of family violence and gendered violence against women and girls.

I say this following a really tragic event which happened on Tuesday afternoon. It was actually in my suburb of Seaford. It was three streets from my home. A woman was stabbed to death in her home. It was 4.40 in the afternoon. She had three children—the three children were present. A male known to the family and known to the woman has been arrested and charged. My community is angry. They are reeling from this, they are distressed, they are concerned for the welfare of the children. They want change and they deserve change, and this legislation, this bill, is part of that change—bringing about gender equality so that we end gendered violence against women and children.

Family violence is a gendered crime, full stop. I do not want to hear any more on this topic. I saw comments coming out on social media saying it is not a gendered crime. It is a gendered crime. The majority of victims are women. If we are serious about ending violence against women, and about ending family violence, then we must address gender inequality. That is not just in my suburb of Seaford. It is across all of our suburbs. It is throughout all of our communities. It is happening in our workplaces; gender inequality is in our schools, in our communities and in our sporting clubs. We must stand together. We must pass this legislation. We must do everything that we can to address gender inequality.

We are already doing so much. Victoria is leading the nation. But it has been too slow. This legislation is about standing up and saying, 'We are now leading. We are introducing a law that is going to purposefully, decidedly and determinedly bring about a shift in our culture, in our behaviours and in the way that we deal with each other'. We are starting in the workplace, with our public authorities, with the public service, with councils, with universities. This is an extraordinary step. I am so proud to be a part of this government that is delivering on this commitment to gender equality and to ending family violence and gendered violence. I wish those on the other side would support this. This is such a good time in Victoria. We are on the right side of history, and I absolutely commend this bill to the house.

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) (11:49): I am absolutely delighted to rise to speak on the Gender Equality Bill 2019. I am very proud to be part of the Andrews Labor government, who is delivering this significant reform, which is long overdue. I want to begin by acknowledging and thanking the amazing women who have been in our cabinet as Minister for Women, and who were responsible for this bill. I want to name the three women that have driven this. I know that there are many women that have gone before us that have achieved major, significant changes for gender equity, but I think without these three women and the work that they have done we would not be standing in this place today debating this bill. First, the late Fiona Richardson, who was the member for Northcote, worked with the government to ensure that this bill had a passage and a pathway. It was then taken up by the

member for Sydenham as the Minister for Women and of course by our now current Minister for Women, who has brought this to where we are today. Their passion and commitment to gender equity in the state of Victoria is just fantastic. I want to pay special tribute to all three of those women, particularly to the current Minister for Women, who now has the job of driving this forward and delivering this significant legislation.

For me, having waited 62 years today for this, and for the many women before us who have worked so hard to achieve this, I want to congratulate all of them. I personally see this as a great achievement and one of the most significant things that this government has done. Obviously this is a first in Australia, which we should all be very proud of. This is really an historic event that we are having today, and I am happy to be doing it on my birthday.

It is also disappointing that those opposite have not given it any time, really, apart from one lead speaker. I think it is disappointing that they do not appear to have any interest in gender equality in our state, and I think that reflects on where they are at this time. I think we also need to reflect our community—51 per cent of our community are women, and we need to represent that. That is exactly what this government is doing with this legislation.

There are always excuses. We heard the lead speaker from the opposition earlier talk about all the reasons why we should not have this legislation. My view is that I have heard enough excuses as to why we should not do these things. This is something where I think many—and I know in my community as well—believe that if we do not introduce legislation, we are never going to achieve gender equality in this state. As I said, in the past we have had achievements, but I almost feel like it is one step forward and two steps back. At the moment, if we look at the international data, we are falling way behind other countries in gender equity. So, as I said, I am very proud to be standing here today, talking about this bill.

It is great to see so many women in the gallery today. I know there are women from Geelong that have come along to hear this debate. In Geelong I am very proud to say that there has been a strong commitment to seeing this bill come to fruition. Over the last probably three or four years women in Geelong from different organisations have come together to be a part of the consultation that the minister's office has run, and the department has run, but also to look at what we need to do in Geelong to have gender equity be successful in our community.

This is about empowering women and girls in our community. One of the things I am really pleased about with this legislation is that my granddaughters will get the benefit of this legislation. This is about women in my community—the many, many women that have come along to the different forums that we have run around this bill—and what it means to them and what achievements they can gain through the content of this bill.

As a government, we wanted to hear from the broader community around what should be in the bill and what it should contain. For four years there has been consultation on this bill. So for anybody to argue that there has not been adequate consultation or that what is in the bill is not right, I would challenge that—very much so. As we heard the previous minister, the member for Sydenham, mention earlier, they ran the citizens jury. They had an enormous amount of consultation around this bill. Much of that was taken into consideration when the bill was drafted, so I am very proud that we were able to do that.

We heard the community views and the ideas about what gender equity laws should look like during those four years of consultation, and that actually helped shape the development of the bill. It was very clear from the consultations that the strong view was that sustainable gender equality would not be achieved without legislation designed to drive systematic structural and cultural change. I was really pleased to hear that because I have had that view myself, and it just reinforced what I felt and what many women in my community felt as well.

During those four years we established what we call the Geelong Gender Equity Coalition. That was made up of people from Deakin University, Gordon TAFE, Women's Health and Wellbeing Barwon South West, Barwon Centre Against Sexual Assault, the Geelong Trades Hall, the City of Greater Geelong, Business in Heels and many others. That was a great opportunity for us to talk about gender equality and how it might roll out in Geelong. I was very proud to be part of that group, talking about the importance of gender equality and how we might roll that out.

Of course there is still a long way to go—there is no doubt about that. This bill is a step towards gender equality in Victoria, but we still have a lot more work to do. We know that women experience a gender pay gap of 9.6 per cent due to unequal workforce participation, discrimination, and insecure and low paid work. I know, very much so, in my working class city of Geelong, many women—the majority—are in in low-paid jobs and insecure work and would like to have the opportunities that their male colleagues have. But this bill is about equality for men as well, because men, more and more these days, are wanting to spend time taking care of their children, having flexible work hours, so they also will benefit from this bill. We have an expectation that the likes of councils and organisations like universities and government authorities will be required to have those policies in place to ensure that there is equity across the workforce.

I think the gender equity commissioner is critical to this legislation. The opposition's view that we do not need it is just totally wrong. We need that monitoring. We need that person or organisation ensuring that there is compliance. Organisations will be required to report every two years and then again every four years, and I think that in itself makes it really important that those organisations will be required to respond to the legislation once it is passed and comply with the gender equity audits that will be required—looking at policy and ensuring that there is genuine equity. I know in my local government area of Geelong they have been doing a power of work on this. Obviously there is more work to do, but I am really proud that organisations in my community, including Barwon Water, Barwon Health and the Gordon TAFE—all those organisations—have already started a path towards gender equality in my community of Geelong. I am very proud of that. I know we have a long way to go, but I think this is such an important piece of legislation. I know that in my community of Geelong, young women, secondary school girls, are really keen to see this legislation pass because it does set a pathway for them in the future. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (11:59): I am pleased to have the opportunity to make a contribution on this bill. It seems like in some ways it has been a very long time coming because women's issues have been on the agenda for so long. I think back to the suffragettes and all those people in the last century and the century before who in some cases gave up their lives to fight for the right to vote and the right to own property—the right to do so much. In my lifetime, I remember in the early 1970s joining the Women's Electoral Lobby and being involved in women's lib and all these things. And then things go quiet a bit, and now we are in a stage where people are seeing the need to entrench this sort of legislation in the law so that it creates a framework that we can go forward with. I think that is really what this bill does. It is an impetus to everyone to think more about gender issues, about equality, and that is really the reason I support the bill.

It enshrines in legislation that 'defined entities', being the public sector, councils and universities, take positive action towards achieving gender equality, and it requires them to promote gender equality in their policies, their programs and their services. The bill also establishes the public sector gender equality commissioner. I agree with the member for Geelong that that is an important issue. Somebody needs to be overlooking what is going on, providing the sorts of information and frameworks that organisations will need to comply with through the legislation.

On other aspects of the bill, it requires all of those organisations I just mentioned to undertake gender impact assessments. They need to address workplace gender inequality by preparing gender equality action plans every four years, with a requirement for organisations subject to the bill to report every

two years and to make reasonable and material progress in the workplace. They are required to report on the progress of the actions that they identify in those impact assessment statements.

Sometimes these things might seem like it is all over-regulation and all too hard and difficult to manage, but I think we only need to look back over a range of legislation that has come in over many years, whether it be the Victorian WorkCover Authority, WorkSafe Victoria—people used to die on worksites on a regular basis. We addressed that. We have road rules to address the issues around road safety. We have organisations that monitor and deal with that and do a lot of educational work to bring people along with the sort of legislation that gets passed, and I really see this is just an extension of that. The bill will allow the Governor in Council to make regulations for or with respect to any manner or thing associated with the bill.

Then we come to prescribed entities, which really can take it, I believe, outside the scope of those organisations that I named before. Organisations with 50 employees or more can come within the scope of the bill. I assume that those smaller organisations have been left out because of the regulatory workload that might impose for some businesses and in rural and regional areas, but I would hope that the general tenor of it throughout all organisations is adopted. Certainly I know, as a lawyer in private practice who had two children during that time and had bassinets under desks while I was seeing clients and doing all sorts of things, you can manage all sorts of things, and I certainly employed quite a few women over my years in practice during those times. You can have flexibility; you can have flexible working hours; you can work at night instead of during the day if you need to. So there are many ways of achieving it, and it is really just about having the flexibility. But in this case the legislation is actually creating an onus, and I think that is a good thing because so many people will always try and slide away from these sorts of issues.

I support the bill and what it stands for. Women comprise two-thirds of Victoria's public sector and apparently have an 11 per cent pay gap—same work, same job—and that seems to me to be quite extraordinary in this day and age. So I am proud to be a woman in this political field here in the Victorian Parliament. I notice that the Parliamentary Elections (Women Candidates) Act 1923 received royal assent in 1924, and that act saw Lady Millie Peacock become the first female member of the Victorian Parliament. When you look around the Victorian Parliament now, it is really amazing to see the difference. Just seeing the member for Lowan before, very pregnant, talking about her experience, about the fact that she will be having a baby here in Parliament—you know, coming with her at times—and that she now feels that that is something she is supported to do; that is a terrific thing. We have seen many other women, even just in the five years I have been here, pregnant and bringing babies along with them and managing this really important role of representing our communities.

I cannot help but reflect on rural issues when I think about this bill. I was just recently at the International Dairy Week in Tatura and spoke to a group of women in the evening. In my lifetime farmers wives were called farmers wives, when really all they were were farmers. That has really changed. I think it is just a great thing that farmers are now farmers, whether they are men or women. It is that social change that comes along. If someone now says, 'Well, she's a farmer's wife', we glare at them; everyone would glare at them, because that is simply not acceptable. They are out there doing everything that the men do and have a really significant role in the management of farms. It is a really significant reflection, and just walking around in that huge arena with all these magnificent cows were so many women leading the cows, grooming the cows and taking a really active part in that whole dairying industry. It is very much an industry where women take a very significant role. To all the women who have gone before us, in so many fields, I think we really have a debt of gratitude to them, because they have made every step of the way that bit easier for us, and here we are now passing legislation that really recognises a lot of the hard work that has previously been done.

The bill seeks to remove the systemic causes of gender inequality in policies, programs and services in our workplaces, and I think without some form of target, then that notion of gender equality becomes quite hard to really take up, keep at front of mind and pursue. I recall being on other boards when we

had to talk about carbon emissions. You had to actually have evidence that you were doing something to achieve a certain amount of carbon emissions reduction at one time in history. A lot of these things come and go, but that was no less a burden. This is even more significant, in that it is about relations between the genders, and it is about women having an opportunity to go forward.

The bill, I think, sort of proceeds in some ways a lot of the work that has been done. When I think about the district of Shepparton I can refer to steps that have already been taken. In 2018 the Greater Shepparton City Council developed the *Gender Equity Strategy and Action Plan 2018–2020*, really as an internal document and a tool to sort of encourage workplace equality and foster cultural change. Moira shire, in my electorate, appointed an officer specifically for that task. The Greater Shepparton Family Violence Prevention Network, as part of the global 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, held an event that really promoted the notion of gender equality and being able to talk about it openly. The Greater Shepparton Women's Charter Advisory Committee is a really active organisation that tries to promote more women going into leadership roles, into local government and also into workplaces, community groups and local boards of management. There are many organisations in our region, I am pleased to say, because I think often in rural areas people think we are behind the times. But there is actually a lot going on out there, and we are right up with it and working hard towards those things.

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) (12:09): It is with great pride that I stand today to speak on the Gender Equality Bill 2019. I am happy to be following the member for Shepparton and to just also reflect on it as a member in this place representing regional Victoria, of course, in the week that we have celebrated the great achievements of the Cain government, one of which was the establishment of the Rural Women's Network, a great network and a great group that really encouraged women to own their role as farmers, to identify as farmers and to break down those barriers. It is a very important network that was of course defunded by the member for Murray Plains, the Leader of the National Party, when the coalition came to power in 2010.

As I said, in the week that we have celebrated John Cain and all that has been achieved, it is timely to remember that it is only Labor governments that ever make advances in the interests of women and girls, and this is yet again one of those. It is a great milestone in the interests of girls and women. At this point I would like to say how delighted I am that there are so many young women in the gallery today. As someone who has been around a while, this is really a great Labor legacy, and it is for the young women in our community that we rise today.

It is also extremely important in this current climate to note that a person who is a victim blamer and an apologist for child sex abusers has received an Australia Day honour. Can I call out our Attorney-General for her work in bringing the attention of the nation to the mistreatment of our nation's greatest honours. I support her in her call for Bettina Arndt to be stripped of that honour.

In the Labor Party we are always ready for the backlash that accompanies true reform, and we have certainly seen it with our once-in-a-generation family violence reforms. But we will not be deterred from doing what is the right thing, and that is to make the world a more equal and fairer place. So I am very proud of the Andrews Labor government's record, and I am going to take you through some of the highlights. We have consistently pursued gender equality in the five years that we have been in office, and I want to take this opportunity to reflect on some of the achievements. Of course there is our world-leading Royal Commission into Family Violence. We are still the only party that is fully committed to the implementation of every single one of the 227 recommendations of that royal commission. I might take this opportunity to make the point that there is scarcely anyone here from the opposition to challenge me on that, because there is currently only one member of the Liberal Party in the house. Let the record also reflect that there has only been one speaker from the coalition on this bill, the member for Lowan—of course a National Party member—so there have been no speakers from the Liberal Party on this bill.

Of course arising from the royal commission we have established Family Safety Victoria and established the family violence prevention agency Respect Victoria, which is leading the brilliant campaign Respect Women: Call It Out. We have introduced Respectful Relationships in schools, again opposed by those on the other side and yet welcomed by every school in my community. We have passed legislation that will enable the deregistering of Wicked Campers and any other vehicle that carries offensive and derogatory slogans primarily directed at women.

Of course here in Victoria so much of what we do is identified by our passion for sport. What I have really been so proud of, the difference it has made on the ground, is our absolute commitment to ensuring that women in sport are supported and encouraged to play and that they are recognised. Here is a small thing but something I feel very passionate about as a young woman who was required to wear either a skirt or a dress during her entire schooling: in fact government schools are now required to provide all girls with a uniform option of pants and shorts—thank goodness for that—so that young girls can stay healthy and active, get on the monkey bars, swing upside down, be creative and feel free to be themselves.

We have established the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation, and we have backed the This Girl Can campaign. We have built more than 150 female-friendly facilities across the state, including in my own electorate. We have got right behind elite competitions, including the AFLW. I might take this opportunity to note that the member for Brighton, who was previously in the house for a short time but has left now, has invited Tayla Harris to Parliament next week for a function that he is having. Why is he not using the opportunity that this bill presents to rise up and call out the appalling sexist, sexualised treatment of that great female champion? In fact let us be clear. Tayla Harris identified her experience of what happened to her as feeling sexually abused by the comments that were made on social media. So I say to the absent member for Brighton: why are you not on your feet using this opportunity to call out those people who use social media to denigrate and abuse women in ways that would never, ever, ever happen to men?

The \$7.2 million Change our Game campaign is helping to level the playing field for women and girls in all sports and across every field of recreation, and of course there is a record investment to rebuild the State Netball and Hockey Centre. Let us not forget that netball is still the number one sport played by girls and women, and it is this government that is making sure that our netballers have the highest quality facilities available to them. In another interesting development down at the State Netball and Hockey Centre, the Minister for Jobs, Innovation and Trade has also worked with the contractors to ensure that lots of women are being employed on that project. Half of the contractors' project staff are women, as are three of the four staff from Development Victoria's project team. Kane Constructions has also pledged to maximise female participation on the project while encouraging subcontractors to do the same.

We know that women account for just 17 per cent of construction jobs and less than 6 per cent of technical and trade roles. Why are we encouraging women into these roles? Because we want women to have their fair share of the well-paid and secure jobs that currently exist in our state. So I am really delighted about this. Of course we have set targets for women's participation and employment in the CFA and the MFB.

We have released a sexual and reproductive health strategy. We are raising awareness about endometriosis and menopause with new resources to encourage women to recognise the symptoms and ensure that they are getting the best health care that they need. This is the government that introduced safe access zones for women seeking terminations and other sexual health services here in Victoria. We are also ensuring that girls at school have access to free pads and tampons. Again this is about destigmatising menstruation and ensuring that girls are encouraged to participate fully at school at all times. This is of course on top of a commitment to ensure that no less than 50 per cent of government board and judicial appointments are women, a commitment that we have already

delivered on, and a gender-equal cabinet—certainly an impressive list of achievements, and these are only some.

I look to the opposition benches. There is no-one here. Let it be noted that the member for Ferntree Gully is the only member here. This is a government that supports both equality and diversity, and this is what happens when 48 per cent of your MPs are women. This is a party that is steadfast in its commitment to ensuring equality for women, and I would say to you, member for Ferntree Gully: how is merit working out for you over there? How is merit working out for you now? You have an opportunity. A member for Eastern Metropolitan Region is retiring from this place, but apparently, according to all the reports, there are no meritorious women in the whole of Eastern Metropolitan who are members of the Liberal Party.

I am going to conclude. Firstly, I need to acknowledge the ministers who have worked so hard to deliver this once-in-a-lifetime bill to this place: the Minister for Women and Minister for Prevention of Family Violence; the member for Dandenong, who has been here for the whole of the debate today, I note, which is terrific; and of course the preceding ministers, the member for Sydenham and the late Fiona Richardson.

But can I finish on this note: apparently one of the Liberal Party's challenges is that it is indeed our fault, the Labor Party's fault, that there are so few Liberal women in this place because, as a member for Western Metropolitan Region in the other place said:

If the Labor Party and the Greens want to have more women in the Liberal Party—

Mr Wakeling: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I appreciate that the member is on her feet, she is on a roll and she is trying to play it out, but this is not a bill about the Liberal Party, and I ask the member to come back to the bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The member for Macedon has concluded.

Mr PALLAS (Werribee—Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations) (12:19): I suppose one of the things we do learn—and I have been under a fair degree of tutelage about this—is that interrupting women when they are making a point is a clear sign of our embedded approach to gender and respect. Australia's first female Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, once said:

I know reform is never easy. But I know reform is right.

Another great reformer and champion of gender equity, the late great John Cain, once said that if you have the choice between the hard thing to do and the easy thing to do, always choose the right thing to do. This is not only the right thing to do; this legislation is a moral, a social and an economic imperative. The Andrews Labor government is determined to drive change and to take a lead role in championing gender equality. Australia's first gender equality bill delivers on our election commitment to introduce legislation to eliminate the pay gap and to boost women's workforce participation. The bill requires public sector organisations with 50 or more employees to publicly report on their progress towards achieving equal pay, ensuring better access to flexible work arrangements and preventing sexual harassment and gender discrimination.

In Australia part-time work is an established practice, but flexible work is hardly the norm. One of the biggest barriers to a more flexible workplace is a lack of understanding about the bottom-line benefits to business. In 2018 the Andrews Labor government commissioned a study modelling financial returns on flexible work. It found that flexible work delivered significant savings across organisations. The objective was to provide evidence of the value of flexible work practices not just in terms of social responsibility but also for the bottom line. This work was part of our firm commitment to address gender equality in the workplace. In Victoria's Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

the estimated saving was \$135 million over five years. To any Treasurer in any state that is a good business case for change and one well worth pursuing in this Parliament.

The bill establishes a public sector gender equality commissioner who will have the power to undertake dispute resolution in relation to systemic gender equality issues—the first dispute resolution function of its kind in this nation. Disputes arising under an enterprise agreement or workplace determination that relate to a systemic gender equality issue in a public sector body may be referred to the commissioner. The commissioner can deal with a dispute as they consider appropriate, except by arbitration or by making a binding determination. This may include mediation, conciliation or indeed making a recommendation or expressing an opinion. The bill also creates a power for the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer, in consultation with the Minister for Women, to develop and issue funding guidelines to promote or advance gender equality—a profoundly valuable and worthwhile initiative.

As part of our commitment to promote the human rights of workers, the Andrews Labor government is making significant progress towards gender equality. The gender pay gap in the Victorian public service has almost halved since this government came to office, falling from just over 6 per cent to just over 3 per cent. We are making gains towards having 50 per cent women in executive public service roles and 50 per cent female membership on government boards.

Ms Williams: Fifty-three per cent right now.

Mr PALLAS: I am now advised that we have got there: over 53 per cent female membership on government boards. We move so quickly, this government.

Last year I was proud to launch Victoria's first *Women in Construction Strategy* to encourage more women to consider a career in construction. In 2020, 48 per cent of Labor MPs are women, compared to only 19 per cent of Victorian Liberal MPs. For the first time in the state's history half of the Victorian cabinet are women. I acknowledge the Minister for Women here at the table with me and the outstanding work that she has done on this bill. We are proud of this effort, and we are proud as a government that we continue to strive to improve our efforts through things such as the introduction of this bill. Victoria's first female Premier, Joan Kirner, insisted that 'women be judged by their contribution—not somebody's view of what they should be about'.

Although labour force participation continues to rise to record heights in Victoria, women's workforce participation remains lower than men's. Unconscious bias continues to infiltrate both promotion and recruitment. Gendered segregation of roles entrenches stereotypes, and it also inhibits productive workplace cultures. This bill will enhance workplace productivity and address current and future skill shortages. It will make it easier for over 300 000 Victorians to enjoy a workplace that is both fair and equitable across all genders. A woman's place is wherever she wants to be.

As Minister for Industrial Relations I would like to thank the Equal Workplaces Advisory Council for their important contribution to the development of this bill. I know through the discussions that I have had with them the passion that they have demonstrated to see that the government not only produces the words but delivers the substantive effort necessary to remove some of the entrenched and sometimes insidious ways that not only the formal practices of government but also the informal practices have created barriers so that they can be most appropriately addressed. Those cultural changes are critically important as part of this, and that is why I think the commissioner's role will be so vitally important in the long term. I commend the bill to the Assembly and I look forward to it passing into law.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (12:27): It gives me great pleasure to follow the Treasurer on the Gender Equality Bill 2019. I note that I think he is the first male speaker on this bill. Thank you so much for the work that you have done as Treasurer during my time in Parliament, unlike the other side. I think that anyone who votes for the conservative side of politics, or thinks about it, should actually be looking at this chamber right now. We have one Independent, the member for Shepparton, sitting on

this side of the house and one Liberal Party member, a male member. That tells you absolutely everything that you need to know about gender equality on the conservative side of politics in this place in the 21st century and more broadly. I think we have also seen examples of that in Canberra only this week with the reshuffle and the appointment of new ministers. Women do not get supported within the conservative parties as individuals, and they do not get supported in policy. Every time they get on the government benches—

Mr Wakeling: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I do appreciate that this is a wideranging debate, but this is not an opportunity for the member to be talking about the opposition. This is an opportunity for the member to talk about the bill that is before the house, not an opportunity to attack the opposition, which appears to be a pattern, unfortunately, of some of the speakers—some of the speakers, I should say.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member is making references to other levels of Parliament, and that is perfectly acceptable. I ask the member to continue.

Ms GREEN: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I think that interruption and that point of order goes to the heart of what the Liberal Party do in this chamber. They disproportionately interrupt women speakers when they are on their feet. It is exactly what the member for Ferntree Gully did to the member for Macedon—and does almost any time I am on my feet. I wear it as a badge of honour that he wants to interrupt what I have got to say. I am sure the member for Eltham wears it as a badge of honour. I am sure that the member for Yuroke wears it as a badge of honour—and particularly the member for Macedon. Almost every time there is a quorum called or an interruption, it is a government female member who is on her feet. You will be defined by your actions—your actions in opposition and your actions in government. We are absolutely proud to be bringing this Gender Equality Bill before the house this week, and I think it is so, so fitting following the condolence motion on Tuesday for the late great John Cain. Some of us had the great privilege—and there were many members of the opposition there—to be at the memorial service, and I just wish they had listened and learned from the amazing achievements that particularly Mary Crooks in her eulogy went through that were the achievements of the Cain government.

One of those was the establishment of the Rural Women's Network. Contextually, that network exists now. I am the Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Victoria. I grew up in regional Victoria. I commend the member for Shepparton on her contribution when she talked about what gender equality means for women in regional areas, as did the member for Macedon. That network was an amazing opening of so many doors to women in regional areas in the 1980s. It was an absolute lifeline for those women in the 1980s and 90s. I saw it firsthand because I actually worked as a public servant in the network for a short period of time, and I was the editor of the magazine. That magazine actually had a circulation of around 20 000 at its peak.

Of course when the Kennett government got into office they were afraid of the political power of the network. They sought to diminish its significance by shifting it to Ballarat under the guise of saying that they wanted it to operate in Ballarat, but it was essentially to get rid of the progressive women who were actually working in the network. I was one of those, and because I had young children I actually could not move to Ballarat. I was put on the redeployment list, and that was one of four occasions. On the fourth occasion I thought, 'If the Government Printer isn't the worst place for women or any public servant to work, I won't find out what is'. There were so many women in leadership who lost their jobs during that dreadful period, and it was a dreadful period of upheaval around the Employee Relations Act. It was actually an offence for any public servant to divulge to the person they were sitting next to—doing the same job—what their pay was. And of course what do you do you think happened then? The rate of pay for women plummeted. The rate of women in senior roles plummeted.

When the Bracks government came to office with a huge number of women and women in the ministry—perish the thought; there had only been three in the Kennett era—we had a job to do to undo

that damage and replace the human capital. Of course they always cut in health and education, which disproportionately has women employed. We saw great support for women and improvements around women throughout the Bracks and Brumby governments, and then, as the member for Macedon remarked, what happened to the Rural Women's Network during the Baillieu and Napthine governments? The Rural Women's Network ceased to exist. Firstly, it was diminished. It no longer had a paper magazine; it was online. The then member for Bayswater was the Minister for Women's Affairs, and she thought this would make it more accessible. Obviously she did not know about the digital divide, particularly for women on farms in regional areas, so she did not speak up at all.

I want to commend a magnificent work experience student, Bella Tatchell-Pittman, who was at school in Hamilton and grew up in Warnambool. She was on work experience with me and came to the Victorian Honour Roll of Women awards during this period. It had so gotten to the point of ridiculous that they could not even manage to have a woman compere for the awards. This was during Heidi Victoria's tenure as the minister for women. David Mann from 3AW is a good bloke and he does a lot of good work in emergency services, but to have him compere the Victorian women's honour roll and stand up and go, 'I'm David Mann from 3AW—Mann about town', this 16-year-old called it out. The emperor had no clothes. She said, 'Why have they got a man compering this thing?'. The women who were there who were being added to the honour roll were so appalled.

But it got worse. Not only did the Rural Women's Network go online, but then it was completely shut down by the Leader of the National Party. So absolutely, what you do in opposition and what you do in government defines you, and 51 per cent of the population of this state are women and girls. Before the member for Macedon was rudely interrupted, I did want to repeat the words of a member for Western Metropolitan Region in the other place:

If the Labor Party and the Greens want to have more women in the Liberal Party, what they should have done is not defeated them, that would have been a very good thing if they hadn't run against our women.

That was Bernie Finn in 2018. I am glad I have got that on the record now for the member for Macedon. We have a current vacancy for the position of Mary Wooldridge, who had to fight for her own political life; let us not forget that. She was knocked off by the member for Kew and so had to move houses—they were so afraid that she might go for the leadership. Now that talented woman is leaving the Parliament. Will there be a woman come in? No, there will not. There is only one who has put her hand up. The mayor of Nillumbik was rumoured to be putting her hand up—Karen Egan—and I believe she was bullied out of it by the deputy mayor, Peter Clarke, who has an appalling record against women, bullying women in the community and trying to bully me. Every time I say something he takes me to privileges—

Mr Wakeling: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, if the member is wishing to make aspersions against members of the public, she needs to be very careful about the comments she makes. Again I repeat my call: she needs to limit the debate to the bill before the house.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member's time has expired.

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Public Transport) (12:37): I rise to make a contribution on the Gender Equality Bill 2019. What I would like to recognise today is the number of young women who are sitting in the gallery, who are here to actually see landmark legislation. So well done, and well done on participating in the democratic process.

I would also like to follow on from the member for Yan Yean's contribution in talking about this bill, and I cannot begin to speak about this bill without talking about Joan Kirner, another former Premier of this place. Women on this side of the Parliament owe a particular debt of gratitude to the former Premier and representative of my district now of Williamstown. Kay Setches and Joan set up EMILY's List, an organisation to nurture and fund progressive women candidates for office. As a proud member of EMILY's List I think it has been the catalyst for success for so many women, and it is in this tradition that this bill comes before us today.

At present there is an 11 per cent pay gap across the Victorian public sector, and although women comprise two-thirds of the Victorian public sector, they account for less than 44 per cent of public sector executives. They are concentrated in the lower paid jobs and are more likely than men to be paid at the lowest end of the salary scale. Whilst Victoria has laws that prevent discrimination based on gender, there is currently no law to proactively drive gender equality. This bill presents an opportunity to improve gender equality in the Victorian public sector workplaces and across the wider community.

The bill supports the achievement of workplace gender equality in the Victorian public sector, universities and councils through contributing to closing the gender pay gap by targeting its key drivers; improving gender equality at all levels of the workforce; reducing gendered workforce segregation; providing greater availability and uptake of family violence leave, flexible work and parental leave arrangements; reducing sexual harassment in the workplace as well as cases of discrimination during pregnancy, parental leave or return to work; and improving the equity in recruitment and promotion practices. As a former executive in the public sector, being able to have that legislative framework that encourages women—being able to say, ‘Here is an opportunity before you women to be able to take up and stand equal to your male colleagues’—is absolutely fundamental to driving that diversity in the public sector.

This bill will also progress gender equality in the wider community by requiring organisations subject to the bill to consider the gendered impact of policies, programs and services that have a direct and significant impact on the public, ensuring that these programs and services meet community needs. It will require that the Victorian public sector, local councils and universities take positive actions towards achieving workplace gender equality, requiring these organisations to consider and promote gender equality in their policies, programs and services. It will establish a public sector gender equality commissioner to undertake education and implementation support functions as well as monitoring, compliance and enforcement functions.

I know from experience that it is not just having that framework. It is also the education policy that is so important: being able to say to men who are in leadership positions in the public sector and those types of organisations, ‘It’s not just about providing equal opportunity; it’s actually looking into your workforce’; being able to go in there and say, ‘Where are the gaps? Where can women make a contribution?’; and actively going out there and recruiting them and then providing them with the opportunities to flourish. That is precisely what the items in this bill will do.

One of the key things that we are doing in the transport portfolio is setting up a Women in Transport program. It was set up in 2017, and it covers the entire transport portfolio. It is the first of its kind in Australia. The initial investment was \$1.1 million, but it has now grown to more than \$2 million. We have developed 15 program initiatives to encourage more women to enter and to stay in transport—and that is everything from undergraduate scholarships to mentoring for engineers and quotas for rail and infrastructure apprentices. And, young women, if you are looking for a job in transport, can I say there has never been a better time to get out there and look in those traditionally male-dominated industries.

The aim, through the Women in Transport program, was to increase the number of women in transport from 16 per cent in 2017 to 25 per cent in 2020 and to lift the number of women in senior roles in the public sector to 50 per cent. Women in Transport partners with the Asset Management Council of Australia for mentoring; the Monash University PhD scholarships; the Mary Jane Lewis Scholarship Foundation, with six undergrad scholarships for disadvantaged young women to study in transport-related fields; and Women & Leadership Australia, with programs for 36 women.

In ports and freight and in public transport we now have 50-50 gender representation on boards. That includes port corporations and V/Line. The Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria board is all women. The Level Crossing Removal Project Training for the Future program and the Department of Transport trainee and cadet programs have 50 per cent targets for women’s participation. Since 2017 the program has achieved a women’s participation rate of 43 per cent.

In 2017 only 10 per cent of all rail signalling cadets were women; now 30 per cent are. The Level Crossing Removal Project's engineering pathway, which started a few months ago, will target women who are refugees and asylum seekers. Forty-four per cent of the 4000 people working at the Department of Transport are now women. The transport portfolio—which includes bus, train and tram operators, the public sector and its agencies and project teams that are part of the Major Transport Infrastructure Authority—employs about 25 000 people. Thirty-eight per cent of senior leadership positions at the Department of Transport are held by women. At public transport operators it is 21 per cent.

A great workforce reflects the people it serves. We can only deliver the best transport for Victorians if we find and retain the best people for the job from 100 per cent of the population. Our new franchising agreements included a requirement that both our partners work towards 40 per cent of all staff being women.

In conclusion, we have made strides forward, but there is still a long way to go. This bill presents a remarkable opportunity to proactively drive gender equality. This presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to get this right, to put our ethics into action and to make real change. I commend this bill to the house.

Ms RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (12:45): Whilst I rise to contribute to this debate with great honour and recognise that the Gender Equality Bill 2019 is a terrific step forward, it is also with a heavy heart that I am conscious that this bill is about so much more than gender equity. This bill will promote gender equity, because we know—and the science is crystal clear—that it is gender inequality that is the disease at the base of the scourge of family violence in this state.

This bill promotes gender equality in the community by considering how policies, programs and services can impact people of different genders. It has been developed to improve workplace gender equality. This bill requires the Victorian public sector, councils and universities to take positive action towards achieving workplace gender equality, and of course it will require defined entities to develop a gender equality action plan every four years. It will require these entities to promote gender equality in the workplace based on the results of gender audits and prepare public progress reports every two years. It will compel entities to promote gender equality in their policies, programs and services through completing gender impact statements. It will, importantly, establish the public sector gender equality commissioner to embark on monitoring, compliance and enforcement. The person that plays this role is fundamental to this bill; we have heard from those opposite, and I can assure you that organisations need to be held to account, and this person will have the power to do that. The Gender Equality Bill will apply to public service organisations with 50 or more employees and will cover 300 organisations. That will make up 11 per cent of the Victorian workforce, and I am delighted to assure the community it will apply to women and men across all levels of organisations. This bill creates a series of gender equality principles.

I am delighted that once again we are fulfilling a commitment made by the Andrews Labor government. We stand on the shoulders of women who have come before us. Although I am only recently arrived in this place, I am very conscious of the legacy of the previous incredibly hard-working ministers who have been involved in the development of this—of course, Fiona Richardson, and earlier we had a contribution from the member for Sydenham, a woman legendary for her wisdom, her hard work and her capacity for getting things done.

Of course, we have in the chamber now the member for Dandenong, who is the Minister for Women. Being a minister is not just about making incredibly important speeches with gravitas, and I acknowledge that she does that. It is actually about incredibly detailed policy work of good governance. It is the heavy lifting of good government, and this minister has done this work in collaboration with the sector. We have listened to the community; we have listened to those with expertise and to those who give us the science that we need to make good public policy, something that has been important in this chamber this week, I must say.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the hardworking people of the public service—of course there is always the minister's office—and those women whose shoulders we stand on, many of whom join us today. You must have wondered if this would ever come about. I congratulate you all, and I am pleased that you are here. We celebrate your contribution to this bill before us. This bill is here because of you.

We heard earlier this week impassioned contributions about the late John Cain and his emphasis on deep policy work. We know that we need to be courageous, and we need to channel John Cain sometimes. We need to raise awareness sometimes, because that can be effective. Sometimes the community evolves, which is always good when the march of progress means change, but it is not enough. We need to use the levers of government to make change, because we need to compel people to make change.

In four years of detailed consultations across all sectors, public, private and not-for-profit, 935 people and organisations have expressed their view, and I am sure many in the chamber today have been included in that. This is hard work, and this government has been very clear. I am very pleased, always, to point to our record: 50 per cent of this government's cabinet are women, and 50 per cent of appointments to government boards, as we heard earlier, are women.

Ms Williams: Fifty-three per cent.

Ms RICHARDS: Fifty-three per cent—yes, of course. And we are now requiring 50 per cent of court appointments to be women. Forty-eight per cent of the caucus are women, and many are here today. The scoreboard is clear. Equality is not negotiable.

I would also like to acknowledge the wise friendship I have with the member for Carrum, and the deep fury we discussed this morning when news came through of another tragic murder. We did discuss, early this morning, that deep fury and whether I ought also to acknowledge the pain of the families in Cranbourne. I choose not to name the man, but a terrible situation reached our courts this week, so it is with great sadness and fury that I honour the family of the women of Cranbourne who were murdered at the hands of people with whom they should have felt safe.

I have said before that my mother was a family violence worker, and I should say that at 88 she is still a person who campaigns to eradicate this scourge of family violence. Channelling my mother—with my mother's voice very clearly in my ear only couple of hours ago—I am conscious that we stand shoulder to shoulder with so many people who fought and celebrated this government's commitment to implement all 227 recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, backed with a \$2.9 billion investment.

We have listened to the experts who have told us that family violence is a gendered crime. The family violence royal commission told us that Victoria needed to establish a culture of non-violence and gender equality if we were to shape appropriate attitudes towards women. I read back on some contributions made by Jesuit Social Services, and I thank Julie Edwards for allowing me to use their insights. Gender inequality, Jesuit Social Services tell me, refers to how:

... narrow, rigid gender norms and stereotypes limit individuals and groups of both men and women, thereby preventing them from living fulfilling and productive lives where they can flourish and reach their full potential.

Gender inequality is problematic for both men and women. Gender norms and expectations that have historically limited women's participation in public life and the workforce, and today see high rates of violence against women perpetrated by men, are also having a detrimental impact on men and boys.

In my role of serving and representing the Cranbourne community I have been grateful for the wise counsel of organisations who likewise serve the people in my neighbourhood, and I would like to thank Kit McMahon from Women's Health in the South East for taking me on that journey. She tells me that this bill is historic and that as an industry and as a community they are taking the time to

recognise this and the leadership that is occurring. This bill is significant for all people in Victoria. The jury is in. We know that gender equality is important for everyone.

The leadership shown today is a profound contribution to all Victorians, their health and their wellbeing. I would like to thank Wellsprings for Women, an organisation I often turn to when people come to see me in my electorate. I know it is one that also serves Dandenong as well. Wellsprings for Women recognised the importance of the introduction of the Gender Equality Bill. They say to me that as a grassroots, women-specific organisation operating in Victoria's multicultural cities they view this bill as a significant step forward towards achieving substantive gender equality and social inclusion.

So I will report back to the women of Cranbourne, to the people in this community that I represent. But I would like to finish my contribution by dedicating this to Amanda Harris, to her mother and her children, to her neighbours who have suffered terribly and to the women of Cranbourne, because people in Cranbourne deserve better, as they all do across this state. I wish this bill a speedy passage, and I thank the minister for bringing it to us today.

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) (12:55): Indeed as the member for Cranbourne said, this is an historic moment in this Parliament but also for the state of Victoria. It gives me great pleasure to speak on this Gender Equality Bill 2019. Our children, our children's children and their children will look back on this day and say, 'What a great thing this Victorian Parliament did'. Of course, this is Australia's first gender equality bill. It has not happened anywhere else, and that is for a reason. That is because this progressive Andrews Labor government knows that the people of Victoria expect us to make sure that every woman, every man, every person in this state has equality.

When we came to government in 2014—and of course I was elected in 2010; this is my 10th year in this place—I never, ever thought at that time that I would actually be speaking on a bill such as this. Of course, Speaker, as you know, me being your deputy for the last few years, it gave me cause to reflect on previous women in this place. Prior to 1933 no woman had been elected to the Victorian Parliament, and until 1979 no woman had been elected to the Legislative Council. Pauline Toner, of course, was the first woman, in the Cain government, to be a minister, and our wonderful Joan Kirner was the first woman Premier.

I also had cause to reflect on Judy Maddigan, our first woman Deputy Speaker and Speaker in the Legislative Assembly, and Monica Gould, the first woman President. That was in 2003, just 17 years ago. How far we have come, but how far we still have to go. The day after Judy Maddigan was elected as the first woman Speaker of the Legislative Assembly a letter appeared in both the *Herald Sun* and the *Age* of 26 February 2003. It was written by a man, and it was titled 'Feminist insult':

The election, or rather Labor majority appointment, of Judy Maddigan as the Speaker of Victoria's Legislative Assembly is an insult to the people of Victoria and the tradition of one of our nation's oldest political houses. In appointing Maddigan, a self-proclaimed feminist radical, Steve Bracks has again bowed to his socialist superiors.

Maddigan, who refuses to be addressed as Madam Speaker and has snubbed the centuries-old dress of her office—

he said—

is bad news for the Parliament and bad news for the people of Victoria.

Judy said afterwards that she assumed that this gentleman was not a great supporter of the Labor Party, but she also copied the letter and hung it in her office so people could have a good laugh on the way in. I never forget and I am constantly reminded that all women, whether it be in this place and indeed those in the public service, in councils or in our universities, as the member for Cranbourne said, ride on the shoulders of great and progressive women who have come before us. Nevertheless, cultural change can be very, very slow, and progress on gender equality is too slow. It has not kept pace with the changing lives of women, the needs of women or the ambition of women, let alone the skills of

women. Here today, with this legislation, we have an opportunity to be on the right side of history and create change—cultural change, generational change—that is so needed and to cast the dinosaurs and attitudes of the past aside.

Obviously I will have an opportunity to continue my speech after lunch, so I will continue with it then. But I just want to say how proud I am of the Minister for Women at the table and of those who have come before us—of course the late Fiona Richardson, who set this in motion and then sadly has never been able to see it, but I know she would be looking down on us and being very proud, and the member for Sydenham, our former Minister for Women. Without great leadership in this space, including our Premier, this bill would not be before the house.

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

Sitting suspended 1.00 pm until 2.01 pm.

Ms EDWARDS: It is a great pleasure to continue my contribution to this historic piece of legislation, the Gender Equality Bill 2019. During the break I was reflecting on how I had mentioned about riding on the shoulders of the women who had come before us, and I recalled that just two or three weeks ago the Minister for Women joined me in Castlemaine to mark a very extraordinary event that occurred on 22 January 1856. On this day, a woman of African heritage and a property owner in Castlemaine cast the first vote of any woman in Australia at what is now the Theatre Royal in Castlemaine. Just a few weeks ago on 22 January we marked that important occasion with a memorial stone in the Castlemaine cemetery for Frances ‘Fanny’ Finch.

This was a remarkable woman. She was someone who owned property—indeed she was a brothel owner, but nevertheless she knew that she had every right to vote. It occurred to me what an extraordinary feat that was: to walk into a polling booth, most likely filled with men, and to say, ‘I am here to cast a vote in this local council election’, and she did. Nevertheless, of course the legislation was changed not too long afterwards to ensure that no woman would ever do that again. Fortunately we have come a long way since then, but I think it is a reminder that there were women even over 140 years ago who actually pushed the boundaries in relation to gender equality, and Frances ‘Fanny’ Finch was just one of them.

In reflecting on this bill I noticed that it was drafted in relation to specifically improving the outlook for women in employment. I also recall that many years ago, when my late husband was quite ill, my four children were very young and we were pretty financially strapped, a decision was made that I needed to go and work. I got a few interviews, and during one of those interviews the employers asked me a question. I reflect now on whether that question would be asked today or not. I suspect if it is not asked, it is probably still considered and even thought about. The question was: how will you be able to manage a sick husband and four children and be able to work? At the time I was a bit flummoxed, I suppose, and I did not really give a response, but I reflect now on—I mean, obviously even back then it was an inappropriate question—how many employers today are still thinking that, if not asking the question, in their minds when they are interviewing women, particularly women who have children or who are in difficult family circumstances. That should have no impact on a woman’s ability to do a job.

I think what this bill does is it sends a message not just to women but to men and to boys and to girls that women can be strong, they can be influential, they can be talented and they can be leaders too—in any field. I think it is about encouraging girls to self-nominate for leadership positions at school. It is about encouraging these young girls to be proficient on the sporting field and to get out there and have a go in the media and in our public life, and it says that women can and women will. It also, as has been mentioned, better reflects the community that we represent.

I also reflected on the fact that it is kind of sad that we have to legislate to make this happen, that it is kind of sad that cultural change is not so immediate that we have moved so far and advanced so far that women do not have to face the barriers that we have in employment, in our social lives and in

sporting arenas. While we have achieved gender parity on pay on government boards and we have improved the number of women in Parliament, particularly on this side of the house and in our cabinet, as I said, there is still a long way to go. This bill is about ensuring that that progress happens much quicker. It is about ensuring that gender equality is for all of us. We have to start by getting this right in our own backyard, because if we do not, then there will be no-one else to lead the way for the women and girls and the men and boys to come, who will reflect on this and go, ‘Well, actually that made a big difference to my life’.

It moves us from a position of just goodwill and having the best intentions to real action, and real action is what will make a big difference. As I said, progress has been too slow for women, and while myself and other women on this side of the house find ourselves in significant positions, for others there is a need to bring that cultural shift forward faster. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms SETTLE (Buninyong) (14:07): It is with great pride that I rise to speak in support of the Gender Equality Bill 2019. This truly is a historic moment in Victoria and indeed in Australia. We are the only jurisdiction in the country to have such legislation before us. For me this is the achievement of a childhood dream. I was a young girl in the 1970s, and I was blessed to have an extraordinarily strong and progressive mother. My mother, Christine Forster, was a pioneer. She is a scientist. Her graduating physics class at Melbourne University in the 1950s was made up of just 5 per cent women. In the late 1960s we lived in Darwin and my mother worked at the Northern Territory administration in the water branch. I remember her coming home one Christmas with a photo taken at the Australian Water Association conference, and there were 50 men in safari suits and just my mother. I was enormously proud of her then and still am. As a young girl I wondered then, ‘Where are all the other women in that photo?’. I imagined a photo made up of equal men and women, much like the caucus photo that we took at the beginning of this term.

In 1970 my mother left an abusive marriage and we planned to move to Canberra. She had been appointed to a middle-ranking position in the public service. We left Darwin and drove to Melbourne, just my mother and her three children. But we got becalmed in Melbourne because her appointment had been disputed by a man who missed out on the job. He claimed that he was better qualified despite her excellent degree and many years in the field in the Northern Territory water branch. She fought it, and while she fought it, we lived in Melbourne for six months. She worked in a restaurant doing dishes while she fought for her position in the public service. She won—because she usually does—and we moved to Canberra. When we got to Canberra, after some time she decided to buy a house for her family—her three children and her—and she was refused a mortgage by the ANZ bank solely and explicitly because she was a single mother. This is despite the fact that she had a secure, well-paid public service job. In my inaugural speech I thanked my mother and all the women of her generation that forged the path so that I could stand here today, and today I would again like to thank them, as this bill began with their courageous paths.

Now, the 1970s may seem a long time ago, especially to some of the younger people in the gallery, but sadly sexism in the workforce is not yet a distant memory. Every woman in this house will know the casual sexism that women in the public eye face constantly. Several months ago I had the pleasure of joining my colleague the member for Wendouree to present a W-class tram to the Ballarat Tramway Museum. The local newspaper, the *Courier*, ran a photo of us standing with the tram. My Liberal opponent in the 2018 election and a staff member of the member for Ripon commented on the Facebook page of the *Courier* that he could not tell which was the ‘old rattler’. It is these small and constant snipes that must be called out.

When it comes to gender equality, we know that there is plenty of work that still needs to be done. Australian women working full-time are still earning on average \$244 less per week than men. Just 65 per cent of women in Victoria aged between 20 and 74 participate in the workforce compared to 79 per cent of men, leaving a participation gap of 14 per cent. Women currently spend almost twice as much time undertaking caring or domestic duties. I am ashamed to say—and he will kill me for

this—that when my youngest son Sam was very young, about six or seven years old, we were at home and I asked him to tidy up after himself, to clean something. I said, ‘I won’t always be here to tidy up after you. You’ve got to learn to do it yourself’. He turned around and said, ‘No, Mum, I’ll get a wife’. He has learned since then, I can assure you, but we really do still undertake too much of the domestic duties, and it is beholden on women like me, the mother of two sons, to make sure that I teach them that they have just as much of a responsibility around the house.

Women are still under-represented in decision-making roles across our community, which contributes to workplace cultures and norms which inherently disadvantage women. We know that more than half of working women are likely to face gendered discrimination, workplace violence and sexual harassment. Casual sexism and unconscious bias are also unacceptably common. In my community there has been a lot of work done to address some of these issues, and I would like to acknowledge the incredible work of Women’s Health Grampians, who have led that work through the foundation of CoRE, Communities of Respect and Equality. The Communities of Respect and Equality Alliance is a partnership of organisations, businesses, clubs and groups who share a vision for safe, equal and respectful communities in the Grampians region. Members of CoRE commit to the CoRE regional plan to prevent violence against women and children. The Ballarat business community has got behind CoRE, and the alliance’s membership ranges from the Ballarat Golf Club through to Federation University. So I know that my community will be celebrating this historic bill.

Today we deliver on our election commitment to introduce gender equality legislation to eliminate the pay gap within the Victorian public sector. This government is committed to gender equality not just in word but in action. It is why we have a gender-equal cabinet and government benches of 48 per cent women. It is why we have gender parity on paid government boards. It is why we have committed to ensuring 50 per cent of all new appointments to Victorian boards and courts will be women. Now we continue the Andrews Labor government’s commitment to progressing gender equality in Victoria with Australia’s first Gender Equality Bill.

The Gender Equality Bill will apply to Victorian public sector organisations with 50 or more employees, including our public service bodies, our public entities, local government, universities, Court Services Victoria and the Office of Public Prosecutions. Government must take the lead on equality, and we are a government that will always take the lead on equality, because equality to this government is not negotiable. In fact gender equality has been at the heart of this government’s agenda. When we came to government in 2014 we took office with a promise to improve outcomes for women and girls across our state—for good. In 2015 we launched a Royal Commission into Family Violence, a world first. It was a necessary royal commission, and we immediately agreed to implement all 227 recommendations of the commission and backed that decision with a \$2.9 billion investment.

The royal commission told us that family violence is a gendered crime and that if we are to end violence against women, we must begin with addressing gender inequality. That is why in 2016 we launched Victoria’s first gender equality strategy, *Safe and Strong*. *Safe and Strong* set a framework for all government action to implement the attitudinal and behavioural changes our community needs to achieve gender equality. A key component of *Safe and Strong* was a commitment to legislative change, a commitment to enact a gender equality act that promotes and improves gender equality across all government functions, and today we are delivering on that promise.

This is not just talk; this is meaningful, with real outcomes, and as a government we are getting on with it. It says to men and women, boys and girls: women can be strong, influential and talented leaders in any field. It encourages girls to self-nominate for leadership positions at school, on the sporting field, in the media and in public life. It says, ‘Women can’. It also means we better reflect the communities we represent. We are backing this up with scholarships and leadership programs to create a pipeline of skilled, supported and influential women to fill these positions, because we recognise that when you have diversity in decision-making you make better decisions.

I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to the many women who have fought for decades for true gender equality. In particular I would like to offer my thanks and gratitude to the three courageous Labor ministers who have worked tirelessly to make this bill a reality—our current Minister for Women, the member for Dandenong; the member for Sydenham; and the late Fiona Richardson. Everyone benefits from gender equality, and today we seek to enshrine that in law. On behalf of every young girl growing up now and contemplating her career, I commend this bill to the house.

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarnait) (14:17): I rise today to speak on the Gender Equality Bill 2019, and I do this in the 59th Parliament of Victoria, which is also the Parliament with a record number of sitting women. This, I assure you, is something that I constantly remind my daughter, Emily, and my son, Leo, of, because right here, right now, we have made history, and I am pretty proud to be part of it. Here in Victoria, we are setting the bar for the rest of the country. Let us face it: someone had to step up and had to take action, because in order to achieve gender equality across our great nation its leaders need to step up and take action.

Every time I walk into this place and look around I am reminded that this Labor government is the first Parliament to have a cabinet where women in equal numbers are able to sit at the table beside their male colleagues. And I remind those opposite—or the empty chairs; the many, many empty chairs—that this has not happened by accident; it has come through the perseverance of both women and men to do what is right, and to speak up and speak out about the need to change the status quo and be on the right side of history.

Through the determination of women on this side of the house, over the past two terms of government we have undertaken the world's first Royal Commission into Family Violence. This government has promised to implement every single recommendation from that royal commission. It is a promise we will keep, with our \$2.9 billion investment. Victorians can trust that our government has got their backs. It is committed to fostering equality and empowering women. But the fight for gender equality does not end there. These steps have been remarkable, but we still have so much more to do. This bill is another step in the right direction.

When we look at how we can even the playing field for women, it is absolutely essential that we look at the workforce. Female-dominated industries are more likely to be paid less than male-dominated industries, despite women needing the same if not higher qualifications. The reality is women are also more likely to take on the domestic work at home, making it harder for them to join the workforce in the first place.

All of these factors have led to shocking statistics: on average, a woman in Victoria will earn 9.6 per cent less than a man. The amount of women in the workforce is 11.2 per cent lower than it is for men. When you put all of these factors together women are left with 37 per cent less in their superannuation savings than men—certainly, knowing what my husband's superannuation is, mine is a lot less. This is appalling, which is why we are doing something about it.

From a personal point of view, for almost two decades I worked in male-dominated industries. I started off as a young legal clerk, where solicitors and barristers enjoyed after-work drinks while talking about their young female clerks and paralegals—yes, all those clichés and certain behaviours now called out, all of that went on. And no, none of us could ever speak about it. The blokes were the barristers, the QCs, the silks, the magistrates and the judges.

The really strange thing is that none of this seemed odd to me, because this was considered the norm. This is the world that I grew up in. It was acceptable behaviour. No female ever spoke out for fear of ruining her career. I was really young at that time; I was around 21 when I first did a stint for the Director of Public Prosecutions in Queensland. I have spent a lot of time reflecting over the years on why I thought this was the norm and that it never seemed unfair to me at that young age. I think it goes back to my childhood. I grew up in a household—a very happy household—where Mum did all the stuff like cooking and cleaning and raising the kids. And Dad? Dad was an awesome guy. He went to

work, and that was it. Mum never complained. She never talked about it being unfair that she gave up her career as a nurse to stay at home and raise her three children. She never complained that she cooked dinner every single night while looking after us three at home, nor did she ever say to me that this type of domestic work was actually unfair and placed upon her because of her gender and a cultural practice that was entrenched in generations before her. So I never questioned the status quo.

It was not until I came back to work—I was aged 30, after having my third child—that I actually felt the sting of inequality in the workforce for the first time. I was highly educated, I was driven and I had years and years of experience in the energy industry behind me by that time. Senior executives and CEOs—well, they were always male. But I never seemed to notice. I remember having a career development conversation when I came back to work after having Leo. I clearly remember being told that I could not be interested in career development and climbing the corporate ladder or doing courses or degrees to continue my education because I was a mum with young kids and coming to work part time was basically a break from my parental responsibilities. I am now 38 years old, so you can do the maths and you can see that this conversation happened eight years ago.

It came out of a cultural, systemic, ingrained and outrageous way of thinking, and that way of thinking still exists—make no mistake. I am not someone who is lost for words, but at the time I remember I paused, and I thought—ashamedly—‘Perhaps, just perhaps, they’re right’. Perhaps it was wrong of me to think I wanted more challenging work and that my contribution to that business was not as important or relevant as my male counterparts’, who always continued to work full time because their wives were at home looking after the kids. I did not say anything; I did not respond. But inside I got mad—really mad. And then it was as if my eyes were opened and I saw the gender equality that existed in my workplace, and I have never stopped noticing. I was outraged. I left that job pretty soon after because I knew I was worth more and I had a bigger contribution to make than just shuffling paper three days a week because I needed a break from my kids. I refused to be put aside like that.

Unfortunately my story is not a unique one. Women right across Victoria share similar experiences, and it should not be their responsibility to constantly fight for equality in the workplace. It is exhausting and it is unfair, and it is our job to make sure that there are systems in place that keep organisations in check. That is why this bill is so important. It takes the burden off women and holds workplaces to account. Over the past year, in the time that I have spent in this place, I have had the opportunity to meet so many wonderful and diverse women, and I have been lucky enough to have them share their experiences with me. Many of them have opened up about the struggles they have faced while entering the workforce, whether it is because they cannot access vital services or they have no other option when it comes to looking after their kids. I do think there is added discrimination against women, particularly in my community, based on their religion and cultural practices, and this is entirely unacceptable. It is unacceptable for our future generation of girls, like my daughter, Emily, who will turn 10 this year, to think that they are worth less in terms of their career progression, their job opportunities or their pay simply because they were born female.

I make this point matter-of-factly because turning to this side and looking at the empty chairs of those opposite, particularly given the fact that one of you turned up—that you have been unable to talk about one or two good things about this bill—I say: be very careful, because you are no different to us on this side of the house. You may not hear that very often, but you are no different. You will have daughters, you will have wives, you will have mothers, granddaughters and females in your lives—girls that will grow into incredible women—and they will look to you as to what is acceptable. What is the norm? What is right? What is wrong? Just like my daughter, Emily, does and just like other members here sitting on this side of the house today know and the Premier does know with his daughter. As a parent, it is my responsibility to set an example, and it is the government’s responsibility to set the right example—and equality is not negotiable.

This bill will change the working lives of women across the public sector. They are our teachers, our nurses, our social workers, police, firefighters and all public servants from across the state. I am absolutely honoured to be here to stand in favour of this bill, and I commend the bill to the house.

Ms HALL (Footscray) (14:27): This is a very proud day for me to make a contribution to this very significant reform, which will shine a light on gender equity and equality and fairness in Victorian workplaces. It is often said that you cannot be what you cannot see. So I say to the girls and women of Victoria: these great strides forward will ensure that you can always see gender equality in the public sector, in our great public institutions and organisations.

It is a shame that the opposition has been dismissive of this opportunity, with only a handful of women in their ranks—not enough merit apparently. It has been really disappointing that there has only been one contribution, from the member for Lowan, from the coalition. I am also appalled, frankly, that the Greens have not participated in this debate. I think that says it all really, because this is a historic reform—and when it comes to gender equality, Labor is truly the party of reform.

It is an historic moment made by a government that is systematically addressing every space where women have not been getting a fair go. From the gender pay gap to women working in construction, delivering gender equity on public boards and building women's change rooms so girls can play footy out in our suburbs, the long list of reforms demonstrates that this minister and this government are leaving no stone unturned. This government walks the talk too, with a cabinet that is made up of 50 per cent women. I am enormously proud to be on this side of the chamber and a part of this fine government.

I would like to begin by thanking the minister for her unwavering commitment. I acknowledge the young women in the gallery too and my sisters from EMILY's List. I am very proud to be an EMILY's List-endorsed Labor candidate. Your advocacy within the Labor Party is crucial, and it is valued. You have been terrific agents for change, and I am very proud to be a member alongside you.

When the Andrews Labor team first took office in 2014 they brought a promise. The great people that I now call colleagues brought a promise to improve outcomes for women and children in Victoria. I think some people were probably pretty sceptical because they had been let down in the past by four years of a Liberal government that did not make it a priority. All of our reforms in gender equality have been important, but I think the most significant was that in 2015 the Andrews Labor government launched a world-first royal commission into family violence. Not only did we listen to the victim survivors and listen to the experts, but we backed it up. By implementing all 227 recommendations, with a \$2.9 billion investment, the royal commission told us what so many of us already knew: that family violence is a gendered issue and it begins with gender inequality and disrespect not only in the home but in the workplace as well.

To begin to undo decades of damage that have been done, we launched Victoria's first gender equality strategy in 2016, *Safe and Strong*. A key component was a commitment to legislative change and a commitment to enact a gender equality act that promotes and improves gender equality across government functions, and this is it. Today we deliver on that promise, and gender equality in leadership is crucial. Let us not take any stick. If you feel threatened by the idea of equality, maybe you should reflect on why—because if you are used to privilege, equality feels like oppression, like something is being taken away.

We have committed to ensuring that 50 per cent of all new appointments to Victorian boards and courts will be women. We have achieved gender parity on paid government boards. And our commitment to gender equality does not stop there. To encourage and support women to put themselves forward for these positions, we are backing them with scholarships and leadership programs to ensure that we have a pipeline of skilled, supported and confident women to fill these positions. Diversity in decision-making teams means better decisions are made, and that is good news for everyone.

Forty-eight per cent of Labor MPs in the government are women, and I am proud to stand with and alongside all of them. Throughout my career I have been really fortunate to work with some strong, intelligent and competent women, and two in particular have not just been political icons and people I have looked up to but have changed this country forever. They broke some very substantial glass ceilings. Nicola Roxon, Australia's first female Attorney-General, was the woman who gave me my first job in politics. In fact it is her office that serves as the Footscray electorate office today. After my first speech in this place Nicola gave me a book titled *You Daughters of Freedom*, and if you have not read it, I highly recommend it. It is a brilliant book about the women who fought for female suffrage in Australia. On the inside of the book Nicola wrote, 'Now we pass the baton onto your generation to fight for the next wave of reforms'. I am really proud to be a member of a government that is delivering such ambitious reform for gender equality. I was proud to work for her when she introduced landmark tobacco reforms, not only as a health minister but as the first female Attorney-General, where she continued to take on the tobacco companies in the High Court.

The other female leader I was fortunate enough to work with was our first female Prime Minister. We all know that she experienced gendered bullying throughout her prime ministership, and that was a shocking thing to watch as a young woman in her office. But her words when she retired were that being the first female Prime Minister would make it easier for the next woman and the next woman after that.

The same goes for having equity and equality within our public sector institutions. This is the first piece of legislation in Australia that puts the onus on proving a commitment to gender equality in public sector organisations. Women have been told for decades not to worry about equality in the workforce, that progress is slow but certain and that we can do anything if we just work hard enough. But we all know that that is not true—not for all workplaces and not for all women—so we are changing that. This bill will make it easier for nurses, teachers, social workers, police, firefighters, child protection workers and public servants to enjoy fairer workplaces.

This bill is ambitious in its scope and its scale. Where organisations do not do the right thing, the new public sector gender equality commissioner, established by this bill, will step in. They will have the power to scrutinise performance, issue compliance notices and refer matters to VCAT. Organisations will be required to publicly report on their progress against key gender equality indicators such as equal pay, sexual harassment, flexible work, parental leave and career progression practices. This transparency means that women in the public sector advancing in their careers will not have to wonder if they would hit their next milestone quicker if they were a man.

Public interest and engagement with this bill has been significant, which is a great thing, because it shows that it matters to people. This bill has been shaped by Victorians through community forums, the stakeholder meetings and the exposure draft for public feedback. To the women and allies fighting the good fight, thank you. We know that gender equality is not a one-size-fits-all disadvantage. It affects and can be compounded and affected by other forms of disadvantage, including race, disability, age and religion. This bill will require organisations to consider the way gender disadvantage can interact with other forms of disadvantage and discrimination.

Gender inequality harms men too, and stereotypes harm men by preventing them from entering traditionally female workforces, discouraging them from taking on primary caregiver roles and even engaging in hobbies, pastimes and certain sports. Gender equality is about all of us, and all of us can do something about it. I urge everyone in this building to think about what legacy we are leaving for Victorians today and to support this bill and its speedy passage.

Ms WARD (Eltham) (14:37): This is a terrific bill, and this is terrific legislation that really reflects the core values of the Labor Party and the core values of this government, this government being about fairness and about equality. We have been walking our truth since we were elected in November 2014. We have paved the way to really bring about institutionalised gender equality in this state. I acknowledge, along with many of the other speakers today, that we do stand on the shoulders of many

female giants and of women in this party who have really worked hard to help bring about a gender balance and gender equality within the Labor Party.

As has been mentioned before, Pauline Toner, who also represented my area many years ago, was the first female councillor for the Diamond Valley, was first female mayor in the Diamond Valley, was the first female member of Parliament for the Diamond Valley and was also the first female minister in this state—an amazing amount of achievements for someone who, I imagine in the 1970s in Greensborough, faced a few challenges in trying to get out there and in trying to get herself elected. I absolutely admire her fortitude, her strength and her drive. To think that she was in Parliament until only a very short period before she passed away is nothing short of amazing and a testament of the strength of this remarkable woman.

We stand on the shoulders of Joan Kirner of course, who opened up many—so many—doors for women in this party, who got EMILY's List up and running and who was out there taking so many opportunities to help promote and encourage women within our party. She stood in the face of criticism; she stood in the face of people with their stupid polka dot caricatures of her—a polka dot dress that she never had. The only way that they thought they could mock this woman and her intelligence and her strength as Premier was to talk about her appearance. It saddens me to say that often this is still the case, that the way to disparage women and the way to try and disempower women is to talk about their appearance and to disparage their appearance. I look forward to the day when this is not the case. I look forward to the day when women across the board in this state, in this nation and around the world are judged solely on their merit. And I will get to merit.

We also stand on the shoulders of Julia Gillard, one of the strongest people I have ever encountered—an amazing woman; a woman with a terrific sense of humour who, I do not know how, kept on going no matter what was thrown at her, like the shocking insults and the horrific things that were said about her and to her. But she kept on going. I have to tell you, I suspect that there are many women in this place and that there are many girls out there who know that if Julia Gillard can do it, if Julia Gillard can put up with that, then they can too. There are very few people in this country who would have been able to withstand what she withstood and still create really good policy and still have a good government that stood for good things. The national disability insurance scheme is just one of those testaments to her leadership and her ability to actually get things done.

I also want to pay credit to Jenny Macklin, who was Labor's first female deputy leader, also paving the way for women, also out there supporting women and also a foundation person of EMILY's List, who put her money and who put her time and her effort into helping women get elected and have positions of leadership and influence within the Labor Party.

We are absolutely doing this as a government. As I said earlier, we are walking our truth. We are creating policy after policy after policy to ensure that there is gender equality in this state. We have covered nearly every base. I am sure that there are still bases for us to cover, but I tell you what—we have given it a really good, red-hot go, and women in this state and girls in this state are absolutely the better for it. They are going to do better in this state because of the leadership shown by our government, by our Premier and by our ministers for women, including the Minister for Women that is here now.

One of the most recent things that we have come up with, which is pretty cool, is that the \$64 million State Netball Hockey Centre redevelopment has got a pilot program to increase the number of women working in construction. While I am talking about construction, let us note the women ministers that we have got, the 50 per cent of representation, but also the fact that we have actually got women in positions of responsibility for infrastructure. We have got women leading transport portfolios. We have got women doing hard things in this state government. We have got women with serious responsibility, who are not only up to the task but are excelling at that task.

Deputy Speaker, it is interesting that, as you have probably heard along with a few other people, there are a number of reports out there that talk about the benefits of having women on boards. They talk about the benefits to corporations and organisations of having diversity of view and talk about the different perspectives that are brought to the board table and how they can actually enhance a company or organisation and can help them make more money because there is a wider perspective there. There is the story told of one executive who says, 'Of course I put women on my board; they make me money'. Because that is what you do. When you improve diversity, when you improve positions, when you improve the perspective that you have got on your board and when it is not down to a bunch of blokes called John, Paul or Peter, you will get better decision-making, and if you are a corporation you will actually make more money.

The Liberal Party could take note of this. If they had more women in positions of leadership in their party, they might actually have had better electoral success in this state. It is very clear to me that gender equality is something that matters to the people and the state of Victoria. They have elected a record amount of women on this side of the benches. They support our policy of gender equality. They support what we are doing, and they support a Premier and the government that say what they are going to do and then do it. That includes our gender equality strategy, that includes our Royal Commission into Family Violence and that includes the work that we are doing to adopt all of those recommendations to have women in this state feel safe and not only feel safe but be respected, because when women and girls in this state are completely respected, that is when we know they are safe. We know that they can go into any room, that they can go into any train carriage and that they can go onto any sporting field and feel safe, because they are respected and because people will not go and think that they can inappropriately touch someone. Because they respect them, they know that is off limits. They are not going to say a disparaging remark, because they respect them and they know that they are off limits. This is what we need in this state, and this is exactly what this government is bringing about.

I want to give a shout-out to organisations like Cricket Australia, who have got pay parity for their female cricketers in the T20 championship. This is what we need. I want the AFLW to step up and start paying female footy players more as well. We need to have these signals; we need to have women in positions where they are on pay equity, where they are getting paid parity and where they are being treated with respect—where their work and their sporting achievements are all respected and rewarded—and equal remuneration is a part of that.

We know that we still have a way to go. We know that women do not have the same superannuation as men. We know that women are twice as likely to experience homelessness. We know that women do not always feel safe, and they certainly do not feel safe when compared to men. This government is putting in policies to help alleviate that, to help change that.

One story I forgot to tell you was about Pauline Toner. When Pauline Toner came here, there was one female toilet in this place, out the front. Now, she did commandeer a blokes toilet. She did make it her own, because of course this is what women have to do. They have to make places their own; they have to own places—and she did that. I have to say, when I came into this place I was quite astonished to find that pads and tampons were not actually available in female toilets and that we had to go to the gift shop, to the bottom drawer under the counter and ask someone working there if they could please give us a tampon or a pad if we did not have one. I am pleased to say that one of my achievements in this place—through the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee—has been to bring about pads and tampons in this place.

I have to say, having pads and tampons in our high schools is a game changer. It helps normalise the conversation around this very natural occurrence that women have for the bulk of their lives. It helps empower girls at school, who can just go and sort themselves out when they need to. I do not think boys or men can really imagine how much this policy can actually matter to girls—how easy this is or how a girl may not be brave enough to go into the supermarket and buy these products for herself,

whose parents or dad or whoever may not be able to do that for her. For her to be able to access this liberates her, and that is exactly what this government is about.

Ms THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (14:47): This is a historic moment. Countless individuals have strived to progress gender equality and improve outcomes for women and girls, and consecutive Labor premiers have delivered real change. Only this week we said goodbye to a giant amongst them. Today we build on that legacy. Today we enshrine the Andrews government's commitment to the women and men of Victoria to enact gender equality legislation. As a mother of two young girls, as a daughter proudly following the lead of my own mother and as a representative of an electorate that actually has more women than men, I am immensely pleased to be here today to speak in support of this bill and see our promise to the people of Victoria become a reality.

We should not need a gender equality bill, but we do. No doubt we will see some negativity from some quarters, but that will not deter us, because frankly we are used to fighting—women are used to fighting. The pushback did not deter us when we fought for equal pay, for paid parental leave, for our reproductive rights, for protections against discrimination or for the vote, and it certainly will not deter us now. Just like we have always done, we will stand up and we will fight, and I lend my voice now to that movement and that legacy and to all those women's voices who have come before my own. It might seem like we have come so far that perhaps the fight is over, but all we have to do is look at the other side of the chamber to see how far yet we have to go. Nothing demonstrates the disdain for gender equality held by the opposition more than the fact that they have put just a single speaker up for this bill. Might I mention that the Greens are notably absent as well—disgraceful on both accounts.

Deputy Speaker, as you know, I have two young daughters. I think about the world they will grow up in, and I compare it to the world that my own mum grew up in. When mum was pregnant with her first baby, my brother Harry, she was working as a pharmacist. Perhaps naively she shared with her employer the exciting news that she was expecting. That same night she got a call from him to say he 'couldn't afford to keep her on'. She was devastated. Bruised by this experience, she took up another position soon after but kept the pregnancy a secret—until her new boss, thankfully a far better man, told her to stop lifting the heavy boxes because it might hurt the baby. She breathed a sigh of relief.

The road to equality is long and it is bumpy, but we owe it to our daughters and granddaughters, our sisters, our nieces and our mothers to fight for an equal future—a future where they will not be paid less for doing the same job as a man; a future where they are valued and respected; a future in which they never have to utter the words 'me too'.

The Andrews Labor government's commitment to equality, in particular gender equality and ending family violence, is second to none in this country. We held the Royal Commission into Family Violence, secured record investment to keep women and children safe, laid the groundwork for landmark family violence sector reform, appointed women to hold 50 per cent of positions on our public boards and launched Victoria's first ever gender equality strategy, all in just four years. I am humbled to have contributed to that work, but I also know that we have a long way to go before we achieve true equality.

In many ways we are going backwards. We still see entrenched structural, social and economic disadvantage for women. We still see workplace discrimination, huge disparities in unpaid care responsibilities, blatant sexism across the public domain and low representation of women in positions of power. Most disappointingly, we still see some political parties lagging when it comes to female representation, and more and more we hear stories of harassment and bullying in the party room. Our government has more women on its front bench than those opposite have at all in this place, but when challenged on their poor record of electing women they tell us that we should have just let them win—that we should not have run against their candidates. Now, we often hear the opposition spouting that it is the Labor Party's fault on many and varied issues, but this takes the cake. The party that still retains a spousal attendance policy is blaming us for their low numbers. Put women in winnable seats! They may just surprise you and win.

That brings me to my dear friend and colleague the member for Footscray. This house is a much better place for having her here, especially considering who the Greens political party tried to run against her to knock her off. What a disgrace.

What we do here matters. Who we are as leaders and decision-makers matters. We will continue to call these things out, and we will continue to drive a change in culture that embraces gender equality. That means fighting against negative and stereotyped attitudes towards women. It means building respect for women and social permissibility around women in power or in traditionally male-dominated industries. It means more women in Parliament and in decision-making roles. The thing is, equality not only advantages women; it also advantages us as a society. We know that as we move towards equality in pay and in workforce participation we see a huge bump in GDP. Similarly, when we have more diverse leadership teams we see better performance outcomes. When caring roles are more equally shared we see stronger families and stronger communities. Perhaps most importantly, when we move towards gender equality we also move towards reducing violence against women, because we know that violence against women does stem from disrespect and gender inequality.

Deputy Speaker, as you know, I had the opportunity to work alongside the former and formidable member for Northcote, Fiona Richardson, in her role as Australia's first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence. It was during this time that the Andrews government delivered the Royal Commission into Family Violence and invested an unprecedented \$2.6 billion in the sector to forever transform how we approach this scourge—more than the commonwealth and more than any other state or territory.

Of course, having a royal commission is one thing—it is a very important thing—but what is most important is what happens next. There are two ways that can go. One is to take the document, smile politely and sit it on a shelf. The other is to take responsibility and implement every single recommendation in that document, and that is exactly what we are doing. Our Premier was prepared to say the system is broken and we need to fix it. A key element in delivering on that promise to fix it is what we have before us today in the house, because if we are ever to challenge a culture of disrespect towards women, we must have social, economic and political equality for women.

This bill aims to improve gender equality within Victorian government workplaces by requiring organisations to report on their progress to achieve gender equality and apply a gendered lens to their policies, programs and services. Public sector organisations will now have to demonstrate that they are actively working towards achieving gender equality. No other jurisdiction in Australia has taken this proactive approach. Indeed very few countries in the world have laws as ambitious as this one that we are debating today.

Under this bill over 300 Victorian public sector organisations, including our public service, councils and unis, will have to implement a gender equality action plan and report on its progress. Importantly, the bill also establishes a new public sector gender equality commission that will scrutinise the performance of these organisations and will have the power to call them out if they are not demonstrating real progress over time. Organisations will be required to publish details of what they have and have not achieved.

But one of the most exciting parts of this bill in my view is its power to issue funding and procurement guidelines. Let me unpack that a little. We know that the gender pay gap in Victoria remains at 9.6 per cent and that women's workforce participation is still 11 per cent lower than men's. We know our labour markets are still divided along gender lines, with women still employed in jobs that pay less. Shifting this occupational segregation and evening out the spectrum of employment between men and women is a key lever to improving economic security for women. We can only do that if we have the private sector on board too. This bill allows us to leverage our position as a major purchaser of goods and services to drive equality measures not just for the public sector but for the private domain. It says to the private sector, 'We will engage with you, but only if you back in gender equality too'.

Finally, I want to acknowledge and thank all those who have contributed to the development of the bill and the important work that preceded it, including Fiona Richardson; the former Minister for Women, the member for Sydenham; the current minister, the member for Dandenong; the Premier; and the many, many Victorians who engaged in all of the consultations. We are committed to building a Victoria where gender equality is a reality rather than a goal. I know there is a long road ahead, but this historic bill is a crucial step towards achieving the cultural change that we want and that we need. To that end, I commend the bill to the house.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (14:56): I am delighted to be afforded the great opportunity today to make a contribution on the Gender Equality Bill 2019. I really value and I treasure this great institution, the Parliament. I think that this Parliament has served generations of Victorians so well, and the institution of the Parliament—the ability for a body to be constructed so that representatives can come here and meet and deliberate on legislation and pass legislation that is enacted by the executive—is a really important cornerstone of our society. I suppose I am betraying my prejudice, but I think it is the hallmark of a civil society that you can have a set of circumstances where an administration can come in and bring a bill, it is debated in this place and passed, it goes to the other place and it is debated and it is passed, and then it becomes law. And when the time comes and the people at an election cast a verdict and indicate that the government no longer represents the will of the people, then that administration then goes onto the opposition benches. It is instructive as a society and a community that we have never had armed conflict—we have never had a revolution—and that when a government falls it goes quietly. It might not go happily, but it will go quietly, and I think that is a really important hallmark of our society and our state.

This great chamber has been the scene of many great debates. In my brief time here we have had some fantastic contributions on both sides of debate—voluntary assisted dying is a case in point—where people come at an issue and they express in a fulsome way and a thoughtful way and a measured way, whether they support the bill that is before the house or they do not. Now, I am so pleased to belong to the great Australian Labor Party, and I am so fortunate to have 54 other colleagues in this chamber as my colleagues. The second-largest political party here is the Liberal Party, and what I find astonishing is that not a single member of the Liberal Party has come forward and argued a position on this bill. I actually wanted to have that. I actually wanted to understand what the position of Liberal Party is on this bill. Would the Liberal Party have the view that, ‘Look, this is a matter of the rights of the individual; the state should not intervene, and therefore we oppose the bill’? Does the modern Liberal Party think that where the rights of the individual are concerned they should have full access, full ability, to be able to lead a meaningful and fulfilled life, and therefore state intervention is required?

Now, I had hoped that I would have that experience today. I had hoped that the Liberal Party would come in here and give an indication. I did not expect every member of the Liberal Party to come and speak, but I would have thought that some members of Liberal Party could put forward a Liberal perspective on the Gender Equality Bill. I would have thought that is a hallmark of a good, functioning democracy, and I would have thought that that would have been the Liberal Party’s way of showing respect to this great institution, the Parliament—indicating what their views might be. But I think this is, sadly, the malaise of the modern Liberal Party.

I remember being here in the 1990s as a staffer, and you always knew where the Kennett government stood on any given issue. It is probably fair to say that most of the ideological engine room and most of the thought and constructs that that government pursued were more Alan Stockdale than Jeff Kennett, but nonetheless you always knew. Instead the Liberal Party today are absent. Is it any wonder that Jeff Kennett, as I understand, has gone to recent Liberal Party functions and has been highly critical of the Leader of the Opposition? I would have thought that if Jeff Kennett was the Leader of the Opposition you would absolutely know what Jeff Kennett thought of this bill. Regardless of whether he was in favour of it or against it, Jeff Kennett was the sort of leader of the Liberal Party who would say, ‘We’re in favour of it for these reasons’ or ‘We’re opposing it for these reasons’ or ‘We

think amendments should be made', and he would be absolutely clear on that. Unfortunately, this is the situation the Liberal Party currently finds itself in, where they are absent.

I have to say they are not the only guilty party where these matters are concerned. I share a boundary with the member for Melbourne, and the member for Melbourne recently wrote a piece in the local community newspaper, which said, to paraphrase, 'I've been absent lately because I've given birth to my second child, but it's great to be back'. I would have thought that the member for Melbourne would have come in here and said, 'I really think this is a great bill' or 'I think this is a terrible bill for these reasons'. The Greens are not speaking on this bill. Where are the Greens? Do they not respect this great institution of the Parliament? Do they not appreciate the great privilege that they have been given and the great trust that has been bestowed upon them as individuals by their electorates, by their communities, to come in here and represent their interests? Instead they are absent. They are nowhere to be seen, and it is deplorable. It is deplorable when we have a situation where members are entrusted by their communities, voted in by their communities, to come here and legislate.

Now, if you do not want to legislate, that is fine; go and do something else. Run campaigns, set up a blog, be a DJ like the member for Footscray's opponent was—that is fine. You are entrusted by the people, you have a sacred trust in the communities who sent you here and you have a trust in that long line of parliamentary democracy and parliamentary representation to come here and be here and speak up. Instead they have clocked off. They have gone for the day. They have just gone off. They have just said, 'No, not interested. I might wander in at five when there's a division, but basically I don't care. I'm not interested'. Well, it is not good enough.

This bill is so vitally important to the nature of our state and the way in which our society will be constructed in decades to come. I know the member for Lowan, as the only speaker from the opposition, indicated that she felt that these responsibilities should be with the minister, and I think that that misunderstands what we are trying to do. With all due respect to the minister currently at the table, the Minister for Women, ministers come and go. Governments come and go. This is about creating the architecture for meaningful and long-term reform. If a future Liberal government comes in here and wants to abolish this bill or wants to amend this bill, they can come here and have the debate. They can come here and move a bill and have an argument—they can do that; that will be their right—but we are not going to have a situation where an incoming coalition government comes in, abolishes the position of the Minister for Women, turns around and basically just tries to kill this off in the dead of the night without being accountable or responsible to the community. That is what we are trying to do here. We are trying to make meaningful, long-term, sustainable reform, because it is in the interests of our economy. In addition to questions about fairness, it is in the interests of a strong, vibrant economy.

George Megalogenis, in his great book *The Australian Moment: How We Were Made for These Times*, talks about the important role that women and migrants have played in terms of underpinning the economic prosperity of our great society as a result of women being given a look-in, women being given a fair chop-out. This bill is making sure that we are using all the powers of the state to make sure that we play a leading role. James Buchan, in a book called *Capital of the Mind: How Edinburgh Changed the World*, talks about the great role that the Scottish Enlightenment played in terms of driving and developing and creating a great and fair society. Now, I like to think that bills like this are a way in which we in Victoria can look at trying to shape and change the way in which women are treated not just here, not just in this nation, but around the world. These are the contributions that we are making on our commitment to the women of Victoria.

We want fairness and we want equality, and we are not going to have some future administration come in here and then just sort of say, 'Oh well, look, it doesn't matter anymore. We've changed the administrative orders. We've changed the allocations of responsibilities, and this is now no longer'. A future Liberal government can come in here and pass a bill to end this if that is what they want, and they can stand up here and say, 'We don't believe in gender equality'. They can do that, and you know

what? If I am here and I am over there, I will be arguing why that is a flawed idea, but at least those of us in here on the Labor side are here for the fight.

We are here for the debate. We respect this great institution. We are prepared to live our values and make sure they are reflected on the statute books—to have the argument and to have the debate. That is what the labour movement expects of us. That is what our community expects of us. You are not going to have us sitting here avoiding the debate like those opposite. Where are the Liberal Party? Where is the voice of the modern Liberal Party today? It is silence in the same way the Greens are silent. It is an absolute disgrace, and it reflects poorly on them. Our democracy deserves better. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) (15:06): I could not go past the opportunity to make some comment, particularly on the contribution of the member for Essendon. I do not intend working into the detail of the bill, but I want to make the point that I have been sitting in the chamber since 2 o'clock, and I have heard a constant narrative about the views of the opposition, the views that were put eloquently by the member for Lowan. And the narrative emanating from the Australian Labor Party—I will not say the other side because it has come from behind me as well—has been an assumption of a particular position taken by the opposition.

Now, it is interesting that the member for Essendon talked about the great debates that we have had in this place, and as someone who considers himself to be a legislator as well as a politician I agree. Certainly in my first term we had a series of them, and we have been, I think, fortunate enough as parliamentarians to have had a number of those debates since. The interesting thing about all of those debates—and the dying with dignity bill was a classic example—is that the Parliament is working at its best. You have the second-reading debate on the principles of the bill, and then you get to go through the bill clause by clause—so you actually get to legislate. The difficulty with the way we handle business now is that—not particularly taking sides—we tend to get the headline arguments. They all need to be put in 10 minutes, which can be particularly challenging when you have got a several-hundred-page bill, and in the end the bill then comes down and it is done.

What we have indicated to the Leader of the House and what we are very keen to see on this bill is that we actually have the opportunity to take it into consideration in detail and go through it clause by clause. So while the government members may be keen to talk it out and basically sing from the same hymn sheet, this side and the opposition—the Liberal and National parties—have had their viewpoint put exceptionally well by the member for Lowan. We now would like to take it into consideration in detail. So rather than spending the afternoon repeating the arguments that have already been made—and I would suggest our position is reasonably well known—we are happy to take it into consideration in detail. We are not simply filling in the afternoon. So with those few comments, I will sit down.

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) (15:09): Thank you, Acting Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on this really important bill. I feel very privileged to speak on this bill for a range of reasons, and one of them is that it is entirely consistent with the values of the Andrews Labor government—entirely consistent.

I used to run a business, and I did not want government intervention in things like the product offerings or the pricings of my business. That was my decision; that is the free market. But, absolutely, I welcomed—and I know the industry welcomes—government intervention in important matters like occupational health and safety for the workforce or important matters around wages and penalty rates. That is where government investment and intervention is important. You cannot take the approach that government should not intervene in a whole range of areas that would warrant government intervention. I suppose it comes down to values and ethics and a desire to actually achieve things, but there is absolutely a space and a place for government to intervene in a whole range of social policy areas, and this government has demonstrated the enormous benefits of that.

I think the opposition generally have a resistance to intervention in the market or in society. I have an appreciation of that in some areas, but I think in this regard it is an absolute failure. So as an example—and others have spoken about this—of this government's intervention in a whole range of social policy areas, there is mental health. Mental health, as we have heard many times from the Minister for Mental Health and the Premier, was ignored for far too long. The broken system was ignored. The people who had to live with a broken system were those users, the people that loved them, families and friends—and I have talked about my family connection with that important issue.

There is equality for the LGBTI community. You could say, 'Look, we're not going to intervene in that either. We're not going to be able to make laws or put money towards programs for that either, because it is okay; it will sort itself out'. I think Bernie Finn, a Liberal in the upper house, said these things sort themselves out. Well, I can assure you, behaviour change and social norms do not just sort themselves out. Maybe over hundreds or even thousands of years they do. They do not sort themselves out in the time that we need them to sort themselves out.

Three-year-old kinder—an enormous investment by this government; probably one of the biggest social reforms of this government—would not sort itself out either if you did not intervene both through policy change and through actual taxpayer funds.

Family violence—I mean, the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence is here and has been here for the entire debate—is something that absolutely warranted government intervention, and government is a leader in many respects in that intervention. It is not the only participant; there is a whole range of other voices that absolutely matter.

The treaty with the Aboriginal community of Victoria—the First Peoples of Victoria—does not just sort itself either. That warrants government intervention and leadership.

I understand the member for Mornington's view that we are presupposing a view by that side and that if we were to let them have consideration in detail we would be somehow illuminated that their view is far more progressive than it seems. You know what? A track record of many years demonstrates that that is probably a really worthless endeavour, to waste that time to find out something we already know, which is that there is a sense of strong conservatism on that side that does not seek to change social behaviour, social norms or social policy. That is not what they are here for. They are generally here for the preservation of wealth and privilege; that is what they have always been—and not just in a monetary sense, privilege in a sense of power, whether it be male—

Ms Kealy: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I would like to bring your attention to page 69 of *Rulings from the Chair*, stating that 'imputations are disorderly and not allowed'. I think that the member has certainly gone off track, and it has now turned into an attack upon a political party. I ask you to consider page 69—the imputation being disorderly—and I also ask you to bring the member back to the bill and the debate as it was put. As my first contribution was entirely respectful—it was not derogatory in any way towards any particular person or any party or any history—

A member interjected.

Ms Kealy: Without interruption would be lovely. I do wish for you to consider that.

Ms Williams: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, I would argue that the member for Oakleigh's contribution goes to the very heart of the issue that we are discussing through this bill, which is the establishment of cultures that often serve to disadvantage and disenfranchise large parts of our community, in this case women. To that end his comments are directly relevant to the legislation.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Suleyman): Thank you. Members, it has been a wideranging debate. I remind the member to go back to the bill and to make no imputations. Please go back to the bill. Thank you, member for Oakleigh.

Mr DIMOPOULOS: Thank you, Acting Speaker. I agree with the minister's interpretation that I was on the bill. Nonetheless, I think that this stuff matters. This policy intervention matters.

Mr T Smith: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I think that the member for Oakleigh was reflecting negatively on your ruling there. He basically said that he agreed with the minister at the table and not your ruling, where you sought to bring the member for Oakleigh back to the bill. I would make that point to you, Acting Speaker, in the humblest of situations. I would invite you to invite the member for Oakleigh to adhere to your ruling.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Suleyman): Order! Thank you, member for Kew. I believe the member for Oakleigh was acting within my ruling. Continue, member for Oakleigh. Thank you, member for Kew.

Mr DIMOPOULOS: Thank you, Acting Speaker. This stuff matters. It absolutely matters. There have been enormously, incredibly informative contributions from our side of the Parliament in this debate. This is not just a 'nice to have'. This, as other speakers and particularly female colleagues have talked about, actually goes to the heart of the safety of women, because it all starts with attitudes and behaviours and language.

The member for Carrum talked about a death in her very community, in a driveway, where a mum was murdered by her ex-partner in front of her children this week in Victoria. You cannot minimise this stuff. It matters. It absolutely matters. This is why this bill matters. It is not just symbolism. We have got a cop on the beat with the commissioner. We have got a whole bunch of things we are seeking from agencies that employ about 10 per cent of the Victorian community. This is about human rights. It is about so many generations of lost human potential.

I want to thank and acknowledge the women who for hundreds of years have, around the world and in Victoria, had to deal with the indignity and the disrespect on a daily basis. They still have to deal with it on a daily basis and with the lack of recognition of their capacity and their value as human beings. I am sorry that you have had to deal with that—you continue to deal with that—and we are trying to change it. The Daniel Andrews government is trying to change it via this very bill and many, many other initiatives we have also done.

One more thing before I conclude about this: a lack of decision in this area is actually a decision. A lack of wanting to do anything, a lack of intervention, is actually a decision.

Ms Ward: A lack of will.

Mr DIMOPOULOS: A lack of will, as the member for Eltham said, is a decision. And that decision is, 'We don't care enough'. That is what it is. People often hide behind the fig leaf of, 'It's not necessary'. I remember the Long Service Benefits Portability Bill 2018. The opposition was saying, 'Look, this is not necessary. It's a cost to business'—all the rest of it. My view is generally, in a debate in a pub or in a debate in Parliament, that when people say it is not necessary it is a fig leaf for, 'I don't care. In fact, I care not to do it. In fact, I'm minded not to do it, because that's not my values'. So please do not fall for this, Victorian community. Do not fall for, 'It's not necessary'. That is a fig leaf. That is a fig leaf for, 'I don't care about equality. I actually don't care about equality'.

Ms Kealy: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, under *Rulings from the Chair*, page 81, members have a responsibility to ensure speeches are factual. At no point in time have I or any other member of this chamber spoken on this bill and said that this is not important or not relevant. I completely reject you, as a male, telling me, as a female, what I think. I am deeply offended. I ask you to reflect on that, but I also ask the member to withdraw.

Ms Ward: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, I would like to indicate to the honourable member that we would not know what they think on that side because only one person spoke on this bill. That is how little they care.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Suleyman): Order! Thank you. There is no point of order. Thank you, member for Eltham. Just getting back, I do not believe there is a point of order at the moment, but can I ask the member for Oakleigh—well, time has run out. Yes, there is no point of order.

Mr HALSE (Ringwood) (15:19): There have been some fine contributions in this chamber this afternoon. There have been some relatively lacklustre interjections, to say the very least. Can I start by thanking the minister—

Ms Kealy: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I find, given that I have been the only member who has raised a point of order or made an interjection from this side, that the comments that were just made by the member were directly linked to me. Under *Rulings from the Chair*, there is certainly, on page 68 or 69—if you give me a minute, if you would like, I am happy to look it up. Certainly I found that the comments were quite offensive. It could be indicated, because there is only one person who can be identified through the comments that were made by the member, that his comments were disorderly. I ask him to withdraw them because they were identifiable as towards me and I took offence, and therefore under the previous rulings I ask that he withdraw those comments.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Suleyman): Order! One moment, I will seek advice.

Member for Lowan, I actually did not hear the full context of the comments at that point, but I will remind all members to please refer to the bill in front of you. I will continue to monitor this closely.

Mr HALSE: Let me continue. I do want to thank the Minister for Women and Minister for Prevention of Family Violence for her work in bringing this bill to this house and affording me an opportunity to speak on it and for her hard work and continued advocacy in this space. I also acknowledge as I make this statement that I am one of the 52 per cent of the Labor caucus that are men, close but not quite the cigar, and yet far better than those opposite. In making this statement I note that I am standing here on the shoulders of so many fantastic women in this Parliament and so many in our party that have come before us, including the late Joan Kirner. There are too many of course to list, but all of them are outstanding leaders in this place and in the other place. I note the irony in how this debate looks at the moment. As I look across the chamber there are not too many seats filled—still just a few members are here present in this debate—and we are still yet to hear from the Greens political party. Surprise, surprise! The optics, as they say, are not great for those opposite.

On this side of the house we understand. This Labor government has said since well before we were elected in 2014 and right through our time in government that gender equality in all its facets is a human right. But the state of Victoria has a problem in the area of gender equality and it is a big one. There is a multitude of statistics that outline the magnitude of this problem, and here are a few. At present there is an 11 per cent pay gap across the Victorian public sector. Although women comprise two-thirds, around 66 per cent, of the Victorian public sector workforce, they account for less than 44 per cent of public sector executives. Women are also concentrated in lower paid jobs and are more likely than men to be paid at the lowest end of the salary scale. Now although we are making progress, statistics show that at the present rate it could take as long as 170 years before women enjoy the same employment and leadership opportunities as men. On any measure, this is not right.

Gender equality is not only about promoting women's leadership in our institutions as an end in itself. It is about building a better, fairer and more just society for every single Victorian. To be clear, we all benefit from gender equality in ways that go far beyond keeping up appearances and feeling good about ourselves. Gender equality is good for families who benefit from extra income and from both parents contributing in the labour market, which leads to more fulfilling and respectful relationships in the home. At this juncture I will defer to the women who have already made outstanding contributions on how gender equality is key in the fight against family violence and pass my condolences on to the families of the many victims of the greatest law and order issue our state faces.

Gender equality is good for communities. A more diverse workforce that is reflective of the community's make-up is a workforce that will treat each other better and is better able to respond to community needs so we have working conditions that fit. Better women's participation simply means a greater pool of people to employ. It is prudent economic policy. As we heard from the Treasurer earlier, it saves the state money and raises productivity. We need more women in the workforce and we need them in roles where they have the same chance at influence as men. Women who are concentrated in lower paid jobs represent unused talent, and a fair chance at career progression would mean all get to see the benefits of that talent. We have a structural, gendered and economic sink. We do not need that and we should change it.

This bill does some important things to those ends. It requires that three big government institutions—three of our biggest employers—take leadership and show best practice in making their workplaces inclusive for all. Under this legislation, universities, councils and the public service will be required to show their progress—

Mr T Smith: Earlier in the member's contribution he made some sort of glib comment with regard to the number of opposition MPs in the chamber. Given that his own side cannot even maintain a quorum, I draw your attention to the state of the house.

Quorum formed.

Mr HALSE: Let me just forge ahead. I do want to make a comment about this idea of merit-based advancement that we hear floated around a lot by those opposite on some very woolly definition of merit-based advancement based on some twisted sort of meritocracy where those at the top of the table just shrug their shoulders and presume that the fact that they all look, speak, and see the world in the same way must be due to merit. A cursory read of history says that practically no change happens this way. Our party understands that. The opposition clearly do not. Change happens because it is demanded.

As a Labor government, we are all about putting women in the boardroom, in Parliament, in cabinet and putting in place legislation like this that demands institutions adapt to reflect that change. In this case it is gender equality, a change for the better for all of us.

I will end my speech on a personal note. Sitting here today is my wife, Rachel, and we are expecting our first baby very shortly. The phone is on silent while I am in the chamber. For a whole lot of suddenly more selfish reasons, I want my child and its peers to have the opportunities of a happy and fulfilling life like I have had, regardless of gender, and 170 years is certainly too long to wait. This is a bill to help us bring workplace gender equality to this state that little bit faster, so that one day when my child asks words to the effect, 'What is a women's place?', I can truthfully answer, 'Wherever she wants to be'.

Mr MAAS (Narre Warren South) (15:29): It really gives me great pleasure, and indeed it is with great pride that I speak on this bill. I thank my parliamentary colleagues for their very, very valued contributions. It gives me so much pride to speak on this bill for several reasons. As a father of two young daughters, who will one day be navigating their way through the world of employment, I would like to see a world for them which I hope will be affording them every opportunity, where their gender is not a bar to progress in life but is a move towards equality.

I am also a member in this term of the Parliament's Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, and we are currently hearing and considering evidence on gender responsive budgeting. The evidence from organisations, departments and academics overwhelmingly supports the committee for initiating an inquiry into gender budgeting and the proactive approach that that committee is taking. Also, I am a member of this government where 50 per cent of our cabinet are women and where we are just shy of 55 per cent of women in the caucus. As a government we consciously link our policies to gender equality. I also note that this government was the first government to produce a gender equality budget

information statement to accompany the annual budget, and that it has done this now for the last three years. And finally, it is the fair thing to do; it is the right thing to do.

It was of course in the lead-up to the 2018 election that the government made an election promise to introduce gender equality legislation, legislation that will empower women and girls in our state. While we have come a long way, more needs to be done, and this bill not only reflects the journey we are on but it is reflective of the pathway that we are taking. Yet gender inequality is still persistent in Victoria. Despite Victoria's improvement on indicators of gender equality, it remains an issue, particularly in the pay gap between men and women and in workforce participation. We still have a gender pay gap of 9.6 per cent, which is driven by a number of factors, including unequal workforce participation, discrimination and occupational and industrial segregation. Victorian women's workforce participation is 11.2 per cent lower than it is for men. A lifetime of insecure, low-paid work for women has resulted in a significant gender gap in superannuation, which sees women's savings 37 per cent lower than men's. The former Minister for Women, the member for Sydenham, earlier took us through the implications that stem from women being on such a comparatively lower superannuation amount. As has been noted, women still make up the vast majority of those working in the lowest paid occupations, such as registered nurses, classroom teachers, welfare support workers and cleaners, and women are under-represented in the higher paid occupations and industries such as finance, construction, utilities, science and technology. In addition, women still shoulder the domestic and caring responsibilities and are significantly more likely than men to take up flexible work arrangements, including part-time work.

We also know that gender inequality negatively impacts men. Many men want to take more equal responsibility in caring for children, but workplace practices often prevent or discourage them from taking extended parental leave or from working flexibly. Men also frequently face discrimination or disapproval when taking on career paths that have traditionally been seen as being reserved for women.

I am very proud that the Gender Equality Bill 2019 is the first piece of legislation in Australia that requires public-sector organisations to demonstrate to Victorians that they are actively pursuing gender equality. At this point I acknowledge our Minister for Women and the previous ministers for women as well for the power of work that collectively has been done. I would also like to especially thank all of the women members of our government. You just simply do not get to this point without gender-representative advocacy within our caucus, and I am very proud of that. Let us face it: Victoria will be the first jurisdiction in the country to take this step. It is good decision-making, and good decision-making stems from this type of gender-representative advocacy.

We know that when the government and the public sector set the standard, that standard is soon met by the private sector as well. By requiring over 300 organisations—spanning the length and breadth of our state, and collectively employing over 380 000 Victorians—to take action to improve gender equality in the workplace and in the community, this bill shows that we will continue in our efforts to address gender inequality and to improve outcomes for all Victorians. Our legislation will hold the public sector to account for achieving gender-equal pay, for ensuring better access to flexible work arrangements and for preventing sexual harassment and gender discrimination. We are pushing for gender equality for all of us, starting by getting it right in the public sector. The bill will make it easier for nurses, teachers, social workers, police, firefighters, child protection workers and all of our public servants to enjoy a workplace that is fair and equitable across all genders. The bill moves us from a position of goodwill and best intentions to real action.

Progress has been slow on gender equality, and we need the law to bring forward a cultural shift in our community. The opportunity to be on the right side of history is before us here today. Again, I say I am very proud of all of the contributions that have been made on this bill and on this side of the house.

Gender equality provides economic benefit. Every day that we fail to deliver gender equality, we pay, economically. By not fully leveraging the skills and the talent of women in the economy, Victoria is losing out on substantial social and economic benefits, both now and into the future. Closing

Australia's gender employment gap would boost GDP by around 11 per cent and by 20 per cent if the productivity gap were addressed.

Australia is ranked number one in the world for educational attainment for women, yet from graduation onwards women experience disadvantage on every indicator, from lower pay to fewer promotion and recruitment opportunities, and at the most extreme end, gendered violence and discrimination. The Australian economy would gain \$8 billion if women transitioned from tertiary education into the workforce at the same rate as men.

We know that equal workplaces are safer and far more inclusive workplaces. We know that by promoting and pursuing fairer and more equal and flexible work and leave policies, organisations stand to benefit. It is a valuable investment. Employers who offer enticing and flexible work and leave arrangements are more likely to win trust and loyalty, which ultimately allows them to retain staff. We need to dismantle the flexibility stigma. No-one should be forced to work flexibly or take parental leave, but we should enable an environment that equally and fairly gives everyone the opportunity to do so should they wish. Our culture still inherently puts pressure on women to do these things and men not to, so we must have an eye to removing these barriers and move towards equality for everyone.

The unconscious bias which infiltrates promotion and recruitment, the gendered segregation of roles which entrench stereotypes and inhibit productive workplace culture, reports of sexual harassment and unfair gaps in wages all contribute to workplaces which are fundamentally unequal and unfair. Achieving gender equality will not happen overnight, but the pace of change is too slow, as I have said. We need legislation to get there faster. We need the right tools in place to plan, measure and track progress to make change.

Quite simply, this bill is an outstanding bill. It is good law. All Victorians should live in a safe and equal society, with equal access to power, resources and opportunities, and they should be treated with dignity, fairness and respect regardless of their gender. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr CHEESEMAN (South Barwon) (15:39): It is with some profound pleasure that I this afternoon rise to speak on the Gender Equality Bill 2019. In reflecting on the elements of this bill and indeed applying the lessons of my own family, it is very, very clear that without legislation like this that has been championed by outstanding members of our government we would have a much, much less fair society. I am fortunate enough to have two boys, Isaac and Noah, and my sister is fortunate to have four girls, Charlot, Violet, Josie and Macy. They are all roughly the same age. I want to see my nieces being given the same opportunities as my sons. I want to see them be able to aspire to the same education opportunities, the same workplace opportunities, the same opportunities to secure well-paid jobs in their workplaces. That is what I want to see for my boys and my nieces.

When I reflect on the outstanding work that has been undertaken both by reformist Labor governments and of course our fantastic trade union movement, I certainly think the substantial gains that have been made today have been made because of those reformist Labor governments and our fantastic trade union movement in this country.

My mum and my father both entered the workplace in the 1960s. My father is a fitter and turner and my mother for most of her working life was a state-enrolled nurse. Those qualifications in so many ways are very, very similar, with the same amount of time to secure the qualifications, yet the earning capacity of my father through his working life was profoundly different to the earning capacity of my mother. Now, that is inherently unfair. They had qualifications that were equal; they had the same opportunities at school; but once they entered the workplace things profoundly changed. I think if I was to do a quick calculation of the earning difference through my mother's working life as a nurse in comparison to my father's working life, it would be hundreds of thousands of dollars less in direct earnings and of course a lot less money in terms of superannuation. It is through the tireless work of many women in the Labor caucus and many women in the trade union movement that we have begun that journey to secure far more rights, equal rights, for men and women.

We still have a long way to go. The elements of this bill very much of course focus on what we are doing as a government and as an employer. I think they are profound, they are significant and they will create pathways for equality for women in the Victorian economy. Having said that, though, there is a lot of work that needs to continue to be done with the private sector. In reflecting on the private sector the reality is that there are a lot of listed companies that do not have females represented on boards, that do not have women in managerial positions, and as a consequence of that there is profound unequal opportunities for women in their workplace.

I have been listening very intently to a lot of the contributions of my Labor colleagues. I listened very carefully to the contribution made by the member for Cranbourne. I think her contribution was simply outstanding. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues to further champion the rights of women in our society to ensure that the experiences of my nieces, who are in primary school, will as they move through their lives be the same as my sons.

I can recall as a young union official working in the Victorian public sector organising workers. This was in the early 2000s. Through the work that I was undertaking, through enterprise agreement negotiations, through internal human resource policies, almost all of the negotiations from the public sector, from the bosses, if you like, were being undertaken by men. That is changing. Through the work that has been undertaken by the three fabulous ministers for women that our government has had we are making substantial inroads. There is still of course a long, long way to go, but I think this bill very much adds to the work that has been undertaken by successive Labor governments and by the trade union movement, who have been champions of this for many, many decades. What I would like to ultimately see, as was reflected in some earlier comments, is the private sector follow the lead of the Andrews Labor government in the fantastic work that has been undertaken to secure gender equality.

I think this will have profound consequences for our economy, it will have profound consequences for our communities and it will have profound consequences indeed for our homes, for our families and the like. It very much builds on the other public sector and public policy reforms that our government has put in place—the Royal Commission into Family Violence and the Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System. All of these reforms, all of these public policy issues that our government is working on are very much about lifting people up and providing the same opportunities. It is a profound reform that will make a difference.

It is remarkable how far we have come; it is remarkable how much further we do need to go. As I said earlier, both my parents had qualifications that could be broadly described as equal, yet the take-home pay through their working lives and the superannuation that they have is profoundly different, simply based on the fact that for all of their working lives we have not had gender equality. This bill and the reforms that are being put in place will make a difference.

Mr J BULL (Sunbury) (15:50): I am delighted to have the opportunity to contribute to debate on the Gender Equality Bill 2019. This is indeed a historic moment in our journey towards gender equality. It is a journey in which we have come so far, but we certainly still do have a long way to travel. In reflecting on notes for this piece of legislation before the house this afternoon I was thinking of when I am holding my eight-month-old daughter, Cleo, and the fact that I want to be able to give her the very best life possible. I am sure like all parents I want her to be safe, to be healthy, to be happy, to be free from worry, stress, fear and shame, and I want her to be equal. I want her to be seen for her values, her attitude, her efforts, her kindness and her decency. What I do not want is for her to be treated differently because she is a girl or because she is a woman. I do not want her to be paid less when she does the same work as a man, to have less opportunity, less money, less superannuation and less of what she, as an equal member of our community, as an equal member of our society, is rightfully entitled to. Like all parents—and I hope like all individuals—I want her to be treated equally within our community, within our state and within our nation. This bill takes a significant step in delivering that.

Of course, the Andrews Labor government believes that each and every person within this state should be treated equally and fairly. It is why holistically this government has embarked on a record number

of policies, announcements and initiatives that have indeed, I believe, made this state better and fairer for decades and generations to come.

Before I discuss some of the elements of this bill in further detail it is worth looking at our investments in education when it comes to fairness—whether that is three-year-old kinder, whether that is building the Education State, whether it is those significant investments in TAFE or whether it is in health care, critically important investments in our hospitals, in our nurses, in our paramedics and in our doctors, all of which, I believe, stem very much from the core value of fairness. This is what this bill is fundamentally about, as other honourable members have spoken about this afternoon. This is about levelling a playing field that has not been level for a very long time.

This bill delivers on our election commitment to introduce gender equality legislation to eliminate the pay gap within the Victorian public sector. The Gender Equality Bill will apply to Victorian public sector organisations with 50 or more employees, including our public service bodies, public entities, local government, universities, Court Services Victoria and the Office of Public Prosecutions. There are, as has been mentioned by other members this afternoon, more than 300 organisations, or around 11 per cent of the Victorian workforce, that are covered by this legislation.

We are a government that lives our values. Of course there would be little point—if any point—in bringing a bill such as this one through the Parliament, through the house, without reflecting on our own party when it comes to gender equality. I am very proud to say that this government has a gender-equal cabinet and government benches of 48 per cent women. We have achieved gender parity on paid government boards, a commitment we made some years ago. The evidence is clear: when we have gender-equal organisations we get better decisions and that then carries on to better outcomes for our individual communities.

I want to take the opportunity this afternoon, as other members have done, to commend and acknowledge the incredible female MPs in this house but particularly the female members on this side of the house, who I believe each and every day do an outstanding job in representing their local communities, working tirelessly each and every day through schools, through roads and through healthcare services, to ensure that their communities are best represented. I certainly want to give a shout-out to our terrific female caucus members.

I would also like to acknowledge the Minister for Women—my good friend the Minister for Women, who is at the table—and the wonderful work both she and her office have done in bringing this bill to the house. Of course that builds upon the work of the late Fiona Richardson and the member for Sydenham, who have done a tremendous amount of work in this space. The Minister for Women I believe shows each and every day what a powerful contribution looks like and does a wonderful job in her portfolio area.

During the debate this afternoon I think what has been thoroughly enjoyable is listening to the contributions of a number of members on this side of the house who have spoken about women through the course of history that have made significant reforms to their local communities and indeed this state—trailblazers who have changed what was thought to be acceptable into what is right and what is fair. It has been incredibly heartwarming to hear these stories and of course know that there has been so much go into bringing about reform and this progress to make our community and our society more equal and more fair. I want to take this opportunity to thank all of those women, many of whom are here today, who have put so much into advancing the rights of women.

This bill seeks to improve gender equality within Victorian government workplaces by requiring organisations to publicly report on their progress against key gender equality indicators such as equal pay, sexual harassment, flexible work, parental leave and career progression practices. They will be required to challenge workplace discrimination—and rightly so—by preparing and implementing gender equality action plans and undertaking gender impact assessments. Defined entities will also need to apply a gendered lens to Victorian government policies, programs and services.

And as other members have mentioned this afternoon, we will of course establish a new public sector gender equality commission, which will effectively be in charge of holding organisations to account. The commissioner will scrutinise the performance against commitments these organisations have made, effectively making sure that the right thing is done, and will of course have the power to call out organisations that have not made real and significant progress over time. They will have the power to issue compliance notices and in cases of breach or non-compliance will refer the matter to VCAT. The commissioner will also have the authority to resolve disputes relating to systemic gender equality issues within any organisation discovered within those enterprise agreements.

Public reporting of outcomes will soon tell all Victorians, and importantly jobseekers, who are the best performers across the public sector, and this continues that constant dialogue of ensuring that the mechanics within this legislation but most importantly the values that underpin this piece of legislation before the house are enforced. The commissioner will set equality targets and quotas, and a range of gender equality targets and quotas may be set. Because of course we know—and I have mentioned this within our ranks—how important it is to make sure that this government is indeed living its values, doing the things that we said we would and continuing to make Victoria a fairer, better, stronger state. This piece of legislation, like many pieces of legislation that we bring to the house, will make a genuine and real difference to the people of Victoria.

Acting Speaker, as you know, the Andrews Labor government is a government of action. We are a government that gets things done. Victorians, I do believe, know that this government builds and delivers on the big-ticket items, whether it is in road and rail or in schools and hospitals. But more important than this, we are government that is driven by fairness. I think that if you are weighing up your values as a government and you are effectively looking at those values on a whiteboard and you have fairness right there in the centre of that board, then that is a good thing. This piece of legislation continues to deliver for each and every community. This is a very important piece of legislation, and we on this side of the house take the responsibility of governing very seriously. So together we send the message to each and every Victorian that under our laws you will be treated equally and fairly. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr FREGON (Mount Waverley) (16:00): I rise also, as have many of my colleagues, to speak on the Gender Equality Bill 2019. Firstly, I would like to thank the minister at the table for her tireless advocacy for women's rights and equality. This bill is another important step in bringing our state towards real equality for women and men. I say 'men' because if we have inequality for women, we obviously have inequality for men on the other side. In my role in this house and as a bloke we should be working for equality and fairness for all of us, regardless.

In a week where we said goodbye and thank you to the Honourable John Cain, who as we heard in this place earlier in the week did much to bring us towards equality for women, it is a good time to bring in this bill. I think he would have approved, not that I would speak for him of course. That work has continued, and the Andrews Labor government can be proud of the steps that we have already taken. But there is obviously still work to do, and this bill is part of it. I again thank the minister but also the Premier and the whole cabinet and every minister and member who has played a part in bringing us here and will continue to bring us forward.

This bill will improve workplace gender equality across the Victorian public sector, universities and local councils, and through these organisations—considering how policies and programs and services affect and impact people of different genders—we will see this message sent out through our communities of the importance of gender equality. It still surprises me that the gender pay gap in our country is around 14 per cent. You would have thought in this day and age that we would be closer than that. But according to the Victorian Public Sector Commission last year that figure across the Victorian public sector is 11 per cent, and it is still too much. This government's historic Royal Commission into Family Violence told us that we need to establish a culture of non-violence and gender equality and to shape appropriate attitudes towards women and children. It is important for us

in this process of preventing family violence that we not only prevent discrimination but also proactively drive gender equality.

There are some who may shake their heads at this bill. I think, gratefully, there are not that many, to be fair, and hopefully that number is decreasing. Take a look at the government benches in this place and the other and you will quickly see that 48 per cent of our side and our little bay 13 over there are women, and as we have said—and we will keep singing—50 per cent of our cabinet are women. This is because we as a party have openly, proactively driven gender equality within our ranks, and it works. We can see it works. Some others might not be able to see that, but it does.

This bill does not only affect women; it affects everyone. Today we deliver a promise that we will make a difference, and that will make a difference. The outcomes of this will not only benefit women but will make a difference in the lives of everyone in our community. Achieving gender equality will not happen overnight, but it will happen. The pace of change could be faster. We need legislation to help this change happen and the right tools need to be in place to plan and measure and track progress to make that change, and this bill does that.

This bill is intended to support the achievement of workplace gender equality in the Victorian public sector, universities and councils through a variety of measures: contributing to closing the gender pay gap by targeting its key drivers; improving gender equality at all levels of the workforce—it is worth pointing out that a lot of the pay gap is due to the fact that women make up a lot of the lower paid careers in our workplaces; reducing gendered workplace segregation—the idea that we have any segregation in this state is all by itself ridiculous; providing greater availability and uptake of family violence leave, flexible work and parental leave; reducing sexual harassment in the workplace as well as cases of discrimination during pregnancy, parental leave and the return to work; improving the equity in recruitment and promotion practices, and providing greater support for women to reach leadership roles in the same numbers as men.

But it is not just these organisations that will be affected by this bill; the wider community will also benefit from this bill's requirement that organisations subject to the bill consider the gendered impact of their policies, programs and services that will have an effect and a significant impact on the public that they serve, and that will ensure that they meet community needs.

Now, as the house is well aware, between 2002 and 2010 the people in my district of Mount Waverley, including myself in 2010, were very well represented by the Honourable Maxine Morand, who was the Minister for Women's Affairs from 2007 to 2010. In August of that year the minister informed the house that when the Bracks-Brumby governments came to power, the percentage of women on government boards was 31 per cent. But at that time, in August 2010, she was very happy to inform the house when she delivered her speech that they had not only reached the target of 40 per cent but had surpassed it. I was very pleased to hear earlier in the debate that that number is now 53 per cent. This result alone has taken a lot of effort over a long time, and our job is not done.

But let us have a list of our ministers for women and women's affairs, to give them the credit that they are due: the Honourable Sherryl Garbutt; the Honourable Mary Delahunty; our own Minister for Transport Infrastructure; the Honourable Maxine Morand; the Honourable Fiona Richardson; our member for Sydenham, who is sitting in front of me—thank you very much; and of course our current Minister for Women. That is a very, very capable list, and all of these women have made their mark in many ways, but when we think about equality, we should probably say they did not make their mark because they were women; they made their mark and they were women. There was a comment from someone in the other place, something about 'Let men be men and let women be women'. Well, how about we just let people be people and stop worrying about whether they are women or men or whatever? They are just themselves, and their capability has nothing to do with their gender. Now, there were ministers from the other side, obviously, for women's affairs, but I will let their speakers mention them.

Something else happened in 2010. We as a country saw our first female Prime Minister. Acting Speaker, as you cannot help but know, because I go on about my kids probably too much, Rebecca and I have a daughter, Sophie. When I first thought of that I was going to say, it was, 'I have a daughter', and then I thought, 'No, I'd better not share that one or I might be in trouble, considering Rebecca did all the work'. Sophie was born on International Women's Day. In 2010 she was three years old, and I was at home when Julia Gillard became our Prime Minister. I can still remember it. We were both standing in front of the TV, and obviously the news had hit. I do not know why, but I am glad I did—I basically knelt down next to little Soph, and she will not remember it, except that I keep reminding her, and I said, 'Soph, do you see that woman on the TV? You can do whatever you want to do in this country. There is nothing that you cannot do in your career, in your choices; it is not to do with you being a girl'. And that is the way it should be, and that is the way that I want our state to be so that my daughter's gender is completely irrelevant to her career prospects, her financial prospects and whatever aspirations she may have—irrelevant. That is why we need equality. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (16:10): Reforming inequality is not a gendered issue; it is a cause for all of us. This is a landmark piece of legislation, an Australian first and a timely reminder of why Labor governments matter and why the labour movement matters. I think it is important to remind the house it was more than half a century ago when the equal pay case was launched, when Bob Hawke, then head of the ACTU, stood and said, 'We want equal pay for equal work'. We are still not there. It is not going to happen by chance; it is the will and the wit and the effort of so many people. I made the point when we commemorated John Cain, the longest serving Victorian Premier, on how proud I think he would have been of this; the Minister for Planning is here at the table as well. These are emblematic issues. This is what defines the difference. It harks back to the liberating changes that John Cain pioneered simultaneously as Premier and as minister for women, and it defines why the past is never dead and buried; it is not even past. It is about our responsibility to continue to drive this change, because it will not happen by chance; it still has not happened. I mean, it is staggering when you find the gender pay gap still at 9.6 per cent, driven by a number of factors, including unequal workforce participation, discrimination and occupational and industrial segregation. I mean, it is still there.

I want to commend all of the women over the whole period of time that it has taken, from the suffragettes, to the women in the labour movement and to those on the other side of politics who want to make the same commitment—I acknowledge that too—to build that pressure over time and to have affirmative action in the cabinet of Victoria for the first time. These are landmark steps and progress, to have the women who are in the caucus and their experience and, Acting Speaker Couzens, your own experience. I have a particular point about what we are doing as a government and what we need to do to drive even further change and, I think, particularly about some of the other initiatives mandating that 50 per cent of the positions on boards have to be for women. We would all be dead before it happened otherwise; that is just the plain truth. So it has been fantastic how we have done that.

I am also conscious, as I know you are, Acting Speaker, of representing a disadvantaged community with a lot of women who came here as factory fodder. That was the only chance they got—they worked on the assembly lines. My mum was on the assembly lines at Yakka, Ericsson, Denzil Don and Nabisco—they have all gone. How do you get your opportunity? How do you get your chance? This is a big responsibility, and I think it is really important that these reforms continue.

I remember this clearly: even if you are in the land of opportunity, as my late dad always called Australia—and he was right—how do you make those differences? I think a lot of people do not quite understand that you got up at 6, you got the breakfast on the table and you got the kids out at 7 to be on the train line to get to school. Then you had to go and do the afternoon shift from 3 o'clock till 11. When we got a car, Dad would make the dinner. I would hold it on the tray, and we would go and see Mum so she could have a break from the assembly line. It was really lonely for people. People do not understand that.

This is the dignity of women that needs to be fought for and needs to be addressed. I have raised this with the Minister for Women; I want to look at how we actually evolve again for women in these circumstances. One of the issues for them is that all they have is their time and their labour, and their time is crushed from all different areas. I have spoken directly with Muhammad Yunus, who won the Nobel Peace Prize for his microfinancing model, and I think this is really important. How does it work? What does he do? It is giving some money for women to start small businesses, to start to be able to invest, to have a go and to be given a better opportunity. And guess what—the result has been outstanding, and it works. Who would have thought? Why don't we just empower women to have a chance, show their initiative, their creativity and everything? We will look at that in the future as well.

I think these issues and these emblematic causes are in a proud tradition. I do want to acknowledge the minister for bringing this piece of legislation, which has to be driven; her predecessors, including the member for Sydenham here and the late Fiona Richardson; and all the other women who have come before, as has been said—Joan Kirner, the first woman Premier of Victoria, Mary Delahunty and Sherryl Garbutt. It is an honour; the rollcall is highly distinguished—legislators, advocates and people who made huge differences. You think of Julia Gillard rising to be Australia's first woman Prime Minister as well.

So this is it: we see that you can—and so you should—have the opportunity to have any position in this country. That is what we are about fundamentally, and Australians get that, so this is another step in how we do it. Again it goes to: what is the mechanism that is being used? Well, we are looking at the public sector and public service bodies, public entities, special bodies, councils, Court Services Victoria, universities and the Office of Public Prosecutions. These are entities of 50 or more employees, to be determined by headcount. The threshold of 50 employees ensures an appropriate balance is struck between achieving the objectives of the bill and encouraging organisational change and ensuring a reasonable and achievable reporting burden.

It does take me back to the way that John Cain was clever about using the power over public land, over Crown land, to actually remove discrimination against women—the white line, the memberships—so that they could actually get in the door. That is all women really want. They just want to get in the door, have a chance, have a fair go and get the opportunity. So I think for a whole range of reasons this piece of legislation resonates. It is an important next step in this long journey for equality, equal pay and equal opportunity, and I think that it is extremely timely given the resonance with the commemoration of John Cain and all of the key women who influenced him as well. The speech that was made at his memorial service was also an outstanding speech, defining all that he had done.

This is how change occurs. It is the critical proposition about driving how we continue, just opening the way and showing that, yes, these are the leaders who were there. It is what I say to my daughter, Tess, if I can just refer to her on this, that the next generation of women coming through are outstanding for education. They see the opportunity. They are not going to be waiting; they are going to be driving the change and leading at all the different levels. I think that as a Labor government for us to continue to do this is really important and we should use the mechanisms that we have.

We still have 65 per cent of women in Victoria aged 20 to 74 participating in the workforce compared to 79 per cent of men, leaving a percentage gap of 14 per cent. Women currently spend almost twice as much time undertaking caring or domestic duties, and women are still under-represented in decision-making roles across our community, which contributes to workplace cultures and norms which inherently disadvantage. We know that more than half of working women are likely to face gender discrimination, workplace violence or sexual harassment. This insight is staggering, that this still continues, so I want to commend the Premier, the cabinet and particularly on this day all of the women for all that they have done and for all it has taken. We cannot thank you enough. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr FOWLES (Burwood) (16:20): It is my very great pleasure to make a contribution to this very important bill, a bill that ought to attract the attention and enthusiastic support of all members in this

place. I would like to thank too the Minister for Women for her very hard work in bringing this bill to the house, her outstanding consultation work and her commitment to these issues.

When speaking last or, I think, second last on a bill, I think it is appropriate to perhaps reflect on some of the contributions made on the matter. I thought the member for Lowan made a thoughtful contribution to this debate, and I thank her for that, and I have listened with interest to the outstanding contributions made by members of my party, including the members for Macedon, Footscray, Northcote and Sydenham—some terrific contributions. But once again we find ourselves wondering just where the Liberal Party is on these matters, and I would suggest it is nowhere to be seen. I frankly do not know what is worse, opposing the bill or saying nothing at all, except of course, as the member for Ferntree Gully managed earlier, just running down the contributions of the members for Macedon and Yan Yean—both of them, of course, women—with spurious points of order, using the procedures and tools of this place to cut short the fine contributions of Labor women on this bill.

I do point out that there is a difference between not opposing a bill and not being opposed to a bill, because I think that difference can easily be inferred from the conduct of some members in this place. It can easily be inferred that whilst they might not be opposing a bill in the formal sense of this place they are nonetheless opposed to its content—not all, I am sure, but many. When we think about gender and the need for gender equality, though it might be opposed by people in this place and is quite clearly opposed by certain members of the other place, I reflect back on the comments I made in my first contribution in this Parliament. They reflected that one only needs to glance around an airline members lounge or city restaurants at lunchtime on a Friday or the boardrooms of corporate Australia to see that we remain an unequal society. It is, I would think, self-evident perhaps, and to not do something about that is frankly a dereliction of one's duty as an elected representative and a public official in our society.

Being a successful man in an equal world does not mean parading the fact that you have a mother or sister or daughters like it is some grand achievement rather than an accident of genetics, but we often hear language like that saying, 'Well, I've got daughters, I've got sisters, I've got a mother'. I think universally we share that fact.

A member: It depends.

Mr FOWLES: Well, for all but the aliens, perhaps. Claiming a love of women does not remove the gender blinkers from our eyes, and there are differences. Twenty per cent of all women say they have experienced sexual violence—20 per cent. Every week in Australia a woman is murdered by a current or former partner. These are breathtaking statistics.

A member: Every week.

Mr FOWLES: This is every week. These are statistics that warrant our active intervention. I am proud to be part of a government that is actively intervening, because we know that gendered violence has at its heart inequality. Gendered violence has at its heart a sense by the perpetrators of that violence that somehow men are better or superior to women—that women are inferior. It is an attitude that is grounded in a century that is not this one. It is an attitude that is scarily still perpetuated at the very upper echelons of Australian society.

Just this week a fascinating report was released by Amelia Loughland, and it stunningly found that in the High Court of Australia—the High Court of Australia—female judges were far more likely to be interrupted than their male colleagues. In the High Court! More significantly it found that this rate of interruption has increased since the time of the first female chief justice. So even at the pinnacle of their legal careers there is embedded bias towards male judicial authority and against female judicial authority. We need to actually bring unconscious bias training to the highest court in the land because what we see is, one, a very, very low percentage of advocates in the High Court being women and, two, a very, very high percentage—even if you take the chief justice out of it, because the chief justice as the traffic controller of proceedings necessarily has to get involved in more of the interrupting—a

dramatically disproportionate number of interruptions coming from male advocates over the top of female justices of the High Court. It is staggering that that could be the case today.

I am conscious that we bring this bill before the house in the week that we celebrated the life of John Cain. I will not repeat my contribution to the condolence motion save to raise one matter, which is the change to club memberships—the John Cain signature special. His actions and the actions of his government put an end to gender discrimination at the Melbourne Cricket Club, the Victoria Racing Club and a host of other clubs that did not afford women the same rights as men. He did it without even the need for a statute. After 27 long years of Liberal rule, in the early 1980s John Cain and Labor brought Victoria's sporting life into the 20th century. It was long overdue, and it points again to the proud record that Labor governments have on these matters and the proud record that Labor governments have on advancing these issues, on caring about these issues and on responding both administratively and legislatively to these problems.

The contrast with others could not be more stark. I think particularly of Prime Minister Tony Abbott's time as the minister for women. I will just say that again because it jars, doesn't it? As soon as you say the words you sort of go, 'Hang on, sorry—surely not'. Yes, Prime Minister Tony Abbott was the minister for women in the Abbott government. Outstanding! One might reflect on Julie Bishop's views about that. When she was the first female foreign affairs minister she said that she was frequently asked by men, and only by men—when she was first appointed to cabinet as the Minister for Education, Science and Training as well as the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women's Issues—'Why isn't there a minister for men's issues?'. Her thoughts were, 'I thought the answer so self-evident that it didn't require a response'. Fast-forward to 2013, she was back in cabinet, the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the only woman—the only woman—in that 19-member cabinet, and the Prime Minister appointed himself the minister for women's issues. She said this:

Some seven years on I thought it was quite clear—

Mr Angus: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, just on relevance, I think the member has well and truly strayed way away. We let him get away with a few federal references, but he is clearly just continuing on and on, and I ask you to draw him back to the bill at hand, please.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Couzens): I do not uphold the point of order, but I ask the member to keep to the content of the bill.

Mr FOWLES: Allow me to finish the quote from the former foreign minister, because I think it does relate to gender equality. It even uses the words 'gender equality'. Here it is. The member for Forest Hill might not want to hear it, but this is a bit of tough love from Julie Bishop:

Some seven years on I thought it was quite clear that we have—

Ms Kealy: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, in relation to the member's contribution, he is deliberately not adhering to your orders around coming back to the content of the bill. He said he would continue what he was saying. Therefore I do ask that he does obey your order. You have asked the member to come back to the content of the bill. I wish you to reiterate that, in respect for you, Chair.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Couzens): I do not uphold the point of order. I think the member is referring to gender equity, which is what the title of this bill is, so I ask the member to continue.

Mr FOWLES: In my 10 seconds left, Julie Bishop said:

Some seven years on I thought it was quite clear that we have some way to go in addressing the issues of gender equality and discrimination—

'some way to go'.

Mr EREN (Lara) (16:30): I am delighted to be able to speak on this very important bill. I am delighted to be part of a government that has groundbreaking historical bills that come before the

house, and this is one of them. There is no question: the Andrews Labor government indeed have, over the past six years, brought legislation into this place which matters to the wider community, and this is one such bill. We are the government that actually called for a royal commission into family violence. As politicians and governments we do not like to ask questions we do not know the answer to. We genuinely did not know, but we genuinely wanted some answers. Two hundred and twenty-seven recommendations came out of that inquiry, and of course we backed that up with \$2.9 billion just to—

Mr Wynne: How much?

Mr EREN: It was \$2.9 billion, Minister. That goes to show that we are serious about making sure that there is equality in our community. And when you consider that, according to the census of 2016, 50.9 per cent of our population is female, of course we need to recognise that and make our state the fairest state in the nation, as we have the fastest growing population, we have the strongest economy and we are the sporting capital. All of these titles come because of the diverse community that we have in this state.

I know that this topic has been covered very eloquently by our side. Unfortunately there have been no speakers on the other side other than the lead speaker, which is a shame. It just goes to show the contempt that they have for legislation like this that comes before the house.

I want to talk about our advancements in the last six years in relation to women in sport, and of course we had—

Mr Wynne: Yes, an area you would know a bit about.

Mr EREN: Absolutely, Minister. As you would know, we have invested a fair bit of money into women in sport. Our government has made groundbreaking investments into women in sport, and I will systematically outline to the house those investments that we have made in the last six years.

I am proudly saying again, as a member of the Andrews Labor government, that whenever we had a federal sports ministers meeting, every other state and territory would look at us to see what we were doing in this state to advance women in sport, and I am very proud of that. Of course the baton has been handed to the new minister, the member for Keysborough, and he is doing a great job as well.

Before I get onto the substance of what I want to talk about today, I want to congratulate my very good friend Fiona Richardson, a former Minister for Women, who obviously set the building blocks for what we have got here today and who handed it on to the member for Sydenham, who handed the baton on to the current minister, the member for Dandenong. All have done a spectacular job in terms of advancing the cause of women in this state, and I want to congratulate all of them for having such a bill before the house.

As I have indicated, we have invested record amounts of money into women in sport, and there are things that we have done as a result of the women and girls in sport and recreation inquiry, which was chaired by Richmond Football Club president, Peggy O'Neal. I am a big fan of Peggy O'Neal. She is the only female president of an AFL club in the nation, and she has done a great job in presenting us with a document which will make our state fairer when it comes to women in sport.

One of the first things that we did—again this is groundbreaking—is we introduced an Office for Women in Sport and Recreation, and Bridie O'Donnell is heading up that within the department to have a look at the inequities that existed in the funding models of previous governments.

Predominantly sporting clubs have been dominated to a certain extent by men; it is not as much as before but they are still dominated by men. My wife and I have five children; we have four boys and one girl. It has been quite easy to accommodate our boys in sporting clubs and associations in the regions that we have lived in, but it was really, really hard to access good sporting facilities for my daughter, who wanted to play football—Aussie Rules. There were no girls teams, and she was only

12 at the time. She had to get changed at home. She could not shower after the game. She was in a boys team. Things have dramatically changed since then, and we have got record amounts of women's teams and girls teams now in this state, which is wonderful to see.

That was unfair. I thought that was inherently unfair that our boys could have access to all of these facilities and yet our daughter could not. So that resonated with me, and you have got to take the opportunity when the opportunity presents itself. When I was the minister, of course with the help of government and the Treasury, we implemented a fair few things in relation to women in sport.

We have a dedicated female sports coordinator within Sport and Recreation Victoria. We have also said that by working with state sporting associations we would like to achieve 40 per cent female board membership by July 2019, with an expectation of 50 per cent by 2024. Many sporting boardrooms lack the balance and the skills that females and women have brought to the board table, and of course we are very proud currently to see so many boards that have taken up this opportunity to advance not only their sport but indeed their boards by having more women on their boards.

Another groundbreaking initiative is the Change Our Game initiative, which we announced in November 2016, which encourages the sporting sector to challenge gender stereotypes and encourage more women and girls to reach their full potential. Of course we were the only state to have a dedicated fund for female-friendly facilities, which we built right across the state. Over 100 clubs now have female-friendly facilities, and the only way you can get women and girls—

Ms Addison interjected.

Mr EREN: The member for Wendouree knows the importance of the investments that we have made, and we have certainly made a lot of them around the state. Certainly there are a lot more women and girls participating in sport because of that change that we made in our funding policies. And if you did not tick the box as a sporting club to come to government wanting money, we said, 'Well, are you going to be female-friendly? Because if you are, you will go right up to the top of the ladder'. And so that is how we have made some of the changes that needed to be made.

The minister at the table, the Minister for Planning, would know this initiative very well: the inner-city netball program. As I indicated earlier about population growth, there are a lot of people wanting to play netball and we did not have enough courts. After discussions with Fiona Richardson, the \$9.6 million inner-city netball program delivered 64 netball courts across the municipalities of Darebin, Melbourne, Moreland and Yarra.

There is the special investment that we made: the State Netball and Hockey Centre. I remember the CEO of Netball Victoria, Rosie King, when I rang her about the good news of the \$64 million investment that we were making in the netball and hockey centre in Parkville; she was actually crying over the phone. This was the biggest investment of any government in the nation ever in women's sport. That was just fantastic.

As the Minister for Tourism and Major Events, where possible when we were having a major sporting event we insisted that there was a female curtain-raiser incorporated into that event. When the Socceroos played, we wanted the Matildas to play. We secured the Women's T20 World Cup final, which will take place at the MCG for the first time ever. We will have the women's final at the MCG on International Women's Day in 2020. Hopefully we will fill that stadium, and I am fairly confident we will.

Consistent with other codes like soccer with the Matildas and the rugby sevens, there is equal prize money for the Victorian Open happening at Thirteenth Beach over the weekend. The Australian Open—equal prize money. There is the Southern Stars Australian women's cricket team. We are increasing women's participation in cycling, and we have recently had the Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Race.

Outcomes for women start with attitudes towards women. Some of our most inspiring leaders in sport are female, and we want to give the next generation an opportunity to become the next trailblazers. Maybe it is time to have the next minister for sport be female. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr WYNNE (Richmond—Minister for Housing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Planning) (16:39): Regretfully, I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

ROAD SAFETY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2019

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Ms NEVILLE:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr FREGON (Mount Waverley) (16:40): I rise to speak on the Road Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. Thank you to all my colleagues for their excellent contributions.

We all use and rely upon our roads every day to get us from A to B. Whether it be for commercial, public or private use, we all share our roads, and we should be able to expect that all of us on the roads will obey the rules of those roads. Now, for minor indiscretions—which I am sure most of us have done—fines are appropriate, and we should behave ourselves. But for serious offences our community expects tougher treatment.

It is very pleasing to me to see that this bill will ensure that the very small percentage of our road users who ignore or forget their responsibilities and are a danger to all of us on the roads are treated with the severity of response that our community expects. Last year was a devastating year on Victorian roads, and so it is good to see that we are once again giving our police the resources they need. We rely upon the safety of our roads to ensure the safety of our families and our community.

I would like to congratulate the Minister for Police and Emergency Services on the significant work that has been done to take those who put members of our community at risk off the roads. I would also take the opportunity to thank the Minister for Roads and Minister for Road Safety and the TAC in the other place for her important work in this area. Once again, in regard to the Transport Accident Commission, a nod to the Honourable John Cain and his wonderful work in that area and for bringing it in.

The government's 2019–20 *Community Safety Statement* has set five priorities to make Victoria safer. These five priorities can be seen in this bill, mostly in the three areas of reducing harm, putting victims first and holding offenders to account. If any member of our community commits excessive speeding offences or other serious road offences, or causes injury with a motor vehicle or murder with a motor vehicle, their licence will be immediately suspended, and they will be off the road, as they should be.

The minister mentioned two individuals in her speech, Chloe Dickman and Jeynelle Dean-Hayes, for their dedication to these changes, and I also thank them for their advocacy. I think it is worth pointing out that every individual on our roads has a family, friends and workmates. Last year we lost 266 people, and the TAC figure on the website is actually reported as 'lives lost'. I think any of us who heard about the horrific tragedy in New South Wales last weekend could not but be moved by the senseless loss of life for those families. I have three children, and I could not even begin to imagine the depth of loss that that family is dealing with right now. So I think that, as well as thinking about lives lost, we should also think about lives changed forever.

I can remember in 1996 when I was driving to work—I was working at BHP at the time—hearing on the radio about Melbourne and Hawthorn merging, which I was not happy about as a Hawks fan. And

over the radio came an announcement that a driver in Frankston had gone through an intersection straight into a petrol station, had hit a kombi van and had squashed the man who was filling up his petrol at a bowser at the time between the kombi van and the petrol bowser. Immediately that blew up, and the driver was killed instantly. I remember that like it was yesterday, because I remember thinking at the time while waiting to park, 'My cousin lives in Frankston, and he drives a kombi van'. I just had a sense that it was him. It was one of these feelings you get when you just think something has happened and you think, 'No, no, no, it's just silly'. So I parked the car, which took a little while, and it kept nagging at me. And I just thought, 'I've got to check; I've got to get it off my mind'. I rang my mother, his aunty, and she answered the phone. And she was in tears. So my cousin David Brice died on our roads. He was not even on the road; he was in a petrol station.

I do not know if the driver that crossed that intersection and went into that petrol station was speeding. I do not know if he ran a red light, and I do not know if he was drunk or on drugs. I do not know, and I do not want to know, because if those things turned out to be true it would make it worse. What I would want to know is that that driver who caused that mayhem, that grief, that permanent sorrow, in the family of my cousins and my aunty, would not have their licence at this moment—and that is what this bill does. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (16:46): I will just make a very brief contribution in relation to the Road Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. I want to note, as I start, the powerful story that was just shared by the member for Mount Waverley, and I commend him for sharing that with the house. I think there would not be a person, probably, in this building that has not been affected adversely by some road trauma of some description over their journey. As the member was just saying, we have got tragic situations on a regular basis—far too regular.

I think as a community we look back at 2019 and we see the horrendously high road toll. Despite the best efforts of the community, despite the best efforts of the police and the law enforcement bodies and other agencies, we are still seeing this. There is no doubt that as a community we have got to improve in that area, and there are a number of ways that that can be achieved. I think that continuing to bring the road safety issue before this place and certainly before the community more generally is an important responsibility.

I think it has been disappointing to see that the committee that used to look after that area here in the Parliament was scrapped by the government—the Road Safety Committee. We have talked about that in previous debates, and there has been much reminiscing over the excellent work that that committee did over a very, very long period of time, including of course one of the key reforms in the whole area of road safety, and that is the introduction of seatbelts. I think that is a real disappointment for the Parliament. I think it is a disappointment for the community to have had that committee so unceremoniously scrapped.

Notwithstanding that, as I said, some of the recent events that we have seen here in Victoria are just heartbreaking. Some of the events that we have seen in other jurisdictions as well are indeed heartbreaking. As I said at the very start, most of us have been touched; I certainly have been. When I was back in my 20s, a very good friend of mine and his new wife were killed on the Hume Highway in a head-on motor vehicle accident—four people killed. It was just one of those totally shocking things that comes out of nowhere. I will never forget where I was when I got the phone call that that had happened, the aftermath of that and the impact on those families. I do not think you ever really recover.

I suppose that is one of the things that would be great to be able to get through to some of the younger people, particularly, that drive so carelessly. All of us are out on the roads, and we see people driving carelessly. We see people speeding, but probably, as the police would concur, the biggest issue we see these days is people fooling around on their mobile phones, texting. I was up on the Hume Highway myself recently, in the Victorian section, and I looked across and I saw a bloke moving from side to side in his lane and I thought, 'He's either not feeling well or there's something wrong with his car'. Then I saw his head go down and I thought, 'That's what it is. He's on his jolly phone'. I think the

young ones have got to get an understanding, particularly—not just exclusively the young drivers, but certainly the young drivers have got to get an understanding—of the consequence of taking your eyes off the road when you are powering a motor vehicle down that road, whether it is like this guy was, at 110 kilometres an hour or, as it could be in any side street, at 50 or 60 or 40 kilometres an hour. The distance you travel and the physics that are involved—people just do not understand that.

I think we need to be trying to bring in some more education at the school level. Even this morning I was sitting in my office here in Parliament and my electorate office called me and said there had been another motor vehicle accident out the front of my office on Canterbury Road. We have that all too often: people doing silly things, people distracted, people not judging distance properly—speed over distance—and just lapses of judgement. And so that is the second one we have had in the vicinity of my office in a week, which is thankfully unusual and atypical, but that is one little section—a few hundred metres—of Canterbury Road just near my office. Thankfully no-one was injured seriously, either, so that was okay. The consequences of that—if you are going faster, if you bounce off then into crowds, or whatever else happens—are very, very serious.

In conclusion, the importance of road safety here in Victoria—I mean, we have done marvellously well. I can remember as a boy when the road toll was 1034. I think it was in 1974—1034.

A member interjected.

Mr ANGUS: Yes, that is it: ‘Declare War on 1034’. I can remember that. I was pretty young at the time, but I can still remember it. To think that we have sadly had a record high level in recent years—last year—we have all got work to do. We have all got work to do ourselves. We have all got work to do with our families—our children, if we have got children that are driving—and our other relatives to do all we can to keep all Victorians, other drivers, motorists and pedestrians safe on our roads.

Mr EREN (Lara) (16:52): I too wish to make a contribution on this very important bill before the house, the Road Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. Can I just say these are some of the bills that come before the house which are really sad. I just want to read out some stats in terms of fatalities that have occurred since 2014. In 2014, 248 people perished due to traffic accidents; in 2015, 252; in 2016, 290; in 2017, 259; in 2018, 213; and in 2019, 266. That is a total of 1528 lives since 2014. Those are lives that were associated with families, to mothers, to fathers, to uncles and to children. These are lives that have been lost unnecessarily in some cases, unfortunately.

We as a government have made improvements on road safety. There is no question of that. Being the former chair of the Road Safety Committee between 2006 and 2010, I know we made some very important recommendations to government in relation to wanting to reduce the road toll. One of those things that we as a government back then did was to introduce a technology into cars that are registered in this state. Every passenger car that is registered in the state must have ESC and side curtain airbags—electronic stability control and side curtain airbags. Those technologies were very expensive at the time, but because of the large uptake of these technologies they have become quite affordable and now every single car has them, which is fantastic. As a result of having electronic stability control in the vehicle we save 100 lives every year; it prevents run-off-road crashes.

Of course technology has advanced dramatically. I think we are not that far away from autonomous vehicles, driverless vehicles, when you consider that even my car has lane departure warning, adaptable cruise control and of course brake assist, which helps drivers. In case they are not paying attention to the road, the car actually takes over and brakes for them. When you consider the amount of lives being lost—unfortunately we did have an increased number of lives lost on our roads last year on the previous year, and distraction is a big part of it. There is no question about that. Speeding, distraction, alcohol in your system and drugs in your system are all contributors—mainly—to the fatalities that occur on our roads. As a government we need to make sure that we do what we can to prevent them. There are some carrots in terms of incentives. If you drive decently and properly you can have a reduced fee for your licence if you have not incurred a speeding fine. But there needs to be

a stick. If you do break the law in a way that jeopardises not only your own life when you are driving but the lives of others on the road, then we need to bring out the stick—and that is exactly what this legislation is—to ensure that we reduce the road toll.

I know there is another speaker after me, and I want to give her the opportunity. This is a bill that will hopefully have an impact on reducing our road toll. That is why I am so supportive of bills before the house such as this, and I am sure that the opposition are as well. I commend the bill to the house and wish it a speedy passage.

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) (16:56): I rise to speak on the Road Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. This bill demonstrates the Andrews Labor government's commitment to taking dangerous drivers off our roads. It is one of many actions that we have taken, and we are serious about making sure that Victoria is safer for all. We are making sure that high-speed hooners and dangerous drivers will be faced with tougher new reforms thanks to this bill.

We have all been affected one way or another when it comes to deaths on our roads. I will never forget the time that my cousin who died through no fault of his own, very young—at the age of 20—coming back from work. I will never forget the moment that I heard the news, two weeks out from his wedding, and turning up to the morgue in the city with his parents to identify his body. The chill of that morgue and that moment just stayed with me. To see the family and that whole community change and their lives affected for ever is something that really affected me and my family.

I urge all drivers to be safe on the roads. If they are not safe, if they want to be irresponsible, they are not only being irresponsible with their own lives but irresponsible with innocent lives on our roads. We have just seen the reports of what happened in Sydney recently with the tragic and horrific deaths of those four children. It breaks my heart seeing the family and the community unite in such grief, again through no fault of their own.

I commend this bill. We do not want any further deaths. We saw too many last year. We do know that taking tough action does actually work. Those who want to speed when affected by alcohol or drugs and hoon around will have their licences suspended and the full force of the law upon them.

We have heard some fantastic contributions today in this house when it comes to making sure that our roads are safer. One thing that I do want to point out is that we have invested close to \$1.4 billion in new safety features on our roads. That includes infrastructure and a particular structure in my electorate is the Taylors Road and Kings Road roundabout. I note the member for Sydenham is in the house as well. We campaigned on this heavily with the member for Kororoit to make sure that we have safe traffic signals and of course safer pedestrian access. This particular road is used by 40 000 motorists each day as well as pedestrians.

I do need to note the dangerous level crossing at Main Road, St Albans, which took the lives of 16 people. Thanks to our government we were able to remove this as our first-year commitment in 2014. That is 16 lives too many. This included removing the Furlong Road level crossing, which saw more than three deaths. We are really committed to making sure that our roads are safe, not only for motorists but also for pedestrians. We will continue with our investment projects that this year will include the removal of the Fitzgerald Road level crossing in Ardeer and the crossing at Robinsons Road and Mt Derrimut Road in Deer Park.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Dimopoulos): The time set down for consideration of items on the government business program has arrived, and I am required to interrupt business.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Dimopoulos): The bill will now be sent to the Legislative Council and their agreement requested.

GENDER EQUALITY BILL 2019*Second reading*

Debate resumed on motion of Ms WILLIAMS:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Circulated amendments

Circulated government amendment as follows agreed to:

Clause 4, line 20, omit "equality" and insert "inequality".

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Dimopoulos): The bill will now be sent to the Legislative Council and their agreement requested.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Dimopoulos): The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

ANTI-SEMITISM

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (17:01): (1837) I raise a matter for the attention of the Premier. The action that I request is for the Premier to look at his government joining the opposition to ban the public display of the Nazi swastika and other Nazi symbols in Victoria and work with the opposition to draft legislation for Parliament as soon as possible. Seventy-five years on from one of the worst atrocities known to mankind, the Holocaust, unfortunately we are seeing terrible reminders in our community. There is no other symbol we are see that represents hatred as does the Nazi swastika. Unfortunately when you see that symbol of the past being reflected in the present, it is a reminder that something must be done.

When we see a 30 per cent increase in anti-Semitism in Australia and racial attacks on the increase, we need to ensure that something is done to ensure that our community is protected. My electorate of Caulfield has the largest Jewish community in Australia, and Melbourne has the largest Holocaust survivor population per capita outside of Israel. Obviously we get our fair share of hate attacks. Certainly a week does not go by without us seeing some kind of attack on the Jewish community, including 12 months ago a Nazi swastika painted on Emmy Monash Aged Care facility, a facility that is the home of many Holocaust survivors.

But it is not limited to my electorate of Caulfield, and that is why the alarming increase has prompted the coalition to work to bring a ban on the swastika to the attention of this Parliament. We have seen only recently, in fact last week, somebody in Clarinda walking around the Woolworths supermarket wearing a Nazi swastika armband. We saw somebody in the Maribyrnong Aquatic Centre with a tattoo of a Nazi swastika wandering around the pool. But most recently the town of Beulah in western Victoria had that Nazi swastika flag flying for over a week next to the home of a Holocaust survivor. Police worked tirelessly with the local community to get that flag down, and it was taken down by bluff, because ultimately there are no laws in the state to protect a Holocaust survivor of 83 years of age that escaped Nazi Germany, came to Victoria, lives there and ultimately is threatened by this flag again.

More needs to be done to protect our community. This is not something that is partisan; this is something we need to work together on in this Parliament. I call on the Premier and the government to do what they can to work with the opposition to ultimately bring laws into this Parliament to see the swastika gone from this state of Victoria.

COVID-19

Mr HAMER (Box Hill) (17:04): (1838) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Health in the other place. The action I seek is for the minister to come out to the eastern suburbs of Melbourne to show support and solidarity for the many local businesses that have been impacted by concerns regarding the coronavirus outbreak.

The identification of any new virus naturally raises concerns about how we as a community are best able to protect ourselves against it. These concerns are only heightened as the outbreak occurred at a time when many Chinese Australians were enjoying a summer holiday and Lunar New Year celebrations with friends and family in China.

I want to thank the minister, her staff, the officials from the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria's chief health officer for providing regular updates about the virus in English, simplified Chinese and traditional Chinese, which I have been able to disseminate throughout my community.

Unfortunately, social media has been the source of many unfounded rumours about how the virus is spread and the risks of infection. This has created heightened anxiety, particularly amongst members of the Australian Chinese community. I am also aware of reports of discrimination and harassment experienced by some members of the Chinese Australian community simply on the basis of their race, including being refused entry to venues, being asked to stop spreading the virus and people refusing to shake their hands. These are not sensible public health precautions. This type of behaviour makes people feel unsafe, and as a society we cannot allow it to become normalised. The coronavirus is not an excuse to vilify members of the Australian Chinese community. As the Premier said earlier this week:

The only way to respond to a health crisis is with compassion and consideration for each other—not division and distrust.

I urge all people of all backgrounds to avoid panic and division and to listen to the medical advice provided by the chief health officer and their own GP. I look forward to the minister's response.

MINERS REST PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (17:06): (1839) My adjournment matter tonight is to the Minister for Education. The action I seek is that he provides me with an update with key dates, including the start of construction and the proposed opening date, for the new Miners Rest school.

At the 2018 election the Liberal-Nationals committed to a new school for Miners Rest on a new site, and then subsequent to that the government then committed to a new school for Miners Rest which they described as allowing 'the school to expand with new land'. Now, there is no land that has yet been acquired, and I am very concerned that the Miners Rest school will fall into the category of the Lucas Primary School, for which the government made an announcement, from opposition, saying it would fund it in 2014, yet that school has only now just opened this year in 2020. So there would be

no students currently at the overcrowded Miners Rest Primary School who would get to see their new school if the government continues to treat Ripon schools in the way that they treated the Lucas Primary School.

Hence my request that we at least get some dates for when they plan to start building this new school, which might give us an idea of when it might be finished, and then that may also give us a very good idea of whether the government is intending to stick to the commitments that it made to deliver a brand-new school for Miners Rest. My fear is that they will not deliver a brand-new school for Miners Rest and that this will in fact be an expansion of the current school. The current school is monumentally overcrowded, and we have a series of demountables. I do think that the people of Miners Rest have an expectation that both sides of the chamber understand that they need a new school. It would be extremely disappointing, and in fact outrageous, were the government to backtrack on this. I note they did not put this school in the budget last year. One would hope it would be there this year if they plan to build it in this term; however, either way they do need to advise me so that I can advise my community when they are getting this school that they have been promised.

DAREBIN ETHNIC COMMUNITIES COUNCIL

Ms THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (17:09): (1840) My adjournment is for the Minister for Local Government, and the action that I seek is for the minister to provide information on any responsibility local governments have to proactively work to eliminate discrimination in our communities.

My community is proudly multicultural. As a second-generation migrant, I am proud to be a part of that. A big chunk of my electorate falls within the Darebin local government authority, as does all of the electorate of Preston and a little piece of your electorate too, Speaker. In Northcote more than 30 per cent of residents were born overseas, and in the seat of Preston that number is almost 50 per cent. I am not going to explain to the house the importance of our migrant communities or detail the contribution they continue to make to our community—surely that is not contested.

For almost 30 years the Darebin Ethnic Communities Council, or DECC, has served its community as the peak body for migrants new and old, including asylum seekers and refugees. Too often these communities can be marginalised and their voices unheard. DECC's chairman has previously noted that many refugees and CALD community members who do not feel comfortable talking to authorities often turn to DECC. DECC has also played a vital role in bringing diverse groups together by creating connections and amplifying their voices—ensuring social inclusion and multiculturalism are reflected in policy and reforms at all levels of government.

For many years DECC's work has, quite rightly, been supported by an annual funding agreement with Darebin council. It makes sense. They are a well-respected and trusted local institution representing over 100 member organisations within the City of Darebin. Their contribution is immeasurable, so it baffles me as to why DECC have had their funding abruptly ended by the council. Apparently the council have put in place a new grants process and DECC simply fell short. I suspect there is something else going on here. Unfortunately the representations that DECC make are not fashionable. They do not have thousands of Facebook likes or Instagram followers. No—they are concentrating on the welfare of their local community, but like many local issues, they are not part of the Darebin councillors' global agenda so they are not front of mind at Darebin council.

DECC's funding ran out in June of last year, and they have been working tirelessly ever since on the smell of an oily rag and the goodwill of their volunteers. I have been contacted by many residents mortified at council's decision to deprioritise our multicultural communities. It might be easy to sit idly by and let these things slip through to the keeper, but I do not intend to do that—not when I see rights hard fought for and hard won systematically eroded. Disappointingly, racism lurks not far from the surface in some quarters, as we have seen with the recent vilification of our Chinese community. We should all be concerned when the values of diversity and equality are put on the backburner and

when those with less access to resources and opportunities are sidelined and silenced. We should all be very concerned—and we are.

HEALESVILLE FREEWAY RESERVE

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (17:12): (1841) I again raise a matter of importance for the attention of the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. The action I seek, which I note I have asked for in this place on several occasions, is for the minister to urgently provide me with detailed written advice or alternatively a briefing in relation to the documented plans for the future use and ongoing maintenance of the land in the Forest Hill district known as the Healesville freeway reserve (HFR). This land, which is more than 30 hectares in size, runs east–west from Springvale Road, Forest Hill, in the west to Boronia Road, Vermont, in the east. I have repeatedly—and I note, unsuccessfully—asked various ministers for this information. Most recently in November 2019 I asked the Minister for Roads about this issue. The reply I received from that minister was that the responsibility for the land was now with the minister responsible for the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning who consequently was the appropriate minister to ask for this information. This response was in direct contradiction to the answer given to the question raised by my colleague Mr Atkinson in the other place when he asked the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change about the future of the HFR and was told in the answer that this land ‘falls within the responsibility of the Minister for Roads’. This appears to be a classic case of one minister trying to pass the buck to another minister, thereby fobbing off a genuine inquiry from a member on behalf of his community—an almost unbelievable situation.

As I have also noted before in relation to this issue, I am regularly fielding inquiries from residents inquiring as to what is happening with this land. My community is very concerned that in fact nothing at all is happening to this land and that the much-promised improvements, such as the shared walking-cycling path over the entire length of the HFR, will never be constructed. Even members of some of our local environmental groups are in the dark, and I find that very surprising given that they were on the inside in relation to some of the consultations that went on many years ago. They are now completely excluded. So yet again I call on the minister to urgently provide me with detailed written advice in relation to the documented plans for the future use of the HFR or alternatively a briefing on this so that I can provide this information to my constituents. I trust that this information will be forthcoming and that I can look forward to finally receiving a satisfactory response from the minister containing the information that I and my residents have been repeatedly seeking for a very long time.

BRENTWOOD SECONDARY COLLEGE

Mr FREGON (Mount Waverley) (17:14): (1842) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for the minister to update the house on the progress on the Brentwood Secondary College upgrade. I was very pleased, as I have said before in this house, to have joined the Deputy Premier in May last year to announce a \$4.6 million contribution for the VCE centre for Brentwood Secondary College in the budget. I would also like to thank the Premier for joining me in October when we met with principal John Ballagh as well as the hardworking VCE students of last year to view the location of their VCE centre. I would like to give a special thanks and shout-out to the Brentwood school captains of 2019—Cindy Tran, Jake Hume, Michael Alepidis and Rachelle Dixon—for assisting in showing us their wonderful school and performing their leadership roles so well throughout the year.

I have also recently met this year’s school captains to discuss the new mobile phone bans that are now in place in my district’s government schools and look at the work undertaken over the break to allow for this important initiative. The school’s new captains are Vidhi Korgaonkar, Hayden Brown, Ricky Armstrong and Navika Moudgil. I am confident that they will lead their peers well, and I wish them very good luck for their VCE year. I hope I pronounced their names right. The Andrews Labor government has invested more in Victoria’s schools than any government in Victoria’s history to

ensure that every child has access to the best education. I look forward to us all receiving an update on this very vital project.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) (17:16): (1843) My adjournment matter is for the Premier, and the action I seek is for the Premier to increase his government's ambition on climate action here in Victoria in the wake of the devastating bushfires that have occurred across our state and across the country. There is no doubt about the link between climate change and the fires that have occurred. So many people are drawing the link—rightly so—between climate policy and these fires and demanding more climate action from their governments. A lot of credit does need to go to the newly elected federal Greens leader, Adam Bandt, who for many years has been raising the issue of climate policy—

Mr Pearson interjected.

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

Mr HIBBINS: He has been raising the issue of climate policy whilst bushfires are occurring, often—in fact always—to the criticism of so many. Now the opposite is true: you cannot talk about these fires without talking about climate policy.

So much of the action needed on climate policy is under the control of state governments. This is what climate action does mean here in Victoria. It does mean a phasing out of coal-fired power, the biggest source of carbon emissions here in Victoria. In this government there is no plan to phase out coal-fired power or a plan for workers. Victoria is burning more coal here in Victoria than the proposed Adani coalmine would produce every year, and it is slated to keep burning for decades to come.

We cannot have any new fossil fuel projects. I cannot make this any clearer. Coal, gas, oil—it needs to stay in the ground. The moratorium on onshore gas needs to be made a permanent ban. The government needs to stop funding new fossil fuel projects.

We have got to stop logging our native forests. These precious carbon stores are actually getting carbon out of the air. They cannot be logged any longer. Despite the massive loss of habitat and animals, they are still being logged right now. The government needs to bring forward the end of native forest logging from 2030.

Finally, the government needs to take action to cut transport emissions. Around 20 per cent of Victoria's carbon emissions comes from transport, and it is going north—it is increasing. There does need to be a planned and massive investment to actually shift people to sustainable transport and to zero-emissions vehicles. But there is no plan in this state to cut transport emissions.

We need to call it what it is: we are in a climate emergency. The government needs to act to increase its ambition on climate policy here in Victoria.

Mr Pearson: On a point of order, Speaker, I would ask that you review the transcript. I listened to the member for Prahran's contribution and I think increasing an ambition is not really an action that a minister or a Premier can be held to account on. It was a long and turgid contribution from the member for Prahran that seemed to wax and wane covering a wide range of issues. There was no specific action. I think just asking someone to increase their ambition is not in accordance with the forms of the house.

Mr HIBBINS: On the point of order, Speaker, this question has been asked of the Premier, and increasing ambition on climate action goes directly to the Premier because it cuts across a number of portfolios and a number areas of government and a number of ministries that I have actually outlined in my speech. So I would ask you to dismiss the point of order.

The SPEAKER: Order! I think the point of order that was raised by the member for Essendon was in relation to whether the specific action that was requested was defined and specific. I will go back to

the record and check exactly what the action was, but I think that was the point that was raised. I will consider the matter and report back to the house.

GLENROY WEST PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) (17:20): (1844) I appreciate the opportunity to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is that the minister consider funding capital upgrades at Glenroy West Primary School to accommodate the significant future enrolment growth predicted for this school community.

Glenroy West Primary School is a fantastic primary school. It is the only local school that offers the International Baccalaureate in what is an extremely diverse and multicultural community. This International Baccalaureate program means that there are a number of families from across the local area that are desperate to get into this school. It is also a school whose facilities are well and truly outdated. The facilities are run down, they are below standard and it is absolutely essential that there be an upgrade of this school in the near future.

As the minister is aware from his visit last year to the school and indeed as the Premier is aware from his visit to announce the \$200 000 inclusive playground grant at the school late last year as well, it is very clear how committed the staff, the parents and the students are to their school community. Principal Pamela Streete is a fierce advocate for her school community. We have invested much in the schools around our local area, and as she says, it is well and truly the turn of Glenroy West Primary School.

Departmental figures project that the school enrolments will grow from approximately 326 students in 2020 to 587 in 2024, and local in-zone demand is projected to rise from approximately 452 students in 2020 to 521 in 2024. This is massive and rapid enrolment growth; it is massive and rapid demand for this school. The school is already providing a leading education and, as I said, it is providing the International Baccalaureate in a very diverse community where families are embracing this educational program. But it needs the facilities to be able to cater for the students in the area, to cater for this growth, and I would ask the minister to consider looking at the facilities in terms of whether they will be able to meet this growing demand and to consider funding capital upgrades at Glenroy West Primary School.

POLWARTH ELECTORATE BUSHFIRE PREPAREDNESS

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) (17:22): (1845) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and the action I seek from the minister is for her to immediately facilitate the active management of roadside reserves, public land and public spaces in and around the communities of Polwarth in order to minimise significantly the risk of out-of-control wildfires.

The six shires, numerous CFAs and town action committees across Polwarth have been on high fire alert now for quite some months. The electorate of Polwarth of course covers the beautiful Otway Ranges, which to date have only had a few spot fires, and the massive western Victorian plains, which have had a bumper season. We have had a particularly good season this year despite what has happened in the rest of Australia, so our part of the world to date has been free of fire but sits on the precipice of what could be still a very disastrous time between now and Easter.

We see across Polwarth vast roadways with 2- and 3-metre-high grass. We have got the scourge of the dead and dying cypress trees that are a legacy of plantations and plantings of 100 and 150 years ago. Together they are culminating in a very, very high risk factor across our region. With increasing tourism there are more cars on the road, and the increasing use of catalytic converters and other low-emission technologies in vehicles provides a greater risk. We saw only in the last two or three months a brand-new police car fully combust and ignite as it pulled over into long grass. This is a real risk.

This is something that my communities have for a long time been wanting and are quite happy to manage proactively and actively on their own behalf. They are not asking for a lot of money from the

government; they are just simply asking for the regulation and process to be as it has always been—a matter for communities to use their common sense, their initiative and their own volunteerism and hard work to keep their communities safe.

We see our roadways particularly and many of our smaller parks and nature reserves left literally abandoned. The government and local government spend a lot of money prosecuting, following up with and working with private landowners, reminding them of their responsibility to keep their land in a fit and safe manner, yet if you are a neighbour to a Crown reserve, a roadway or any number of government-controlled land spaces right across my electorate, your home, your community and your family are at far more risk having the Victorian state government as a neighbour than you are having good private neighbours on your boundary. It is something this government and this minister can fix.

MARKHAM ESTATE REDEVELOPMENT

Mr FOWLES (Burwood) (17:25): (1846) In the interests of brevity—it has been a very long week—my adjournment matter is for the Minister for Housing and Minister for Planning, and the action I seek is that the minister update my community on the progress of the Markham estate public housing project. I look forward to receiving that update.

The SPEAKER: The specific minister that it was directed to?

Mr FOWLES: Housing.

RESPONSES

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure) (17:26): The member for Caulfield raised a matter with the Premier. I just want to indicate to the member for Caulfield that I have been advised by the Premier's office that they have received the letter that the Leader of the Opposition sent to the Premier on this matter and that the member will receive a response from the government as this matter is being considered. I will leave it if that is okay with the member for Caulfield—just to acknowledge that this issue has been well and truly raised and understood.

The remaining nine members raised matters with various ministers, and they will be referred to those ministers for action and response.

The SPEAKER: The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned 5.27 pm until Tuesday, 18 February.