

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY, 18 FEBRUARY 2020

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable KEN LAY, AO, APM

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Mr KA WELLS

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FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION

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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 Couzens, Mr Eren, Ms Ryan, Ms Theophanous and Mr Wakeling.

Environment and Planning Standing Committee

Ms Connolly, Mr Fowles, Ms Green, Mr Hamer, Mr McCurdy, Mr Morris and Ms Vallenge.

Legal and Social Issues Standing Committee

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

Privileges Committee

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

Standing Orders Committee

The Speaker, Ms Allan, Mr Cheeseman, Ms Edwards, Mr Fregon, Ms McLeish, Ms Sheed, 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, Ms Crozier, Mr Davis, Ms Mikakos, Ms Symes and Ms Wooldridge.

Electoral Matters Committee

Assembly: Mr Guy, Ms Hall and Dr Read.

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

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, Mr Leane, Ms Lovell and Ms Stitt.

Integrity and Oversight Committee

Assembly: Mr Halse, Ms Hennessy, 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 Newbury, Mr D O'Brien, Ms Richards, Mr Richardson and Mr Riordan.

Council: Mr Limbrick and Ms Taylor.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

Assembly: Mr Burgess, Ms Connolly and Mr R Smith.

Council: Mr Gepp, Ms Patten and Ms Watt.

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Tuesday, 18 February 2020

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

Announcements**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

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

Questions without notice and ministers statements**BUDGET**

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (12:04): My question is to the Premier. Last week while the Premier was on holidays the Treasurer announced his Labor government will be imposing \$4 billion of cuts. How many Victorian workers will lose their jobs as a result of Labor's \$4 billion of cuts?

Members interjecting.

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

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (12:04): I thank the member for Ripon for her question. The member for Ripon, otherwise known as the workers' friend—you know, the shop steward for the working poor, the hardworking poor people, and the greatest advocate for unionism and collectivism this Parliament has ever seen—

Mr M O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, I would ask the Premier to stop debating the question and actually come back to answering it, given it is about \$4 billion of cuts and how many Victorians will lose their jobs as a result.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier will come back to answering the question.

Mr ANDREWS: The Treasurer last week made it very clear that the government, in all the work that it does, makes sure that taxpayers money is appropriately deployed to be in line and in accordance with the priorities of the government: delivering infrastructure, investing in hospitals, investing in schools, investing in child protection, investing in community safety—the list goes on and on. And those priorities—yes, they are the government's priorities, but they are also the priorities of the Victorian community, as clearly evidenced by the Victorian community's verdict and judgement in 2014 and the resounding endorsement of those priorities and that alignment of public expenditure with those priorities in resounding terms in 2018.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I do ask the member for South-West Coast and the member for Mordialloc to cease shouting across the chamber.

Mr M O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question. I do not recall at the last election him promising \$4 billion worth of cuts. All we are asking for is who is going to pay, who is going to lose their job as a result. I ask you to bring the Premier back to answering the question.

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

Mr ANDREWS: As I was saying, the community have absolutely endorsed investing their money in these key areas of focus, and the government makes no apologies for doing that. We will continue to do that in each budget that we have the great honour of delivering. There will be surplus budgets,

there will be AAA budgets and there will be budgets that deliver against the commitments that we made to the Victorian community.

Now on the issue of jobs, there are some who have opposed every job-creating major project in the last five years. Who might they be?

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Well, there are not many of them. I could actually name them all, but I will not. There is then of course, if you want to compare records, 500 000 new jobs that were created in Victoria in the last five years, fully 30 per cent of new jobs created in our nation. The national accounts are being written right here in Victoria.

Mr Wells: On a point of order, Speaker, under sessional order 11 I would ask you to bring the Premier back to the question, which is in relation to the \$4 billion proposed cuts and how many jobs will be lost as a result of that decision.

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

Mr ANDREWS: I am delighted that the father of the house, a former Treasurer, gets up and makes a point of order. We all remember the unemployment record when the member who just made a point of order was the Treasurer.

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Well, we all remember. I think if we could just keep our nose in front of Tasmania, that was about all we could be good for.

Mr M O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, if I could remind the Premier, Victoria created more jobs in our four years than any other state in the country. There are no alternative facts over here: more jobs than any other state in the country under the coalition.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. That is not a point of order.

Mr ANDREWS: More jobs than at any other time and yet you lost yours. There you go. What does that tell you about your four years of stewardship? We will deliver budgets that provide investment in all the areas that we committed to the Victorian community would be our priorities—today, tomorrow and every day.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (12:09): Premier, after five years of Labor's economic mismanagement, Victoria is the highest taxed state in the country, a fact confirmed by ABC Fact Check. Will you rule out any tax increases on Victorian families and small businesses to fix Labor's budget black hole?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (12:09): I am glad that you are happy sitting over there.

At the end of the day, the budget will be delivered on budget day and the Treasurer will outline the accounts of the state—both the accounts as closed off for the financial year and the estimates of performance for the future. What I can tell the member for Ripon is that it will be a surplus budget: it will be a budget that delivers in health, education, employment, transport and community safety; it will be a budget that keeps Victoria where it belongs, at the centre of economic growth and at the centre of progressive reform; and it will keep us where we are absolutely at our best—in a leading position, not skulking along at the bottom of any ladder, which was the burden that those opposite subjected us to. We welcome these questions. Keep them coming, because when it comes to delivering, this government has got you absolutely dead to rights.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: BUSHFIRE RECOVERY INITIATIVES

Ms NEVILLE (Bellarine—Minister for Water, Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (12:10): I rise to update the house today on some of the process around recovery efforts in bushfire-

impacted communities. We currently still have two significant fires going in East Gippsland. We have got active fire edges around the Marthavale fire north of Bairnsdale and also the Cann River fire and active edges around Cape Conran, Bendoc and Bonang. Despite substantial rain in some parts of the state, we still also have continuing dry areas in other parts of the state, so the fire risk remains for Victorians.

Significant work is going on supporting those communities that have been impacted. We have got recovery centres open in East Gippsland and also in the Hume area. We also have regular mobile pop-up sessions to reach people who are in more isolated areas. To date we have had over 14 600 financial assistance payments paid out. We have also had over 3800 Australian government disaster recovery payments granted. The bushfire case support program has received over 1600 phone calls. We have road access back into a number of areas. In fact we have been able to open the road to Mallacoota, but also a total of 903 kilometres of arterial roads have now been cleared. Every person who has received an emergency relief grant is also being contacted if they have properties in those areas to look at re-establishment grants and whether they are eligible.

We have also started the process of hazardous waste removal. We have had 293 rainwater tanks cleared up and refilled, more than 660 clean-up program registrations and mental health support being provided to both those impacted from living in those communities but also those other Victorians who lived through that bushfire experience. A lot of work is underway, and there is a lot to go.

I want to thank all of those firefighters who remain out there on these fires. I also want to thank those who are part of the recovery process and assure those communities that we are walking side-by-side with them and will be there throughout the journey of recovery.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Ms RYAN (Euroa) (12:12): My question is to the Minister for Public Transport. Last week the Treasurer announced this Labor government will be imposing \$4 billion of cuts, and he has said that he is looking at every line item. The minister cannot get a single train line to run on time. Will the minister guarantee that public transport's share of the \$4 billion in cuts will not lead to even more delays for Victoria's train travellers?

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Public Transport) (12:13): I would like to thank the member for her question. This is a government that has got a strong track record in investing in public transport. We have spent hundreds of millions of dollars on more services across all of Victoria; that is what we have done and that is what we will continue to do.

Ms RYAN (Euroa) (12:14): Last Monday one of the old diesel V/Line trains from Albury arrived into Southern Cross 3 hours and 38 minutes late after being stranded between Heathcote Junction and Donnybrook. Passenger Pat McMahon missed his flight to Hobart, costing \$2700 to rebook accommodation and tickets. Can the minister guarantee that none of the Treasurer's \$4 billion in cuts will make life harder for passengers like Pat, or is this too not the minister's responsibility?

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Public Transport) (12:14): In relation to the north-east line—and I am aware of the incident that the member has raised—this is a line that is under the responsibility of the federal government's agency, the Australian Rail Track Corporation. We have been responsible for lobbying the government to get a \$235 million upgrade. It is what we will continue to do.

Ms Ryan: On a point of order, Speaker, the sessional and standing orders require the minister to be factual and relevant. I would put it to you that the minister therefore should explain why two Sprinter trains passed the train and why—

Members interjecting.

Ms Ryan: No, two Sprinter trains—

The SPEAKER: I ask the member for Euroa what the point of order is.

Ms Ryan: passed this train, Speaker, and perhaps she should explain whether there are any industrial issues at play here.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. Members know that points of order are not an opportunity to raise matters of debate. The Minister for Public Transport has concluded her answer.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: NEW SCHOOLS

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk—Minister for Education) (12:16): For the first time in our state's history we have reached the milestone of 1 million students. This year more than 80 000 of these were preps starting school for the first time.

To meet this unprecedented demand we are building new schools like never before. At the start of this term 11 new schools opened their doors. I had the pleasure of opening Casey Fields Primary School with the member for Cranbourne, Lucas Primary School with the member for Wendouree, Davis Creek Primary School with the member for Tarneit, Homestead Senior Secondary College in Altona with the Attorney-General and member for Altona, and Grayling Primary with the member for Bass. And other members opened new schools. The member for Yuroke opened up the brand-new school Elevation Secondary College. The member for Keysborough opened up Keysborough Gardens Primary School—well done, Minister. The member for South Barwon opened Mirripoa Primary School. The Treasurer, the member for Werribee, opened Riverwalk Primary. The member for Cranbourne was busy opening Botanic Ridge Primary, and the member for Yan Yean opened Beveridge Primary. All these school openings are only possible thanks to our record \$6.1 billion investment and our commitment to roll out 100 new schools by 2026.

But there are some people who are not so keen on our policy of building new schools, who have alternative policy settings. Speaker, you know these people. They clutch posters of former premiers. They pine for the party of Jeff Kennett, bemoaning, 'What do we believe in?'

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr MERLINO: Well, I tell the member for Brighton what the Liberal Party believes in—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Education will resume his seat.

Mr Wells: On a point of order, Speaker, the Deputy Premier has 8 seconds to get the punchline out. Don't stuff it up this time.

The SPEAKER: Order! I expect points of order from the Manager of Opposition Business and father of the house to be better than that.

Mr MERLINO: Here we go: we build them; you close them. The Kennett government—350 schools— *(Time expired)*

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) (12:18): My question is to the Minister for Child Protection. Last week the Treasurer announced that the Labor government will be imposing \$4 billion of cuts, and he has said he is looking at every line item. With more than 14 000 phone calls to child protection going unanswered between January 2018 and June 2019, will the minister guarantee that not one dollar of these cuts will be made in child protection?

Mr DONNELLAN (Narre Warren North—Minister for Child Protection, Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers) (12:19): I thank the member for his question. I think that is the second question I have had since I have been put in this role, so I very much welcome that. As the shadow minister would know, the protection of our children above all else is the most important thing any government can do. If you look at our continuing investment in this sector, it is substantial. Over the last five years

we have put an extra \$2.5 billion into the sector to provide better services. We have had over 650 extra child protection officers in that period of time, unlike some other people who actually did not put one extra child protection officer in over four years. In other words, our case allocation rate is at 90 per cent, and our average allocation per case-holding officer is between 12 and 15 per officer. So in other words, we have put in substantial investment, because—

Ms Ryan: On a point of order, Speaker, this was a very, very simple question that should have a simple answer, a yes or no answer as to whether the minister can guarantee that none of these \$4 billion cuts will affect the child protection portfolio, and I would ask you to bring the minister back to answering that question.

Ms Allan: On the point of order, Speaker, I make two points. Firstly, points of order are not an opportunity, as we are seeing on a number of occasions, for those opposite to repeat the question or debate the question through points of order. Secondly, the minister was being very, very clear. The question went to investment in the child protection area. The minister was being, very, very clear and concise about the investment in child protection, and I would suggest he be allowed to continue to answer his question.

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not uphold the point of order. I cannot direct the minister how to answer a question. He is being relevant to the question.

Mr DONNELLAN: We have a very strong record in this case, as I was trying to get the message across to the shadow minister. If you look at their allocation rate when they were in, it was about 81 per cent. So we have actually ensured that 5700 extra children have a case officer dealing with their case. We have put the case officers in, we have improved the training and we have actually made a commitment. So if you look at our history of investment in this sector, it is in stark contrast—I might add, in stark contrast—to the former minister, who failed comprehensively to put one extra child protection officer in in four years.

Mr Wakeling: On a point of order, Speaker, in terms of relevance, this is a very important question. The community wants a guarantee from the minister that there will not be any cuts from the child protection portfolio. It is a very important question. The Victorian community wants to hear a very clear answer on this important issue, and the minister must provide a very clear answer to Victorians. Will there or won't there be a cut?

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister did veer away from answering the question. He is to come back to answering the question.

Mr DONNELLAN: As I have indicated very clearly, we have got a very strong record in this space. The budget will be delivered in the coming months and, accordingly, that will be the day the budget is delivered.

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) (12:23): Noting that the minister failed to provide a commitment that there would not be cuts in this portfolio, last year two long-term foster carers from Sunbury made the very difficult decision to cease foster caring due to mismanagement and a lack of support from his department. Minister, can you guarantee that Labor's \$4 billion of cuts will not see more carers leaving the foster care system on your watch?

Mr DONNELLAN (Narre Warren North—Minister for Child Protection, Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers) (12:23): I thank the shadow minister for his question. Obviously the shadow minister is not aware of the enormous funding increase we have put in for carers full stop, whether they be foster carers or kinship carers, whether it be our carers hub or whether it be our kinship finding model. We have put substantial investment in to support carers because we understand how important they are to the sector. The only failure in this room was the former government's failure to actually ensure that the child protection system was adequately funded and we had enough child protection officers to protect children.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: HOLDEN CLOSURE

Mr PAKULA (Keysborough—Minister for Jobs, Innovation and Trade, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Racing) (12:24): Yesterday General Motors announced that it was discontinuing the Holden brand in Australia and New Zealand, selling the Thai factory where many of the right-hand drive vehicles are manufactured and after the middle of this year retrenching some 500 workers predominantly in design and engineering.

As an Australian, as someone who has driven a number of Holdens, as the son of a Holden driver, Australia without the Holden seems scarcely possible, and that is a point I made to Holden when I spoke with them yesterday. I also made the point, as I believe did Minister Karen Andrews, that it was incredibly disappointing that the state and federal governments were only notified after the decision had been made irrevocable.

Notwithstanding that disappointment though it was important to extract some commitments from the company, and they have assured me that all retrenched employees will receive full redundancy entitlements, that some 200 jobs in after-sales service will be retained, up to another 90 staff will be offered redeployment within the company, and all workers will be offered a full suite of counselling and retraining assistance. The company will engage with the government about the future of the infrastructure at the Lang Lang proving ground and a package of support will also be offered to the dealer network. In addition to that, for workers we have already reached out through the department about the Workers in Transition program, which will provide workers with contacts for retrenched workers, coordinate information sessions, referral to available services and the like.

Had Holden still been manufacturing bodies in Elizabeth and engines at Fishermans Bend, this sad situation may have been avoided. We will never know unfortunately, but what those workers do know and what they will always know is that our government will never dare manufacturers to leave our shores. We will continue to utilise local jobs first to ensure that local content means that workers get the biggest dividend possible from our infrastructure program. We will add to our record of 530 000 jobs, of making things here, building things here and giving people the skills they need for the jobs they want.

COUNTRY FIRE AUTHORITY MORWELL BRIGADE

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) (12:26): My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, last Monday the government announced that construction of the new Morwell fire station was due to commence shortly. Within the government's media statement on this day you had noted that:

The new station will deliver a significant boost to volunteer and career firefighters in the Latrobe Valley.

However, volunteer members of the Morwell fire brigade—some of whom are in the gallery today—decided in 2019 that they wished to remain at the existing Morwell fire station in McDonald Street, Morwell, and not enter into co-location arrangements with career firefighters. The brigade's volunteers have recently reinforced this position and subsequently written to yourself as minister stating that should they be forced to relocate then volunteer sustainability and service delivery to the Morwell area would be severely compromised. So, Minister, will you support the Morwell fire brigade and its volunteers in their desire to remain at their current McDonald Street, Morwell, site?

Ms NEVILLE (Bellarine—Minister for Water, Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (12:27): Can I thank the member for Morwell for his question and can I acknowledge members of the Morwell brigade who join us today and thank them for their service to the local community and to the Victorian community.

As the member has indicated, in fact it was both I think the previous Liberal-Nationals government as well as ourselves in 2014, going into the election, that committed to building a new integrated station.

This has been an integrated station for a very long time—40 years—so career and volunteers have worked side by side all along.

Mr R Smith interjected.

Ms NEVILLE: Have you apologised to those?

Members interjecting.

Ms NEVILLE: I am trying to answer this question specifically with respect to the Morwell brigade who is represented here today, so it would be nice not to have interjections of that nature.

Members interjecting.

Ms NEVILLE: I apologise to the member for Morwell. I will get back on track.

We committed to an integrated brigade. Since 2016 there has been extensive consultation, including with volunteers, and speaking to both the deputy chief fire officers, the operations managers, the acting chief officers who had been working with the brigade, I understand that the brigade would prefer not to go into that station, but for the CFA it has always been the intention that this would remain as an integrated brigade, at least to commence with.

I understand that there has been over the last few years quite a toxic environment that has been created in some parts of Victoria on both sides, from volunteers and career, and in those relationships. Some of that has been led by politicians, and I think it has been a disgrace.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister has the call.

Ms NEVILLE: What I do know and one of the things that has been clear to me, having been involved now in over five different fires in Victoria in different roles I have had, is that where people work side by side together we get the best response, whether it is SES and CFA, whether it is volunteers and career. Whatever that is, we need people working together.

I want to try and work with all volunteers and with all career to try and mend those relationships because that is what is going to deliver the best outcome for the Victorian community. I know the brigade only has at its heart the interests of that local community. I am committed to meeting with you if you would like to discuss if there is a way we can make that facility—as I understand it, there is a lot of volunteer space, but if you think there needs to be a better way to improve that I am very happy to work with you and the CFA to achieve that. But at this stage it will remain an integrated brigade.

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) (12:30): Minister, the Morwell fire brigade volunteers have been advised by the CFA that they will not be allowed to remain at their current site and will be forced to co-locate if they wish to have a future. I understand that in some communities such as Moe or Latrobe West approval has been granted to establish multiple firefighting capacities, including having a fire station and appliances for career firefighters and a separate fire station and appliances for volunteers. Minister, can you advise why the Morwell fire brigade and its volunteers are being forced to co-locate when only 15 kilometres away the complete opposite is happening?

Ms NEVILLE (Bellarine—Minister for Water, Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (12:31): Again, I have actually made it really clear to Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria and to volunteers when we have been talking about the reforms that it is my view that, yes, ultimately we will enable volunteers to make a decision. I do not want that decision to be made in the heat of what has occurred. I want people to see the arrangements and how those integrated stations operate. This has been 40 years where people have worked side by side. I am sure there have been good and bad years in that period. But what I still know is that people working together is going to deliver the best outcome for our communities. The CFA—and I have spoken to both Steve Warrington and Gavin Freeman on a number of occasions about the Morwell CFA—believe this is the best outcome for

community safety. I will meet with the brigade to make sure they have got the facilities they need there. I am assured they have, but if we need to look at something in addition, I am very happy to do that. But at the heart of this we need everyone working together, and I want to try and heal those wounds that exist.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: SOLAR HOMES PROGRAM

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (12:32): I am absolutely pleased to inform the house on how we are delivering on our commitments, with over 70 000 Victorians right now taking advantage of our Solar Homes rebates. Solar panels, solar batteries and solar hot-water systems are being installed in homes right across Victoria. We are doing exactly what we said we would do: delivering lower bills and delivering less pollution and more jobs for Victorians.

I was very, very pleased to have visited Shirlee Faram last week, a lovely lady living in Cranbourne who was able to install a solar system through her housing cooperative thanks to Solar Homes. For her this system will slash \$800 off her power bills each and every year—\$800. This means more money for the weekly shop, more money for life's necessities and less money spent on power bills.

This is not the end of the story. We are seeing similar stories for many Victorians right across the state. There is a boom in Melbourne suburbs, and a whopping 41 per cent of our rebates are going to regional Victorians. This is a fantastic outcome. People are jumping on the solar boom, and we are absolutely delighted that Victorians are getting those savings in their pockets. If I could just highlight some of those booming suburbs and parts of regional Victoria that are doing so well and really taking full advantage of this progress—again, it is right across the state—Cranbourne has got 3699 applications for rebates, Benambra 1104, Tarnait 3637, Shepparton 1037, Yuroke 2357, Hastings 977, Bass 2070, Ovens Valley 971, Werribee 1906, Euroa 909, Melton 1582 and 900 in Ripon. That is a solar boom, and there are 700 000 more to go.

WASTE AND RECYCLING MANAGEMENT

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) (12:34): My question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. Last week the Treasurer announced that this Labor government will be imposing \$4 billion of cuts, and he said he is 'looking at every line item'. With recycling going to landfill and Victoria's waste management in crisis, will the minister guarantee that none of these cuts will be made to waste management?

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (12:35): I thank the member for Mornington for his question. What I can say absolutely clearly is that what Victorians will get from this government and have got from this government is record investment in our recycling system—record investment—and that will not stop there. We will improve resources, and we will improve services for Victorians. That is our commitment and that is exactly what it is that we will deliver.

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) (12:35): The supplementary: will the minister today give Victorians a guarantee that there will be no increase in the bin tax to pay for Labor's budget black hole?

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (12:35): I thank the member for his supplementary question. Let me set the record straight: there is no bin tax. There is no bin tax; it does not exist. There is no bin tax.

What I will guarantee is that Victorians cannot expect to have an incinerator in every suburb right across the state, as is planned by those opposite. We will be delivering a comprehensive recycling circular economy policy, and we will have more to say about this in the coming period of time. There is only one side of the house that will deliver a reinforced, strengthened recycling system and industry in this state, and that is the Andrews Labor government.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: GOVERNMENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (12:36): I am delighted to rise to update all honourable members and indeed all Victorians of the significant progress we are making in delivering on the promises that we have made. We said we would get rid of 50 level crossings by 2022 and we have got rid of 34 so far: gone! This has been opposed in many respects by some, but delivered in full by our government, and we are well on track to have 50 gone by 2022 and indeed 75 gone against that longer time frame. This is employing thousands of Victorians, giving medium and larger businesses the pipeline of work that they need; getting rid of deathtraps and safety concerns; having traffic move more freely—a fantastic outcome. Again, I just make the point: it was opposed by some but delivered by our government.

The list goes on. The Deputy Premier and Minister for Education was just talking about 100 new schools, 11 of which are opening this year. That creates a lot of jobs too. That creates a lot of jobs. There are billions of dollars of investment in school projects large and small, and we are investing in TAFE right across the state: 1400 projects or more, in fact, creating jobs and skills and opportunities and the best start in life.

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Well, the West Gate Tunnel—there are 4000 people working on the West Gate Tunnel, another one opposed by some—

Mr M O'Brien interjected.

Mr ANDREWS: It is a shame you did not speak up for infrastructure as loudly when you were at the cabinet table. It is a shame you did not have as big a voice for infrastructure when you were at the cabinet table.

Mr M O'Brien interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition!

Mr ANDREWS: You are struggling to build a reputation. I am not going to be taking lectures on building infrastructure from you. You are at full stretch building a reputation, my friend. We will not be taking lectures on building infrastructure from the member for Malvern, the failed former Treasurer.

The list goes on: the Metro Tunnel is continuing apace, suburban roads and too many hospital projects to mention. Across Melbourne and across regional Victoria we are building the infrastructure we need and creating jobs along the way.

Mr Battin: On a point of order, Speaker, there are a few questions that have been unanswered by the government. I would like to raise with your attention questions 1466, 1497, 1499, 1501, 1502, 1504, 1506, 1507, 1508, 1509, 1510. You are going to need a lot more ink in your pen there, Speaker—1511, 1512, 1513, 1514, 1515, 1516, 1517, 1518, 1520, 1522, 1523, 1525, 1526, 1527, 1528, 1529. It keeps going, there is a fair list here—1530, 1531, 1532, 1533, 1534, 1535, 1536, 1537, 1538.

That is one row done. It has got to go in. I can table the document, if you would like.

The SPEAKER: Order! I would ask the member for Gembrook to assist the house by providing the list to the clerks.

Mr BATTIN: It has got to be in *Hansard*. I am happy to table the documents—by leave, I am happy to table the document.

The SPEAKER: You can make it available to the house.

Mr BATTIN: I will table it so it is incorporated.

The SPEAKER: I am advised by the clerks we can incorporate the list into *Hansard*.

Mr BATTIN: I have got the call at the moment. I will read them in or offer by leave to table them. Do you want them tabled?

Members interjecting.

Mr BATTIN: No? Okay: 1539, 1540, 1541, 1542, 1543, 1544, 1545, 1546, 1547, 1548, 1549, 1550, 1551, 1552, 1553, 1554, 1555, 1556, 1557, 1558, 1559—

did not miss one; one minister answered—

1560, 1561, 1562, 1563, 1564, 1565, 1566, 1567, 1568, 1569, 1570, 1571, 1572, 1573, 1574, 1575, 1576, 1577—

getting close to my date of birth—

1578, 1579, 1580, 1581, 1582, 1583, 1584, 1585, 1586, 1587, 1589, 1590, 1591, 1592, 1593, 1594, 1595, 1596, 1597, 1598, 1599, 1600, 1601, 1602, 1603, 1604, 1605, 1606, 1607, 1608, 1609, 1794 and 1793.

I would ask that you look into those and if we can get some of them answered by next question time.

The SPEAKER: I will ask the relevant ministers to respond to those questions.

Mr M O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, I missed some of the numbers of the member for Gembrook. Could you ask him to repeat them please?

Mr R Smith: On the point of order, Speaker, I think the member for Gembrook has amply pointed to the sessional orders, particularly sessional order 4:

Answers to questions on notice

A reply to a question on notice delivered to the Clerk under Standing Order 54(3) must be submitted within 30 days.

The member for Gembrook has amply shown, demonstrated, that ministers are not doing their job, and it is something that I have raised in this house many times. Indeed my colleagues on this side of the chamber have also on many occasions raised the issue of the ministers' tardiness when it comes to fulfilling their responsibilities. When we have a member of this place who largely I am sure is asking questions of the government on behalf of his constituents and indeed the broader Victorian community, it is incumbent on ministers to actually do their job and to have those questions answered. They have the resources of their departments and their agencies. It is not something they have to do personally.

I think, as I said, it is incumbent on the ministers to do their job and to deliver those answers to members of Parliament who are here to represent their communities, who have been called by their communities to represent and be their voices in this place. After what has been over a year of ministers being, as I said, very tardy in discharging their responsibilities, I ask you to maybe have a bit of a chat to the Leader of the House and have her speak to her colleagues about those ministers fulfilling those duties as put down in the sessional orders.

The SPEAKER: I thank the member for Warrandyte for raising that point of order. I will indeed have a look at how many outstanding questions there are and, if required, discuss the matter with relevant government representatives.

Ms Vallence: On a point of order, Speaker, I also have a constituency question—

A member interjected.

Ms Vallence: I cannot compete with the member for Gembrook on the number of questions, but with constituency question 1691, I asked of the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events whether the government will commit funding to the Yarra Valley equestrian park project, a very important

project for the local economy in my electorate. It was asked 83 days ago, on 27 November 2019, and I would appreciate if you could follow that up.

The SPEAKER: I will follow that matter up as well.

Constituency questions

CAULFIELD ELECTORATE

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (12:45): (1853) My question today is for the Minister for Roads in regard to the ongoing traffic congestion problems around the Caulfield Racecourse precinct. Minister, a 2018 Victorian Planning Authority community survey into the Caulfield racing precinct found that 71 per cent of respondents travelled to and from the precinct via car, the highest response of any transport type including train, tram, bus, walking and bicycle. When asked, ‘How can we make the precinct a greater place? What needs to be improved?’, the highest response was ‘Managing traffic congestion’. Key resident concerns included limited parking and the amount of residential development occurring in the area. We have seen that particularly with population growth coming into this precinct with huge high-rises, and certainly congestion and overdevelopment. Minister, on behalf of local residents in Caulfield I ask you to provide an update as to what actions you are taking to address traffic congestion issues around the Caulfield racing precinct.

PASCOE VALE ELECTORATE

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) (12:46): (1854) My constituency question is for the Minister for Local Government. The question I ask is whether the minister will consider approving the application by Moreland City Council in relation to the community infrastructure loans scheme for the construction of the Wheatsheaf Hub in Glenroy. This is an important infrastructure project that is planned for the integration of essential services in Glenroy, an area in which this government is investing greatly in trying to help Glenroy build a community that embraces its diversity and provides services in health for children, for maternal services and for services that help the newly arrived with settlement. This hub would create a great space that offers many of the services that residents in Glenroy rely on: a kindergarten, community health services, long day care and maternal and child health, as well as a library. As part of this project the state government has already committed \$750 000 towards the new library.

GIPPSLAND EAST ELECTORATE

Mr T BULL (Gippsland East) (12:47): (1855) My constituency question is to the Premier. The government has announced it will fund half the cost of boundary fencing materials where private freehold abuts state forest or national parks. The information I seek from the Premier is whether he will support the same deal—that being funding half the cost of boundary fencing materials—where private freehold meets VicRoads road reserves. The reason I ask this question is that there is a high level of anger within my community around the lack of maintenance that has been undertaken on road reserves. In many cases these road reserves acted as a wick. A property would not be burned, but the fire would burn on the road reserve to an adjacent property. They want to know if they will be looked after in this regard because they have lost a lot of private property as a result of this. If not, how will this be better adhered to and planned in the future?

ESSENDON ELECTORATE

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (12:48): (1856) I direct my constituency question to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, and I ask: can the minister outline programs and initiatives the Andrews Labor government is undertaking to support emerging African Australian communities, particularly in my electorate of Essendon?

EVELYN ELECTORATE

Ms VALLENCE (Evelyn) (12:48): (1857) My question is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure on behalf of Lilydale residents and the Lilydale Township Action Group. Can the minister confirm if after the Lilydale level crossing on Maroondah Highway has been removed it will be replaced by traffic lights? If so, can the minister advise what traffic modelling was undertaken and how replacing a level crossing with traffic lights will improve congestion at morning and afternoon peak in Lilydale? The government announced it will spend almost half a billion dollars to remove the Mooroolbark and Lilydale level crossings, and that this would improve congestion. With more than 53 000 vehicles using these crossings each day, my community in Lilydale want to know how long traffic will be at a standstill once traffic lights are installed, how this compares to congestion with the boom gates today and whether the minister will release this modelling to ensure transparency in the process and allow Lilydale residents to understand how spending half a billion dollars of taxpayers money to replace level crossing with traffic lights represents value for money.

WENDOUREE ELECTORATE

Ms ADDISON (Wendouree) (12:49): (1858) My constituency question is for the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Before I ask it, I wish to thank her for the great leadership she has demonstrated and also thank our emergency services for their work across the current fire season. Will the minister or a representative of the minister come to the electorate of Wendouree to join with me to thank firefighters from the Ballarat region for the contribution they have made to fighting fires across this fire season?

BRUNSWICK ELECTORATE

Dr READ (Brunswick) (12:49): (1859) My question is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. After the level crossing removal project cut down three more mature trees than planned, the community around Moreland station feels betrayed and powerless. The current stakeholder consultation process has failed them. Community members in the Upfield Corridor Coalition and members of the Guardians of Gandolfo Gardens want to play a role in the design of the area around Moreland station and the gardens after the level crossing removal project is complete. So, are the landscaping plans now finalised, or will there be further opportunities for genuine and meaningful consultation and community input?

BURWOOD ELECTORATE

Mr FOWLES (Burwood) (12:50): (1860) My question is for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. I have been contacted by a large number of Burwood constituents who are gravely concerned about all of our native wildlife given this horrific summer of bushfires. Whether it is wombats or wallabies, dingoes or ducks, there is a heightened sense of urgency and alarm about the welfare of our valued native species. Whilst I have been pleased to convey to them details of the \$17.5 million wildlife rescue package to fund the first phase of recovery efforts, including feeding from the air and wildlife triage units on the ground, my constituents are keen to understand the longer term impacts of climate change on these precious animals. Minister, what is being done by the Andrews government to preserve our native wildlife population to give them the best possible chance of survival in the face of continued harsh conditions as a result of climate change?

POLWARTH ELECTORATE

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) (12:51): (1861) My question is to the Minister for Education. Can the minister please tell the people of Winchelsea and district when its review on secondary school zoning will be complete? The families, people and students of Winchelsea have been left this year being zoned to the township of Bannockburn, some 160 kilometres return round trip each day to and from school. There are no public transport connections and no provision in the immediate or short term to provide buses for students wishing to get access to state education in the Winchelsea area. The last 100 years has seen students going to and from Colac or Geelong, where buses currently exist, and these buses

are no longer available for the students of Winchelsea. In fact the department told one family, when they said it was not possible to drive the 160 kilometres, that the mother should give up her job and devote her time to driving her children to school—a totally inappropriate response.

MOUNT WAVERLEY ELECTORATE

Mr FREGON (Mount Waverley) (12:52): (1862) My constituency question is for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and I ask: how is the Andrews Labor government's Victorian renewable energy target helping create jobs for my constituents in Mount Waverley?

Recently I welcomed the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change to the Wilson Transformer Company in Glen Waverley. We got to see firsthand a locally built 125-tonne transformer developed for the Mortlake South wind farm. It was proudly manufactured in the Mount Waverley district. The purchase of the electrical transformers for windfarms contributes to the achievement of our local content target, supporting our local industries and encouraging further growth. Renewable energy does not only help support the government to combat climate change but is empowering the economy by creating jobs, new industry and new technology. I also dropped back on Sunday night at 11.00 pm to wave goodbye and see the truck off for the start of its voyage to Mortlake—another delivery for all Victorians.

Bills

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (CASEY CITY COUNCIL) BILL 2020

Introduction and first reading

Ms KAIROUZ (Kororoit—Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Suburban Development) (12:53): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to dismiss Casey City Council and to provide for a general election for that council and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

Ms KAIROUZ: Under standing order 61(3)(b) I advise the house that the other parties and Independent members have been provided with a copy of the bill and a briefing. In accordance with the standing order I therefore move:

That this bill be read a second time immediately.

Motion agreed to.

Statement of compatibility

Ms KAIROUZ (Kororoit—Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Suburban Development) (12:56): In accordance with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 I table a statement of compatibility in relation to the Local Government (Casey City Council) 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 Local Government (Casey City Council) Bill 2020.

In my opinion, the Local Government (Casey City Council) 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 proposed Local Government (Casey City Council) Bill 2020 (Bill) proposes to dismiss the Casey City Council (Council) and provide for the appointment of administrators for the Council. This follows the recommendations in the report of the municipal monitor, Laurinda Gardner, who I appointed to the Casey

City Council under section 223CA of the *Local Government Act 1989*. The report recommends the dismissal of the council beyond the October 2020 general elections for local government.

The municipal monitor provided me with her report on Tuesday 11 February 2020. The municipal monitor states that, based on her observations, there has been significant governance failures at the council, including in relation to the council's statutory responsibilities under the Local Government Act. The report also notes that the councillors have failed to demonstrate a willingness to improve their ability to meet statutory obligations in the performance of their role as a councillor, including in relation to requirements for disclosing conflicts of interests.

The report also notes that the councillors have prioritised protecting their personal reputations in light of Operation Sandon, an Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC) investigation into allegations of corrupt conduct involving councillors and property developers in the City of Casey, rather than restoring public confidence in the council and protecting the interests of its municipality. According to the municipal monitor, the council is likely to be further distracted from performing its core business and further serious governance failures may be highlighted when the public examinations for the IBAC investigation resume in March 2020.

The municipal monitor concludes in her report that the council requires a thorough review of governance policies, procedures and processes, and significant work to repair the damage to the council's reputation and standing in its community. In light of her findings, the municipal monitor recommends that the council is dismissed and administrators appointed for a period beyond the general elections for local government in October 2020.

As such, I seek the dismissal of elected councillors at the council until October 2024 to enable a thorough review and embedding of good governance policies, procedures and processes for effective council decision-making, and for the development of more diverse community leaders and greater participation in setting a vision for the City of Casey.

The proposed Bill dismisses the Council until October 2024.

Human Rights Issues

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

Taking part in public life

Section 18 of the Charter establishes a right for an individual to, without discrimination, participate in the conduct of public affairs, to vote and be elected at periodic State and municipal elections, and to have access to the Victorian public service and public office.

Clause 5 of the Bill clearly engages and purports to restrict the right under section 18 of the Charter.

The limitation appears to be reasonable and demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society under section 7(2) of the Charter Act.

The right to participate in the conduct of public affairs broadly relates to the exercise of governmental power by all levels of government, including local government. The right to be elected ensures that eligible voters have a free choice of candidates in an election and, much like the right to vote, is not conferred on all Victorians, but is limited to eligible persons who meet certain criteria. The processes for the appointment, promotion, suspension and dismissal of candidates and councillors are objective, reasonable and non-discriminatory.

In this case, the purpose of the limitation is to enable the restoration of good government at the council.

IBAC has been conducting an investigation called Operation Sandon which has a particular focus on allegations of serious corrupt conduct in relation to planning and property development decisions at the Casey City Council. As part of Operation Sandon, public examinations ran from 18 November 2019 to 6 December 2019, and will recommence on 2 March 2020.

As a result of Operation Sandon, I appointed Laurinda Gardner as a municipal monitor to the council on 27 November 2019. She was required to monitor the council's governance functioning, processes and practices and report to me by 11 February 2020.

In summary, the report found significant governance failures at the council, including an embedded 'avoidance culture' among councillors which has enabled alleged bullying, intimidation, exclusion and other inappropriate conduct to go unchallenged. The municipal monitor notes that councillors are susceptible to 'being led by more dominant characters' and less likely to question and fully debate issues. This is further reinforced by the low level of transparency and accountability at council meetings to the extent agenda items are resolved 'en bloc' with no discussion. The municipal monitor also found that the councillors have failed to meet key statutory requirements under the Local Government Act and that there has been serious damage

to the reputation of, and public confidence in, the council. The municipal monitor expressly states that she has no confidence in the ability of the council to meet its statutory obligations in the foreseeable future.

Accordingly, the municipal monitor recommends that the council is dismissed until beyond October 2020 and administrators appointed. This can only be achieved through legislation.

The serious nature of the monitor's findings justifies the dismissal of the elected councillors. In addition, the municipal monitor notes that the councillors have failed to understand the core causes of their governance failings and continue to prioritise protecting their personal reputations in response to Operation Sandon, rather than properly performing their statutory role of councillor and protecting the interests of the City of Casey.

Removal of an elected council is always a matter of last resort and undertaken only in the most serious of circumstances. While it is regrettable that this is necessary, the Government has a responsibility to protect communities from governance failings by their local representatives.

The Local Government Act provides a less restrictive and more immediate measure, namely suspension pursuant to section 219(1). However, section 219 is not appropriate in this case because it provides for suspension for a maximum period of 12 months, indicating the provision is intended for circumstances in which a short interruption to elected representation will be sufficient to overcome the failures identified.

However, as the municipal monitor's report demonstrates, the circumstances require the removal of democratic representatives beyond October 2020. This is to enable a thorough embedding of good governance policies and procedures at the council, and the development and implementation of a municipal wide program to develop more and diverse community leaders and greater participation in setting a vision for the City of Casey.

In response, the Bill dismisses the Casey City Council, and provides for a term of administration until the next general election for the Council in October 2024.

Under the Local Government Act, general elections for local government occur every four years in October. Despite this, the period of administration under the Bill is considered reasonable. This is in order to give effect to the monitor's recommendation in relation to the next election of the council, to enable administrators to effectively address the monitor's second recommendation regarding improving council decision-making and working with the community to develop new and diverse leaders, and to address any recommendations expected to be delivered by IBAC following its conclusion of Operation Sandon.

Importantly, the period of administration enables the council to return to democracy in line with the statutory timing of the next general elections for local government after October 2020, provides a full four-year term for the next group of elected councillors and is balanced against the community interest in having democratically elected representatives.

Privacy and Reputation

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

Clause 5 of the Bill provides for the dismissal of the elected councillors, and therefore purports to restrict the right under section 13 of the Charter.

Any interference with a person's privacy and reputation is lawful and not arbitrary in this case. The decision to remove the councillors from office follows the recommendation from a municipal monitor.

The serious nature of the issues identified at the council by the municipal monitor, as identified above, clearly warrant the immediate removal of the councillors.

The Hon Marlene Kairouz MP
Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation
Minister for Suburban Development

Second reading

Ms KAIROUZ (Kororoit—Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Suburban Development) (12:56): 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 will dismiss the Casey City Council and provide for the appointment of an administrator or panel of administrators in response to the recommendations of the report from the municipal monitor appointed to the Casey City Council.

The municipal monitor, Laurinda Gardner, was appointed on 27 November 2019 under section 223CA of the Local Government Act 1989 (the Local Government Act) to monitor the Casey City Council's governance functioning, processes and practices. This appointment was in light of the public examinations conducted as part of Operation Sandon, an Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC) investigation into allegations of corrupt conduct involving councillors and property developers in the City of Casey.

IBAC's public examinations as part of Operation Sandon commenced on 14 November 2019, ran until 6 December 2019 and are set to resume on 2 March 2020. The issues raised during the public examinations to date are alarming and identify serious issues in relation to alleged corruption, the provision and declaration of campaign donations, conflicts of interest, integrity and transparency of council decision-making, the role and use of lobbyists and the role of council staff.

In accordance with the municipal monitor's terms of reference, Laurinda Gardner was required to report back to me by 11 February 2020. I have tabled the monitor's final report to ensure full transparency of the findings and process.

The monitor's report raises serious concerns about governance at the council. Ms Gardner reports that councillors have displayed a low-level regard for engagement with the communities they are elected to represent, which is a failure in one of the core statutory responsibilities of a councillor. She also notes a low level of engagement by councillors in strategic items required to be considered by the council, such as the Annual Plan. In fact, Ms Gardner finds that in response to the intense scrutiny by IBAC and the appointment of a municipal monitor, the councillors have prioritised protecting their own reputations rather than that of the City of Casey.

Further, she notes in her report that there is an embedded 'avoidance culture' among councillors which has enabled alleged bullying, intimidation, exclusion and other inappropriate conduct to go unchallenged. She is also of the view that the councillors are at risk of being 'led by more dominant characters' and therefore less likely to question and fully debate issues. This is further reinforced by the low level of transparency and accountability at council meetings due to the extent of agenda items resolved 'en bloc' with no discussion. Ms Gardner notes that 'en bloc' voting has contributed to very short council meetings, often under one hour, which do not feature an appropriate or sufficient level of consideration and debate of matters required for the effective governance of a large and complex organisation.

The monitor also notes that despite contemporaneous advice from the council administration and ample training opportunities, councillors do not appear to understand what is required in declaring conflicts of interest during council meetings, nor how to hold other councillors to account for undeclared conflicts of interest. This raises serious concerns that conflicts of interest are not being declared as required under the Local Government Act.

The monitor's report concludes that there have been significant governance failures of the council, including in relation to council's statutory responsibilities under the Act, that councillors have failed to understand the core causes of their governance failings, nor demonstrated any willingness to improve their ability to meet statutory obligations including in relation to conflicts of interest. She also found that there has been serious damage to the reputation of, and public confidence in, the council.

The monitor notes that the council requires:

- A thorough review of policies, procedures and processes to ensure the council has clear and appropriate decision-making roles and responsibilities in place, including how to manage councillor interaction with affected stakeholders; and
- Significant work to repair the damage to the council's reputation and standing in its community, so that the community has a pool of high-quality candidates to choose from when electing their next council.

Accordingly, the monitor recommends dismissal of the council for a term that extends beyond the general elections for local government in October 2020 to enable:

- a thorough review and embedding of policies, procedures and processes for more effective decision-making and responsibilities; and
- the development and implementation of an extensive municipal-wide program to develop more and diverse community leaders, greater participation in setting a vision for Casey, and more awareness and interest in local democracy, the role of council and the responsibilities of councillors.

The issues raised in the report will not be resolved quickly and they raise serious concerns about the ability of the councillors to effectively govern the municipality. The current council has not demonstrated any willingness

to remedy the governance issues raised and there needs to be a break in democratically elected representation at the council for a significant period to restore good government for the City of Casey's community.

The Bill provides for the next general election for the Casey City Council to be held in October 2024. This period of dismissal:

- gives effect to the monitor's recommendation in relation to the timing of the next election of the council,
- enables the council to return to democracy in line with the statutory timing of the next general elections for local government after October 2020,
- provides a full four-year term for the next group of elected councillors,
- provides sufficient time for the administrators to implement the monitor's recommendation to improve decision-making at the council and working with the community to develop new and diverse leaders, and
- ensures that any recommendations delivered by IBAC upon its completion of Operation Sandon can be considered and effectively implemented.

Dismissing a council by Parliament is the most serious intervention by the state and is only undertaken in the most serious cases of governance failure. It gives me no pleasure that there is evidence that this is the current situation in the City of Casey.

Without this Bill, there is risk of further deterioration of the governance at the council and the probity, integrity and accountability expected of local government.

I have stated before and I remain resolute that the community and Parliament expect the highest standards of governance, probity and representation from their councillors and council staff. This Bill will ensure good governance, and confidence, is restored in the City of Casey.

I commend the Bill to the house.

Mr T SMITH (Kew) (12:57): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

NATIONAL ELECTRICITY (VICTORIA) AMENDMENT BILL 2020

Introduction and first reading

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (12:57): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the National Electricity (Victoria) Act 2005 and the Electricity Industry Act 2000 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read a second time tomorrow.

Documents

CASEY CITY COUNCIL

City of Casey Municipal Monitor Report

Ms KAIROUZ (Kororoit—Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Suburban Development) (12:58): By leave, I table the *City of Casey Municipal Monitor Report February 2020*.

Ordered to be published.

Committees**SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE***Alert Digest No. 2*

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarnait) (12:59): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, being *Alert Digest* No. 2 of 2020, on the following bills and subordinate legislation:

Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Out of Home Care Age) Bill 2020

Crimes Amendment (Manslaughter and Related Offences) Bill 2020

Forests Legislation Amendment (Compliance and Enforcement) Bill 2019

Project Development and Construction Management Amendment Bill 2020

Transport Legislation Amendment Act 2019 (house amendment)

SR No. 93—Road Safety (Traffic Management) Regulations 2019

together with appendices.

Ordered to be published.

Documents**DOCUMENTS****Incorporated list as follows:**

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT—The Clerk tabled the following documents under Acts of Parliament:

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority—Report 2018–19

Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor—Report 1 November 2019—Ordered to be published

Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984—Notice under s 32(3)(a)(iii) in relation to Statutory Rule 135/2019 (*Gazette G5, 6 February 2020*)

National Education and Care Services Freedom of Information and Privacy Commissioners and Ombudsman—Report 2018–19

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

Bayside—C161 Part 2

Boroondara—C312

Hobsons Bay—C113

Melton—C201, C217

Mildura—C102

Nillumbik—C117 Part 1, C124

Surf Coast—C128

Victoria Planning Provisions—VC160, VC 168, VC170

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008—SR 5

Road Safety Act 1986—SR 7

Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983—SR 6

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:

Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 4, 5, 6, 7

Documents under s 16B in relation to:

Water Act 1989—Temporary Qualification of Rights in the Broken System 2019

Wildlife Act 1975—Revocation of the Declaration of Common wombats to be unprotected wildlife

Guidelines under s 26.

PROCLAMATIONS—Under Standing Order 177A, the Clerk tabled the following proclamations fixing operative dates:

Children Legislation Amendment Act 2019—Sections 3(2), 9 and 10 and Parts 4 and 5—17 February 2020 (*Gazette S49, 4 February 2020*)

Justice Legislation Amendment (Serious Offenders and Other Matters) Act 2019—Sections 19(1), 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29—31 January 2020 (*Gazette S37, 29 January 2020*).

Bills

MELBOURNE STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT (ENVIRONMENT MITIGATION LEVY) BILL 2019

Council's agreement

The SPEAKER (13:00): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Melbourne Strategic Assessment (Environment Mitigation Levy) Bill 2019 without amendment.

Royal assent

The SPEAKER (13:01): I have received a message informing the house that the Governor has given royal assent to the Melbourne Strategic Assessment (Environment Mitigation Levy) Bill 2019.

Business of the house

PROGRAM

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure) (13:01): I move:

That under standing order 94(2), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 5.00 pm on Thursday, 20 February 2020.

Forests Legislation Amendment (Compliance and Enforcement) Bill 2019

Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill 2019

Justice Legislation Miscellaneous Amendments Bill 2019

Owners Corporations and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2019.

In making a few comments on the government business program that is before the house today I also wish to add, as the house would be aware given that we have just first and second read the local government bill regarding the Casey council, that it is the government's intention—and can I acknowledge this intention has the support, I believe, of all other parties and Independent members of the house—for the Assembly to debate this bill as the first item of government businesses this afternoon following members statements to enable its expeditious passage to the Legislative Council. It is also, I believe, with the willingness of the Council. Of course I am not in a position to speak on behalf of the Legislative Council, but it is certainly the government's intention that with the support and will of the Legislative Council that bill also pass the Legislative Council today.

There has been much public commentary around this council and the circumstances that have led to this bill coming into the Parliament. I will be judicious in my commentary, given that there are various other judicial procedures underway, and we would encourage members of this place to work carefully through these issues when they debate this bill either in this place or the other place. But it is certainly our intention to see this matter resolved for the Casey community as quickly as possible through the Parliament and to have that resolved today. Again, can I thank all members of the house for their cooperation in bringing this about today.

There are four other bills on the government business program, which makes it a very strong and robust government business program, one that is worthy of support—worthy of resounding and

unanimous support. A little birdie has given me a little bit of a whisper in my ear that my hopes and expectations will be dashed when the Manager of Opposition Business gets to his feet, that my ongoing desire for this house to run smoothly with great cooperation from those opposite—the Manager of Opposition Business is going to let me down on this occasion. That is a great disappointment to me because it is a strong government business program. It contains a number of different policy areas. Can I particularly call out the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill 2019. I believe that might have been an election commitment—

Mr Carbines: Indeed, from both.

Ms ALLAN: From both sides, the well-informed member for Ivanhoe informs me. He has got very good connections in the Great Ocean Road region—very good connections. I look forward to his contribution both on this debate and on the bill as well perhaps later on today.

It is great to see again with the government business program that we are putting to the house this week that it contains the business of government, it contains the passage of bills that are related to our election commitments—so we are delivering on that important agenda that we laid out to the Victorian community in 2018—and it is also dealing with other priority matters, as I have already touched on. I put it to the Manager of Opposition Business that I cannot understand why he would want to oppose such a robust and strong government business program that has such great policy and legislative merit as it does; however, I will leave it to him to explain his actions and his decision to not support the government business program on this occasion.

The Manager of Opposition Business has indicated that the opposition would like to take the Forests Legislation Amendment (Compliance and Enforcement) Bill 2019 into the consideration-in-detail stage, and I have indicated to the Manager of Opposition Business that if there is time available at the end of this week that would be an opportunity; however, given that we have also had to add to our program the bill regarding the Casey council—and, as I have indicated, it appears that it is the unanimous will of the house that this be given priority and precedent for our government business program—that may or may not leave time available at the back end of the week. That, however, is again another reason why this is a great government business program and one worthy of support. I look forward to this motion being approved by the house, and we can go forward with a strong legislative program.

Mr WELLS (Rowville) (13:06): I would like to point out to the Leader of the House the large amount of cooperation that was in place when we had our first week of Parliament back for 2020. I think there was great cooperation between all the parties on that. We are grateful for the way that worked out, because obviously there was a lot of work in regard to the John Cain condolence and the bushfires motion as well. This week, through cooperation once again, the government is very keen to get the Local Government (Casey City Council) Bill 2020 through, and on our side of the house we support the government's push to get this done. We think that has to be done quickly. There have been discussions with the Shadow Minister for Local Government, and he also agreed that this was an important bill that needed to get through and to be introduced today, debated today and moved through to the Legislative Council as quickly as possible.

We have no issues with the bills that have been outlined: the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill 2019; the Forests Legislation Amendment (Compliance and Enforcement) Bill 2019, which I will come back to; the Justice Legislation Miscellaneous Amendments Bill 2019 and the Owners Corporations and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2019. The issue we have is with the forests legislation amendment bill. The Shadow Minister for Environment and Climate Change has indicated his strong desire to be able to move an amendment to the Forests Legislation Amendment (Compliance and Enforcement) Bill 2019 because he has grave concerns, and so does the Liberal and Nationals coalition. He wants to move an amendment to be able to make it fairer—and we believe it is a sensible amendment—for people that are involved in certain aspects of this particular bill who we believe will be at a disadvantage. It is for that reason that we are opposing the bill. We understand that the Leader

of the House has said ‘if there is time’, but to date we still have not been into consideration in detail in this term of Parliament—full stop. So even if there has been time, we have not been afforded the opportunity to be able to go into consideration in detail.

Based on that, we will be opposing the government business program, but we do acknowledge that there has been cooperation in regard to the Casey council bill. We think that the government is correct in bringing it in for us to debate quickly to be able to get it up to the Legislative Council so that it can be hopefully passed by the end of today, but we still have concerns about the amendment that we want to raise on the forest legislation amendment bill.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (13:09): It gives me great joy and pleasure to be afforded this wonderful opportunity to rise to support the Leader of the House’s motion today on the government business program. Can I say at the outset: what an absolute cracker of a government business program it is. It is a rich and heavy program ensuring that the government is able to get on and deliver on its election commitments while also making sure that we deal with the matters that come up from time to time that require action from the Treasury bench, such as the bill before the house today in relation to the removal of Casey council. I listened to the Manager of Opposition Business’s contribution, and I do confess at the outset that it comes as no surprise that I am a mere neophyte in this place when compared to the lengthy career that the member for Rowville has had since he was elected here in October 1992. I preface that from the point of view that I find the member’s contribution curious—that the member is seeking to oppose the government business program because the shadow minister wishes to move an amendment. I would have thought that there was obvious capacity for any member of this place to seek to move, for example, a reasoned amendment, which would acquit essentially the desire of the shadow minister, rather than having to oppose the government business program outright. That would just be my thoughts. Perhaps the member might take the view that a reasoned amendment does not fully satiate their desires in relation to this piece of legislation.

Nonetheless, those opposite have chosen to oppose a very good government business program. Perhaps they might be doing it for their own internal reasons. Perhaps they feel it is important to rally the troops after an insipid question time where the Leader of the Opposition did not ask a single question. Again, I am a neophyte in this place—

Mr T Smith: On a point of order, Speaker, no-one on this side of the house is remotely interested in the member for Essendon’s observations from question time. His own colleagues do not think that he should be supported on the front bench, and we do not think he should be either. Therefore how about you ask the member for Essendon, Deputy Speaker, humbly, to get back to talking about the government business program?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order, but I do ask the member to speak on the government business program.

Mr PEARSON: Look, it is an outstanding government business program, it is lengthy, and I would have thought that it would be heartily supported by those opposite. Clearly it is not being supported by those opposite for curious reasons. I mean, you look at the desultory performance today, the fact that many members opposite are not here right now. Perhaps they feel the burning need and desire to try and rally the troops by enforcing a division in relation to this outstanding government business program. You do have to wonder why. I cannot really understand how those opposite operate and work; I do not think I would really want to. It is a very, very good government business program. I am delighted to be afforded the opportunity of supporting it. I commend the government business program to the house.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I call on the member for Gippsland South.

Mr D O’BRIEN (Gippsland South) (13:13): Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I do thank you sincerely for the opportunity to speak, and I am going to be very nice and polite because I just saw the look you

gave the member for Kew, and it could power the state if it was put to good use, so I will be very nice in how I debate the government business program.

I would just take up a couple of the comments from the member for Essendon. We all love listening to the member for Essendon. I am very disappointed that the member for Essendon did not quote Cicero or some papal encyclical from the 12th century today, but I am sure, given the business program—and there are four bills to debate—that we will get the opportunity to hear him do so. I hope he will be spending his time tonight making sure he has got a good couple of quotes for us prepared on one of the bills on the government business program.

The member for Essendon said that we should not be opposing this because, if we want to put in a request to go into committee to debate a particular amendment, we should just move a reasoned amendment. Well, there are forms of the house, member for Essendon, and the forms of the house allow us to move an amendment. Unfortunately, given the government business program and no guarantee that we will be allowed to go into committee, we cannot do that. It is all well and good to say, ‘Oh, you could move a reasoned amendment’. Well, we do that from time to time on certain legislation, but on this particular one that is not the decision we would like to make because the amendment does not relate to the entire bill. It is all well and good to say, ‘You should just move a reasoned amendment’. It would be just as easy for us to say, ‘Well, give us half an hour, a bit of time to debate the bill’. We know what will happen. We have seen this time and time again. The Leader of the House says we will get some committee time if there is time, but we will find on Thursday afternoon that 24 government backbenchers will be given the notes for one of the bills. They will all get up and they will all pretty much say the same thing about how wonderful this piece of government legislation is, and, oh dear, we will run out of time. So spare us the lectures that we could do better.

On the business program, others have put forward their views on the legislation. I might add that there has been cooperation with respect to the City of Casey dismissal, and I look forward to the debate on that, having gone through this myself last year with the South Gippsland shire dismissal. I know this is something that the Parliament does not do lightly, but as was the case with South Gippsland, I think there is absolutely a very clear case here for the dismissal of Casey council. The investigations continue on that, but the monitor’s report has just been tabled and I look forward to hearing the member for Kew’s position on this.

That is why we are opposing the government business program. It is incumbent on the government to actually give the opposition and other members in the chamber the opportunity to debate things in detail, particularly when we have amendments that we would like to move on a particular piece of legislation. I will leave my contribution there, and I look forward to debate throughout the week.

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) (13:16): I am pleased to make a contribution in support of the government business program, in particular, as outlined by the Leader of the House, the three bills to be introduced this week, in addition to the four bills to be debated. In amongst all of that, of course, is the matter of public importance debate, and no doubt the government will continue to prosecute our record of investment in government services. Not only that, but members have touched on the fact that we have seen the introduction of the Local Government (Casey City Council) Bill 2020, and I do look forward to the debate on that, to come shortly, to restore confidence and certainty to the ratepayers and community in Casey.

As has been touched on, as we pursue that bill—and I am sure it has the opportunity to get passage to the other place later today—I thought it is also important to note and to mention one of those four bills in particular, the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill 2019, which I know is a bill that reflects in large part election commitments made by both sides of the house. In particular it tries to pick up on those 20-plus different management organisations that have responsibility for the Great Ocean Road. Of course when we are talking about some 7 million visitors a year to the Great Ocean Road, it is a very significant role it plays in not only the tourist economy but more broadly across our country as not only an economic driver but a significant cultural institution from Torquay to

Warrnambool. It is very significant to set up a statutory authority and better governance arrangements about who is responsible for driving further improvements and change and to make it clear to those who engage with the Great Ocean Road, support it or rely on it and those who live there, through better reflecting some responsibilities and accountabilities, how that great natural wonder—as well as the great contributions that have been made by our forebears in this development—will be supported in the future. Some of those findings of course also came out of the Wye River fire.

So I think there are some expanded conversations that we will have on that during debate on the bill. I am certainly keen to see whether that is backed up by election commitments from those opposite when the bill gets to the other place in relation to getting moving on establishing that statutory authority so that we can start to get some greater consolidation and direction on the future of the many investments and policy programs and accountabilities that are so important to the Surf Coast community on the Great Ocean Road.

I will just touch on those other bills, such as the Justice Legislation Miscellaneous Amendments Bill 2019 and particularly the Owners Corporations and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2019—really important stuff there. Many MPs would be aware of the gruelling nature of some of the complaints and issues that we deal with in the community from our constituents in relation to owners corporation regulations, and I think it is really important that we have time to debate and consider those matters.

What does surprise me a little bit though is that we have had some comments from those opposite in relation to the opportunity to go into consideration in detail on bills. There was not a specific bill mentioned that those opposite wanted to go into consideration in detail on to debate and discuss it in greater detail. I did not hear any particular bill nominated. Of course the lead speaker does have the opportunity to make available to the house any particular amendments in relation to a bill that they might want to make available for consideration of members, and that opportunity still remains available to members. This always does take me back, this debate on the opportunity to go into consideration in detail on bills. I can list several examples. One that readily comes to mind is the National Parks Amendment (Prohibiting Cattle Grazing) Bill 2015 and the opportunity that we had when we banned cattle from the High Country. The opportunity to go into consideration in detail on that bill is just one example of many where our government has provided opportunities to those opposite to debate matters in detail. Of course, given the lack of contributions from those opposite when it came to the Gender Equality Bill 2019 last week, I am sure they are doing their best to find other time that can be made available for debate on bills in this place.

I am looking forward to the contributions from all members. But in particular, with a very strong business program this week and the opportunities to also pick up and move, as we need to, on the Casey bill—just as we did last sitting week with the cooperation of the house in relation to condolences with regard to bushfires and to former Premier the Honourable John Cain—I am sure there is great scope and capacity for some amity across the house in pursuing the business program and seeing these bills make their way to the other place, particularly in relation to local government matters that are so critical to people in the south-east.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 54

Addison, Ms	Foley, Mr	Neville, Ms
Allan, Ms	Fowles, Mr	Pakula, Mr
Andrews, Mr	Fregon, Mr	Pallas, Mr
Blandthorn, Ms	Green, Ms	Pearson, Mr
Brayne, Mr	Halfpenny, Ms	Richards, Ms
Bull, Mr J	Hall, Ms	Richardson, Mr
Carbines, Mr	Halse, Mr	Scott, Mr
Carroll, Mr	Hamer, Mr	Settle, Ms
Cheeseman, Mr	Hennessy, Ms	Spence, Ms
Connolly, Ms	Horne, Ms	Staikos, Mr

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

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Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 18 February 2020

Couzens, Ms
Crugnale, Ms
D'Ambrosio, Ms
Dimopoulos, Mr
Donnellan, Mr
Edbrooke, Mr
Edwards, Ms
Eren, Mr

Hutchins, Ms
Kairouz, Ms
Kennedy, Mr
Kilkenny, Ms
Maas, Mr
McGhie, Mr
McGuire, Mr
Merlino, Mr

Suleyman, Ms
Tak, Mr
Taylor, Mr
Theophanous, Ms
Thomas, Ms
Ward, Ms
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Angus, Mr
Battin, Mr
Blackwood, Mr
Britnell, Ms
Bull, Mr T
Cupper, Ms
Guy, Mr
Hibbins, Mr
Hodgett, Mr
Kealy, Ms
McCurdy, Mr

McLeish, Ms
Morris, Mr
Newbury, Mr
Northe, Mr
O'Brien, Mr D
O'Brien, Mr M
Read, Dr
Riordan, Mr
Ryan, Ms
Sandell, Ms

Sheed, Ms
Smith, Mr R
Smith, Mr T
Southwick, Mr
Staley, Ms
Tilley, Mr
Vallence, Ms
Wakeling, Mr
Walsh, Mr
Wells, Mr

Motion agreed to.

Members statements

BUSHFIRES

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (13:27): I rise to inform the house that members of the Mill Park community came out in full force last Sunday to support the bushfire appeal fundraising barbecue. It is an initiative that I was very keen to initiate because we know that many members of the local community are really keen to look for opportunities to participate and to help raise much-needed funds as a result of the devastation that has occurred as a result of these fires in communities in East Gippsland and north-eastern Victoria. We raised almost \$2000, which will be shared between the CFA South Morang and the Victorian Bushfire Appeal fund. More than 100 people came out to this event from all types of communities—coming together, talking, having some fun in the park and really thanking the volunteers from the CFA for their participation in having attended a number of the fires in East Gippsland. I do want to acknowledge very kind donations from a number of different organisations locally, including Bertocchi Smallgoods, the BAPS mandir in Mill Park and the Kiritsis family. They all contributed food for free. Also, the AMWU helped out with cooking and staffing the barbecue, and various other community organisations provided support.

CONTAINER DEPOSIT SCHEME

Mr WELLS (Rowville) (13:28): In this statement I pay great credit to the Liberal-Nationals coalition for their commitment to bringing back a container deposit scheme which is similar to the program that provided small refunds for bottles and cans as far back as the 1980s. I remember being a young cub and scout in Bairnsdale, and I remember this program well and believe it is a fantastic initiative that can be a major source of income for scouts, guides and sporting clubs. Not only will this program provide funds for local community and sporting groups, but it will also reduce litter in parks, roadsides and beaches as well as improve recycling.

Victoria is now the only state in the country that does not have a cash-for-containers scheme. It is time for Victoria to not only catch up with other states but to get ahead. That is why this scheme will be a high priority for an elected Liberal-Nationals government. With the Andrews Labor government's total failure to properly deal with the recycling issue Victoria faced last year, it is so important that this scheme along with the fantastic waste-to-energy policy are put in place. Victoria needs solid, realistic and achievable policies put in place to refix the recycling mess. That is why the Liberal-Nationals

coalition are considering the best schemes from across the country so the Victorian version is the best of the best.

NEWPORT ISLAMIC COMMUNITY

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Public Transport) (13:30): I rise today to honour the hard work and strength of the Islamic community of Newport in my electorate of Williamstown, who in the wake of the bushfires came together to gather food supplies and aid for communities impacted by the bushfires. The Islamic community have organised a number of food supplies and relief drops to communities currently impacted by the fires. Victoria has had an unprecedented situation, and the contribution that has been made over the last few weeks by the Islamic community is testament to the strength of community in providing support to those who need it most. A few weeks ago I visited the mosque and was so impressed by the level of generosity and compassion demonstrated. It was particularly moving to watch younger generations working alongside older ones as items were separated, packed and moved into trucks. As these disasters occur more regularly, we rely on the strength of community to provide support in our time of need.

Efforts to gather food supplies and aid for communities impacted by the bushfires is indicative of the compassion and kindness of the Islamic community, which is what we are known for in the west. They represent the kind of traits that we need in our communities, and I am so proud of the work they do each day. So I would like to give special thanks to Laila Houli, Sheik Mohamed Aljibaly and the rest of the Newport Islamic community for all of the hard work they have put in over the last few months in providing support to those who need it most.

TIMBER INDUSTRY

Mr T BULL (Gippsland East) (13:31): It is with disappointment that I report to the house that the timber industry workers who were at the forefront of our bushfire defence and then recovery are not back in full-time work as yet. The reality is, with so much salvage harvesting to be done and many more roadsides to be cleared, they should be busier than ever.

I also note that in question time last sitting week the Premier responded to a question by saying:

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.

These are mixed species coupes in Gippsland, and they recover. They actually need fire to reproduce. They do not all die. They are now sprouting new growth, and even if they were burnt they can still be harvested. So we need to get to those timber industry workers, show them some respect and get them back to work.

CANNI CREEK RACES

Mr T BULL: On Saturday I attended the Canni Creek races at Buchan in front of a record crowd, and there were a number of MPs there. We had the shadow Treasurer, the racing minister, federal MP Darren Chester and an upper house member for Eastern Victoria Region. It was a great day enjoyed by everyone in the community.

I drove into that racetrack two days after the fire and it was completely devastated, and to see it in its condition on Saturday was great. I think the racing minister continued his traditional poor form in punting, and the only winner he got was the one I tipped him. The shadow Treasurer was not a lot better, but full credit to all of the organisers there at Canni Creek—Ian Dunkley and his great team—for hosting a brilliant day.

YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie—Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support) (13:33): Last Thursday, 13 February, I had the great

honour to speak at the launch of the new Victorian framework to reduce criminalisation of young people in residential care.

We know that the youngest children in the youth justice system are also more likely to be known to child protection. On average one in every two young people aged 10 to 13 years who are in youth justice were subject to a child protection order. One in three were subject to a child protection order and the same number had experienced out-of-home care. Of these young people who had experienced out-of-home care half had experienced more than five placements, and sadly, we know the trajectories of these young people—the younger you are when you enter the youth justice system, the more likely you will continue your offending and enter the adult system.

Last Thursday's launch was a very important initiative. I want to thank Muriel Bamblett, the chief executive officer of the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency; the chief executive officer of the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, Deb Tsorbaris; Liana Buchanan, the principal commissioner for children and young people; Nicole Rich, the executive director, family, youth and children's law at Victoria Legal Aid; Victoria Police's Murray Fraser, acting commander, priority communities division; and also the Minister for Child Protection for his leadership.

We know this is the beginning of a major new partnership to stop that trajectory, that pathway of young people in out-of-home care entering the criminal justice system. This will support young people. It will also provide frontline security and support for our wonderful working staff.

GEMBROOK ELECTORATE BUS SERVICES

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) (13:34): The Labor government are failing a wide cross-section of the Gembrook community by leaving retirees and school students on the side of the road with no public bus system. Officer Secondary College has 1100 students and has no school bus management system (SBMS) service and no other bus service at all. With no proper footpaths leading to the school from the surrounding suburbs, many students are being forced to cross Princes Highway and walk kilometres to school with no other options.

Students in Upper Beaconsfield who attend their closest government school, Berwick College, are denied the conveyance allowance despite living in the required distance from the college and being in the metropolitan zone. When they go on the Public Transport Victoria website to find out how to get to the school, as suggested by the minister's office, it tells them to get a taxi. The government is paying for a free bus for students who live in Narre Warren North, an area outside the school's zone, but it ignores Upper Beaconsfield families' requests.

New year 7 Emerald Secondary College students living in Cockatoo were denied access to the SBMS service despite some of their older siblings being approved. Instead they are expected to walk past other students catching the bus and catch the bus from the main street, which gets them to the school as classes begin.

The government are still refusing to provide a bus stop on Toomuc Valley Road to service the Goldcare retirement village and surrounding estates. The government's new excuse for this is that the intersection at Toomuc Valley Road and Princes Highway is too unsafe to have a bus crossing. Well, maybe if they upgrade the intersection like we have been calling for it will solve two major issues for students and residents.

For the fastest growing area in Victoria, the government is failing to provide vital services and is turning its back on the Gembrook electorate.

COVID-19

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (13:36): Today I rise to express my solidarity with the people of Hubei province and of wider China in the fight against the novel coronavirus. I have been shocked and saddened by the impact that the coronavirus has had not only on the people of China but also on our

wonderful Chinese-Australian communities and businesses. Fear has driven some of the negative responses, but we must stand together during this time to support each other as work continues across the world to control the spread of the virus and to develop a vaccine. I am especially proud that Victorian medical researchers at the Doherty Institute have joined the work to find a cure for coronavirus, being the first to recreate the virus outside of China.

It is pleasing to see Victoria's Chinese diaspora as well as wider Victoria working together not only to aid those suffering in China but also to support local traders to say, 'We are open for business'. The truest of friendship emerges in times of adversity. Victorian communities are standing together in friendship, and I stand with them to convey our support to Wuhan, to Hubei province, to China and to Victoria's Chinese communities.

JIM MITAS

Mr PEARSON: A big shout-out to Jim Mitas from JB's fish and chip shop in Ascot Vale. He sold his business recently and had his last day on Friday. The good people of Ascot Vale turned out in force on Friday—I have never seen the shop so busy—to farewell Jim, who has been a fixture of Ascot Vale for many, many years. Jim has made an outstanding contribution to our community, and there has been so much warmth and affection shown towards him these last few days. Jim, I wish you all the very best for the next chapter in your career. Thank you for all your labours and endeavours. You are an absolute gent.

ROSE KELLY

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) (13:37): I rise to pay tribute to Rose Kelly, who was the director of the Windsor Community Children's Centre before she died tragically last year. Rose was a community builder, a leader in the early childhood sector and a trusted colleague and friend to the educators, families and community members she worked with, including our Indigenous community and Reconciliation Stonnington. Rose's death is a huge loss to her husband and son and to our wider community. It was heartwarming to see so many people come together to honour Rose's life over the weekend and to know that her legacy will be continued with an award to be offered in her name by Early Childhood Australia.

DUCK HUNTING

Mr HIBBINS: As I speak right now, the decision whether or not to proceed with Victoria's duck hunting season has yet to be made. With drought conditions, waterbird and duck numbers at historically low levels and habitat being lost, one would have to ask: if duck shooting season is not cancelled this year, when will it ever be? Of course the fact that the state government has to even make this decision every year by continuing to support duck shooting, which results in the death and injury of native birds every single year, is unfathomable. It is time to end duck shooting in Victoria once and for all.

NORM GIBBS COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AWARD

Mr FREGON (Mount Waverley) (13:39): Norman Gibbs, OAM, is a good bloke. The Honourable Anna Burke, AO, calls him 'Mr Waverley', and I could not think of a better name for Norm. Norm has always volunteered and given back to our community. He has volunteered for over six decades in more community groups than I have time to mention. He is a life member of many of them. He also volunteered for decades as Zodo the Clown at Monash Children's Hospital until he retired two years ago at the age of 90. Even at 92, Norm and his beloved wife, Topsy, are still heavily involved with community groups around the Waverley and Monash areas.

Norm has been recognised for his service and holds many awards to his name, including the Sir John Monash Community Leadership Award, the Victorian Senior of the Year Award and an Order of Australia Medal, and he has also had the honour of carrying the Olympic torch. That is why I named our school community leadership award after Norm. This award highlights students who give to back to their community and make it a better place.

I am proud to announce the winners of the inaugural Norm Gibbs Community Leadership Award. We have Daniel Fatouros and Shilpi Shah of Glenallen School, Tuhina Verma of Glendal Primary School, Cindy Tran of Brentwood Secondary College, Iaroslav Shubin of Essex Heights Primary School and Flynn Bartlett of Syndal South Primary School. Joan Kim won the Lance Lloyd Award at Mount Waverley North Primary School, and Demitri Kaminis won the VCE Leadership Award at Mount Waverley Secondary College. While I was in the house a fortnight ago Norm Gibbs was at Avila College presenting the award to Emma Gare. My congratulations to you all.

As I said, Norm Gibbs is a good bloke.

WINE INDUSTRY SMOKE TAIN

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (13:40): It is easy to be a champion when everything is going well and you are kicking with a 10-goal breeze, but the real test of character comes when adversity hits. The wine growers in north-east Victoria are desperate for support, particularly as the smoke-tainted vintage tests become clearer. Just prior to Christmas the Minister for Agriculture, Jaclyn Symes in the other place, withdrew funding for important research into smoke taint in grapes that one day will be worth millions of dollars to this industry to help these local businesses. It will help them make better decisions earlier as to how to best manage the vintage.

With the fires this year and the smoke taint ruining many of the crops for 2020, the minister needs to take her portfolio seriously and genuinely assist this industry. The Premier for Melbourne and the Minister for Agriculture need to look further up the highways and take some responsibility for the situation we are in. Poorly planned burning policy and a lack of action by this government have been contributors to this smoke-filled summer. I call on the Minister for Agriculture to deliver real financial solutions, not just froth and bubbles. Our prosecco industry is bleeding right now, and you have turned your back.

ALLIANZ INSURANCE

Mr McCURDY: The insurance industry is often criticised and maligned for their lack of action after a major event. Last Wednesday I spent the afternoon with Bert and Norma Bohun in Dandongadale, who lost their house and everything in it to fire. Allianz insurance and our local insurance broker Steven Prince were absolutely outstanding in the way in which they approached this assessment. Full credit to all on site for your compassion and your professionalism, and I thank them all for making this difficult task much easier for Bert and Norma.

BAXTER RAIL EXTENSION

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) (13:42): In October 2019 the Victorian state government completed and handed to the federal government a business case into the electrification and duplication of the metro train line to Baxter, on time and on budget.

Whilst prior to the federal election the federal government and their community stakeholders seemed in a hurry, the train plan has ground to a halt and we are hearing nothing, so the question is: what are they hiding? To date, almost four months on, this business case has not been released to the public, notwithstanding the significant amount of interest in my community in the report.

We have seen a sustained period of strong advocacy from both Frankston council and Mornington council, together with the Committee for Greater Frankston, calling for the public release of the entire Baxter electrification and duplication business case, but to no avail.

Despite advice from an electorate-wide mail-out that construction would commence in 2019, without a business case or funding; the Prime Minister's strong support for the extension during his visits in May 2018 and November 2019; and even a senator visiting last year stating he would 'not let this rest', all we hear is silence, and the construction of the project is at a standstill until the federal government releases this business case to our community.

This week I have written a letter to the Deputy Prime Minister, the Prime Minister and the Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure to ask them to release the full Baxter electrification and duplication business case publicly so our community can look forward to building on the Victorian state government's transformative Metro Tunnel project and the \$3 billion of upgrades on the Frankston line, that include prepping the Frankston station for this project. I look forward to a prompt response to rule out the growing fear in my community that they have been promised the world and delivered nothing, with the full business case remaining hidden forever.

MILDURA WEST PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ms CUPPER (Mildura) (13:43): Late last year my office received a petition from the students of grade 5C at Mildura West Primary School sharing their concerns about the health of the Murray and Darling rivers. The students of grade 5C will have just started in grade 6, but I hope they will get a chance to see their concerns shared with the house today. These empowered young students have been learning about policy and government, and through that process they have created a petition which attracted 165 signatures. The students and the signatories to the petition have grave concerns about taking too much water from our rivers, in particular through the proliferation of water-intensive crops like cotton; the illegal and unethical storage of water and meter tampering in New South Wales and Queensland; the death of endangered fish like the Murray cod and silver perch; and ultimately the risk that our rivers, and in turn our communities, will die if we do not do more to conserve water for the environment.

I stand with the students of Mildura West and share their concerns. I want them to know that I am doing everything I can from this house to ensure that Victoria adheres to the Murray-Darling Basin plan, but also that as Victorians we hold other states and the commonwealth government to account for the times they have ignored or defied the intent of the plan. The students in grade 5C understand how important a healthy river is to our community and the entire nation. I am proud to bring their petition to this house, confident in the knowledge that the next generation of Mildurans are already fighting the good fight for our mighty Murray River.

AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) (13:45): I rise to thank and congratulate local Australia Day Award recipients in my Ivanhoe electorate. Officer (AO) in the General Division of the Order of Australia went to Professor John Dewar for distinguished service to education through leadership roles in the university sector and to professional organisations, certainly in his role as vice-chancellor at La Trobe University; and to Professor Jeffrey Zajac in Heidelberg, for distinguished service to medical research and education, particularly in the field of endocrinology, and to professional societies. Member (AM) in the General Division of the Order of Australia went to Ms Mary Featherston in Ivanhoe, for significant service to the arts, particularly to interior and industrial design; to Professor Marjory Moodie in Eaglemont, for significant service to education, particularly to health economics; and to Dr John Santamaria in Heidelberg for significant service to intensive care medicine. The Medal (OAM) of the Order of Australia in the General Division went to Ms Julie Ryan in Ivanhoe East, for services to secondary education—

Ms Thomas interjected.

Mr CARBINES: Yes, member for Macedon, she was principal of Our Lady of Mercy College, Heidelberg, from 2005 to 2017. It also went to Peter Williams in Eaglemont for services to maritime history.

I would also like to acknowledge several other recipients: Michael Malouf, AM, for services to local government and to the community of Victoria; Colleen Pearce from the Office of the Public Advocate, who I was with just last week, for significant services to the community through public advocacy roles; the Honourable Sherryl Garbutt, for services to the people, who previously served in this place as

minister and member for Greensborough and Bundoora; and of course Elaine Carbines, AM, former member in the other place, for significant service to conservation and the environment.

FIVE WAYS INTERSECTION, WARRANDYTE

Mr R SMITH (Warrandyte) (13:46): I would like to draw the attention of the house to the petition I tabled in this place in the last sitting week regarding the Five Ways intersection in South Warrandyte, covering the Ringwood-Warrandyte Road, Husseys Lane, Brumbys Road and Croydon Road. The Warrandyte electorate has spoken overwhelmingly, with over 850 signatures asking for immediate action by the Andrews Labor government to fix this treacherous intersection instead of waiting for a fatality to be the catalyst for action. Local residents have made a number of comments on social media, and local resident Pam O'Connor stated in the *Manningham Leader* newspaper last week that the intersection is 'extremely dangerous'.

The previous minister for roads, the member for Narre Warren North, ignored my residents when he had responsibility for the portfolio. It now seems the current minister, Ms Pulford in the other place, is doing likewise. Instead of actually doing something, we have been told that the department will 'continue to monitor the safety and operation of this intersection', and more recently, the minister has asked the department to review it and see if there are any short-term, low-cost improvements that can be made. It seems that, with a budget on the brink of collapse due to massive cost overruns on infrastructure projects and massive pay rises for the Premier and his ministers, 'short-term and low-cost' are about all that Victorians can afford now. The electorate of Warrandyte deserves so much better from this government, and this government needs to ensure that it is delivering for all Victorians and not just its mates.

TESS BARNES AND MADDI CONDRON

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) (13:47): We build sporting champions up in the Macedon Ranges. Congratulations to basketball superstars Tess Barnes and Maddi Condron, who represented Victoria at the under-20 national championships, where they defeated New South Wales to win bronze at the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra. Fantastic job, Tess and Maddi!

LAURIE MARSHALL

Ms THOMAS: Meanwhile, Malmsbury Cricket Club groundskeeper Laurie Marshall has always been a local legend, but now he has received nationwide recognition. Laurie has won this year's Big Bash League Local Legend award after almost 40 years maintaining cricket pitches at both Malmsbury and Kyneton. I hope you enjoy the cruise, Laurie, and congrats to all at the MCC for nominating our local legend.

BIG TREE DISTILLERY

Ms THOMAS: As I am sure you all know, Macedon is home to some of the nation's finest wines, beers, ciders and liqueurs—and now officially Australia's best gin. From the hamlet of Newham comes Big Tree Distillery's Elegant Dry Gin, which took out the first prize in the best classic Australian gin category at the World Gin Awards in London. The distillery uses the farm's own rainwater as part of the distillation process and all ingredients are locally sourced. Congratulations to Gary Jago and Catherine Crothers on this incredible achievement.

KERRY WILDENBURG

Ms THOMAS: We have really got something cooking in Kyneton, because for the third year in a row a Kyneton woman has been nominated for a Victorian AgriFutures Rural Women's Award. Congratulations, Kerry Wildenburg, on your hard work with some of our most vulnerable residents and your vision for a permaculture food forest in Kyneton.

DIANNE MCGRATH

Ms SETTLE (Buninyong) (13:49): I rise today to congratulate one of my constituents, Dianne McGrath, who was awarded the Order of Australia Medal. Dianne was awarded this honour for her tireless work on international humanitarian programs. She is the Ballarat president, state vice-president and on the national board of directors of Ryder-Cheshire. It is her incredible work with Ryder-Cheshire that has made a remarkable difference to the lives of thousands. Ryder-Cheshire is a volunteer charity organisation which, for over 50 years, has provided accommodation and care for those who are sick, have a disability or are destitute.

Dianne may be based in Ballarat; however, her compassion is felt much further abroad. Her work is helping people in Australia, Timor-Leste and in particular northern India. The Raphael project in northern India started in tents and now cares for over 200 children and adults as well as providing support for an additional 250 people with disabilities. This support includes housing, health care and education, and caters for those suffering from conditions such as leprosy and tuberculosis, amongst others. Dianne was surprised to hear she was to become an Order of Australia medallist, but said she felt incredibly humbled and amazingly honoured. In the manner that Dianne has become known for, she was also quick to point out that this award will be very much a sharing for volunteers for people who are suffering, people who have disability, people who wish to share with their children.

BAYSWATER ELECTORATE PROJECTS

Mr TAYLOR (Bayswater) (13:51): Deputy Speaker, as you know, in this place we have 90 seconds to make a statement and today I wanted to give the Bayswater community a quick run-down on a number of projects being delivered across the community with commitments from the Andrews government—cue *Mission: Impossible* music and go!

A new learning space and gym for Heathmont College is about to start construction. We are delivering the North-East Link to get you to the city sooner. New stations for The Basin CFA and Knox SES have been announced, with detailed designs underway. The Basin Primary School's new oval and upgrades to their carpark and pavements are currently in early planning. Detailed designs are underway on the new Knox central library, with \$450 000 from the Andrews government. The Reimagining Blind Creek project in Boronia and Ferntree Gully is to be officially opened in the coming weeks. New lighting at Marie Wallace Park in Bayswater to keep locals safe is about to kick off. Bayswater Primary School's new main building is set to start works in the school holidays, with the construction of block C already finalised. We are making the intersection of Canterbury and Bedford roads safer with construction to fix it starting mid this year. Grants have been made for a number of our local sporting clubs. Construction will also start this year on a new state-of-the-art 120-bed public aged-care facility right in Wantirna. Plans for a new senior learning building at St Bernadette's Primary School are moving into the next phase.

We are delivering more local police in the Knox and Maroondah areas. The \$75 000 for the fit-out of the new HE Parker pavilion is being put to good use, with the pavilion nearly ready to go. The construction of a new pavilion for the Eastern Raptors Rugby League Club is nearing completion. Plans are underway to massively overhaul the State Basketball Centre, which is the home of Knox Basketball, Melbourne Boomers and South East Melbourne Phoenix. Funds to create all-ability spaces at Eastern Ranges, Marlborough Primary, The Basin Primary, Boronia K-12, as well as a new outdoor learning space at Bayswater South Primary, are all in train. We are building new toilets at Marlborough Primary and Bayswater West Primary. Seventy thousand free brekkies are also delivered to kids across the local community; and hundreds of half-price solar panels will continue to deliver for all locals across the Bayswater community.

VIRGIN MARY MOSQUE

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarneit) (13:52): I recently had the pleasure of taking my son Leo with me as I visited the Virgin Mary Mosque in Hoppers Crossing, along with a member for Western Metropolitan

Region, Kaushaliya Vaghela in the other place. We were there to join our local Muslim community to raise funds to support bushfire-affected communities. It was a great day of fun, with jumping castles and animal farms for the kids, and a barbecue and auction for the adults. I would like to thank Sheikh Abdulla Hawari for organising the event and all the families who attended on the day to show their support.

HOPPERS CROSSING GURUDWARA

Ms CONNOLLY: On Sunday I took my entire family down to the Hoppers Crossing Gurudwara for a wonderful afternoon of prayers, music and lunch with our local Sikh community. They had also raised funds for the bushfire appeal, and I am so proud of them for supporting their fellow Victorians affected by these tragic fires. It was wonderful to see my two young children have so much fun with all the other kids at the Gurudwara. This is multiculturalism at its best, and it was absolutely fabulous to be at the heart of it.

BUSHFIRES

Ms CONNOLLY: There has been no shortage of generosity shown from our community, and in a vibrant and diverse community like the Tarneit electorate it is humbling to see all come together, people of different faiths and cultural backgrounds, to show their support for fellow Victorians. I am very proud to represent a community that supports one another and stands in solidarity with their fellow brothers and sisters, and I thank all who have shown their support for the bushfire relief over the last two months.

MORDIALLOC ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (13:54): Recently I had the great pleasure of joining three incredible school communities as we celebrated milestones in their school development and upgrades to their school facilities. The first cab off the rank was Chelsea Heights Primary School, a \$4.5 million building upgrade—10 new learning spaces, administrative building and outdoor learning spaces. Jane Satchwell, the principal there, is an incredible leader in our community. To see the start of demolition works is a great milestone for Chelsea Heights.

At Edithvale Primary School down the road, we celebrated the opening of their STEM centre. This was a great celebration, with principal James Whitla and his amazing crew at Edithvale Primary. What a great celebration, seeing the students doing robotics in their science lab coats and doing that STEM education that we know is so important. Of course, they have got their art technology centre on the go very soon, which is so very exciting.

Then, the third cab off the rank—amazing—was Yarrabah School, a complete rebuild of our specialist school in the Mordialloc electorate. We are rebuilding this brick by brick, and by September 2020 we will finish off this school with a more than \$20 million investment. We were there to open their administrative buildings, an amazing outcome for this incredible community. Matthew Harris and his wonderful parent community have led this project from start to finish. We are looking forward to opening up the secondary facilities, the life skill buildings, very soon. I am counting down the days to reopening the full new Yarrabah School.

TEAGAN DENNY

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) (13:55): I would like to congratulate Teagan Denny, a Craigieburn resident and recipient of the 2020 Hume Young Citizen of the Year award. At only 19, Teagan has already made a positive and meaningful impact in our community. She is a volunteer with the Craigieburn SES, she is trained in road rescue operations, and also volunteers helping out with the local Blue Light disco. Teagan is also involved in the Craigieburn War Memorial and Remembrance Committee, assisting in maintaining the digital and social media presence of the committee. She is also pursuing a teaching career and spent her gap year in 2018 volunteering as a teachers aide at Broadmeadows Primary School.

BUSHFIRES

Ms SPENCE: I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous work undertaken by Craigieburn residents who responded to the call for aid for bushfire-affected communities—in particular, Ravinder Kaur and her family, who reached out to the Sikh community, the Craigieburn Sikh Gurudwara for providing storage facilities, and the Australian Sikh Support group who transported goods to affected communities, all of whom provided amazing support when it was needed most. The stream of support from the broader Craigieburn community was endless. The generosity of our community was outstanding, with donations of food and goods being delivered directly to impacted towns across Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia. I recently met with the Northside Malayalee Community Club, who donated funds raised at the Bunnings sausage sizzle to the bushfire relief fund. I know that many other community groups are holding fundraisers to do the same. I am very proud of them all. Well done and thank you all.

MCKINNON RESERVE PAVILION

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (13:57): It was my pleasure recently to officially open the new female-friendly facilities at McKinnon Reserve pavilion, a big boost for St Paul's footy club and the McKinnon Cricket Club because it means that both clubs now can embark on a future where men and women, boys and girls can be treated equally.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The time for making statements has now concluded.

Bills**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (CASEY CITY COUNCIL) BILL 2020***Second reading***Debate resumed.**

Mr T SMITH (Kew) (13:58): I rise to support the bill as moved by the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, the Local Government (Casey City Council) Bill 2020, which will sack the City of Casey councillors until October 2024.

At the outset I would like to inform the house that the opposition will be supporting this bill, although we do have some reservations about the time frame. I think a more appropriate time frame would have been March 2023, a three-year abolition of elected local councillors at the City of Casey. I have been calling for the dismissal of the council of the City of Casey for months, and if Parliament sat a little bit more in Victoria this may have been achieved a lot earlier.

I was briefed this morning—and I appreciate the effort that the minister's office went to to brief me in good time before the bill was tabled in this place—by the municipal monitor. Her report is damning. It is damning as to the conduct of all councillors at the City of Casey, not just the two who have featured so prominently at the various hearings of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission.

Interestingly, on page 4 of the *City of Casey Municipal Monitor Report*, I quote:

My observation is that Councillors have been more concerned about their own reputation rather than that of the City of Casey and have reluctantly taken advice to not generate more media coverage by making further statements. Despite this and advice to the contrary the Council have made some media statements that have led to more negative media coverage and community commentary and pursued the calling of a Special Council meeting for the 31 December to resolve to approve the establishment of Section 86 Special Committee to deal with non-delegated planning matters in the belief that the Committee will ensure efficient handling of planning matters and assist in restoring public confidence in the Council.

Essentially what the monitor observed and what I think all of us in this place have observed and I have certainly been on the receiving end of—I have defended myself against a number of bizarre statements from councillors both in Australia and in Cairo—is that frankly this council had lost the plot, that these

councillors were living in cloud-cuckoo-land and that the councillors deserved to go, and by their own behaviour and statements should have gone a long time ago.

The number of times that the mayor or indeed Cr Aziz had a crack at me and others for calling them out on their bizarre behaviour indicated to the media, the members of this place, the minister, the monitor and indeed to their own community that they had lost the right to govern and that they should go. So I am very pleased that my call for this council to go has been upheld by the Andrews Labor government, albeit too late, and indeed by the municipal monitor.

I note that Cr Aziz, the Christopher Skase of local government, is marooned over there in Cairo. That bloke—seriously. I understand that Australia does not have an extradition treaty with Egypt. I suspect that is why he is there. This bloke needs to return to Melbourne and face the music at IBAC. I think it is a glaring hole in our legislation here in Victoria that people can abscond and leave the country and do not have to account for their own behaviour at the anti-corruption commission hearings. I think that is an absolute disgrace, and I am very happy to work with anyone in this place to fill in that hole. Cr Aziz is sitting there in Egypt—sitting by a river called denial—and I just think that all Victorians are quite rightly outraged by this bloke sitting there putting his feet up and earning a councillor's wage.

These councillors voted to give this bloke leave. They voted to give him paid leave from his councillor duties to undertake his duties in Cairo. Heavens above! So quite rightly there is public outrage at the behaviour of the City of Casey councillors. The secretary of the Casey Residents and Ratepayers Association, Brendan Browne, said that the council:

... need to be sacked as soon as possible. The current situation isn't in the interests of ratepayers.

My inbox has been inundated with comments from Casey ratepayers pleading that their council, which has become a circus, be dismissed, and I am very pleased that that is happening today. I am very pleased it is happening with bipartisan support across both chambers of this Parliament.

The monitor's report goes on. It talks about the culture and behaviour of the councillors at the City of Casey, particularly the bullying and intimidation that the monitor observed. I quote:

Several Councillors I interviewed stated that they had observed or experienced 'bullying' by other Councillors. This alleged bullying is reported to largely comprise behaviour of exclusion, cliques, and intimidation by Councillors. The cliques centre on one or more dominant personalities—

I just wonder if there are any external personalities who are involved in this situation—

and political affiliations and result in perceptions that matters have not been properly considered by all Councillors or decisions have been made behind closed doors.

Under the heading on page 6 of this report, 'Fear of Conflict or Intimidation':

This unwillingness of Councillors to call out unacceptable Councillor behaviour and hold each other to account appears to be motivated by a fear of conflict or further intimidation that has enabled inappropriate behaviour to go unchecked.

Now, I only received this report formally—with all other members of this place—barely an hour ago. But it is a damning report, and it shows just how right I have been, my colleagues on this side of the house have been and now the government is being in demanding that this council be sacked. Most worryingly, given what we have seen at IBAC, is page 7. The monitor, at council meetings—and I quote:

... observed Councillors stumbling over what was required in declaring conflicts of interest and a gallery completely uninformed about the reason behind declared conflicts. This demonstrated a culture of a low-level of understanding and regard for the importance of effectively and transparently managing councillor conflicts of interest. This is despite efforts by the Administration to educate and provide just-in-time advice and the current scrutiny arising from the IBAC Investigation.

Two Councillors I interviewed stated that they suspected one or more other Councillors have had undeclared conflicts of interest but did not act on this suspicion in part because they did not understand their responsibility and how to approach the issue.

Now, what became apparent in reading the report and indeed during my briefing this morning with the monitor and staff from the minister's office was that there was a belief that if simply Crs Aziz and Ablett were dismissed from the City of Casey all the problems would go away. Well, what this report shows me is that that is simply not the case—that there was systemic poor governance at the City of Casey. There was a culture of bullying and intimidation, a total misunderstanding of councillor roles with regard to conflict of interest and indeed a circus that failed the pub test and which ensured that ratepayers across the largest local government area in our state—350 000 people—and a growth area of significant importance to greater Melbourne had lost confidence in their local council.

So in terms of the recommendations from the monitor, Laurinda Gardner, she recommends that the City of Casey is dismissed and administrators are appointed. She was silent on the length of time, and I reiterate my concerns from the start of my speech that I think March 2023 would be more appropriate. However, I am very happy to support the government bill in this house and indeed the other place.

The term of Administration extends beyond the general elections for local government in October 2020 to enable:

- a thorough review and embedding of policies, procedures and processes for more effective decision-making and responsibilities; and
- the development and implementation of an extensive municipal wide program to develop more and diverse community leaders, greater participation in setting a vision for Casey, and more awareness and interest in local democracy, the role of Council and the responsibilities of Councillors.

Now, Ms Gardner's report is a good report. I think that the fact that we have at least one councillor on paid leave in Egypt shows what a complete disgrace this council has become. This bloke Aziz is the Christopher Skase of local government. He should return to Melbourne immediately and face the music at the anti-corruption commission hearings, because his thumbing the nose at justice in this state has gone on long enough, and I think his local community is absolutely disgusted by his behaviour. I commend this bill to the house and hope for its speedy passage.

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) (14:08): The Greens will be supporting the bill to dismiss the Casey council, and we do share the opposition's concerns around the lengthy period before there is actually an election in Casey. So we put on the record that our preference would be for a shorter time before there is actually a democratically elected council put back in place in Casey, but we also acknowledge the monitor's statement that the period should extend further than the next election period.

One of the main issues that has been raised in the monitor's report is the clear conflict of interest and the lack of understanding of councillors of declaring conflicts of interests and not meeting their obligations under the Local Government Act 1989. Of course, the monitor has been put in place because of the damning evidence that has come out of the recent IBAC investigation into Casey council.

This conflict of interest—this cosy, close relationship between property developers and elected representatives—is the sort of thing that the Greens have been warning about for many years. Whether it be through donations or other financial arrangements for elected representatives—councillors in this instance—whilst making favourable planning decisions for the developer who had provided them with that financial benefit and a failure to declare those conflicts of interest is absolutely appalling. It is just what we have been warning about for many years and seemingly a clear attempt to buy influence, particularly for favourable planning outcomes.

You know, there is a saying about the wild, wild west. Well, it is kind of like the wild south-east out there in Casey, with a developer absolutely running riot in a local council, and it is absolutely appalling. That is why we do need donations reform in this state, to make sure that it is clear that property developers cannot donate to local government candidates or to state government candidates, because it does create at its heart a clear conflict of interest, and as has been noted by the monitor that is one of the main issues. It is why she has recommended the dismissal of Casey council.

The Greens support that, and we would also like to look at not only how we can make sure that Casey council is in a position that it can actually restore and have democratically elected councillors as soon as possible but also make sure that the structures are in place for that to actually occur and that the community of the council can actually have confidence once again in its council. Clearly at the moment it does not, and that is why it is in the best community interest that Casey council is dismissed and that both houses of Parliament support this bill.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time; by leave, proceeded to third reading.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

The SPEAKER: The bill will now be sent to the Legislative Council and their agreement requested.

Business of the house

JOINT STANDING ORDERS

The SPEAKER (14:12): Before going to the next item on the government business program, I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to a new joint standing order 25 to take effect immediately.

Bills

GREAT OCEAN ROAD AND ENVIRONS PROTECTION BILL 2019

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Ms D'AMBROSIO:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) (14:13): I am pleased to rise to open the debate this afternoon on the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill 2019. The Great Ocean Road has of course been the subject of some extended discussion out in the community and probably amongst members for an extended period. What we have before us this afternoon is a bill which is intended to create a new principal act, and we do not do that every sitting day, to recognise the importance of the land and the seascapes of the Great Ocean Road, to consider the road length as one natural entity for protection purposes and to create a Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority. It is quite a detailed and complex bill, but essentially it recognises the road as one living and integrated natural entity for the purposes of protecting the area.

The bill provides for areas to be designated respectively as the Great Ocean Road region, the Great Ocean Road scenic landscapes area and the Great Ocean Road coast and parks; it establishes a set of principles for entities that are going to be undertaking functions within the coast and within the parks; it establishes the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority; it establishes a framework so that the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change has the capacity to develop an overarching strategic framework plan for the region; it requires the commissioner for environmental sustainability to report on the Great Ocean Road coast and parks area; and it establishes a link, quite a complex link, between the strategic framework plan that is established under this bill and the existing planning schemes and the existing planning structure. So it is quite a complex bill and will result in significant change to the areas it affects, should it be passed.

The area that it affects of course is an iconic area. It is a favourite destination for Victorians and has been for generations. The principal attraction, if you like, oddly enough is a road. There are not many

places in the world where the principal attraction is a road, but of course it is really what is around the road that is the important part of it.

The road itself was begun in 1919, so it has just celebrated its centenary, as the minister at the table, the Minister for Veterans, says. It was built by veterans, by returned servicemen, and it was intended to be a memorial for their fallen comrades.

Mr Scott: A unique memorial.

Mr MORRIS: Absolutely, a unique memorial. Three thousand returned servicemen worked on the road, and they were paid the princely sum of 10 and six a day. Now, it occurred to me when I was making that note that probably the vast majority of members of this house do not know what 10 and six a day is. It is 10 shillings and sixpence a day, and if you do the direct translation to decimal currency, from pounds, shillings and pence, it would be \$1.05. So it was not a lot of money. They worked 8 hours a day, and 8 hours a day under those conditions must have been challenging, particularly when the south-westerlies were blowing in on some of those exposed points. They worked under not only harsh climatic conditions but in terms of the terrain they were working on as well. They worked 8 hours a day, five days a week, and half a day on Saturday. The original section of the road, the first section between Eastern View and Lorne, opened in 1922, and that is quite remarkable when you consider the scale of the task. The next section, from Lorne to Apollo Bay, took another 10 years, so the original Great Ocean Road ran from Eastern View, where the archway was built, through to Apollo Bay.

Of course the region we are talking about now is a much broader region. According to the action plan that the government published, and I think the accepted view of the road, it runs from the end of the Surf Coast Highway, Torquay, through to Allansford, just this side of Warrnambool. I was interested when I looked on the Great Ocean Road tourism website page—I did not make a note of what it was actually called, but essentially it is a tourism guide to the Great Ocean Road—that they had it running through to Port Fairy, so perhaps there is some debate about the length of the road. I will come back to that a bit later, but essentially it finishes, for all practical purposes, east of Warrnambool.

It is much more than simply just a road. It is a magnificent scenic road. Probably the only other stretch of coast that I can think of in Victoria that is similar is the Esplanade, which runs between Mount Martha and Safety Beach—again, carved into the side of the cliff, not by returned servicemen but it is a similar incredible piece of work. Of course it is only a few kilometres long. It is nothing like the length of the Great Ocean Road, and we do not have national parks above it. In recent years we have housing above it, so it is not quite the same as it was.

This road and this area is much, much more than a road. Certainly one of my earliest memories as a kid is walking into Erskine Falls. I guess if you go there now you would say, ‘What are you talking about: walking into Erskine Falls?’. But in those days there was no road in. There was no easy drive and gentle walk in. We had to walk several kilometres. I do not know how many kilometres it was; it seemed an awful lot on five-year-old legs, I can tell you. It is probably one of my earliest memories of being in the bush and getting all the pleasure that you do out of that experience. I have a crystal-clear recollection of seeing a platypus playing under the falls on that day, and I think we were probably the only people at the falls. Those sorts of experiences I know have been had by hundreds of thousands of Victorians, probably millions of Victorians, over the years, and there is the opportunity for those sorts of experiences in many, many other places along the length of this road as well.

Apart from the magnificent vistas, there are the waterfalls, the natural features and the surrounding national parks—the Great Otway National Park, the Port Campbell National Park and the Bay of Islands Coastal Park. It is a truly magnificent area. When you look at the visitor guide for the Great Otway National Park, which runs basically from Torquay to Princetown, it talks about the falls, it talks about the beaches and rivers, it reminds people that most of those beaches are not exactly safe—and of course we know that the Southern Ocean is not the safest water to swim in—it talks about the

excellent opportunities for picnicking, the facilities and so on. It just tries to put on one page what the delights of just one of those national parks are.

It is also of course the traditional land of the Eastern Maar people and the Wadawurrung people. For 35 000 years at least they have been on that country, and they have an enormous amount of local knowledge and an enormous history there. It is not just from 1919, when the road was built, or before that, when the first settlers travelled to Lorne by steamer or over the rough roads out to the Princes Highway.

The action plan also identifies a range of features in the area that we sometimes forget. From the pretty basic stuff like the 11 200 jobs in the region—well, that is important—and that there are 170 000 hectares of Crown land. As a proportion of the area I understand it is 80 per cent or more. Something that we often forget when we are talking about this patch is just how dangerous it was in the 19th century: there were over 200 shipwrecks off its coast. There is a lot of erosion. The region will receive 8.6 million visitors a year within the next 10 years. Thinking of our discussion on bushfires last week, I remember standing on the beach at Mornington looking at the black clouds coming across on Ash Wednesday in 1983. There were 42 000 hectares and 729 houses lost, so it is a dangerous area as well. Of course more recently, just in the last few years, 115 houses and over 2200 hectares were lost at Wye River. It is a very beautiful area, but it can be a very dangerous area.

As I mentioned, the growth in tourism is quite amazing. Some work was done by Deloitte in the process of preparing the consultation on the government's plan for the region. Prior to that, in 2016–17 there were 2.28 million overnight trips to the road and about 3.45 million daytrips. So what is that? About 5.5 million trips. By 2026–27 it is anticipated that there will be more than 8.5 million, as I mentioned a couple of moments ago. To put that in perspective, that is 23 500 people every day. That is a serious number: 23 500 people every day. The thing that interested me on the tourism side of it is that it generates \$1.3 billion a year for the region, which is obviously critical to the local economy. In fact the area receives more visitors than the Great Barrier Reef and Uluru combined. When you think about the numbers moving in those regions, that is a big figure.

We know that there are governance issues, we know that there are some significant issues with funding and we know there have been well-documented road problems—I do not think that that is in dispute. But we know that we also have a patchwork of governance between local councils—there are five local councils—the catchment management authorities and the local committees of management. There is a real patchwork of governance. There is a clear need, I think, to rationalise that particular framework.

In August 2018 the then Leader of the Opposition announced that it was the intention of the opposition to create a new—speak of the devil—Great Ocean Road authority to manage the Crown land along the Great Ocean Road. The intention was to replace existing organisations, including the role of local government in managing the area, Parks Victoria, the Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning and the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee, which were currently managing the land. In making that announcement we indicated that in our view—and it is a view that I endorse—governments have a duty to ensure that iconic areas like the Great Ocean Road are looked after, that they are maintained and that we are able to hopefully pass them on to the next generation in better condition than that in which we found them. This is something that the local community, businesses and tour operators had all been looking for. It has certainly been a starting point that this sort of reform is necessary. I think some time shortly afterwards, between then and the election—I was not able to immediately lay my hands on the media release this morning—the government released its own plan and announced its intentions to proceed. This bill, I understand, is the first bill of two bills that will seek to implement that plan.

So what is in the bill? Essentially the bill establishes the region or sets out a framework for identifying the region—the coasts and parks, the scenic landscapes area—and the opportunity to declare additional areas. It sets out some principles in terms of how the various authorities should operate. It sets out

general and economic principles, including holistic management of the road, the coast and the parks; some guidelines for decision-making; the point I was making a couple of minutes ago about the generational impact and the opportunity to hand it on; inclusion of the local Aboriginal people and the importance of that; the importance of the environment and the sorts of things that decision-makers need to take into account; the social principles, which of course picks up the aspect of post-European settlement; and the manner in which the parks are managed. While there may be opportunities to dispute little bits at the margins, really I do not have an issue with the principles contained in the bill.

The next section of the bill, part 4, sets up the capacity to create the Great Ocean Road strategic framework plan. Obviously it needs to be consistent with the principles. This part goes to quite some detail. The point I want to perhaps focus on is the fact that it is the minister—the minister for environment in this case—that has the responsibility for preparing a draft plan and undertaking public consultation. There is the opportunity to appoint panels and so on, but essentially it is a process driven by the minister and it is a decision by the minister.

Part 5 of the bill sets up the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority. That authority will have significant powers. Again, while there is a structure in place—a maximum membership of 12, and some people are included and some are specifically excluded from being eligible to be appointed—and the basic structure is okay, I certainly have some quibbles with the details, and I will come back to that.

There is a reporting structure built in, which I welcome. When we get to part 10 we see the relationship developed with the Planning and Environment Act 1987. Essentially, responsible entities—they are identified in a definition earlier in the bill under clause 3—will have to comply with the Great Ocean Road strategic framework, and any planning amendments that are prepared cannot be inconsistent. I think that would be okay if the area was defined and we knew exactly what we were talking about, but one of the issues that I have with this bill is that in fact we do not know the precise area that we are talking about.

The other point that is completely absent from the bill, which does concern me, is any mention of funding. This is not going to be a cheap exercise. There has been no real discussion about how it might be funded, how the authority is going to be resourced and how the framework plan is going to be implemented, so that aspect of the bill concerns me as well.

I think most members would have received a submission from the Victorian National Parks Association. They have expressed concern that the bill could ‘potentially, if not actually’—their words—weaken environmental protection of the parks, about the risk of inconsistencies between the framework and the park management plans and that the control of the national parks by the new authority is overreach. As I said, I think most members would have received this submission, so I do not intend to focus on it too much, but I think it is important commentary on the bill. They set out clearly under number 4 their concern about the complexity of the bill and the potential ambiguity of the bill and basically concluded that management over the smaller reserves is fine but perhaps the national parks should not be included, and perhaps Parks Victoria could have regard to the framework rather than being bound by it.

I propose to move a reasoned amendment, and I will ask for it to be circulated. I move:

That all the words after ‘That’ be omitted and replaced with the words ‘this house refuses to read this bill a second time until the government has resolved the significant omissions in the bill and ensures:

- (1) the source of funds to resource the operations of the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority and the implementation of the proposed Great Ocean Road strategic framework plan are identified;
- (2) the extent of the region is identified and defined;
- (3) the relationship between local planning schemes and the overarching powers granted to the minister by the bill is reconciled;

- (4) the proposed constitution of the board of the authority is amended after further consultation to provide that there is sufficient representation from residents of any of the following municipal districts:
 - (a) Surf Coast Shire Council;
 - (b) Colac Otway Shire Council;
 - (c) Corangamite Shire Council;
 - (d) Moyne Shire Council; or
 - (e) Portland City Council; and
- (5) the decision to exclude all board, or committee of management, members of responsible entities (as defined in the bill) from eligibility for appointment as a director of the authority is justified'.

The intention of the reasoned amendment is that all words after 'That' be omitted and replaced with the words 'this house refuses to read this bill a second time until the government has resolved the significant omissions in the bill'.

The first significant omission that I am concerned about is the lack of identified funding. Clearly the authority itself will need a reasonable operating budget. I do not begrudge it that—that is fine—but it needs the proper resources to operate. It is all very well to have a strategic framework plan, but you have got to have the resources to implement it. There is no money attached to this bill, and there does not necessarily have to be, but we have had no indication of how it is to be funded, and that concerns me.

The second point relates to the way the region is identified and defined. Basically it is the municipal districts of the constituent councils. There are two definitions—one on the water side or the ocean side of the road and the other from the road inland—but at its greatest extent the area covered by this framework could extend to the farthest municipal boundary of each of the constituent municipalities, which would be a ridiculous overreach.

We have no indication of how it is proposed to operate. My view is that the decision on the area covered by the authority should be a decision of the Parliament, given the powers and the range of responsibilities that are being allocated under the legislation. It can also effectively be changed at any time. If it was simply establishing an area I would not have an argument with it, but given particularly the link to planning powers it is very important that we actually know what we are dealing with. It may be 30 per cent of the entire area of the council's concern, it may be 80 per cent; we simply do not know, and I think that is an issue.

The relationship between local planning schemes and the overarching powers granted to the minister for the environment by the bill needs some clarification; particularly the impact it is going to have on local councils, and again that comes back to the area of the region. How far are we going to exclude local communities from being able to plan in their own areas? We simply do not know. It is important not only for the Parliament but for the affected communities to know exactly how much their input into their own area is being prescribed by this bill.

I have some concerns with the constitution of the authority itself. I cannot immediately find the page, but effectively a definition in clause 3 identifies who cannot be part of the authority, and that includes local councils, it includes catchment management authorities, it includes the local Indigenous organisations—it includes a range of bodies. They should not necessarily be there as of right, but given the breadth of the exclusion it is actually going to be very hard in a practical sense to find some locals who are able to contribute, to find locals who are not councillors or members of staff and to find locals who are not involved with CMAs and are not members of local committees of management. The very people that you want to be involved and those who probably have the knowledge in these areas are the people that are actually out there doing things. So while I understand the intention to have an independent body, my fear with the way this is constructed is that we will finish up with a body so independent that it will effectively have no local representation. I think that point is an issue as well.

The concept the opposition does not argue with. The concept of having common governance—we advanced it in August 2018 and we are very comfortable with that position now—we have no problem with. But we certainly do see some significant issues with the structures that are proposed in the bill that is before the house. I do not think it is irretrievable by any means, but it has got to be defined. We have got to know the area that is going to be affected by the framework plan or protected by the framework plan—however you want to put it. It is not a bad thing, it is a good thing that is being done, but we need to know precisely where that area is going to apply. We need to have the opportunity for the local community to participate in a meaningful way, not simply be consulted. Consultation is identified again in the bill. Simple consultation I do not think cuts it. You need actual representation from the local communities. They need to be involved in making the decisions. Finally, we need to know where the money is coming from. Because you can have all the grand structures in the world, but if you do not have the dollars to back up the structure and you do not have them explicitly identified, then no matter how noble the intention of the bill is, the reality is not going to live up to the intention.

I have moved that reasoned amendment, and I simply reiterate that the concept is fine. If we can get some movement on the manner of the implementation, then the opposition would have no problem with the concept of the bill.

Mr CHEESEMAN (South Barwon) (14:42): It is with some pleasure that I rise today to speak on the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill 2019. The first opposition speaker went through some of the significant history of the Great Ocean Road and the coastal environment, and of course the Otways and those areas have had significant Indigenous occupation through that area for at least 30 000 years. The Great Ocean Road was constructed, as we currently know it, by returned servicemen who had returned from the horrors of war and who built the Great Ocean Road as a standing monument for the ultimate sacrifice that had been made by many Australians during the First World War. In fact it was an initiative of Geelong people, particularly a councillor—Geelong's mayor at the time—Howard Hitchcock, who led a campaign to build the Great Ocean Road and established a trust in order to do that. Today the Great Ocean Road is regarded across the planet as if not the most magnificent coast road across the globe then perhaps the second-most magnificent. Certainly I, as a local MP, have been aware of the significance of the Great Ocean Road—and the Otways and the beaches throughout that region—in terms of the jobs that it creates and the economic opportunities that it creates but also the conflict that exists between people who wish to make private sector development, between tourism and between locals who wish to see that environment preserved and protected.

It has become particularly obvious, I think, over the last couple of decades that the patchwork of management responsibilities along the length of the Great Ocean Road has meant that both the protections that I think the community would like to see in place and the investment that the tourism operators would like to see put in place do not proceed, and of course the establishment of the Great Ocean Road authority will I think streamline planning decisions. It will streamline the investment that can be made in protecting and enhancing the environment to ensure that for future generations the Great Ocean Road can be loved, it can be enjoyed, and that is why I think this bill is so important.

Of course this bill is the outcome of a very detailed community planning process that has been undertaken by the department where the local communities have been extensively surveyed and had the opportunity to provide input into what they see as important things that need to be established throughout the area. I have had the opportunity over the last decade and a bit to have had many, many conversations with locals who live the length and breadth of the Great Ocean Road. I have had the opportunity to engage with the tourism operators, who of course employ people and create opportunities for Australians and indeed those international visitors who are so important to the Victorian economy. I have heard and had the opportunity to hear firsthand the challenges that they see, and there is no doubt about it that the 13 or 14 or 15 different statutory bodies, local government bodies, coastal wards and the like mean that it is and has been impossible to make the strategic investments to both protect the environment, to protect the road, and of course to make sure that the very reasons why it is such a fantastic place to visit are preserved and enhanced going forward.

Through that community consultation and the hard work of the department this bill has been developed, which is an important step in developing a comprehensive framework for managing the Great Ocean Road and its environment.

In reflecting on the shadow minister's contribution, a fair bit of which I actually agreed with, I think it is important to point out that over the last 20 years it is really Labor governments that have shown the necessary leadership in the Great Ocean Road and through the Otways. Firstly, of course, there was the decision made by the Bracks government to establish the Great Otways National Park, to cease logging, to set up the Otways as a national park and to of course put in place—as is appropriate—a conservation plan for those areas. It was also a Labor government, again the Bracks government, that established the marine coastal parks—some of those feature throughout the length and breadth of the Great Ocean Road—and it was the Gillard government that recognised the contribution that it made to Australia's national heritage. As a consequence that whole environment was nationally heritage listed. I was pleased in that period to have worked closely with my state Labor colleagues and my national colleagues to achieve some of those important milestones.

The way I see it the work that has been undertaken over the last few years is a necessary further step to make sure that the competing interests along the Great Ocean Road are resolved through the establishment of a single governing body. That will, I think, lead to the opportunity to make appropriate investments in not only protecting the environment but of course creating those significant economic opportunities for Victoria to ensure that we can continue to enjoy the Great Ocean Road and its environments for many, many generations to come and to do it in a way which is clearly understood by the community, with a framework around how it is managed and of course with future investments.

I want to just for a very brief moment look at the reasoned amendment. I normally do not make helpful observations to the opposition, but I do not believe the Portland city council actually exists. I suspect the mover was suggesting the Warrnambool City Council. As I say, I do not normally make helpful suggestions, but it occurs to me that Portland is perhaps not the intended council in that one; I suspect it is Warrnambool. I very much support the work that has been undertaken. I very much look forward to the establishment of this body, and I commend the bill to the house.

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) (14:52): I rise today to speak on the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill 2019, and the previous speaker, the member for South Barwon, who should know better because of course he has represented the region at a federal and now a state level, described it as a streamlining of management of the Great Ocean Road. If that is streamlining the Great Ocean Road's management, then putting a grader blade on the front of a Boeing 747 is streamlining an aeroplane.

This legislation is nothing but pages and pages of added bureaucracy to the management of what is one of Victoria's most loved and cherished areas, and over my four years in this place, day after day, week after week, the communities of the Great Ocean Road have come to me and said, 'We have to do a better job of the management of this area'. This bill has been flagged as the solution. It is not the solution. This is aeroplane streamlining with grader blades.

This legislation does not solve the problems that people talk about. It does not solve the raw sewage going over the cliff at the Twelve Apostles. It does not solve the kilometres of wire barriers along the Great Ocean Road that prevent people parking, stopping and enjoying it. It does not solve farmers having to donate their farms and paddocks to provide excess car parking. It does not solve the problems in Apollo Bay, where public toilets, amenities and facilities cannot have simple maintenance like toilet seats replaced, bins emptied and toilet roll holders fixed up. It does not solve the problem of safe places for families, for visitors and for tourists to pull over on the side of the road, enjoy the environment and take the best of what it has to offer. This does not solve the problem of land management.

Take, for example, Apollo Bay and Princetown, two important communities along the Great Ocean Road. The Princetown community earns nearly \$200 000 a year from its caravan park. That money is

reinvested back into Princetown to the local CFA, to the local cricket club and to maintaining the local environment in and around Princetown. Guess what? That \$200 000 will be ripped from Princetown and delivered into the coffers of this new mega bureaucracy. We do not know where it is going to be. We do not know whether it is going to be in Torquay and eventually just be an office somewhere in Geelong. We do not know whether the bureaucracy is going to be relocated to Apollo Bay or somewhere in the heart of the Great Ocean Road, but that community will be left high and dry.

Currently the Otway Coast Committee, one of the many organisations being subsumed into this mega department, has carriage over the Apollo Bay football ground. The Apollo Bay football ground goes underwater for half the year. Its amenities are downgraded and substandard. There are no resources from the current income streams available to maintain that really important community hub and community service. So how is this new bureaucracy—with no mention of increased funds, no mention of increased revenues—going to maintain that important community hub? Who is going to look after it? At least at the moment the community can get angry with the Otway Coast Committee, and at least the Otway Coast Committee can say, ‘Oh, sorry, we don’t have enough funds’. What are we going to have now?

This legislation has no provision for local input whatsoever. It talks about Indigenous representation, it talks about minister’s representation, it talks about reports to government. Nowhere does this say it will get back to local communities. Nowhere does this say that it will stand up and represent important community services in those local communities. What will the people of Apollo Bay do? What will the people of Princetown do when they need their local community hubs and their important public reserves and spaces looked after and maintained? Who do they go to? Are they going to have to get on a V/Line bus and take 4 hours to get to Melbourne and then try and make an appointment with a minister’s representative who may find it within themselves to meet with them? What is the process for local input? What is the process for making sure local communities get respected and looked after?

This legislation does not talk about another huge area of feedback that I get from the community tirelessly, whether it is in Surf Coast shire, Colac Otway shire or Corangamite shire. We currently have strange boundaries over who looks after what. For example, once again, the Apollo Bay foreshore and, for that matter, the foreshore spaces in Lorne. Who will empty the bins? Is it going to be the shire or is it going to be the new entity? Who is going to manage that? This bill is silent on the old boundaries. Are the boundaries to be wiped away? Will the boundaries move from the Great Ocean Road to the edge of town? Is it the town boundaries that will be the new boundaries? This legislation is trying to achieve goals for the government but not outcomes for my communities in Polwarth, which take up nearly the entire Great Ocean Road.

Another disappointment of this legislation is that it spends a lot of time talking about planning. Planning is a no-win issue. It is a highly complex area, and there is no doubt planning needs to be taken seriously along the Great Ocean Road, but there are mechanisms in place already by government, like the shires taking the option of taking planning permits directly to the minister for extra advice, extra guidance and extra process. This authority has the potential to be bogged down for the rest of its life on planning issues. That is not what my community wants. My community wants an authority that will help the communities develop, grow and look after an important tourism business. Never more have we seen how important this is than with the coronavirus at the moment putting a lot of pressure and stress on tourism operators. They do not need an authority that could be bogged down in a big planning process in Port Campbell, a big planning process in Anglesea or a project out the back of Apollo Bay. They are enormous projects, and they require the resources and expertise of specialised planning authorities, not some agency that is on a whim and has to do that as well as empty toilets, manage car parking facilities and organise and coordinate tourism in one of the most important areas in Victoria.

There is an issue also with regard to the way this bill deals with native title and the government’s agenda around Indigenous issues. To a large extent we can welcome the fact that the government has tried to implement and set a new agenda in the way we may deal with these types of issues. However,

it is worth noting that this legislation calls for representation from local Indigenous groups. Now, through the process I advised those coordinating that they were leaving some significant local Indigenous groups out of negotiations, and in fact I know that the two main local groups, the Gulidjan and the Gadubanud, who are based in Apollo Bay and Colac, were never invited to the process. They have been excluded from this process. If we were to resolve that at some point in the future, does that mean that the 12 board positions will then have representation of the Wadawurrung, the Eastern Maar, the Gadubanud and the Gulidjan? Are they entitled to that? Does that mean that five of the 12 positions will be focused on Indigenous issues and not necessarily on issues around the other people that live in those communities? This board needs to account for everybody and everything to do with tourism and protection of the Great Ocean Road. It should not be seen as a highly political document that is designed to achieve other broader government goals but not the goals that the local community want to see carried on.

I welcome very much the reasoned amendment that the shadow minister, the member for Mornington, has moved. He has put forward five really important changes to the bill, and I will reiterate what he said earlier, noting the change that the member for South Barwon made: number one—and this is the most crucial factor for the people in the Great Ocean Road region—currently the ills, the concerns and the ongoing angst that is in the Great Ocean Road area all stem from a lack of funds. This bill makes no provision whatsoever for any further support. The new authority will have to use existing resources to achieve outcomes and with the same amount of money that they currently have with these problems there. We cannot move this bill forward without proper resolution as to how any improvements will be paid for along the Great Ocean Road.

We have got issues around the local planning schemes, which I have touched on. Where will this new authority have control? Is it to the edge of town? Is it to the top of the ridge on the Otways? In fact Corangamite shire goes as far as Skipton. Colac Otway shire goes as far as Cressy. Surf Coast shire goes beyond Winchelsea. How far north from the Great Ocean Road will its planning influence us? Are we going to end up in one terrible state of confusion around the development and progress of an area such as Polwarth?

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) (15:02): I am very pleased to rise to speak on the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill 2019, and I will start by congratulating the minister for her work on this significant bill. Engaging so many stakeholders over the last couple of years has been an important process in the consultation on the development of this bill.

The history of the Great Ocean Road is an interesting one. It was built as a memorial to those who died fighting in World War I and it was built by returned soldiers. This was an engineering feat for its time which ended the isolation of communities such as Lorne. The road opened in 1932, and there actually was a toll on the road at Eastern View, where the memorial arch was erected and remains today.

But long before the construction of the Great Ocean Road the First Nations people lived along this coastline. With deep spiritual connections to country they have quite a significant investment in what is contained within this bill today. The coastal landscape includes natural features that represent creation stones and spiritual connections. This coastal environment was an important resource for Aboriginal people for food, bush plants for healing, ceremony and gatherings. We know of the discovery of many significant cultural sites, including the midden sites along that coastline which are really significant to First Nations people, and the care that needs to be given to ensure that those areas of cultural significance are looked after and maintained.

Of course the history of that coastline along the Great Ocean Road is really important to the First Nations people, and they have been very much involved in the consultation. Just listening to the previous speaker talking about consultation with First Nations people, the Wadawurrung and Eastern Maar have been extensively consulted and they are the traditional owner organisations that have the right to be consulted. I think the question of consultation should be challenged on what we have just heard from the previous member. They have been consulted very broadly. They have sat around the

table and been able to have positive and significant input into the development of this bill, so the consultation and engagement around that has been significant. We know there have been something like 11 organisations responsible for that 240-odd-kilometre road, so it was important that we ensured that those groups had input into this bill, and that is exactly what has happened over the last couple of years along with, as I said, the traditional owner groups.

The task force presented 26 recommendations to the government in August 2018, and in October 2018 the government responded with the *Great Ocean Road Action Plan*. The action plan includes a commitment to legislate a standalone act of Parliament that recognises the national significance of the Great Ocean Road, which is what we are doing here today.

The bill is the first of two bills to give long-lasting effect to the major reforms of the management of the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes that were announced in the government's *Great Ocean Road Action Plan*. There are four key areas that come into effect with this bill: the recognition of the importance of the Great Ocean Road and its environs to the economic prosperity and livability of Victoria; the establishment of the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority as parks manager for the coast and parks along the length of the Great Ocean Road; provisions for the development of an overarching Great Ocean Road strategic framework plan, with a long-term outlook to provide coordinated direction and to harmonise the activities and decision-making of the many responsible entities along the Great Ocean Road; and requirements for regular reporting on the environmental condition and benefits of the Great Ocean Road coast and parks.

As I said, there are 243 kilometres of national heritage-listed Great Ocean Road between Torquay and Allansford. It is one of the world's most scenic and iconic coastal touring routes. Tourism is such an important thing for the Geelong region—and we consider Geelong to be the gateway to the Great Ocean Road, of course. I think many people see Geelong and the Great Ocean Road as a strong connection, as do the Wadawurrung people who cover that entire area, that all-of-Geelong area and through to the Great Ocean Road. It is important that we take into account the number of tourists that use the Great Ocean Road, the First Nations people and their connection to country, and also the residents and business owners in those communities and the impact that it has on them. So the consultation really has been around engaging everyone to ensure the best possible outcome in this bill.

The environmental impacts are critical, and we know the issues around climate change that we are seeing are becoming worse and worse each year: the erosion, the damage to the rainforests, all those sorts of things that we need to ensure are looked after as part of this bill. The area is special and important to Victoria and it needs dedicated management arrangements, dedicated legislation, a dedicated parks management authority and a dedicated strategic framework plan.

The bill provides for the declaration of three areas: the Great Ocean Road coast and parks, comprising the Crown land and marine waters along the Great Ocean Road that may be assigned to the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority to manage. The intent is to provide a clear spatial boundary to the scope of the authority's land management functions. There is the Great Ocean Road scenic landscapes area—that is, the area between the road and the coast and the landscape visible from the road. This will be the focus for the protection of the distinctive areas and landscapes, and in which the authority will fulfil a coordination role for sustainable visitation management policy and planning.

The Great Ocean Road region comprises the Great Ocean Road, its landscapes and the nearby hinterland. This is the area with facilities and infrastructure important to the Great Ocean Road visitor economy. As I pointed out earlier, tourism is such a critical part of the Great Ocean Road—the 243 kilometres and beyond. We know at the moment there are issues for our tourism operators and for local businesses because of the lack of tourists going into the area right now because of the coronavirus issues that are going on. It certainly has an impact, but it certainly means that we need to consider the tourism aspect in whatever we do and it needs to be considered in light of the natural beauty of the Great Ocean Road and the environment around that. It is important that we do allow people to enjoy that but that we do it in a way that protects the environment.

The other area I want to cover is traditional owner inclusion. The bill includes a provision specifically stating that the act does not affect native title rights and interests or other Aboriginal rights. I am really pleased that the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Aboriginal corporations and Corrina Eccles, who is the traditional owner, have been involved in the development of the bill and are very happy with the consultation that they have been involved in.

The recognition and involvement of traditional owners of country in the future management of the Great Ocean Road and its environments are embedded in the bill in a number of ways, including Aboriginal inclusion principles that responsible entities must have regard to. There are requirements for the vision and long-term objectives for the region to identify the aspirations and objectives of recognised traditional owner groups—noting the term at ‘aspirations and objectives’ is a reference to their country plan. There is a requirement to recognise, protect and promote Aboriginal tangible and intangible values and other cultural and heritage values and to consult with recognised traditional owner groups in the development of the overarching plan. A nominee of each recognised traditional owner group will be a member of the board of the authority. There is a requirement for the authority, in performing its functions and exercising its powers, to acknowledge the intrinsic connection of traditional owners to the Great Ocean Road coast and parks.

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (15:12): Today I rise to speak on the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill 2019. It is a bill that is actually going to attempt to streamline management responsibilities for the region along its whole length. The idea is very good in principle, and that is why prior to the last election it was an idea that we actually had as well—to make sure we got some streamlined activities. The challenge we have got here with this bill is that there is just too much that is not clear. That is the concern that people in my part of the world, my electorate, have.

The Great Ocean Road ends in my electorate. Only a small portion actually is in my electorate, in the Allansford area, but the flow-on effects that we have in our region from the benefits the Great Ocean Road brings are enormous. That is why a lot of the councils in my electorate, such as Moyne, Glenelg and Warrnambool City Council, have been involved in the discussions over the years, trying to improve their situation.

What we have seen is the Great Ocean Road grow in popularity. I can remember that in about 2008 we had a girl from Austria working with us and living with us. She went down there and visited, and all the people who came to Australia and visited us did. When I was a Nuffield scholar, I often had people come back and stay at our place and explore our part of the world, as I had done in theirs. She came back—it must be a couple of years ago now—and brought her mum, dad and fiancé, as often happens with these sorts of family relationships that go across the oceans. She went down there, and she just could not believe the difference from 2008 to I think it was 2017 or 2018—it has just got so busy. That is why over the last few years there has been an enormous effort to try and capitalise on and optimise how we as a region display and demonstrate the beauty of our part of the world, using the iconic Great Ocean Road as a drawcard and having that flow-on effect to the beautiful areas that Glenelg and Moyne offer and that Warrnambool City Council understand the benefit of—hence their involvement.

I am afraid what worries me is that the way this bill is structured it really does not give clear definition as to where the parameters of responsibility will lie. Will the ‘Great Ocean Road’ mean that a few metres north of the road will be applicable to this authority or will it be 15 kilometres or will it be something that might be proposed, many kilometres away? Who will determine that and how will that be determined? I spoke to a group who sit on the RDA, the Regional Development Australia group. They suggested, ‘Look, we do want this, but we don’t want it in a way that doesn’t actually serve the purpose that we’re actually looking for, which is to make sure everything is streamlined and not more cumbersome’.

One of the Moyne councillors that I spoke with said that they had a consultation from government, but they were left with more questions than answers. One of the things that they were most concerned about was: was it just going to be another step in the bureaucracy? Would this authority actually have

the ability to make the decisions? And when they did, if they did make decisions, would the Moyne shire, for example, in this instance, be left with the responsibility of taking charge of the problem? They used the wind farms as an example. The minister gets the opportunity on the wind farms to make the final decision, which is the same in this situation, with the minister making the final decision, but they then, as the Moyne shire have found, are left with the challenges, such as noise pollution and things that are brought to the Moyne shire's attention by the community and constituents in my electorate. The Moyne shire do not have the capability within their organisation to actually deal with the situation. It will be a very similar situation if the minister decides on a situation but then the shires or whatever organisations are left to deal with that challenge and do not have the resources. That is why I am very supportive of the reasoned amendment my colleague has put forward as the lead speaker—because the concerns about the bill are that the geographical area of the new authority has not been declared. We are just not sure. It would be far better for it to be seen and for the public to have awareness of this now so that we can put some lines on the map.

The other concern I have is: what will happen to the strategic plan on which a lot of work people from my part of the world have undertaken, with the 2015 *Shipwreck Coast Master Plan*, which was released in 2015? The government has already invested \$9.8 million to improve bridges, lookouts, information technology and the like along this highly visible stretch of the Great Ocean Road. My worry is: what will happen to this work? It took years to develop and cost taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars. It is not okay to simply push that to the side and have it superseded by this new strategic plan. So that is a question I have got which I cannot find the answer to.

I am worried about the exclusions as well. These are all addressed in the reasoned amendment, but I am worried about the exclusion of people sitting as directors. Essentially we exclude anyone who has relevant experience or knowledge of the region, so local government employees, catchment management authorities and people who sit on committees of management. These are the people who in our communities are the ones—you know, if you want something done, ask a busy person—who are the kinds of people who are on everything. They are knowledgeable, they have gained experience over the years with the different committees and they appear to be quite excluded from this new board.

We need to understand that the Great Ocean Road has enormous tourism value. It also displays our agricultural community in a great light. You know, there is nothing better than driving along the Great Ocean Road and you have got dairy cows to the left—depending on what way you are going—and the ocean views to the right. I have to say I think my part of the world actually has the best part of the Great Ocean Road—I genuinely do. I have always thought that. It is not because now I am the member. It is the most beautiful part, with Childers Cove and that part of the world. It is far more beautiful—that is perhaps just my opinion! It is lovely, so it is a great opportunity—the growth in ecotourism where we can actually have people coming and spending their holidays.

I went to a conference in Tasmania a few years ago when I sat on the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority. The opportunities they were talking about there—where people actually spend their holidays working in the environment, planting trees and cleaning up areas—people are really enjoying them. We have got the best of those three areas just in that one spot with the Great Ocean Road.

The opportunity is enormous. We do not want to see what we are seeing at the moment, with the massive amount of congestion that my friend from Austria was shocked to see. She commented on how poorly we had managed that exponential growth that she saw between 2000 to 2018, or whenever it was—16, 17, 18, sometimes time goes too fast. That is the thing that my colleague, the member for Polwarth, talked about, with the toilets overflowing. That is an issue that is real. We are talking 2020 and having those sorts of conditions that we are offering our tourists using the facilities.

I visited the Giant's Causeway just north of Belfast in Northern Ireland a few years back. I was with my son, actually, and he said to me, 'My goodness, look how well this is organised'. It did stand out. It looks very similar to the Great Ocean Road, but the way they coordinated it and the way they dealt

with the tourists—in an organised manner, without the chaos—was a real opportunity to learn from. I am sure there are other examples around the world that we can learn from, but we are clearly not doing it well.

So whilst I endorse the concept that, yes, we do want to have a streamlined approach, I support the reasoned amendment that actually asks for the bill to be replaced and looked at until we have sorted out the issues around funds, to make sure we get the actual strategy right, to make sure the extent of the region is identified and defined, to make sure that the relationship between the local planning schemes and the overarching powers granted by the minister is reconciled and to identify that the councils and districts that are affected are actually able to be represented, so that all the decision-makers that need to be on the board are not excluded from the board. The concept is right; we need to streamline it. The opportunity is immense that we have as a Victorian community to benefit from doing this well. We are clearly not doing that. We all recognise we need to streamline it. This bill is a typical example of just putting something out there and saying, 'We're going to fix it'. It does not really demonstrate that the work has been done that shows me that it will fix it.

Mr EREN (Lara) (15:22): I am delighted, obviously, to be making a contribution on this very important debate which is on the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill 2019. As you can appreciate, I had a little bit to do with it as the former Minister for Tourism and Major Events when we were deciding what we could do with this asset, the Great Ocean Road, which contributes so many millions of dollars into our economy.

I do not think it is a surprise to many, but a lot of people did not know that the average tourist expenditure on the Great Ocean Road was roughly around 17 cents per visitor. Clearly there was something that needed to be done to ensure that we could maximise the opportunity, when tourists come to this wonderful state and go to that wonderful part of our state, for them to expend a bit more money.

We were in deep and meaningful discussions with a variety of stakeholders at that time, and obviously the key ministers in relation to this document which is before the house today were the Minister for Planning, the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change and the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events—and indeed other cabinet members that made very important determinations on this very important bill.

I note the comments that have been made by the member for Polwarth. He did mention that he was not happy about some of the outcomes of this bill that is before the house today. I just want to remind him that this bill is part 1. Obviously as a government we will be concentrating very hard to make sure that we get this right, and we want to get it right because it is such an important asset. The second part of the legislation—we as a government will decide when that comes before the house. He also does not, I think, appreciate the work that Terry Mulder did as a co-chair for the task force. Obviously Peter Batchelor and Terry Mulder are very experienced heads, former ministers in former governments in their own respective parties. It was the determination of both of those men and the committee that has come to the conclusion that we find ourselves with today.

I know opposition members obviously have to find something to whinge about and cry about and to not totally accept the bill, but there are certainly some concerns that were raised at the time by many stakeholders, and we tried to do our best as a government to ensure that we alleviated some of those concerns. We have been making strategic investments—rightfully so—in that very important part of our state. One of the things that I wanted to mention is the city deal that we struck with the federal government. Some \$355 million will be invested as a part of the city deal, and we were very fortunate enough to be the very first in the state to strike a deal with the federal government. We are contributing a fair bit of money to that as a state government because we understand the importance of it.

Apart from the convention centre and the exhibition centre in Geelong that we will be making investments in, an interesting part that relates to this bill are the investments that we will be making in the *Shipwreck Coast Master Plan*. Both the Australian and Victorian governments are jointly investing

\$108.15 million to deliver priority projects under stage 2 of the *Shipwreck Coast Master Plan*, which is such an important part of what will happen into the future in that very important area.

Some of the other investments are in projects that include \$12 million for the Apollo Bay Harbour upgrade, \$8 million for the Point Grey, Lorne, redevelopment, \$5 million for the Skenes Creek to Wild Dog Creek coastal walk, funding for the Kennett River public amenities and car parking and a feasibility study for a Great Ocean Road walk between Skenes Creek and the Surf Coast Walk.

They are just some of the investments that we will be making. I hope that the opposition does not expect that we are going to have a budget line item in a document which is basically the bill before the house. That will be determined in estimates going forward in terms of what is needed and what moneys are required, but certainly what is on the record is what I have just put on the record in relation to that investment that we will be making in that very important area.

The objective of this bill is to give long-lasting effect to the major reform of the management of the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes that were obviously announced in the government's *Great Ocean Road Action Plan*. This bill, as I have indicated, is part one of two bills that we will bring in to make some very key reforms in this area. The key reforms given effect in this bill are, number one, recognition of the importance of the Great Ocean Road and its environs to the economic prosperity and livability of Victoria. Number two is the establishment of the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority as a parks manager for the coast and parks along the length of the Great Ocean Road.

Number three is the provisions for the redevelopment of an overarching Great Ocean Road strategic framework plan with a long-term outlook to provide coordinated direction and to harmonise the activities and decision-making of the many responsible entities along the Great Ocean Road. Number four: requirements for the regular reporting on the environmental condition and benefits of Great Ocean Road coast and parks, which are such an important part of the attraction. We know that the 7.5 to 8 million people that visit that area annually go there for specific reasons, and one of them is that it is in pristine condition, it is not overdeveloped and its natural asset is its beauty. That is why international tourists particularly love it.

I know that previous speakers have spoken about the devastating impact that it may have, this coronavirus, in terms of the tourism sector. I know that certain parts of Victoria are certainly hurting, and one of those areas is the Great Ocean Road in terms of its visitation. Visitors from China were our biggest population to have visited that location. Indeed that is why my niece, who was up there recently for the seafood festival at Apollo Bay, noticed some road signs that were actually in Chinese. It is such an important part of our tourism economy that—for those Chinese tourists that self-drive—we want them to be safe and understand what the rule road rules are and what is coming ahead in terms of road repairs that may be ongoing. The signs are in Chinese writing because it is such a large proportion of our tourism sector. It is worth about \$28 billion. Obviously \$28 billion is roughly around 230 000 people that work within the tourism sector. The Great Ocean Road is one of those iconic areas—a landmark that is not only very popular for the visitors from around the country, our nation, but also internationally. There is a lot of attention that has been paid to that iconic road.

This bill comes before the Parliament after a long process of community engagement and consultation about the steps that need to be taken to safeguard the future of the coastal land and the waters off the Great Ocean Road. In September 2017 the Victorian government established the Great Ocean Road Taskforce, as I have indicated, which is co-chaired by Peter Batchelor and Terry Mulder. The independent co-chairs did a great job—they consulted widely.

We did not want to play politics with this very important asset. We wanted to be bipartisan in approaching this very important area, and that is why Terry Mulder was a part of the task force. The task force membership also included representatives of the traditional owners, tourism and coastal management and local government. It also conducted the first independent assessment of the management and the oversight of the entirety of the Great Ocean Road region. It consulted with

38 organisations and found widespread agreement on the need to reform this obviously very important asset. The task force also found that given the Great Ocean Road's outstanding natural, cultural and heritage value, there was a need to treat the region as a single, integrated and living entity. In August 2018 the task force presented 26 recommendations to the government, and in October 2018 the government responded with the *Great Ocean Road Action Plan*.

In the short time that I have left available to me I just want to stress the importance of this bill before the house. It really is about an iconic piece of natural asset that we have in the Great Ocean Road and we collectively need to be on board and in tune with what is going on and with what we intend to do. Certainly, as I have indicated, we would like to have a position of bipartisan support for this because it is such an important part of our asset in terms of tourism, and certainly we on this side of the house have been concentrating tremendously on making sure that we look after the assets. I am sure the member for Bass will talk about the wonderful assets that we have in Phillip Island and in her area, but we are genuinely as a government wanting to do the right thing when it comes to the Great Ocean Road. I commend the bill to the house and wish it a speedy passage.

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) (15:32): I am very pleased to rise and speak on this bill before the house. The protection and support of the Great Ocean Road is certainly something that I have a very keen interest in, not only as a member of Parliament but also in my former capacity as the Shadow Minister for Environment in the previous Parliament. I was very pleased to work with my shadow cabinet colleagues and the members for Polwarth and South-West Coast to look at the fragmented nature of the regulations and authorities that govern Crown land in this iconic part of Victoria. What we identified was that from Torquay all the way down to past Port Campbell it was fractured, there was dissatisfaction, there was uncertainty and there were concerns by local communities about the nature of regulation. We saw that played out at places like the Anglesea caravan park, where there was uncertainty placed on that organisation through its administration by the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee, and there were a myriad of other problems that beset the coast.

For such an iconic part of Victoria which is going to see daytrips grow from 3.5 million in 2016 to 5.5 million in 2026—and overnight trips will grow from 2.2 or 2.3 million to 3 million over the same period—it is imperative that we get this right. So I was very pleased to work with, as I said, my colleagues to develop a policy that would see the creation of a new authority—that being the Great Ocean Road authority—and it was announced at Port Campbell at the Twelve Apostles in August 2018. That was well received by the local community. It was supported along the Great Ocean Road, and it was seen as a solution for ensuring that there was one authority to manage Crown land along this important stretch.

As it was put by one councillor along that stretch, it was a good announcement but what we needed was a bipartisan approach on this issue. As has been noted, the government then came out some time after and matched our policy commitment for the creation of a Great Ocean Road authority. Certainly the work that was put in by the opposition identifying the problems, working with local communities, working with tourism operators, understanding the need for one authority to manage the whole of the Great Ocean Road as opposed to the segmented, piecemeal approach that was in place, had strong support. As has been noted, the government then followed the lead of the opposition by announcing, similarly, that an authority was to be created.

Now, what the government has done in this bill with the creation of the authority has raised some concerns, and those concerns involve issues around funding. There are issues around the extent of the region which is going to be covered in terms of the actual geographic location of the authority and its remit, in terms of its impact and the role that it will have vis-a-vis councils like Surf Coast, Colac-Otway, Corangamite, Moyne and Warrnambool, and those issues have not been clarified. The bill will also require the development of a strategic plan, and this is to be prepared by the minister. Whilst that in itself may not be a problem, it will bind the secretary to act in concert with the strategic plan, which effectively will overtake some local planning controls, and there will be lack of consultation. So there are concerns about some of these practical issues, about the way in which this authority is going to

operate. There will be a chair, a deputy chair and a nominee from a specified Aboriginal party, but it is imperative that under this new governance structure there needs to be substantial experience of public administration, of governance. There needs to be a strong focus on financial management and also environmental conservation, which are incorporated in the bill.

Whilst it is important that those issues are covered in terms of the membership of the authority, what is equally important, though, is that we need to ensure that the people who are making decisions also understand the needs of local communities, people who are from the community, whether they run a business, whether they are involved in local committees—those that are directly impacted and affected by the Great Ocean Road who understand the issues associated with the Great Ocean Road. We know that there are significant issues in terms of buses that travel along the Great Ocean Road that stop at Anglesea, that stop at Apollo Bay. But the facilities there to cater for those buses, the toilet facilities and the other service facilities there, are not up to scratch. Often there is a lack of investment in those local communities in terms of the travelling public, particularly for the buses that travel to the Twelve Apostles. There is no opportunity for capturing that market in terms of helping to subsidise or pay for those facilities, and it falls back onto those local councils or those current local authorities to fund the upgrade of those facilities to effectively cater for that travelling market. There is a range of issues here, and it is imperative that this new authority understands them, works with local residents, works with local communities, to identify what the actual needs are.

We only get one shot at this. We need to do it right. We need to ensure that the plan that is put in place meets the needs of ensuring that we sustain the Great Ocean Road for the long term. Whether we have a Great Ocean Road authority or not, we are still going to have that increase in patronage: 30 to 60 per cent increases over the journey in terms of uptake of local, interstate and overseas tourists travelling along the Great Ocean Road. Whilst it involves direct investment in that local community, there is also a need to upgrade infrastructure, to make sure these things are managed properly. It is imperative that the government needs to get this right—needs to get the bill right, needs to get the authority right—to do this properly. We do not want to have a half-baked approach. We do not want to have a piecemeal approach with the creation of this new authority.

I am pleased to see that the government has followed the opposition's lead with the creation of this authority, and I genuinely say that because the community said it wanted a bipartisan approach, and it has had that. We accept that and we appreciate that, and I think the community appreciates that. There are, however, identified concerns. It is imperative that those issues are rectified because we need to make sure that the system that is put in place is done correctly.

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) (15:40): I am pleased to make a contribution on the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill 2019. I should put on the record, as a former journalist at the *Geelong Advertiser* for five years, that the Great Ocean Road featured prominently in much of the community discourse and the writings and the aspirations of the community right across the Surf Coast, from Torquay through to Warrnambool, and there is no doubt that it has been a jewel in the crown not only for our state and regional Victoria but right across our country. I think the opportunity this bill sets out, through so much hard work and consultation to establish better governance arrangements and effectively a Great Ocean Road authority, is really about trying to provide greater accountability, greater transparency and opportunities to drive a safer and more secure future for the communities that thrive and live across the Surf Coast and for those also that are committed to being part of the history and the future of the Great Ocean Road. When you think of \$1.3 billion being spent last year by visitors and the area employing some 11 200 people, it really is a very significant asset to our state.

Also, coming out of the conversations with local residents following the Wye River fires was the fact that you have got several local governments, you have got foreshore committees and other committees of management. It is a pretty hard process to navigate your way through the different organisations that have grown on top of each other, all largely with great intentions—they are very committed people, the volunteers and those who for small remuneration provide a great service. But ultimately to take a greater overview of the long-term future of the Great Ocean Road—to protect it into the future,

to make sure that for those who want to contribute, to invest, to understand its story and to make sure it thrives—it is important that we have got a much better arrangement in place. Can I say that it is not surprising then that at the last election our government and also the state opposition made a commitment around arrangements for the Great Ocean Road. I am encouraged by those opposite, but I am keen to understand further their commitment to make sure that the Great Ocean Road authority is able to be established.

We are not just talking about the road, of course; we are not just talking about the foreshore; we are not just talking about the hinterland as well. We are talking about a very broad corridor that requires support. What is important here for those opposite is to understand that there will be, as they took to the election, full support for the establishment of the authority. It is not going to happen overnight. This is about setting some very clear legislative benchmarks in place about how we will grow and evolve that authority in time. There needs to be a lot of work done. There are some 20 different authorities I could easily rattle off that have some responsibility when people navigate the area: when they want to seek permits, when they want to operate businesses, when they are operating tourist ventures, or for locals who just want to understand their rights and obligations—the local people who live in those communities. So there is much work that needs to be done. The bill does not seek to cast all of that in stone. But we are setting the framework in place to take the next steps to not only appoint the Great Ocean Road authority but to continue the work and conversations that are required to get some greater collaboration and some purposeful arrangements in place for the future of the Great Ocean Road.

We have seen that with the Great Barrier Reef. There is an authority there that has a greater responsibility for that significant natural asset in our country, and there is no reason why we cannot up the ante and make sure the same is happening along the Great Ocean Road.

Can I also just touch on the fact that there are a couple of elements that I think are particularly important to mention. I wanted to touch on the support and engagement of the Indigenous communities along the Great Ocean Road, who have been not only the traditional owners of the land right across our country, but in particular on the Great Ocean Road, and the engagement and work that they have put into this bill. Where it has come from is significant, and I think to give effect to what is outlined here it really must be, and certainly is, underpinned by the work and contribution of our traditional owners and the role that they will have in the Great Ocean Road authority. Can I say also that there has been significant investment from governments on the Great Ocean Road, and I think in reflecting on the work of the servicemen and those returned from World War I we need to remember that there are very many generations of Australians who have a stake in the work, the history and the future of the Great Ocean Road.

Can I say also that the authority has to have a look over the next 50 years at what is required in relation to natural processes, our marine national parks along the coastline and the effects of climate change. There is no doubt that a significant authority is required to put a lot of that work together and to make sure that we are singing from the same song sheet and that we are lobbying for the resources and the support that is required. The opportunity to try and structure this a lot better and give greater confidence to local communities that there is a strong advocacy group in place that has responsibilities as outlined in this bill is significantly important.

More broadly on the Great Ocean Road as well, can I say that those hinterland communities need to be able to be well represented in relation to their aspirations for employment and the planning conditions that exist in those many communities. There are always going to be development pressures and the very significant number of visitors that need to be addressed, managed and balanced with the natural environment.

Work has been done over a long period of time to pull together not only the reference groups that have been established in the past by former members in this place—the former member for Polwarth and the former member for Thomastown, who worked on chairing a lot of the reference and advisory

group work. I would certainly like to acknowledge the work of G21 for their engagement and involvement in the committee's work, the other agencies and other local government representatives that have been involved and anyone who is passionate about the Great Ocean Road and its future.

What is very clear is that we need to start to map out a strategic implementation of the priorities for the Great Ocean Road and the communities that live there and the communities across our state that thrive on not only employment and investment opportunities but ultimately an iconic natural and in parts man-made resource that continues to attract millions of visitors every year. To do that we just need to move into the 21st century about the way in which the government's arrangements are in place for the Great Ocean Road. The opportunity is to bring not just accountability but a better understanding of how we are going to get action on different priorities along the Great Ocean Road.

There is absolutely no reason why the very many organisations that have committed themselves for decades to significant protection, advancement and advocacy on the Great Ocean Road will not continue to have that role. But ultimately in trying to speak with one voice, I think the arrangements outlined in the bill provide some really good opportunities to muscle up a bit and to give the opportunity for the voice and the advocacy for the Great Ocean Road to drive a lot of the strategic work that government has been able to do in relation to its future, both in the tourism and also the environmental sense. I do think the time has come and that this is an appropriate legislative framework for the government and for the Parliament to adopt that seeks to secure the long-term future of the Great Ocean Road and to join together the great strength of all of those stakeholders—the management committees, Parks Victoria, the range of other organisations, local government authorities and volunteer groups that make a great success of the Great Ocean Road, and all those connected entities and towns right along the coastline. But if we are going to do that, we need to really make sure that the government's arrangements that are in place reflect the 21st century and reflect I think a greater opportunity for more Victorians to get involved and have a say, and to do that it is about knowing who is responsible and where to have your engagement and involvement. It is about having accountability and having transparency, and I think its time has come. That is why there was affirmation at the election of this commitment and why there was broad support across both parties. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (15:50): I also rise to speak on the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill 2019. We know that this bill comes out of a frustration with the way that tourism, in particular, has been managed on the Great Ocean Road—frustration with parking problems at the Twelve Apostles, with tourists not spending all that much money while visiting the region and just with the sheer number of tourists and how we manage them. At the moment public land ranging from toilet blocks to national parks is managed by many, many different organisations—from government departments to councils to committees of management—and so it is quite a confusing situation that is perhaps not managed in the best possible way.

This bill comes up with a solution that in many ways looks like it does make sense: replacing all of these organisations with one authority which manages the land and sets the vision for the future and how it should be managed. It is a solution that makes sense until you stop and think about the national parks that are along this stunning strip of our coastline. Who should run national parks? Should it be Parks Victoria? Should it be an authority that has conservation as its remit? Or should it be an authority whose main remit is pursuing tourist dollars? While Parks Victoria is about tourism—it is about helping people enjoy our national parks—it also has a primary responsibility to manage our national parks in order to protect the plants and the critters which actually live in them. Our national parks are some of the last remaining habitat for our threatened species. They are some of the only protected wild places that we have left. Parks Victoria took a funding hit under the previous coalition government, and the funding really has never been lifted to the levels that are needed, but they still do a really good job of looking after our parks.

According to this bill, the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority could potentially take over management of all national parks in the region around the Great Ocean Road. This is a body which

has come out of a desire primarily to make more money out of tourism. It is charged, this body, with creating a strategic framework plan for the region. While it must prioritise preservation of ecological and landscape integrity, really its primary purpose is economic development.

We are all for sustainable tourism. We know how important jobs are for dignity and wellbeing. We would welcome the community of the Great Ocean Road and the wider Victorian community benefiting more from the huge number of people who visit this wonderful part of the world—and we would be happy to see more sustainable tourism facilities in the region—but it cannot come at the expense of our environment, at the expense of our national parks and our threatened species. We are not particularly reassured, unfortunately, by the words about conservation in the bill. It says:

The object of the Authority is to protect, conserve, rehabilitate and manage ... land ...

But could this include, for example, building resorts in our national parks? It says:

There should be a net gain for the environment arising out of any individual change in land use.

But unfortunately this term ‘net gain’ is a term that is often used to justify development or environmental destruction through offsetting, which quite often is a total disaster. Offsetting essentially says we can destroy something over here as long as we promise to protect something else over there—in a different place. We have seen where that has got us. For example, with development in our western suburbs, just 10 per cent of the offset promised for the western grassland reserve has even been purchased. So not only is offsetting something that in the first place can lead to destruction, but also offsets are never even delivered.

We are also nervous about the funding. This bill does not discuss how the new authority would be funded besides stating that it would inherit staff and assets from the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee and the Otway Coast Committee. That really begs the question: is it intended to be self-funded, and will that mean that there is an added incentive to develop our parks as a source of income? I do not believe the community wants a self-funded body or a body that has an incentive to use our national parks just to create more money. To quote the government’s Great Ocean Road *Community Views Report*:

Respondents said that any new entity must have appropriate dedicated ongoing funding ...

So the community does not want it to be self-funded and they do not want it to have insecure funding; they want to know what the funding will be. That report also stated that in an initial consultation:

... the community felt that there was an overemphasis on the economic development of the region and insufficient emphasis on the protection of the environment.

That is not coming from me; they are words from the community when they were consulted on this bill. We stand with the community who is saying this, who is saying that our landscapes in our national parks are precious and that they need to be protected. The Great Ocean Road is an incredible natural asset that we have in Victoria and something that we do not want to destroy.

We could solve the problem of congested car parks and not enough toilet blocks without handing over our national parks to a tourism body. The current problems are not actually in our national parks. The Twelve Apostles car park, for example, is across the road from the national park; the viewing points and toilets are along the road itself. Tourist facilities can be built next to national parks while keeping our special national parks protected. So while there is justification for the authority, it does not seem that there is much justification for the authority taking over management of our national parks. We support an authority which takes over management, for example, of the tennis courts, the reserves and the car parks currently run by many different organisations, but it should not manage our national parks.

I have seen that the opposition has moved a reasoned amendment to this bill, and we are sympathetic to some of the arguments that they have put forward, particularly that the bill be delayed until some of the concerns around funding have been dealt with, and we would like to see it delayed until some of our concerns about the management of national parks and the incentive to develop our national parks

are dealt with to make sure that there is not an incentive to develop our national parks just for economic gain but that they are actually protected by a dedicated body that has as its primary concern conservation and protecting our national parks.

Victorians love our natural parks. We know this. We know how much people love to visit them. We also know how much people just love to know that they are protected so that some of our beautiful animals and creatures can be protected into the future. We know that Victorians want this protection. We can do tourism better on the Great Ocean Road but also leave parks in the hands of Parks Victoria, and that is what we are advocating.

Mr HAMER (Box Hill) (15:58): I too am delighted to rise and provide my contribution on the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill 2019. I would like to start off by acknowledging the contribution of my neighbour the member for South Barwon, who has worked for very many years in this space towards the protection of the Great Ocean Road and its environment.

The 243-kilometre Great Ocean Road is one of the world's most scenic and iconic coastal touring routes. It has rainforests, beaches, limestone cliffs, some of Australia's most iconic sites—Loch Ard Gorge, London Arch, the Twelve Apostles—and short detours to the Cape Otway lighthouse and Bells Beach. I think I have probably visited them all in my time over the years, and I encourage all Victorians to visit these fantastic natural wonders. These are the features that have made the Great Ocean Road region a mecca for Victorian families for generations and one of the most popular destinations for visitors and particularly now international visitors. I will not requote the figures that have been mentioned by other members, but the member for Lara mentioned visitor numbers from China and how Chinese international tourism to the Great Ocean Road region is growing but that, sadly, at the current time there has been a severe drop in those numbers. I certainly hope, for the sake of all the tourism operators down in the Great Ocean Road region, that this time passes quickly and we can bring fortune to those people.

Going to the history of the road—obviously this has been talked about—it is the world's longest war memorial and was built by 3000 returned soldiers. But it is also of course one of the world's great engineering projects, ending decades of isolation for the communities along the coast, which previously had to either take a rough track through the Otways to the rail heads on the Warrnambool line or go by ship. That was the only way that they could actually get back to Melbourne. Some of the reports of the work that was required to build this road are nothing short of astounding, particularly when you think of the men who built it, all returned soldiers. Through dense wilderness they advanced at approximately 3 kilometres a month. Construction was done by hand, using small explosives, picks and shovels, wheelbarrows and some small machinery. At all times it would have been perilous, and several workers were killed on the job. When the route was finally opened in 1932 the *Age* commented:

In the face of almost insurmountable odds, the Great Ocean Road has materialised from a dream or 'wild-cat scheme', as many dubbed it, into concrete reality ...

Almost 100 years on, the Great Ocean Road remains one of Australia's most popular tourist destinations and a significant natural asset, but it is threatened just through the increasing number of visitors and the forces of nature and severe weather events, including the impacts of climate change. These elements are having a very real impact on the beaches, the cliffs, the plants and the animals, both in terms of the day-to-day and the long-term operation of the road. Over the last three years we have seen a number of occasions where the road has had to be closed due to landslips or other weather events.

One of the challenges that is found across the region, as has been pointed out and as is the main purpose of this bill, is that there are 11 different Crown land managers across the length of the region, each with different responsibilities, stakeholders, priorities and time frames, with no one agency having full remit along the full length of the road. A number of other speakers have talked about the caravan parks and various reserves along the region. One particular example that comes to mind is just the simple matter of car parking—not even the big car parks that they would have down at the Twelve Apostles,

for example, but just those little turnouts where you are going around a bend and you can see the sea vista down to Lorne and you want to pull over and take some selfies. Who manages that? I have not been able to actually find out who is the responsible authority, because it is off the road but it is not within a reserve. Establishing a single body that retains management responsibility for the entire region can help in this regard.

I just wanted to focus, I guess, on a couple of the major parts of this bill. Part 5 of the bill establishes the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority, which is the key purpose of this bill and, like I said, will mean that instead of 11 different committees of management there will be a single responsible authority. That authority will protect and manage the coastal Crown land and marine waters along the road to protect it for future generations, hopefully for the next 100 years and beyond. The primary purpose of this authority will be to protect and manage visitation of the parks area and to foster resilience of the natural, cultural and heritage values of coastal Crown land and marine waters along the Great Ocean Road. It will simplify the governance of the road and its landscape, and it will provide both the remit and the imperative that is required for a holistic approach to protecting this special part of our state and improving the visitor experience. As mentioned by the member for Ivanhoe, there are similarities to the authority that is being established with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, which also has a broad remit over that natural asset. Given the breadth and size of the Great Ocean Road region, it does make sense to have an authority of that scale with a similar role. There have been a number of members talking about how that will interact with Parks Victoria and the environmental principles of the region in general. Certainly the intention is for the authority to work closely with Parks Victoria so that Parks Victoria can continue to provide a parks management service to the authority in these areas.

I would also like to just point out and draw to the attention of the house part 3 of the bill, which talks about the coast and parks protection principles. Far from pushing the environmental principles into the corner, it is actually showing a balance in, as I say, the quadruple-bottom-line approach to decision-making that the authority needs to take. So it is not only looking at social and economic principles, but it is also focusing on environmental principles, and, also importantly, it is focusing on the cultural principles. Well before 100 years ago, when the road was commencing construction, for many thousands of years before that the original owners of the land were present in great numbers down on that part of the coast. As clause 15 reads:

There should be a net gain for the environment arising out of any individual change in land use.

And back in clause 13:

Decision-making should be based on the effective integration of environmental, cultural, social and economic considerations.

All in all I think that the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill will provide the protection that is required across the entire Great Ocean Road region and protect that environment for many years to come, so I commend the bill to the house.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (16:07): I am delighted to join the debate. I rise today to support this bill because I think it is a very important bill in relation to the Great Ocean Road. I did not seek to come to this place purely to speak on environmental issues, nor did I join the Labor Party because I sought to protect the environment, although happily the Labor Party and Labor governments have got a great tradition in relation to protecting our environment and preserving and conserving our future.

I joined the Labor Party 28 years ago because I believed I had a right and I had an obligation to speak up and to protect working people because I wanted to do what I felt was right and what I felt was fair. Now as the member for Essendon in this place, I have got but one vote and I have got one voice, and at every opportunity I will speak up in this place for what I believe is right, fair and decent. So I will always speak, if the whip will allow me, if I have the opportunity to speak on behalf of working people or people in my communities, because I believe that this is a vitally important responsibility to my community, to my party, to my movement and to my core values.

I do not outsource this obligation to others; I speak for myself. I do not ask my colleagues to try and say, 'Look, in relation to this bill about protecting workers rights or this bill about creating a fairer society for African Australians or this bill to provide more public housing, I am not going to speak; you do it'. I do it myself because that is what my community expects of me. They sent me here, and when they cast a vote for me they knew that I would come here and represent their interests in this place. It is a very simple proposition. I am speaking on an environment bill and I am speaking as a member of the Australian Labor Party, and I am proud to do so. There has been one speaker from the Greens political party—one. So have the member for Prahran and the member for Brunswick outsourced their responsibilities and obligations to the member for Melbourne, have they? We saw it last week too. We had landmark legislation, the Gender Equality Bill 2019, and they did not speak, not one of them. So what are they here for? This is a wonderful institution, this is a great institution and I respect this institution of the Parliament, this great chamber, this pantheon of great debates over decades, where we come and we argue our case. Each of us has a voice and each of us has one vote, and we will not always agree, but we come in here and we speak up for what we believe in and what we believe is right.

Now, I am not a member of the Greens political party. I did not go and say to my community, 'Vote for me because of the environment'. Those snoozers did. They did. If they are going to take the attitude that they are going to outsource and subcontract their responsibilities to only one member, that is fine. Let there be one member. Let it be the member for Melbourne, for argument's sake. The member for Prahran and the member for Brunswick, well, they can both retire at the election and say, 'Do you know what: we outsourced and we abdicated our responsibilities as members of our community, as members of this place, and the member for Melbourne can carry the load'—or whoever the lucky person may be. But do not turn around and say that you are going to stand up and speak for the environment, make that pledge, make that commitment to your community, get those votes and when a bill like this—landmark legislation—comes before this place, where are you? Snoozing in your office—are they asleep in their office or are they in Strangers having coffee?

We are here. We are working, because this is what we believe in. This is important. I would have thought that maybe if they had bothered to read the second-reading speech, they might have said, 'This might be worth having a yarn about', because we are including the language of the Eastern Marr and the Wadawurrung people in this bill. I do not reckon that has ever happened anywhere. Certainly it has never happened in Australia. Wouldn't that warrant 10 minutes of the member for Prahran's time, 10 minutes to say, 'This is pretty good'? No, not here—absent. They do not care. They are frauds and they are charlatans. That is what they are. They do not believe in these matters.

The SPEAKER: Order! I just ask the member for Essendon when he is referring to other members of this place not to make imputations or personal reflections.

Mr PEARSON: Thank you, Speaker, for your guidance. This is a really important bill before the house, and many members from the government have spoken on this. I know some of the members opposite who represent some fine parts of Victoria where the Great Ocean Road traverses have spoken as well, and I note that it is 4.13 on this magnificent Tuesday afternoon, and between now and 7 o'clock we are only hearing from members from the government—only members from the government. We are the only ones who are standing up for the environment today. The Greens have sold out. They are nowhere to be seen, they are not interested, they do not care and they are frauds. The thing is, Speaker, like you, I have been floating around politics for a long time, and as Robert Caro wrote in his outstanding biography of Lyndon Baines Johnson, power reveals. It always comes out. If you are a fraud, if you are a con, if you are conspicuously absent when your community needs you or your movement needs you, you are found out, and you wear that for the rest of your life like a crown of thorns. That is what they deserve.

Now, this bill: it is so vitally important that we protect this great asset because this asset is something that has been to the benefit of our community for decades, and I commend the minister for bringing forward such landmark legislation. I mean, how good is it to be able to have the language of the Eastern

Maar and the Wadawurrung people included in a bill, included in the statute books? I reckon it has never happened in Australia, ever, and the minister should be congratulated on it, because this is just what we do in the Labor Party. We speak up and we give a voice to people who are denied a voice, who have been abandoned by those opposite, who have never cared about their interests. Being able to provide an opportunity for our first Australians to have their own language forever recorded on the statute books is outstanding.

In relation to the board itself I note that previously you have had 10 different Crown land managers, all with different responsibilities, and I think that when you look at it that does not lead to having a systemic approach, a wideranging approach, in terms of appropriately managing this asset. You should have one strategic plan for this great asset, you should have one board, you should have one senior management team whose responsibility and obligation it is to appropriately manage this asset and to have a holistic approach, as the second-reading speech indicates. That is what you would expect for good modern governance, and to have a skills-based board speaks to the intentions and the values of the minister in bringing forward a bill like this to the house, because we want to make sure that we get the best and brightest people to serve on this board and we want to make sure that they have got a clear vision for the way in which they can safeguard and protect this asset for generations to come.

We are so fortunate and we are so lucky to have an asset like the Great Ocean Road in our community that has been such a great economic driver for so many of those people who live in those communities, and it really showcases some of the great things, the wonderful, special and beautiful things, about our great state. Again, when it comes down to it all the great pieces of legislation in relation to protecting the environment, be it at the state level or a federal level, have always happened under a Labor government. It has always been Labor that has put these things first and has pushed forward.

If you cannot even turn up to have a debate, if you cannot even come into this place and either congratulate this government for moving this bill or alternatively say, 'Yes, you've got this right, but I think you should do these other things', where are you?

We are the ones that are actually doing it. We are the ones that are protecting the environment. We are the ones getting on with the job of making sure this asset is protected for generations and generations to come. We are talking about it, we are standing up for the environment and we are introducing landmark legislation like this. Those people—those pathetic individuals from the Greens political party—are not even prepared to front up for the debate. I mean, honestly—

The SPEAKER: Order! I have warned the member for Essendon about reflecting on other members of this place. In the short time left I ask you not to do so again.

Mr PEARSON: Thank you, Speaker. I reckon you would get more fight out of the French army than you would from the Greens political party. They are just hopeless. I am so proud to belong to an outstanding Labor government that is bringing forward landmark legislation like this. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) (16:17): The member for Essendon is a hard act to follow at any time, and that was a particularly impassioned speech. I myself will have something to say about the Greens' contribution in my speech today. Can I make the point that without a doubt the Great Ocean Road is one of the world's greatest tourist routes, and at 243 kilometres it provides magnificent scenery, spectacular views, fresh ocean air, great surf, limestone cliffs, a fascinating shipwreck history and of course the cultural heritage of the Eastern Maar and the Wadawurrung people.

Over the last 20 or so years it has been my privilege just about every summer to go and spend some time down at either Aireys Inlet or Fairhaven. Now, I expect there are probably purists in the chamber that say the Great Ocean Road does not start until you pass the memorial, but both Aireys and Fairhaven are particularly beautiful spots. One of my favourite things to do while I am down there is pick up a passionfruit sponge from the Freshwater bakery on the way through. I used to enjoy running

along the cliff top to the lighthouse at Aireys. The views of course from the lighthouse, Sunnymeade Beach and a special meal at Kosta's all make for a pretty great way to spend summer.

Of course I am one of thousands and thousands of Victorians who choose to have a summer break down on the beautiful Great Ocean Road. It is not just holiday renters like myself; we know many international visitors also flock down to the Great Ocean Road. So like many other tourist destinations it is important to recognise that being very popular does pose some risks to the environment, to local amenity and indeed to the tourism economy itself. These are risks that are associated with increased numbers and visitation as well as the very real impacts of climate change. This bill is the first of two bills to give long-lasting effect to the major reforms to the management of the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes.

The bill has come about through a terrific consultation process and as result of work undertaken by two former members of this place, the former member for Polwarth, Mr Terry Mulder, and Mr Peter Batchelor, who has had a long association with the Great Ocean Road due to owning a place down at Anglesea. In September 2017 the government established the Great Ocean Road Taskforce. It included representatives of the traditional owners, tourism and coastal management, and local government. The task force conducted the first independent assessment of the management and oversight of the entirety of the Great Ocean Road region. It consulted with 38 organisations and found widespread agreement on the need for reform. In 2018 the task force presented 26 recommendations to the government, and in October 2018 the government responded with the *Great Ocean Road Action Plan*.

This bill comes about as a consequence of all of that work. The recommendations were to legislate a standalone act of Parliament that recognises the national significance of the Great Ocean Road, including the establishment of a Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority to manage the coastal Crown land and marine waters along the Great Ocean Road. Currently, as many people have already told us, there are 11 different Crown land managers along the Great Ocean Road. Clearly this is highly inefficient and cannot possibly provide the best outcome for the management and care of this very precious resource, asset and beautiful tourism destination.

I am glad to see that the key reforms that are given effect in this bill are the recognition of the importance of the Great Ocean Road and its environs to the economic prosperity and livability of Victoria, the establishment of the Great Ocean Road coast and parks authority as a parks manager and the government committing for the first time to the establishment of that statutory parks management authority. It provides also for the development of an overarching Great Ocean Road strategic framework plan with a long-term outlook to provide coordinated direction and to harmonise the activities and decision-making of the many responsible entities along the Great Ocean Road.

The purpose of this plan is to provide overarching direction to the future use, protection and development of land in the Great Ocean Road scenic landscapes area and to facilitate economic development to support the visitor economy across the broader region. The framework plan will aim to balance requirements for the protection of traditional owner values, the protection of heritage values, the protection of the environment and significant landscapes, the livability of local communities, facilities and infrastructure for a great visitor experience, and economic development for a prosperous region.

It is at this point that I want to refer to the comments from the member for Melbourne. The tourism economy is absolutely central to the Great Ocean Road and its environs and indeed south-west Victoria. What I heard from the member for Melbourne was an absolute lack of understanding of how regional economies work and how important local jobs are for local people. The tourism economy is the third-largest employer of people in those shires along the Great Ocean Road coastline. It comes just after agriculture, still up there number one; health care comes second and then tourism, employing almost 17.8 per cent of all people in that region. So ensuring that we have a framework in place, legislation in place, that supports and gives certainty to the visitor economy is vitally important.

Now, the other thing that I did want to say about tourism is that a lot of people have talked about international tourists coming to the Great Ocean Road and to visit the Twelve Apostles. I am not sure that people even notice that there are only eight, but that is by the by. People come flocking to the Great Ocean Road, but let us be clear that the largest number of people visiting the Great Ocean Road are domestic visitors. It is people like myself, people like all of you in the chamber, and in fact overseas visitors—I can tell you the figures—make up a total of 16.5 per cent of all the visitors. So we need to, in my view, continue to encourage overseas visitors, but we need to give them more reasons to stay longer and to spend more money while they are visiting us along the Great Ocean Road. I did want to make the point that currently only 4 per cent of all the visitors are international visitors that stay overnight. It would be really great to see that other 12 per cent be provided with reasons and experiences that would entice them to stay, and of course that is going to require some additional accommodation to be built along the Great Ocean Road that is suitable for people who are looking to stay maybe one or two days. At the moment the vast majority of accommodation is more suitable for holiday renters.

Another challenge for a tourist destination like the Great Ocean Road is one of seasonality, and indeed this is something that all of our coastal areas suffer from. They will have big peaks in summer and it can be quite dismal during winter, so again, looking to provide opportunities and create experiences that will entice people to come in the off-season is something that is really important. The natural environment and the natural beauty of the Great Ocean Road and the parks within it are absolutely critical to this. Victoria has very many great and very beautiful nature-based experiences. How we unpack those and enable visitors to learn more about them and really experience all that they have to offer is a challenge for all of us.

So again, this is a terrific bill. I commend it to the house. I think it balances out the interests of the Great Ocean Road, ensuring protection and that we have an economically viable and thriving visitor destination. I commend the bill to the house, and I do pick up the point that the member for Essendon made: it is very disappointing when you have a bill such as this one that is focused very much on our natural environment that we only have one speaker from the party that purports to represent the environment. The Labor Party is the party that has the best interests of the environment at heart, because we are the only party that will deliver for the environment and balance out that opportunity to create jobs and strong economies in regional Victoria.

Mr J BULL (Sunbury) (16:27): Speaker, I am delighted this afternoon to have the opportunity to contribute to debate on this bill—and equally delighted to see you here in the house for this contribution. When we speak of environmental protection I am absolutely thrilled to be able to follow the member for Macedon, who has done extraordinary work in her local community when it comes to environmental protection and I think just last week had the Minister for Planning in her electorate just near Kyneton for the release of the final statement of planning policy—certainly a very important piece of work that is going to set up planning policy for the long term in the Macedon Ranges.

As I said, I am delighted to have the opportunity to contribute to debate on this bill, the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill 2019. Before I turn to the bill I just want to pick up on some comments made by the member for Polwarth, who I think this morning may have missed the party room meeting because, if I understand correctly, the lead speaker from the other side in this place has broadly supported this bill but unfortunately the member for Polwarth spent 10 minutes canning this bill. It just seems like there may need to be a little bit of a strategy discussion, perhaps in Strangers over a coffee, just about where those opposite sit on this important piece of legislation.

This bill is about protecting and enhancing our environment and of course the Great Ocean Road. We need to get on with it. We need to make sure that this bill passes through the Parliament so these important environmental protections can be put in place as soon as possible. This is a significant bill, a bill that I am really proud to support, and this is from a government that is committed to supporting our natural environment. We are of course constantly and consistently reviewing the data and reviewing the science around our environment to make sure that our initiatives, our projects and our

policies are state of the art and are relying on sound environmental science to ensure that we are continually at the forefront and leading our nation.

We know and understand that our environment and our natural landscape is, as I said, ever changing and evolving, and of course there is a history of over 60 000 years of Indigenous settlement in this land, the land of the First People. Since European settlement we have seen this state and indeed other states and territories right across our nation change rapidly. Changes to landscapes are driven by settlement, driven by industry and driven by farming practices, driven by tourism, and how we use this natural landscape and how we operate within our local communities, between communities and across states certainly has significant impact on land.

Land use management and planning of course requires significant coordination and thorough process, and this bill, importantly, provides that. Like many speakers this afternoon I have spent some time down at the Great Ocean Road, Speaker, as I am sure you have on that bike of yours. Certainly for me one of the great highlights is the Great Ocean Road marathon and the half marathon, the 10-kilometre event and the 5-kilometre event. Now, I certainly have not been fit enough to tick the marathon off, although I am very proud to say that my sister has won the marathon four times. I am very proud of her for doing that. I have sort of just chugged along in the half marathon, but Speaker, as you would know, it is an absolutely stunning running event.

Mr Richardson: Lift your game!

Mr J BULL: I should lift my game, member for Mordialloc. I look forward to seeing you down there next year with the running shorts on, and away you go. It will be fantastic. It is a significant and important event. It is an incredible running race. It is in a beautiful and iconic location and is a terrific thing for both the state and importantly local communities along the Great Ocean Road. As I said, it attracts many local visitors, down for a weekend in May to that stretch between Apollo Bay and Wye River, and it is absolutely fantastic. Many members have spoken about their memories, their reflections about the Great Ocean Road, and I am sure, Acting Speaker Ward, you have many as well.

This bill, as other members have mentioned this afternoon, does come before the house after a long process of community engagement and important consultation around the steps needed to be taken to safeguard the future of the coastal land and waters along the Great Ocean Road. As other members have mentioned, there was the establishment of the task force in September 2017. The task force included, importantly, representatives of the traditional owners, tourism and coastal management and local government. We have heard that there was consultation with 38 organisations and widespread agreement on the need for reform. This is the pathway, if you like. This is the process of bringing this important piece of legislation to the house.

On the back of that were those important 26 recommendations to government. In October 2018, the government responded with the *Great Ocean Road Action Plan*. This is an important plan, as I mentioned, to give effect, if you like, to the management reforms in the government's *Great Ocean Road Action Plan* and to protect the iconic coast and parks and the livability of those local communities that I mentioned before. This is about ensuring that the visitor experience is a good one. It is about continuing to attract investment, increase visitor expenditure and boost the number of jobs in the region.

The bill will, of course, work to establish the dedicated parks management authority for the land and waters along the Great Ocean Road that reduces the fragmented public land management that is in place at the moment. It goes on to make provisions for an overarching planning framework that harmonises the activities and decision-making of more than 11 responsible entities. There is a significant number of entities, multiple partners and multiple local governments—many, many different people involved in the management of such an important stretch of road. I am sure all members of the house agree on its importance and the need to protect the entire corridor for the benefit of all.

For the first time there will be the establishment of a dedicated statutory parks management authority, the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority, which will serve to protect and manage the coastal

Crown land and marine waters along the Great Ocean Road for future generations. We of course know that, like in so many areas right across the state, as more and more visitors go to see what is on offer there are more and more uses and more and more activities and events. We know that there are significant pressures placed on these corridors. What we need to continue to do, as I mentioned earlier in my contribution, is to make sure that we are constantly reviewing the science, constantly working with all of the agencies and bringing people together around the table to make sure that the best science is used and the best decisions are made to provide the best outcome for local communities and the literally hundreds of thousands of visitors that each and every year visit these very important spaces.

We on this side of the house, as members mentioned before—certainly the member for Macedon and the member for Essendon—will not be lectured to by those in the Greens political party around the environment. This is a government of action. This is a government that is committed to getting things done. We are a government that time and time and time again will bring legislation into this house and pass it through this house to go into the place next door to make sure that our environment is protected. We will continue to stand on our record, we will continue to invest and to work with all agencies—with scientists, with those that spend the best part of their lives looking at ways we can best manage our environment—to ensure that we get the best outcomes. That is what this government stands for, and we are very proud of it.

We always know and we always recognise that we can do more and we can do better. This is an important bill. This is one that will enhance the management of and set the vision for the future for the Great Ocean Road. We on this side of the house will continue to support the environment and all of those wonderful communities that rely on it so heavily and continue to ensure that right across the state—whether it is in rural and regional Victoria, whether it is in the heart of the city or the outer suburbs or the growth corridors like yours and mine, Acting Speaker—we will continue to make sure that we support legislation that supports local communities. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms CRUGNALE (Bass) (16:38): I rise to speak on the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill 2019. We have a unique, treasured, much-loved, rather long, 243-kilometre national heritage-listed road stretching from Torquay to Allansford. Some will say this Great Ocean Road is one of the country's, if not the world's, most scenic and iconic coastal touring routes, where the visual narrative takes us on a journey of accentuated limestone cliffs, shipwrecks, pockets of rainforest, world-class surfing breaks and a land and seascape imbued with an earth history going back to time immemorial and with a rich, valued Indigenous cultural history—on par, of course, with our Bass coastline all the way to Wilsons Prom.

In a former life as a bus-driving tour guide, taking Italian- and Spanish-speaking visitors on the big road trip, it was certainly revered by all—points of interest dotted along the way in plenitude, many pull-over stops at the on-demand call of the joyous Mediterranean and Latin peoples here on holidays, thirsty for information, stories, history and truth telling of such, questions aplenty, a lot learned, stories rich and fibrous and the sound of cameras, pointed up and shuttering away, with koalas in the frame.

It is a popular destination for visitors both domestic and international and is one of the most significant natural assets in the state of Victoria. Challenges exist, and it is about balance. Visitor numbers are increasing, climate is changing, weather events are more severe, and all of this is impacting this rather elongated precious coastline. So it needs dedicated management arrangements: dedicated legislation, a dedicated parks management authority and a dedicated strategic framework. Currently there are 11 different Crown land managers along this Great Ocean Road, each with different responsibilities, stakeholders, priorities and time frames. Not one agency has the remit along the full length of the road.

The purpose of this bill, which is the first of two, is to give long-lasting effect to the major reforms to the management of the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes that were announced in the government's *Great Ocean Road Action Plan*. It is what we committed to and it is what we are going to do through this bill, should it pass both houses. If I can highlight some of the key reforms, they are: recognition of the importance of the Great Ocean Road and its environs to the economic prosperity and livability

of Victoria; the establishment of the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority as a parks manager for the coast and parks along the length of the Great Ocean Road; provisions for the development of the overarching Great Ocean Road strategic framework plan with a long-term outlook to provide coordinated direction, and to harmonise the activities and decision-making of the many responsible entities along the Great Ocean Road; and requirements for regular reporting on the environmental condition and benefits of the Great Ocean Road coast and parks.

The bill provides for the declaration of the Great Ocean Road coast and parks as comprising the Crown land and marine waters along the Great Ocean Road that may be assigned to the authority to manage. The intent is to provide a clear spatial boundary to the scope of the authority's land management functions. The bill also provides for the declaration of the Great Ocean Road scenic landscapes area. This will then be the area of focus for protection of the distinctive areas and landscapes and in which the authority will be the lead agency for sustainable visitation management policy and planning.

And we did not get to this point by blindly rushing, either. There has been a long process of community engagement and consultation which delved into the steps necessary to be taken to safeguard the future of the coastal land and waters of the Great Ocean Road. In September 2017 the Victorian government established the Great Ocean Road Taskforce. The independent co-chairs were former members of this Parliament, the Honourable Peter Batchelor and the Honourable Terry Mulder. Task force membership included representatives of the traditional owners, tourism, coastal management and local government. The task force conducted the first independent assessment of the management and oversight of the entirety of the Great Ocean Road. It consulted with 38 organisations and found widespread agreement on the need for reform. It also found, given the Great Ocean Road's outstanding natural, cultural and heritage values, that there was a need to treat the region as, and I quote, 'a single integrated and living entity'.

I am particularly pleased that the bill importantly includes a provision specifically stating that the bill does not affect native title rights and interests or other Aboriginal rights. The Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Aboriginal corporations have been closely involved in the development of protection principles for the Great Ocean Road coast and parks and have provided bilingual statements of importance, which are enshrined in the preamble of the bill.

In terms of future involvement and management arrangements we as a government are committed to a genuine partnership with the traditional owners of country in the governance of the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes. They are further embedded by the provision for a nominee from each recognised traditional owner group on the board of the authority, requirements to identify the aspirations and objectives of the traditional owners in the vision and long-term objectives, the requirement to identify, protect and respect traditional owner values in the strategic framework plan and also requirements to involve the traditional owners in the development of policy, planning and management of the coast and parks.

The bill also provides for the development of the Great Ocean Road strategic framework plan, which is a statutory plan which will provide direction on future land use and the development of the visitor economy. The SFP also provides the spatial scale to balance requirements for the protection of traditional owner values; the protection of heritage values; the protection of the environment and significant landscapes; the livability of local communities; the facilities and infrastructure for a great visitor experience; and economic development for a prosperous region.

How does this actually work on the ground and practically? The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning will prepare the initial SFP in partnership with the traditional owners of country, the new authority, other relevant agencies, councils and key stakeholder groups over the next three to five years. Importantly, its development will have significant community involvement.

I had a letter in the lead-up to this bill from the Victorian National Parks Association, who wrote to me raising their concerns about the diminished role of Parks Victoria. As outlined in the action plan,

neither this bill nor the subsequent one will alter the underlying conservation objectives of the national park areas for which the new authority assumes responsibility. The new authority will work closely with Parks Victoria, who will retain responsibility for broadacre parks management, including for most of the Great Otway National Park, and will provide parks management services to the new authority for its field operations to ensure all environmental conservation objectives are met. This is similar to the management model for the Great Barrier Reef, where the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service provides field management services to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and the marine and island national parks.

The bill does not weaken the environmental protection of national parks, nor does it amend the objectives of the National Parks Act 1975 or the conservation objectives of any management plan prepared under the act. The primary objective of the authority is, and I quote:

... to protect, conserve, rehabilitate and manage Crown land and coastal assets within the Great Ocean Road coast and parks.

In conclusion and in summary, it gives effect to the management reforms outlined in the government's *Great Ocean Road Action Plan* of 12 October 2018 to introduce a standalone act of Parliament that legislates the policy, legislates the planning framework, legislates the environmental economic accounts and establishes a new, dedicated statutory parks management authority called the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority.

This bill will simplify some very complex, fragmented and visibly duplicated management arrangements and will ensure the approach is coherent by establishing the one authority to address these challenges and be that single point of accountability. I commend this bill to the house.

Ms SETTLE (Buninyong) (16:47): I rise to speak in support of the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill 2019. There is absolutely no doubt whatsoever that the Great Ocean Road is one of Victoria's most valuable assets. With more visitors each year than Uluru and the Great Barrier Reef combined, it is a major international tourism drawcard. Importantly, it holds a very special place in the heart of all Victorians. Built by returned soldiers between 1919 and 1932, it is the world's largest war memorial to soldiers killed in World War I.

It is also etched in many of our hearts as the scene of childhood beach holidays and long, hot family drives. My parents live in Anglesea, and my children have spent every summer of their lives exploring and enjoying all that the region has to offer. For surfers, it is the home of the iconic Bells Beach, a beach where surfing championship dreams are fulfilled or shattered.

As a government we have a responsibility to protect this iconic part of Victoria so that it can be preserved for future generations to enjoy. I believe that the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill 2019 achieves that.

The Andrews Labor government is a government of action. This protection bill is not something that we have rushed into. When dealing with a region as important to Victoria as the Great Ocean Road region, it is crucial that the homework was done prior. That is why in September 2017 the Great Ocean Road Taskforce was established by the Andrews government. This task force's membership included representatives of the traditional owners, the tourism industry, coastal management and local government. It was co-chaired by former members of this Parliament, the Honourable Peter Batchelor and the Honourable Terry Mulder. The task force conducted the first independent assessment of the management and oversight of the entirety of the Great Ocean Road region. It consulted with 38 organisations and found widespread agreement on the need for reform. In August 2018 the task force presented 26 recommendations to the government, and in October 2018 the government responded with the *Great Ocean Road Action Plan*.

The action plan included the commitment to legislate a standalone act of Parliament recognising the national significance of the Great Ocean Road and to include the establishment of a Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority to manage the coastal Crown land and marine waters along the Great Ocean

Road. This bill is the first of two bills to provide the structure for the major reforms to the management of the Great Ocean Road and its landscape that were announced in the government's *Great Ocean Road Action Plan* in October.

The key reforms given effect in this bill are: the recognition of the importance of the Great Ocean Road and its environs to the economic prosperity and livability of Victoria; the establishment of the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority as a parks manager for the coast and parks along the length of the Great Ocean Road; provisions for the development of an overarching Great Ocean Road strategic framework plan with a long-term outlook to provide coordinated direction and to harmonise the activities and decision-making of the many responsible entities along the Great Ocean Road; and requirements for regular reporting on the environmental conditions and benefits of the Great Ocean Road coast and parks.

As I have mentioned, the Great Ocean Road region is a much-loved part of Australia. Unfortunately popularity can bring with it its problems. Like many international tourist destinations, the Great Ocean Road finds itself challenged by an ever-increasing number of visitors. Add to that the fact that this is a region heavily impacted by the forces of nature, severe weather events and of course the impacts of climate change—all of these elements are having a very real impact on the beaches, cliffs, plants and animals.

The beaches all along the road are home to the hooded plover, which is an endangered species, and I have seen the many volunteers who contribute countless hours to protecting the young of the hooded plover from dogs and inadvertent tourists. It was only a month ago that I had the absolute pleasure of walking along the coastal path from Point Addis to Anglesea. It is a truly beautiful walk with great vistas of the ocean and includes the windswept Anglesea Heath. The heath is home to the indigenous orchids.

We are already seeing the impact in places that are putting both the day-to-day and long-term operation of the road at risk. This part of our state is far too valuable to risk. There are too many communities along this 243-kilometre stretch of coastline that rely on us doing our job—to act and protect the region from all of these threats. Currently there are 11 different Crown land managers along the Great Ocean Road, each with different responsibilities, stakeholders, priorities and time frames. Not one agency has remit along the full length of the road.

My parents have been very heavily involved in a lot of conservation groups around the area. They are very hard workers and are committed to organisations like ANGAIR. I know that when you speak to a lot of those volunteer groups one of the issues that they have really faced is that there is not one particular authority. For example, a group I spoke to the other day described wanting to get in there and do some conservation work and having to actually speak to three different authorities to get the permissions to go in there and do the work. So really there are these tribes of wonderful people out there wanting to conserve the hooded plover or work on the preservation of the sand dunes, and they are being hampered by what is really a governance structure that is not working.

So this part of Victoria really needs dedicated management arrangements, not just confusing structures. The region needs dedicated legislation, a dedicated parks management authority and a dedicated strategic framework plan. That is what this government will deliver. The bill provides for a strategic framework plan that provides overarching strategic direction to the future use, protection and development of land in the Great Ocean Road scenic landscapes area and facilitates economic development to support the visitor economy across the broader region. Other people have talked around the pressures that international tourism has brought to the area, and I remember well the issues that went on in Anglesea a couple of years ago when it was decided that they really needed a public toilet for all of the buses that stopped at Anglesea along the way. It was a really big issue within the community.

The strategic framework plan applies to the whole Great Ocean Road region, including nearby hinterland and towns. The strategic framework plan will aim to balance requirements for the protection

of traditional owners' values, the protection of heritage values, the protection of the environment and significant landscapes, the livability of local communities, facilities and infrastructure for a great visitor experience, and economic development for a prosperous region. Once the strategic framework plan is approved it will be binding on the authorities and entities listed in the bill. These bodies, including government departments and councils, will be required to have regard to the strategic framework plan when performing their statutory functions and duties and exercising statutory powers that may affect the Great Ocean Road region.

The Andrews government have committed to establishing a dedicated statutory parks management authority—the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority. The establishment of the authority will simplify the current complex and fragmented management arrangements. The authority's primary purpose is to protect and manage visitation of the Great Ocean Road coast and parks area. It will manage, protect, rehabilitate and foster resilience of the natural, cultural and heritage values of coastal Crown land and marine waters along the Great Ocean Road. It will simplify the governance of the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes.

Really importantly, as speakers before me have mentioned, the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Aboriginal corporations have been really involved in the development of this bill. They were closely involved in the development of the protection principles for the Great Ocean Road coast and parks and also provided bilingual statements of importance, which are enshrined in the preamble of the bill. As several on my side have spoken about before, it will be a historic moment when these words are enshrined in a bill.

We are acting in the best interests of the Great Ocean Road region and the best interests of all Victorians with this bill. We are providing certainty where there is currently confusion and providing a plan for the future where formerly there was none. We are treating those in this region with the level of respect and consideration that they deserve. Years of community consultation have gone into this bill, and we are ensuring that the community plays a major part in the region's future. As I say, I have had regular contact with many of those community groups. I know their love and their passion for the landscape along the Great Ocean Road, and this bill will give them certainty going forward. I recommend this bill to the house.

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Public Transport) (16:57): I am really delighted to speak on this bill, and I would like to congratulate the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change on this important legislation, which fulfils an election commitment of the Andrews Labor government to create a standalone act of Parliament that for the first time defines the coastal land and waters we all know as the Great Ocean Road; recognises that this region is a single integrated and living entity; establishes a holistic approach to the management of this special part of our state; establishes a new dedicated statutory parks management authority and overarching framework; and makes the management of the region publicly accountable.

This bill gives effect to the reforms set out in the *Great Ocean Road Action Plan* that the government released in 2018 following extensive community consultation undertaken by the independent Great Ocean Road Taskforce, and as a result it establishes a holistic approach to management that is centred on local community values and preferences. I, like many of my colleagues, would like to congratulate the task force co-chairs, my good friend the Honourable Peter Batchelor and the Honourable Terry Mulder, members of the task force and all involved for their hard work in bringing to fruition this landmark reform for an iconic part of Victoria's coastline.

As the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change said when she introduced the bill to the house, this bill is a landmark in the history of this state. It is a landmark not only because it marks the beginning of something quite different for decision-making along the Great Ocean Road but also because it recognises the sovereignty of our First Nations people, which was never relinquished. This bill not only gives traditional owners a say in the planning and management of the landscapes that the Great Ocean Road traverses, it also enshrines in legislation a seat on the board of the parks

management authority for traditional owners. This is a first for Victoria. I am very proud to be a member of a government that is committed to incorporating the voice of traditional owners and ensuring this is maintained, and I am really proud to be speaking on a bill that incorporates the values and wisdoms of traditional owners and includes Aboriginal inclusion principles in protecting the Great Ocean Road coast and parks.

The bill covers the road and its region, stretching from Torquay to Warrnambool and north to the Princes Highway. It takes in land in five local government areas: the Surf Coast, Colac Otway shire, Corangamite, Moyne and Warrnambool. It provides for the declaration of three distinct areas: the Great Ocean Road region, comprising the road itself, its landscapes and nearby hinterland important to the visitor economy; the Great Ocean Road coast and parks, comprising public land and the marine waters along the road; and the Great Ocean Road scenic landscapes area.

The bill requires that an overarching strategic framework plan gives direction on how to balance the protection of the unique landscapes with a need for appropriate development and investment that contributes to the visitor experience and prosperity of the region. The strategic framework plan will embody the parks protection principles set out in the bill and be prepared in partnership with the traditional owners, the five local councils responsible for the road and other government agencies. A development of the plan will involve public comment and input, and once implemented, outcomes will be monitored.

During the debate much has been said about the Great Ocean Road. It is one of the world's most scenic and iconic coastal touring routes and is, I must say, one of my favourite parts of Victoria. I would also like to take a little bit of time to contribute to what the story of this special area is. As many have mentioned, it is built on the traditional lands of the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung people, which sustains them physically and spiritually. About 3000 returned soldiers built the road as a memorial to diggers killed in World War I. Construction started in 1919. The first section, from Eastern View to Lorne, opened in 1922, and the last bit, from Lorne to Apollo Bay, opened in 1932. Before then the only way to get to the isolated south-west coast was by sea or rough bush tracks. In fact the first road builders had to be lowered down the cliffs by rope—a career I am glad I did not choose. In 1936 the Great Ocean Road Trust handed the road over to the state government. And as we have heard from others in the debate, it is now Victoria's top tourism attraction, with 2.6 million people visiting each year, more than Uluru and the Great Barrier Reef combined. It contributes \$1.5 billion to our economy. In the past 10 years international visitors have increased by 63 per cent, and this 243-kilometre road, which goes from Torquay to Warrnambool, is on the National Heritage List.

About 24 000 people live along the Great Ocean Road itself. In the summer peak the populations of Anglesea, Aireys Inlet and Lorne increase by up to 1000 per cent. For example, just over 1600 people live in Lorne, but in summer that increases up to 16 000. The Falls Festival—and I have got to say, I am a little bit old for the festival culture; or I do not quite embrace it with the vigour that I had in my youth—attracts about 17 000 festival goers. You have got to be conscious of your own limitations!

The dairy farms in the Great Ocean Road region are part of the Barwon South West dairy region, the largest milk production area in the state, producing 27 per cent, I believe, of Australia's dairy exports. Arterial roads connect farms with factories in Allansford and Cobden. There are also significant timber plantations within the region.

In relation to my portfolio areas, V/Line coaches run from Geelong to Apollo Bay. It is one of Victoria's most popular routes, with 55 000 trips in 2018–19, an increase of more than 3 per cent on the year before. The coaches stop at shops, holiday parks, visitor centres, golf clubs, pubs and post offices. Tourists, teenagers, surfers and elderly people who do not drive all rely on them. There are three daily return coaches each day between Apollo Bay and Geelong, and a return service from Lorne and Geelong, all connecting with Melbourne trains and giving Victorians the opportunity to enjoy all that the Great Ocean Road has to offer. From mid-December until late January we run two extra daily return services: one from Lorne to Geelong and the other from Apollo Bay to Geelong. In March 2019 we

added a new bus stop at Waurn Ponds shopping centre, the gateway to the Great Ocean Road for locals living in Armstrong Creek and other new communities on the Surf Coast. A return coach also operates between Apollo Bay and Warrnambool on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, taking breaks at popular locations such as the Twelve Apostles and London Arch so passengers can take photographs.

In terms of the ports portfolio, the first Lorne pier was built in 1879 to serve the logging industry. Teams of horses and timber rail tram lines delivered timber felled at Upper Kalimna Falls to the pier, and ships took wood to Geelong. At its peak 36 cuta boats offloaded fish at Lorne. Cranes lifted the boats onto the pier each night. The Great Ocean Road Coast Committee manages it. The old timber pier was replaced in 2007, and the Lorne Pier to Pub ocean swim, an event I shall not participate in—just saying—has 5000 participants, the biggest in the world. Like Lorne, the Apollo Bay port, managed by Colac Otway shire, was built to serve the timber industry. Logs were floated out to sea and loaded on ships. There are now about 50 berths and moorings at Apollo Bay. The local fishing industry employs about 70 people, who work on trawlers, crayfish boats and charter boats. Port Campbell supports two commercial fishers, a charter boat operator and a local boat club.

So in addition to it being an international tourism drawcard and a fantastic place to experience, the Great Ocean Road provides employment for more than 11 000 people and brings income to businesses and people who make this part of Victoria such an awesome place. Again I would like to congratulate the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change for bringing in this bill. It is an awesome bill, and I commend it to the house.

Mr FOWLES (Burwood) (17:06): I am delighted to make a contribution to the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill 2019.

A member interjected.

Mr FOWLES: I probably will not be taking the opportunity to talk too deeply about my festival experience, but I can say that the member for South-West Coast highlights that it is very important that we recognise—and some members who sit just immediately to my right perhaps missed this point—that the Great Ocean Road is not just a piece of built infrastructure, it is not just a war memorial and it is not just a gateway to some of the most scenic parts of our great state, but it is in fact a critical piece of visitor economy infrastructure. That is a very, very important point indeed.

The Great Ocean Road is undoubtedly Australia's most iconic coastal drive. It is an exemplar of natural scenic beauty. This flowing serpentine journey from Torquay down to almost Warrnambool is something that I think resonates with all Victorians. I would be staggered if many Victorians reach adulthood without at least one trip to the Great Ocean Road, and I know for many it is a regular part of their family traditions and their experience of the magnificent south-west coast of Victoria.

The built environs of the Great Ocean Road are exceptionally important; there is no doubt about that. It is an engineering feat quite unlike anything else in the state of Victoria. It was built with labour from returned servicemen after World War I. It is commemorated in their honour, and that makes it the largest World War I memorial in the world. So 3000 returned servicemen put their labour into the construction of this road, construction that involved, at that time, wooden bridges and some very difficult-to-navigate topography, but it was nonetheless an outstanding accomplishment of the late teens and early 1920s a century ago here in the great state of Victoria.

What we have seen develop over time is a sense that the Great Ocean Road is merely a piece of infrastructure that everyone can chip into and have a crack at. We have ended up with a Byzantine mess, frankly, of regulatory oversight that does not serve the purposes of the visitation economy, does not serve the purposes of our environmental objectives and does not serve the purposes of the local traders, the local businesses and particularly the local residents in that part of the world. I suspect that is part of the reason that so many people have called for the establishment of a Great Ocean Road and parks authority. Sarah Henderson has said that it ought to be established so that a proper management plan can be put in place, 'including to combat rising sea levels'. She said that:

With so many state agencies currently responsible for the Great Ocean Road and the coastline, the Great Ocean Road authority is desperately required—

‘desperately required’, and I agree with her assessment. I am troubled to some degree by the reasoned amendment that has been put before us, where members of the opposition parties are seeking to chip into this bill with a few perhaps curious perspectives. The first is that I think we may well have exposed that lurking deep within the coalition parties there are some anti-amalgamationists—some anti-local government amalgamationists—because lo and behold we have the first sighting of Portland city council since 1994, the very first sighting since Jeff Kennett amalgamated Portland city council with a couple of neighbouring councils. More curiously, Portland city council sits beyond the end of the Great Ocean Road, so one can only speculate as to how that has ended up being referenced in this reasoned amendment.

But to the more substantive issue, and that is that the reasoned amendment calls for there to be justification given for the decision to exclude all board or committee of management members of responsible entities from eligibility for appointment as a director of the authority. I say that this is another example of the coalition parties being soft on good governance—soft on good governance because what they are refusing to recognise here is the importance of having an independent authority. Implicit in this reasoned amendment is a view that it is okay for directors or councillors of local councils, for example—they are defined as a responsible entity under this bill—to sit on both sides of the transaction and to sit on both sides, for example, of the management of a piece of land. If the authority was to take over the management of Crown land that was currently managed by, say, the Surf Coast Shire Council, those opposite say it is okay for a Surf Coast shire councillor to sit on the decision as the party relinquishing that control and also as the party taking that control on behalf of the authority. That defies any sense of decent governance. That defies any orderly or appropriate way of managing the various responsibilities that this bill vests in the authority.

Peter Batchelor and Terry Mulder worked collaboratively and sensibly together in producing their recommendations that underpin the very structure of this bill, and they were absolutely adamant that independent governance was important—very important—and that you needed to have an authority that sat independent of government and independent of local government, to have a proper board appointment process and to have a board that was able to take a holistic view, because it is the lack of holistic planning, the lack of adequate strategic planning and resourcing and the lack of a whole-of-Great-Ocean-Road view that extends not just to the built form but to the environs surrounding it and to the lands and oceans nearby. It is all of those matters that are particularly important, I think, in this bill. It is very, very important to take the holistic view. To suggest that members of various entities—entities that can be directed by this authority or entities into which this authority can transact—can nonetheless sit on the board of the authority is a deeply, deeply flawed approach.

Can I turn to a very important aspect of this bill, which is that this is one of the very few bills in Australia to contain First Nation languages—one of the very few. The bill includes statements from both the Eastern Maar and the Wadawurrung people, in their own languages, about the significance of the special place that we call the Great Ocean Road—a place that for thousands of years before this house was erected and before the Great Ocean Road was built was known as home to the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung nations. It is commendable of the minister that their views and their languages have been incorporated into this bill.

I would like to quote briefly from the English translation of the statement from the Eastern Maar people, as contained in the bill:

Together body and Country, we know long time
... greeting.
Mother my Country.
Father my Country.

Sister my Country.
Brother my Country.
We are the Maar speaking Peoples. Hear us.

I will repeat that—‘Hear us’. This bill does listen to the First Nations people of the Great Ocean Road area, and it ensures that the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung people will continue to be heard well into the future. It gives traditional owners a say in the planning, management and care of the Great Ocean Road park by enshrining a seat on the board of the authority for traditional owners. Let us not underestimate the significance of that. It is only Labor governments that will deliver on those sorts of commitments to ensure that the rights and the voices of Indigenous Australians are heard at every opportunity. I think that is one of the many commendable aspects of this bill.

I will finish by saying that the Environment and Planning Committee, of which I am a member, has spent a bit of time touring around Victoria in recent times. It has no Greens on it, interestingly—no one from the Greens party thinks to sit on the environment committee, because why would you if you were a member of the Australian Greens? That speaks to their decorative approach to environmental policy. We have heard a lot about the conflict of regulators and regulations right around the state of Victoria, particularly in relation to coastal management. For this reason this model is a very, very good model and ought be considered more broadly as we roll forward. It is a very good bill, and I commend it to the house.

Ms ADDISON (Wendouree) (17:17): I rise today to speak in support of the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill 2019, another Andrews Labor government landmark bill—a bill that recognises the state significance of the Great Ocean Road and its landscapes. I do this because I care deeply about the Great Ocean Road and its stunning coastal landscape, as well as wanting to support the people who live and work in the communities along the iconic road.

Firstly, I would like to thank the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change for the work that she has put into this bill and acknowledge the work of her office and department to ensure the high level of consultation with stakeholders and local communities that has occurred. I would also really like to acknowledge the considered and well-thought-out contributions of members of this house. I have thoroughly enjoyed learning more about this very special part of the world from a range of members, including the member for Geelong and the member for Lara. I was really interested in the Minister for Public Transport’s contribution about the Lorne pier and the timber industry, and also in the member for Burwood sharing with us that important translation from a First Nations language that has gone into this bill. It is really, really important that we hear those voices of the people who have cared for and nurtured the land for thousands and thousands of years.

Families from my electorate of Wendouree love going down to the coast, particularly down the Great Ocean Road. I often remark in January that there are more Ballarat people down the coast than actually in Ballarat. It is where families take their caravans and others pitch a tent or rent a place to enjoy a summer at the beach. Our 243-kilometre Great Ocean Road’s beaches and coastal townships are places for spending quality time, making memories with family and friends and even making new friends. It is a place where the students I used to teach flocked for schoolies; concertgoers love to go down to the Falls Festival; keen swimmers love to compete in the pier-to-pub at Lorne; and runners undertake the challenging Great Ocean Road marathon at Apollo Bay. The Great Ocean Road is loved by many, and for very good reason. We have a responsibility to protect it.

This bill will give our spectacular Great Ocean Road, its coast and its parks, the proper management and safeguards it deserves now and into the longer term future as well as protecting the coastal landscape for future environmental challenges. As a result of this, this bill will be well supported by many members of the Wendouree electorate.

The Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill 2019 is another example of the Andrews Labor government living its values and delivering on its commitments to Victorians. The Great Ocean Road is on the lands of the traditional custodians, the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung people, and I welcome

that this bill recognises that sovereignty of our First Nations was never ceded. Ballarat is also a part of Wadawurrung land, and I pay my respects to all of the Gilson family and members of the Wadawurrung clans that live in my community. I was pleased to see that this bill strengthens and embeds traditional owner knowledge and culture into the management of the landscapes of the road and also, as already mentioned, that the traditional owners' languages are embodied in the bill. This is very, very important. The bill also ensures an ongoing involvement of the traditional owners by guaranteeing a seat on the board of the parks management authority for traditional owners.

This important bill is for all Victorians, today and into the future, as it protects our Great Ocean Road for generations to come. We will look back, and we will be proud. We will tell our children and our grandchildren that we supported this bill—that when people did not want to do the work, did not want to take the action to support the Great Ocean Road, we did. That is a legacy that we will all be incredibly proud of.

The area and the environment of the Great Ocean Road is a world-renowned treasure that must be protected, and that is what we are going to do. With its unrivalled beauty, it is no wonder that the Great Ocean Road is an iconic international tourist drawcard for Victoria and Australia. Annually the Great Ocean Road attracts 17 million visitors to marvel at the unique landscapes of this stunning piece of coastline as well as the awe-inspiring engineering feat. It is our top tourist attraction.

Last year visitors to the Great Ocean Road spent more than \$1.3 billion and provided employment for more than 11 200 people. I note with interest that this is more visitors than Uluru and the Great Barrier Reef combined, a very significant fact. However, the popularity of our iconic Great Ocean Road and booming tourist numbers are creating significant pressures on the landscape and the seascape, which are also experiencing the effects of natural processes and the impact of climate change. The reforms being introduced in this bill are about addressing these pressures whilst guaranteeing the road continues to bring visitors to Victoria. By getting this balance right—and it is a very important balance to get right—we will deliver the economic and environmental benefits for regional communities. Consequently it is vital that we act to give effect to the management reforms in the government's *Great Ocean Road Action Plan*: one, to protect our treasured coast and parks; two, to ensure the livability of our local communities; three, to encourage tourism by improving the visitor experience; and four, just as importantly, to boost jobs on the Surf Coast and in south-western Victoria.

I love the Great Ocean Road, and it is undoubtedly great for so many reasons, including the history of its construction by returned soldiers from the Great War. The first part of the road, from Eastern View round to Apollo Bay, was built by 3000 soldiers who had just returned home from World War I and is a lasting memorial to all those who served. Photos taken from the time when the road was being built in the 1920s show men hanging from ropes and using shovels, sledgehammers and picks to move mud and small explosives to get through the rock to construct the windy and dangerous road that grips our magnificent coastline. Men who had bravely served our nation on the other side of the world had returned home to then be a part of a landmark construction project that would further build our national identity and create a permanent memorial to all those who served. Further, the Great Ocean Road has been officially recognised as the longest war memorial in the world. We have an obligation, we have a duty, to preserve this memorial, and we will.

I love spending time at the beachside towns and communities along the Great Ocean Road, and it is very special to me and all members of the Dickinson family. Growing up in landlocked Ballarat, a highlight of each year was for my family to head down to the Great Ocean Road during the January school holidays for a two-week coastal holiday. Mostly we stayed at Anglesea, but we also spent some summers in Lorne. Some of my happiest child memories are swimming at Point Roadknight, visiting Aireys Inlet lighthouse and eating fish and chips at the beach. We also loved going to see the kangaroos at the Anglesea golf course, bushwalking in the Otways and riding the rapids at Lorne. Therefore I support the moves in this bill that will enshrine increased transparency and public accountability in the management of the Great Ocean Road's coast and parks. It is one of my happiest places, and I want to make sure it stays that way.

It is also a place that I love to share with others. Whenever we have international visitors, especially Mike's family when they visit from the UK, a trip along the Great Ocean Road is a must. It is an early start from Ballarat but well worth it. We undertake the ultimate drive from Port Campbell along the Great Ocean Road to Torquay before heading home. It is a massive day but a wonderful way to showcase our special corner of the world, including admiring the Twelve Apostles, a coffee stop at Apollo Bay, lunch at the pier at Lorne and so many stops along the way to take photos of the views. Regardless of the weather or the time of year, our visitors always leave in awe of the Great Ocean Road and are so pleased that they have had the opportunity to tick it off their bucket list.

I am proud to be supporting this legislation that recognises the importance of the Great Ocean Road and the need to protect our beautiful asset through the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority and ensuring stricter planning controls. So I am so pleased to commend this bill to the house. It will reform the management of the Great Ocean Road and protect our uniquely beautiful assets for future Victorians and the world.

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) (17:27): I rise today also to contribute to the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill 2019. We have heard some fantastic contributions today from this side of the house explaining the importance of this bill—most of all the long-lasting effects of these major reforms that our government is making. This is about the management of the Great Ocean Road, of its landscapes and of its livability and, most importantly, announcing the Great Ocean Road plan.

The Great Ocean Road has long been considered one of the world's greatest scenic roads. Its location holds significance when it comes to the tourism industry of our state. We have heard speakers previous to me speak about the pockets of rainforest, the history and the world-class surfing that make the Great Ocean Road Victoria's number one natural spot for tourism. I am sure all members of this place are well aware of the great beauty of the Twelve Apostles and the other world-famous sites. The road is an incredible example of the beauty that Victoria holds and is a great result of the power of nature expressed over thousands and thousands of years.

Not only is the Great Ocean Road an important example of Victoria's great natural beauty but it is also a significant economic driver for our state when it comes to the multiple millions of tourist dollars that are generated each year and every year. People come from across the state and internationally—most importantly—to see this particular natural beauty, but it drives economics when it comes to local trading as well. We have already seen over \$1 billion spent last year by tourists when it comes to travelling along the Great Ocean Road.

But of course we have heard today, in particular from the member for Box Hill, that recently we have seen the numbers along the Great Ocean Road drop, in particular when it comes to our Chinese tourists, due to the current circumstances. This has been devastating for communities. In particular the tourism industry is certainly feeling the effects of that, and I hope that these circumstances end very soon.

This bill comes after, as we know, extensive consultation with community and stakeholders, and in particular interest groups. The bill also is about safeguarding the future of the ocean waters and the Great Ocean Road. We know in 2017 our government established the Great Ocean Road Taskforce, an independently managed and co-chaired committee with the former members the Honourable Peter Batchelor and the Honourable Terry Mulder. This task force had a lot to do, and it really went out and received broad representatives, including traditional owners, tourism, coastal management and local government providing submissions and comment back.

The task force extensively consulted, which included 38 organisations, and during the process of the task force it was pretty evident that there needed to be a widespread agreement and that there was a real need for reform. The task force also found that given the Great Ocean Road's outstanding and unique cultural and heritage values, there was a real need to treat the region as a single integrated living entity. After extensive work in August 2018 the task force presented 26 recommendations to our

government, and in October 2018 we saw our government responding with the *Great Ocean Road Action Plan*.

As previous speakers have already contributed, the action plan includes a commitment to legislate a standalone act of Parliament recognising the national significance of the Great Ocean Road and to include the establishment of a Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority. This is about streamlining the process and making sure the management of land and marine waters around and along the Great Ocean Road is actually done in a better way and, most importantly, is streamlined with the responsible authorities.

There is no doubt that the Great Ocean Road is the jewel of the crown of this state, and it needs to be better managed and protected. This bill is needed for the 243 kilometres of the national heritage-listed Great Ocean Road from Torquay. I would just like to state that this road, as I said previously, is the world's most scenic coastal route, and I know that by streamlining the agencies and organisations, better management of this iconic, heritage-listed, world-famous stretch of land will occur. It is only this bill that provides that protection to this very special place in Victoria.

I know many constituents in my electorate, in particular schoolchildren, take the opportunity during excursions to visit or drive along the Great Ocean Road, and it is a fantastic day out for the family. I recall when I was a little kid growing up, one of the first excursions that I took was out to the Great Ocean Road with my school. So it is really important to have the right legislation and make sure that the parks authority is able to undertake the appropriate management to be able to protect this land into the future. Furthermore, it is very important that this act does not affect native title rights. I really take note of the member for Burwood, who adequately explained that this particular bill will not have any effect on native title and would actually incorporate our First Nations people's language and culture, and I think that is really integral to this bill. Most importantly this bill has acknowledged and engaged further with our First Nations people, and I am really proud to see that occur in the process of this bill.

Of course there needs to be a balance between employment, planning, development, and the interests of the locals and of course of visitors and tourism, and it is important to note that this bill streamlining the current management process will actually allow local communities to be better represented but most importantly to have the ability to contribute and have a say in the management of this iconic piece of natural resource in Victoria.

We have been working on this bill for a while and we have seen that throughout the years, so it has not just occurred overnight. There has been extensive consultation, and importantly this is about ensuring that we get the balance right. Most importantly the communities and stakeholders have been part of this process, and their voices do matter in the ability to get this bill right, so we know that tourists will enjoy a well-managed heritage-listed region well into the future.

As I conclude I want to reiterate the importance of the Great Ocean Road both economically and culturally. This bill is making sure that the Great Ocean Road is sustainable and better managed and of course that the environment is protected for many years to come. I also want to make a special note and thank the minister for bringing this bill to the house after many years of extensive consultation. This has truly been an independent process where everybody around the table has been able to contribute to this absolute jewel in the crown when it comes to the most scenic and iconic spots in Victoria. We need to make sure that this bill continues to protect our environment, but most importantly we want to make sure that the region prospers together hand-in-hand, that people and communities have the opportunity to have streamlined services and that those stakeholders' and interest groups' voices have been heard as part of the process, and through this plan and this bill this will occur.

Can I also take this opportunity to thank the independent co-chair and the committee members who presented the 26 recommendations to government in 2018. I think they did a tremendous job, and our

government was able to respond and prepare an action plan that would deliver the outcomes. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (17:37): I rise today to speak on the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill 2019, which is of course around our spectacular valuable natural landscape features of western Victoria. I know that it has been spoken about in terms of being the greatest asset of the state and the jewel in the crown of Victoria's natural assets, but I am the member for Lowan; we have such fantastic, beautiful natural assets in our region, including the Grampians National Park, the Big and Little deserts and the amazing and world-renowned West Wimmera wetlands, which of course were built through the receding coastline from thousands of years ago—now there are vertical chains of lakes through that part of the state. It is a beautiful part of the state, and I know there has been a lot of focus recently around visiting bushfire areas, but our region also has been hit hard when it comes to tourist visitation.

Particularly through the Grampians region we have seen a decrease of 50 per cent or more in visits to our great part of the state, so I do encourage all Victorians and people right across Australia: it is safe to come and visit our region. We have not been touched by bushfire. We have got so many brilliant things to come and see and do in the Grampians and beyond. Whether it is going on my favourite walk going up Mount Stapylton with 360-degree views around the area—I do not go so often at the moment, but it is absolutely spectacular—amazing waterfalls, beautiful landscapes and features or amazing hospitality providers, there are some great things to do when you come out to the Grampians or to western Victoria. So please visit the Great Ocean Road and take it that little bit further and make your way through to the Western District, through to the Wimmera Southern Mallee and through the Grampians region. You certainly will not be disappointed.

I think all of us have some sort of recollection or memory of what our relationship is with the Great Ocean Road, and I remember quite fondly a grade 6 camp where I went down and we stayed just out of Warrnambool with the then Edenhope Consolidated School. We actually walked across the London Bridge, which is now known as London Arch. It was only a couple of months later, in the January of 1990, that London Bridge fell down, and that was deeply concerning for my mother, who was vicariously worried that I could have been on that bridge at the time even though I was holidaying in Warrnambool on our annual holiday to the coast and certainly safe and sound. But I do vividly remember a couple of tourists who were stuck at the end of London Bridge at the time and had to be rescued.

Of course, we have seen over the years the Twelve Apostles dwindle in number, and perhaps they could be done for false advertising by the ACCC in that the number of apostles certainly is no longer 12. But it is a spectacular coastline. It is filled with beautiful national parks and areas of state parks that must be managed and looked after, and I am very, very proud that before the election in 2018 the Liberal-National opposition at the time made the commitment that if we were elected to form government we would create a new Great Ocean Road authority to manage designated Crown land along the Great Ocean Road. As we know, this was for very good reason. There has been much conflict and concern and a lot of duplication of responsibilities and roles which have led to conflict, and gaps as well, over the past years.

That is why we put forward a policy proposal around removing those duplications and multiple layers throughout the Great Ocean Road region to make sure it came under one authority and was managed through that. I note there are elements of this bill which push toward that; however, I do support the reasoned amendment put forward by the member for Mornington, which addresses a lot of the concerns—and they are significant concerns—around how we manage the Great Ocean Road going ahead. Particularly we need to make sure that whatever authority is put in place is appropriately funded, not that there is no funding available to resource such an authority over an expanse of park that we are not quite sure of the size of. I do not think it has been disclosed by the government at this point in time what the actual map will be of the reserved allocated areas underneath the authority. It is important that we do get that right. We want to make sure that we encompass sufficient land mass that we can

appropriately manage that space, but we do not want to make it so it is an enormously expansive area that may cause some other problems down the track in terms of management of other areas that were being managed well and you have some sort of erosion of otherwise good management practices.

That leads to point two of the reasoned amendment, the extent of the region being identified and defined, then:

- (3) the relationship between local planning schemes and the overarching powers granted to the minister by the bill is reconciled;

At the moment there is a level of duplication between those roles, and overlap, and it is not always clear what has been delegated and what has not within the legislation that has been put forward by the government today. The reasoned amendment continues:

- (4) the proposed constitution of the Board of the Authority is amended after further consultation to provide that there is sufficient representation from residents of any of the following municipal districts:
 - (a) Surf Coast Shire Council;
 - (b) Colac Otway Shire Council;
 - (c) Corangamite Shire Council;
 - (d) Moyne Shire Council; or
 - (e) Portland City Council;

In addition to that, another comment that I have is around the importance of inclusion of community in the management of this area of the state. I will go into that a little further. I will just finish point five, which is:

the decision to exclude all board, or committee of management, members of responsible entities (as defined in the bill) from eligibility for appointment as a director of the authority is justified'.

The reason I wanted to specifically speak to the importance of engagement of community is because we have some very similar circumstances in my electorate, particularly around the management of the Grampians National Park but also Mount Arapiles. Both have been subjected to vast closures to rock climbing recently. With the Grampians National Park there has been a lot of debate within social media but also through formal media outlets and through the local communities. It does not have to be the rock climbing community; this is striking everybody. People are very deeply concerned that the minister has made decisions based on false information and misleading information provided to her by Parks Victoria which have led to these significant closures in the Grampians National Park. This is causing enormous damage not just to tourism in our region, not just to the rock climbing companies, but it is also putting the future of some of our communities at risk in the long term.

We have also seen some issues around the Natimuk community and the management of Mount Arapiles. Recently there was a declaration of Dec Crag, which is a very famous climb in the Mount Arapiles region. It has been closed for cultural reasons. Parks Victoria coordinated a meeting locally, and it was extremely frustrating for locals that they were turned away from that meeting. We should never be turning away people from a community who want to be involved in the discussion. Unfortunately, Parks have made it a number one priority to exclude most people from the discussion. It has been very frustrating for rock climbers to be separated from traditional owners and unable to meet and discuss any of the issues to try to work through them. It has been extremely frustrating for the Natimuk community, whose livelihoods are at risk. I feel for Bill Lovel, who runs the pub. He has helped to coordinate a new committee of Natimuk who are really focused on making sure that we can work through some of these restrictions that have been put in place by the Labor minister, informed by Parks Victoria who are not engaging with the community.

If rock climbing is closed at Mount Arapiles, it will have enormous flow-on effects to the community of Natimuk. We have doctors who live there. We have many professionals. They have kids at the school. They contribute to the very rich artistic community that we see in Natimuk. They are also

filling houses in that region. To have positive population growth and to make sure we are selling our houses at a reasonable price is something we should be supporting in our regional areas.

So out of all of this I know that there will be a change and a shift in the Great Ocean Road management committee to move perhaps some of those responsibilities away from Parks, but at the end of the day we need to make sure we get this right. We can never have too much responsibility sitting with the minister. We can never have too much responsibility, or total responsibility, sitting with traditional owners. We never ever can have all responsibility just sitting with the community or have all that responsibility with rock climbing groups and local tourism organisations. We must all work together. We must respect one another and respect the land that we operate on. If we do work together, we will have fantastic outcomes, not just to preserve and enjoy our national parks but also of course to make sure we preserve them for other people to enjoy well into the future.

Mr WYNNE (Richmond—Minister for Housing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Planning) (17:47): I rise to make a contribution to the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill 2019. I am delighted to be making this contribution because can I say that both I and the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change were the architects of this groundbreaking piece of legislation, and it is a wonderful day to see it actually now brought into the Parliament, so I am thrilled. It comes into the Parliament, obviously, after an extraordinary process of community engagement and consultation about the steps needed to be taken to safeguard the future of the coastal land and waters of the Great Ocean Road.

I have heard some wonderful contributions from many of my colleagues today of the history of the construction of the Great Ocean Road—as we know, it was an amazing feat of both engineering and sheer willpower by people to build that road during the Depression years—and of course, it is truly one of our most iconic destinations certainly in Victoria, if not Australia. As I recall, it is one of the most visited sites in the country and something that we absolutely must protect for future generations.

In September 2017—gee, it is a while back now—the government established the Great Ocean Road Taskforce. Can I say it was a wonderful piece of work that was chaired by two very, very interesting people in Terry Mulder and Peter Batchelor, who both came to this conversation with, obviously, very significant and distinguished parliamentary and ministerial careers but also with a deep understanding of the Great Ocean Road and its environs. I was fascinated to see how the two former ministers, jousting partners across the table on any number of occasions, actually worked so cooperatively together to bring this body of work to its fruition. The task force members included representatives of traditional owners, which was fundamental to the voice of our traditional owners being embedded both in the task force's work and the report but was also an acknowledgement, absolutely, of the crucial role that they will play going forward. Tourism and coastal management and of course, all of our local governments were intimately involved in the work as well. This task force conducted the first independent assessment of the management and oversight of the entirety of the Great Ocean Road and consulted with, I think, in the order of 38 organisations that intersect in some way with the Great Ocean Road. The task force reported in August of 2018 and made 26 recommendations, and in October 2018 the government responded with the *Great Ocean Road Action Plan*.

It is not common that we do this, but I particularly wanted to call out the wonderful work of Libby Sampson, who may be listening to this debate today. She did an absolutely magnificent job in steering the work of the task force. I know I speak on behalf of Terry and Peter, who on any number of occasions have acknowledged to me both publicly and privately the wonderful work of Libby in bringing this groundbreaking work to fruition. Not only that, but of course prior to that—she is obviously keen on water—she was fundamental in some of the wonderful work we have done around the Yarra River as well. So to Libby, I thank you sincerely on behalf of the government for all the work you have done on this, and your colleagues, of course, who took us down that pathway to where we find ourselves today.

The bill's key reforms are recognition of the importance of the Great Ocean Road and its environs to the economic prosperity and livability of Victoria; the establishment of a Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority as a parks manager for the coast and parks along the entire 243-kilometre length of the Great Ocean Road; provisions for the development of an overarching Great Ocean Road strategic framework plan, with a long-term outlook to provide coordinated direction and to harmonise the activities and decision-making of the many responsible entities across the Great Ocean Road; and requirements for regular reporting of the environmental conditions and benefits of the Great Ocean Road coast and parks.

One of the key elements that was identified by the task force was the intersecting range of authorities and local governments and frankly, at times, the inconsistent application of treatment of parts of the road itself—whether it is the roadside maintenance, whether it is the upkeep of facilities or indeed the capacities of local governments to in fact manage some of the key not only strategic infrastructure but opportunities for further tourism enhancement along the Great Ocean Road. This is quite a significant issue for many of our local government authorities because they do not necessarily have the planning capacity or the expertise themselves to in fact assess some of the bigger tourism projects that are starting to come through. So getting a consistent application through the strategic framework is very, very critical to this.

I wanted to briefly, if I can, indicate that the bill provides for the declaration of three areas: the Great Ocean Road coast and parks; Crown land and marine waterways; and the scenic landscapes area. The Great Ocean Road, comprising its landscapes and nearby hinterland, has facilities and infrastructure important to the Great Ocean Road visitor economy. As I indicated to members previously, precise boundaries for each of these areas will be declared once the legislation has commenced operation.

I wanted to turn briefly, if I can, to the reasoned amendment and touch particularly on point (3), which seeks clarification of the relationship between local planning schemes and the overarching powers granted to the minister by the bill, and how that is reconciled. I want this to be very clear: there is no proposition that the responsible authority that attaches to each of our local councils is not in fact retained. Where a council seeks to refer a matter to the state government, that is a different question. Often councils will say, 'Look, we would prefer that this matter is dealt with by the state government because it is a matter of strategic importance and we may not have the capacity locally to address some of the more difficult strategic issues that might arise from a big tourism development that may be proposed for an area'. That is perfectly appropriate. But there is absolutely no sense in, no appetite for and no proposal that there be any diminution in the role of local governments as planning authorities in their own right. Certainly we want to work with local governments, work alongside them, help to facilitate with them and support them in their ambitions for the Great Ocean Road.

Can I say, in the minute or so that I have left, that this is a fundamental piece of work which really recognises the absolutely strategic importance of the Great Ocean Road to our state and indeed to our country. It is under pressure, we know that. We know that it does require further infrastructure investment to ensure that with the enormous numbers of people who enjoy the Great Ocean Road we try to capture them further down along the Great Ocean Road and not bring them back on the same day but have them get to enjoy not only the Great Ocean Road but the hinterland beyond it. That is one of the key elements that I know the strategic plan speaks to. We very much look forward to this bill passing the Parliament. I think I have clarified the position in relation to the planning aspects of it and that we really celebrate what is a magnificent asset that, through the work of this task force and through the work of the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill, will be protected for future generations going forward. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (17:57): It gives me great pleasure to join the debate on the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill 2019, which is before the house. We have had a long list of government members who have spoken on this bill, and I am pleased to follow the Minister for Planning. Success has many parents. The Minister for Planning correctly said that it has been his work and that of the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change that have led on this

groundbreaking piece of legislation. I am sure he will not mind if I also acknowledge the role of the former Minister for Tourism and Major Events and also the former Minister for Regional Development for their work in the tourism sector and also the regional partnerships. For the Barwon regional partnership, this has been their number one priority. I note that all the government members from the Barwon region have spoken in support of this.

I note also as a member of the parliamentary Environment and Planning Committee that the chair of the committee, the member for South Barwon, has spoken on this, as have the member for Burwood and the member for Box Hill. We are all on this committee and at the moment we are working on a reference from the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change on how communities are tackling climate change. Every piece of evidence that we heard in the west of the state just reinforced the need to get on with establishing this authority.

For the many reasons that have been articulated in the second-reading speech and in the debate, particularly in relation to climate change, communities are having to deal with a number of authorities to try and navigate their way through issues such as rising sea levels and storm surges. Since we took evidence down in the east of the state, in coastal communities there, I would be very surprised if there is not a clamour in coastal communities in Gippsland calling for an authority such as this.

I mentioned members of the parliamentary Environment and Planning Committee. The member for Mornington is also a member of that committee. I have got to say I have a great deal of respect for the member for Mornington—maybe it has just been the amount of work that he has been putting in on the parliamentary committee—but I think this reasoned amendment is not one of his better pieces of work. I cannot believe he actually penned it, for a start, mentioning the Portland City Council, because I know the member for Mornington knows that that council disappeared in 1994 and was replaced by Glenelg shire. I am pleased to say that I will be meeting with the mayor of Glenelg shire in the Parliament this week and I am sure she would get a good laugh out of the fact that the Liberal Party have proposed a reasoned amendment that talked about something that has not existed since 1994.

I cannot believe that they have actually proposed this reasoned amendment after the great collaborative work that has been done by Terry Mulder and Peter Batchelor, who were, as the Minister for Planning said, old adversaries across the table. But I know that Peter Batchelor has longstanding family connections and holidays with the late lovely Dorothy Reading at their beautiful holiday home at Point Roadknight in Anglesea and that Terry Mulder represented the electorate of Polwarth and is a Colac resident. They are probably two former members who both had such a passion for the Great Ocean Road and there would be hardly any who would have had the same passion. I find it bizarre that the coalition would not be backing in the work that Terry Mulder has championed. Certainly members who have spoken in support of the reasoned amendment and against the proposal had previously been on the record in favour of it—the current member for Polwarth and the member for South-West Coast. Goodness me, what did she think about the mention of Portland rather than Glenelg? She must have been so embarrassed speaking on it. I do say that I agree with her: some of my favourite parts of the Great Ocean Road are in the member for South-West Coast's electorate. That is where I grew up, along with her.

As the Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Victoria in the last two terms and for tourism as well in the last term I have spent a lot of time talking to tourism operators, particularly around Port Campbell. We are also now seeing the great results in the hinterland. We are finally catching up with the Otways and seeing the growth of tourism businesses there amongst the forests. That is creating an opportunity to take a bit of pressure off the Great Ocean Road. I have even opened an attraction at Mount Elephant near Derrinallum. Tourism more broadly along the Princes Highway and the Western Highway is growing, so hopefully that means we can take pressure off the Great Ocean Road, which is being loved to death, as many have identified.

Also, I was surprised that the coalition are not supporting this bill straight up, because it is actually a crucial part. I mentioned the regional partnerships and the federal government earlier. I know the

former member for Corangamite, now a senator for Victoria, Sarah Henderson, has certainly been vocal in support of the city deal for Geelong and the Barwon area, and the establishment of this authority is actually crucial to delivering on that city deal. So it is particularly important that we actually get on with it and that the reasoned amendment is not supported.

Like others, I want to note that only one of the Greens political party bothered to get up and speak in this debate, and that is deeply disappointing, but those of us who have been in this place for a while are not surprised by this. I am a member of, as I said, the Legislative Assembly Environment and Planning Committee. In the time that the Greens political party has had representation in the Victorian Parliament, either in this chamber or in the other place, there has been not one occasion when a member of the Greens political party has been a member of an environmental parliamentary committee. So what does that say about their commitment to actually delivering real change and improvement for the environment? I think it speaks volumes that they are always prepared to be commentators but when the hard work is around they are absolutely missing. It was only the member for Melbourne. She made a contribution on the bill, but she showed a real lack of understanding about the importance of parks to our tourism economy and in regional Victoria. She showed a real lack of understanding for someone who purports to have grown up in regional Victoria. I expected better from her. The member for Prahran and the member for Brunswick have been completely silent, just as every other Greens political party member has been silent on these matters forever.

We are part of a government that is getting on with delivering this really significant change to this iconic part of Australia and of Victoria. It is world renowned. I think we are going to see that this is something the tourism sector and everyone living and working along this road has wanted for so long. It will mean that we are really able to drive improvements into the future and will also mean that we pay respect to the largest war memorial to World War I not just in Victoria, but in Australia.

I wanted to give a shout-out to the operators along the road. We are certainly alive to the fact that the road is not being overly loved at the moment. The travel ban on China is having a big impact on visitation to the Great Ocean Road. So just like I have given a shout-out to fire-affected communities, let us, every one of us that live in cities in this great state, get out and visit the beautiful tourism assets in this state, whether it is along the Great Ocean Road or in the fire-affected areas in Victoria. Whether it is the forthcoming weekend, the Labour Day long weekend or at Easter, get out and enjoy the Great Ocean Road. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (18:07): It is great to follow the Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Victoria and hear her passion about the Great Ocean Road and tourism more broadly and generally. When we were coming back as a family after spending a few nights in Bali toward the end of January, we could see the images coming in.

A member interjected.

Mr RICHARDSON: There was minimal dancing. You see beautiful scenery and the promotion of Melbourne when coming in, and you see the gorgeous scenery that is the Great Ocean Road. It is what we are known for. It is what, internationally, people look towards when they see our beautiful city and they see some of the most pristine regions. One just has to skip down to the Great Ocean Road.

The member for Wendouree talked about her family experience, bringing family over from England and them experiencing that as well. My family, with my wife's family being from the north-west of England, has done that trek and that beautiful journey down the Great Ocean Road and experienced its joy and everything that it has to offer. We have shared the joy internationally with so many visitors. The visitor economy and tourism in Melbourne and indeed Victoria is so substantial, and the Great Ocean Road plays such an important part. It is why we need to protect it, preserve it and make sure that we have every strategic element to ensure its preservation for generations to come.

It is for generations of our Indigenous Australians, who have looked out over that coastline for thousands of generations—some 60 000 years of continuous inclusion—and their role in preserving it

into the future. The road was built post-World War I—a quite remarkable engineering feat where the road runs now. Consider how difficult it would be to design and build it—and probably to go through the approvals process today—to get it to where it forms that beautiful trail all the way across that more than 200-kilometre stretch. We need to make sure that with all that visitor economy and all that interest we preserve it and protect it. We need to make sure of the environmental sensitivity around protection and support and understanding of our Indigenous communities and make sure that the joy that we all experience if we trundle down the western side of our state is preserved into the future.

A lot of work has been undertaken and the Minister for Planning eloquently detailed that point. I am hoping that maybe after hearing the Minister for Planning's contribution the member for Mornington might stroll back in and reconsider this reasoned amendment and think about getting on with the business of establishing this authority and establishing the strategic direction that underpins the support of the Great Ocean Road coastline and communities into the future. But I will not hold my breath. When you look a bit deeper into this reasoned amendment it looks like it has been cooked up this morning. It looks like it is just hot off the press. As you go through some of the points that have been put forward, point (1) talks about the funds that are to be identified. Like any bill, this will be part of consolidated revenue; it will be part of the work of government going forward—nothing to knock this bill off, like any other bill that comes before this house. Point (2) talks about the region being identified and defined. Well, it is indicatively shown in the back of the action plan, so how much depth of knowledge or engagement was had in this bill to this point in time?

But this is the absolute kicker. Almost like the member for Mornington's attempt right here, it is a bit of *Back to the Future*. We have hit 1994. It is just post an Essendon win in the AFL Grand Final—great times through there; I think West Coast were on an edge. We have gone back to the Portland City Council days. It is extraordinary. It is almost like the glory days of the member for Mornington's contributions—1994, what a year! What an extraordinary waste of time this reasoned amendment is for the Parliament and a real mockery of shadow cabinet checking and procedures. The fact that this thing has somehow made it through the Leader of the Opposition's office probably reflects the Premier's comments today that this bloke is trying to build a reputation rather than build anything else, because the fact that this thing, in the name of the member for Mornington, somehow skipped through shadow cabinet talking about Portland City Council is laughable—absolutely laughable. I mean, this is a serious bill underpinning one of the most strategic tourism and environmental assets in our state, and we get this drivel come through.

Maybe there will be a little bit of consideration to take this reasoned amendment back, but it goes a little bit deeper here. We saw the member for Polwarth's contribution. Not the former member—obviously the former member, Terry Mulder, in the collaboration that he had with Peter Batchelor underpinned a lot of the recommendations and work that have gone into this strategic framework and then beyond into the establishment of the authority—but the current member for Polwarth did not hold back. This reasoned amendment coming into this place—why don't you just have the ticker to vote against the bill and tell your communities that you oppose the strategic element of this and also the establishment of the authority? The member for Polwarth, who generally talks about wind farms, wire rope barriers, tourism and multilingual signs down the Great Ocean Road, came in and had a fair dip and really probably gave away that they are opposed entirely to the establishment of the authority—that goes back on policy that was the work of the former opposition leader, the member for Bulleen; he put that through. So what we see here when we dig down deeper into this legislation is further chaos in the policy standing of those opposite and the shadow team.

We need to see them step up and show some leadership. Are you opposed to the bill? Do you want the bill to go through? Or do you want this park-it-forever reasoned amendment? I think this is the kind of chaos that we have seen in bill contributions coming forward time and time again that frustrates the house. It is a waste of paper, some of this stuff put forward. You see this kind of approach: it is stalling, putting things off and delaying. They have not learned anything from their election defeat in 2014, when nothing got done and everything was on hiatus.

We will not hold our breath, but we will see whether the member for Mornington, when we come to Thursday afternoon and we are just about to knock off the bails, goes back to the opposition leader's office, apologises for suggesting that the Portland City Council should be re-established and the glory days of the Liberal Party of 1994 come back and if we can actually have some sensible debate on this authority and the strategic framework.

That is what this requires because this is such an important asset—243 kilometres of coastline. When I have gone down there as the Parliamentary Secretary for Schools it has been amazing to interact with these communities. I actually got on the phone to the member for Polwarth and had a chat about where the best location was to get a sausage roll and a pie. We stopped off in Apollo Bay, a beautiful community. We went to the P-12. Sorry, we announced the plans for the new kindergarten, an inspired announcement, and we were having a chat. We stopped in on this lovely bakery, which offered up an amazing pie. There was absolute kindness and friendliness that we were welcomed with, talking about what was on the go in the community; they welcomed all visitors. As we sat there for about half an hour, we could see the interactions and the positivity, and we could see why these communities attract visitors each and every year and why the visitor economy continues to grow along that beautiful stretch. So it is really important that we provide that strategic framework and we provide that support.

As I said, obviously the Great Ocean Road task force's work in September 2017 was a cross representation of former elders of this place who made substantial contributions as members of Parliament and indeed ministers of the Crown. Both Terry Mulder and Peter Batchelor had put forward a strategic and wonderful blueprint for establishing the authority.

We are merely, in this Parliament, custodians of the environmental protection and assets into the future—this Parliament right now and further parliaments into the future; the 59th Parliament of course is what we are now—and it is important that we share in that vision and share in bipartisanship. That is what the spirit of this bill was all about, so the notion that we have moved away from that is greatly disappointing. This has been substantially consulted on and worked through for a number of months with various interest groups and also with the respect, honesty and engagement of our traditional owner communities, and that is what this process has been about. That is what has been its defining characteristics and hallmarks, and we should see this pass through into legislation and establish that strategic framework.

We know as members of Parliament how difficult it can be to traverse different authorities, different council areas and different bureaucrats with different land management. Anyone that has done any sort of land issues in their local communities will have experienced that, and as someone who has a beautiful stretch of Port Phillip Bay, it can be a challenge with different authorities. So providing that strategic overview and the authority effectively being the custodians into the future, strategically looking at the needs and outcomes of the Great Ocean Road—that is what this bill is all about. It is important that we set that framework up as soon as possible to make sure that everything that we have come to know about the Great Ocean Road—the feeling of parochial pride that we have as Victorians and the love and the pride that people have when they visit our local communities and see the Great Ocean Road and that joy as you go meandering through—continues for generations to come. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms WARD (Eltham) (18:17): It was interesting to hear before from the whip, saying, 'You're in Eltham. What has that got to do with the Great Ocean Road?'. Well, like every single Victorian, I care deeply about the Great Ocean Road. I care deeply about how it looks and I care about how it feels. It is so terrific to have a bill before us that actually helps enshrine the significance of the Great Ocean Road, world heritage site and all. This is a particularly important road to our state. It is a road that tells us a bit of the story of our state. Whether it is men working on it after the First World War or Second World War, one of the wars—

Mr Maas: First World War.

Ms WARD: First World War, thank you, or whether it is people holiday-making along it now, it all gives us stories within our families, this road. It all connects to us in some way. One of my favourite stories about the Great Ocean Road is the story of my nan, Eileen, who in the 1930s got on the back of a friend's Harley-Davidson and hooned along the Great Ocean Road. I love the idea of my nan in her early 20s—God knows what she was wearing; whether it was in high heels or it was in boots, I do not know—hooning along Great Ocean Road feeling as free as a bird. It is not often that we think of our nans that way, but this image of her on the back of a Harley I think is a pretty good one.

Mr Pearson: Totally lit.

Ms WARD: Totally lit—I would not say that, member for Essendon. Totally memorable, maybe.

Mr Pearson: It is totally lit.

Ms WARD: No, you are not using it right. You are not lit, dude.

Mr Pearson: I am going to raise that as a point of order.

Ms WARD: There is no point of order. Along with everybody else in this place, I too have got very fond memories not just of my nan's own history but of my own along the Great Ocean Road. I have memories of going along there in the back of a Ford Falcon with my grandparents and mum and dad, having holidays and checking out the Twelve Apostles and the rest of it and of going for holidays on my own. We managed to spend New Year's Eve camping at Port Campbell, waiting for the millennium bug to hit, which of course it did not. I enjoyed the Port Campbell pub too, I am happy to say.

It might not have been Bali but it was a pretty good pub, and we had a lot of fun. I do think that it was beer o'clock for a number of hours that night. It is a fantastic community. It has got wonderful restaurants, it has got great fish and chip shops, it has got great shops and it has got great people. But I have to say it is the landscape that speaks to us—it is the landscape, it is the beauty of driving along this exceptional road. There are few places in the world where you can drive along and have an unimpeded view that is seascape, that is landscape and a road, and that is it. And this is something to treasure, and it is something important to all of us.

I have got friends that have got family who have got a holiday house in Skenes Creek. We go down there quite a few times, usually in the colder months, and spend time with the fire and playing cards, and it is lovely. It is lovely to go down there in the winter, to feel the sea spray, to walk along the beach and to listen to the radio. I tell you what, community radio down there is pretty good, and they have got a very good playlist. It is clearly a tight-knit community, and it is clearly a community that really cares about its environment, that really cares about how they look.

It is important for a government like ours, which does care about consultation and which does care about engaging with people, to have created this bill that really does address a number of the concerns that people might have down there. Acting Speaker Carbines, I am sure that I do not have to remind you of the interesting years of the Kennett government and the plans that they had for many parts of this state, including the Great Ocean Road, including the big tourism centres and the hotels and so on that they wanted to blight the landscape with—that beautiful landscape and that seascape that, as I said earlier, is all you see along great parts of the Great Ocean Road. We have now got legislation that means that there has to be a lot more consideration around appropriate development; it has to fit within the landscape and it has to fit within the needs of these communities. Of course we want to do what we can to create employment opportunities within our regional communities, but in doing so you have got to respect this beautiful part of our state.

I have to say, I do tell these communities that I, along with I am sure many of my colleagues, will be heading down the Great Ocean Road over the next few months to help support those communities who I know are experiencing a few challenges at the moment with the lack of tourists that they have got touring along there because of the coronavirus and because of the limitations on visitor visas that we have got at the moment. While I understand why that has to happen, I also understand exactly how

difficult it will be for those communities, so I would like to assure them that this government is well aware of those challenges that they face. We will be going along there and doing what we can to support them and to re-engage with this road that we love so dearly—this road of great history, this road of surfing, this road of fish and chips, of dairy products, of wine, of seafood, of crayfish.

This terrific stretch of road connects us and gives us so many wonderful stories and gives us such a sense of place. I know that I would not be the only person in this place who only has to see a picture of the Great Ocean Road to know where they are. You know when you see the Twelve Apostles, you know when you see what is left of London Bridge and you know when you see part of that road that you are in Victoria and that you are looking at a beautiful part of the state.

In talking about London Bridge I will finish off with a story from the early 1990s about the Great Ocean Road. On a very, very woolly day when the winds were up—the winds were going, the waves were up, it was crazy—we were down at the Grotto, and there was a guy who took his kid to explore a bit of the cliff face at the front of the Grotto. We told them to pull back, and I am glad they did because as they started to walk back towards us a massive wave came up and we were surrounded by water that was waist high. If they had stayed where they had been a couple of seconds earlier, they would have been washed out to sea. We were also at London Bridge that day when part of the bridge fell away. In fact the very next day was when the whole thing collapsed and there were a couple of people that were stranded on it who had to be rescued because of the ferocity of the waves that day.

It is a ferocious coast; it is a strong coast. It is the Shipwreck Coast. There are so many stories of early white settlement along there; the story around Loch Ard Gorge. There are terrific things that remind us of the history of this state, remind us of how we were settled, remind us of the good and the bad. It is a road that is well and truly worth preserving.

Acting Speaker Carbines, you might not think that many of us could devote 10 minutes just to talk about a road, but with the Great Ocean Road it is actually not that hard because we have all driven along it, we have all walked along it, we have all celebrated things along it, we have all had fun along it. We do in fact love this road. It matters to us. It matters a little bit more than a few of our other freeways and other roads might because it is actually a part of our living history, and legislation like this helps us to preserve that living history. It helps us to preserve that narrative, that if you like roadside braille—‘doom-doom, doom-doom, doom-doom’—as we go along the Great Ocean Road. This is a terrific bill, and I commend it to the house.

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (18:25): It is with pleasure that I rise to make a brief contribution on the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Bill 2019. As someone who represents an electorate that is very much, I guess, part of middle-ring Melbourne—my electorate is only 13 kilometres from this Parliament—I always do feel that I learn quite a bit about a particular part of regional Victoria when this house is considering a bill such as this. It is fair to say that the appeal of Victoria to people who are not Victorians, to people who are from interstate, to overseas tourists, is very much both our natural and built environment, and I know that the Great Ocean Road is central to that. I know it attracts many, many visitors each year—each day in fact. I know that it is a 243-kilometre road that goes all the way from Torquay to Warrnambool, and of course it is on the National Heritage List as well.

What I was quite surprised to find out during my brief research for this bill was that in fact the Great Ocean Road is the world’s largest war memorial. It was built by returned service people from the First World War, and it was built in remembrance of fallen comrades in that war. I know every time Anzac Day rolls around I am reminded of the immortal words of Banjo Paterson, who said:

The mettle that a race can show
Is proved with shot and steel,
And now we know what nations know
And feel what nations feel.

It makes me think that every time I hear that I will think of the Great Ocean Road now that I know that in fact it was built by returned soldiers and now that of course I know that it was built in remembrance of people we lost during that war. To me that is even more reason for this bill—to make sure that the Great Ocean Road not only is protected but also enhanced, and to make sure that we are addressing the very fragmented way in which it has been managed to date.

This bill does a number of things. Principally it provides dedicated legislation for the Great Ocean Road. It provides for the declaration of three areas. One is the Great Ocean Road coast and parks, comprising the Crown land and marine waters along the Great Ocean Road that may be assigned to the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority to manage. The intent is to provide a clear spatial boundary to the scope of the authority's land management functions. Secondly, there is the Great Ocean Road scenic landscapes area—that is, the area between the road and the coast, and the landscape visible from the road. This will be the focus for protection of the distinctive areas and landscapes, and in which the authority will fulfil a coordination role for sustainable visitation, management policy and planning. Thirdly, there is the Great Ocean Road region, comprising the Great Ocean Road, its landscapes and nearby hinterland. This is the area with facilities and infrastructure important to the Great Ocean Road visitor economy.

There are many parts of this bill, I think, that have been gone through by various members on both sides of the house throughout the day, and I do not intend to cover the same ground even though I have just over 5 minutes left on the clock. I will just finish by saying—and I am going to be quick because I think my friend and colleague the member for Caulfield is about to get up on the next bill, and I know that he is very keen to talk about justice—that this is yet another piece of legislation that pays a lot of respect to our Indigenous Australians as well by making sure that Indigenous culture is at the centre of the management of the Great Ocean Road. It is only appropriate for a Parliament that proudly flies the Aboriginal flag and for a government that is doing something of an Australian first in embarking on a treaty process that we also make sure that our Indigenous Australians are central to this particular process. So with those few words I commend the bill to the house and I wish it a speedy passage.

Ms HENNESSY (Altona—Attorney-General, Minister for Workplace Safety) (18:31): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

**ENERGY SAFETY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (VICTORIAN ENERGY SAFETY
COMMISSION AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2019**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (CASEY CITY COUNCIL) BILL 2020

**BUILDING AND ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
2019**

Council's agreement

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Carbines) (18:31): I have received messages from the Legislative Council agreeing to the following bills without amendment: the Energy Safety Legislation Amendment (Victorian Energy Safety Commission and Other Matters) Bill 2019, the Local Government (Casey City Council) Bill 2020 and the Building and Environment Protection Legislation Amendment Bill 2019.

JUSTICE LEGISLATION MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS BILL 2019*Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Ms HENNESSY:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (18:32): I rise to speak as the opposition's lead speaker on the Justice Legislation Miscellaneous Amendments Bill 2019. This bill seeks to do a number of things: firstly, to amend the Supreme Court Act 1986 to provide the Supreme Court of Victoria with the power to make a group costs order with a stated claim that this would improve access to justice for plaintiffs bringing class actions to the Supreme Court. So this is really dealing with contingency fees and allowing those contingency fees to be charged. Certainly in the 20 or 30 minutes that I have got I will have a fair bit to say on that part of the bill because there are some issues that we in opposition have in regard to the contingency fees. I will elaborate a bit further on that shortly.

There are two other parts of this bill which are fairly straightforward and that certainly the opposition does not see any problem with. Firstly, regarding the Local Government Act 1989 and the Magistrates' Court Act 1989, the bill ensures the validity and enforceability of actions and decisions by improperly established municipal electoral tribunals, known as METs, and affected reserve magistrates. That effectively looks at correcting something that is known as an issue that affects local councils predominantly. The Department of Justice and Community Safety advise that in 2003 MET members were appointed in perpetuity; however, in fact there was a legislative requirement that was incorrectly interpreted and therefore not adhered to, and the members should have been appointed every 12 months. So it is effectively clearing that up and ensuring that those that were appointed in perpetuity were meant to be appointed. The bill fixes that.

It is also pretty much to deal with elements of local government, so those appointees within local government and tribunals that are constituted under the jurisdiction of the Magistrates Court of Victoria that consider disputes about the validity of local government elections. That is pretty timely because later this year we will have local government elections, and this is looking at where there are disputes around jurisdictions, effectively, where people have disputed returns. What that means is that somebody who actually puts themselves up for local government election has to file all of the paperwork and ensure that all of the processes and systems of somebody putting themselves up for election are followed and processed and that these people are able to have that properly reviewed. We need to ensure that those people that do that are able to do that in line with the law, and this will fix all of that, so we have no problems with that part of the bill.

The bill looks at a whole range of other changes, and it includes amendments to the Evidence Act 2008, which is basically to allow postal articles sent by prepaid post to an Australian address to be taken to have been received on the seventh working day. This amendment reflects the same time period for the presumption of service by postal delivery in other jurisdictions. Basically when you are receiving evidence, it ties it into the evidence in other states. It is really just bringing that in line with the way that other places operate.

Amendments to the Evidence (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1958 make changes to provide for the County Court to make orders for evidence on commission in its own proceedings. Currently the parties must apply to the Supreme Court for an order to allow evidence to be taken on oath or affirmation outside of court, which is considered unnecessary and burdensome. It is cleaning it up to allow a more streamlined approach.

Minor amendments to the Oaths and Affirmations Act 2018 clarify that certain offences under the act are indictable offences. Amendments to the Professional Standards Act 2003 allow the Victorian Professional Standards Council to delegate functions to any person employed pursuant to part 3 of the Public Administration Act 2004.

They are pretty much the main elements of the acts that are being covered in this bill, but the main part that I wanted to really focus on are the contingency fees. The primary element of this is to ensure that group costs orders are in reality the vehicle to introduce percentage legal contingency fees recovered from successful damages and settlements by a group of plaintiffs, which will be sanctioned in Victoria for the first time in Australia—they were previously outlawed—in class actions. So contingency fees have been banned in all Australian jurisdictions, and we propose to be the first jurisdiction in Australia to have contingency fees that lawyers can charge.

We have seen situations where Slater and Gordon and others have gone ‘no win, no fee’, which is used in class actions in getting people to come together if they have got an issue with something that a number of people have been affected by. They come together and they effectively do not pay unless there is success, and that is certainly a way that some of these big law firms have operated.

Lawyers in Australia have only been able to charge fair and proper fees based on the work that they complete. So we would all be familiar with this: we meet with a lawyer, we sit down and we work it out—you never really know how long a lawyer is going to bill you for or how long the case is going to go for, but you know that there is an hourly rate and you know that ultimately you get charged for the time, and at the end of that time you will receive a bill.

Contingency fees basically say, ‘You know what? We won’t be charging you that, but we need you to sign up to this, and if we end up with this particular windfall, then we might take 30 or 40 per cent of it’. That might sound great. You might not get caught up with anything up-front, but what about vulnerable people?

Take the bushfires. You have lost your house—you are one of many people who have lost their houses—and you have nothing, and you want to sue the government because they did not do what was right. You end up in a class action, and you get into a situation where Slater and Gordon or Maurice Blackburn come to you and say, ‘You know what? Sign up here. Sign up for a contingency fee, and we will represent you’. A situation then arises where you say, ‘That’s great. I have received now’. There are millions of dollars awarded to all these people, because it gets divided amongst the class action, and you end up with \$500 000 each. If a contingency fee gets charged of 40 or 50 per cent, you might only end up with \$250 000. So you have run a case, it is not fair and reasonable, and for something which would normally cost 10 to 12 per cent in the current form, where you might be charged \$50 000 to \$60 000, you might be charged \$400 000 to \$500 000. For a vulnerable person we do not think that is fair.

We do not think that lawyers should now be in the business of entrepreneurship. We think the whole legal system has been set on the basis that they should be representing people for justice and they should be working for what is right and not working for the dollar. That is where we have a concern. We have a concern that lawyers will be motivated by profit ahead of ultimately what is right in running a case.

You will find situations, as many people have stated, where a case might be run, and because of the windfall if they have these contingency fees that the government is now proposing, the lawyer’s advice might be very different if they stand to take 40 per cent rather than their normal fees. They might say, ‘You know what? Let’s settle. Let’s settle now at this fee, and I will take my 40 to 50 per cent, and I will move onto the next one’.

There are a number of concerns that we have with contingency fees. Our courts are absolutely clogged; you cannot run a court case. If you are waiting to get a court case today, you will be waiting months to get a date for a court case. Our courts are clogged. Victoria will be the only jurisdiction in Australia that will have these contingency fees. Guess what will happen? You will have the honey-pot effect of other states running here. You will have big multinationals being chased down here and cases being run out of Victoria. So you will have big law firms running a case that may have been in New South Wales or in another state, but it gets run down in Victoria because of the contingency fees. We already have a court system that does not work—a system that cannot meet demand, that does not have

efficiencies in our system here in Victoria. How do we cope when all the other states have agreed not to have contingency fees, all of a sudden when Victoria is the only one the big Maurice Blackburns, the big Slater and Gordons—all these big firms that happen to be major donors to the Labor Party—turn around and say, ‘Thank you very much. We are going to set up shop and make sure we run all of our cases down in Victoria’?

There is no coincidence here—the fact that these major law firms that stand to gain the most out of this happen to be donors to the Labor Party. We have seen that, and I will go into some more detail. It is a concern—the situation Slater and Gordon found themselves in when they effectively had bankruptcy in terms of their growth and a shareholding of major loss because they were chasing the dollar versus going out there and doing what they should have been doing. If you look at Maurice Blackburn, Maurice Blackburn is by far the largest player in the class action market, with a 17.8 per cent share in the business. They have got 17.8 per cent in the business. It is also one of the largest donors to the Labor Party. Last year it chipped in \$554 000 to the ALP and affiliated entities. Of that, \$122 000 went to the Victorian branch, where it helped re-elect the current government, the Andrews Labor government.

So we have a law firm that has 17.8 per cent of the market that has gone on the record and said, ‘Bring on contingency fees—we love this stuff’, and they stand to gain the most benefit out of this. Maurice Blackburn and Slater and Gordon stand to gain the most benefit out of this. It is on this basis that I would like to move a reasoned amendment if I could. I move:

That all the words after ‘That’ be omitted and replaced with the words ‘this bill be withdrawn and redrafted to:

- (1) take into account further consultation about the benefits of removing the group costs orders and contingency fees provisions proposed for the Supreme Court Act 1986; and
- (2) retain the remaining provisions of the bill.’

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Carbines): The reasoned amendment will be circulated to members. The member for Caulfield can continue.

Mr SOUTHWICK: Thank you very much. As I said, there are the two elements of the bill we do not have a problem with. We want contingency fees taken out. We do not think it is right. We do not think that the government has done their work on this. I refer you to an article from 14 February by Chris Merritt, ‘States split on fees for class actions’. It says:

Almost two years ago, the commission produced a report—
about contingency fees.

Other jurisdictions have confirmed that Victoria has not even tried to have this added to the agenda of the Council of Attorneys-General—
at COAG.

Victorian Attorney-General—
who happens to be here—

... has instead embarked on a course that will make Victoria the only state where class action lawyers will be allowed to take a percentage of what they win for their clients.

This has raised concerns about forum shopping and the possibility that the big plaintiff law firms will choose to launch national class actions in Victoria—

which is effectively the honey-pot effect.

‘The Victorian government did not consult with NSW on its proposed scheme. NSW has no plans to introduce contingency fees’.

This will come as a relief to the business community and the national insurance industry ...

They are proposing that it will cause fees to skyrocket in terms of a lot of companies now having to take insurance out on the threat of them being sued in these class actions. It says in this article that this might encourage some companies to do business in New South Wales instead of Victoria and it refers to New South Wales companies being dragged into national class actions.

If Victoria's move triggers a spike in anti-business class actions, the federal government could face pressure to intervene.

That is just one. There are a number of other articles, such as 'Law Council of Australia rejects success fees':

The Law Council of Australia has decided that lawyers won't be allowed to take a portion of their clients' winnings in lawsuits, a change that could have been a boon for plaintiff lawyers.

They say:

'Everyone agrees with the premise of increasing access to justice but contingency fees could create conflicts of interest for lawyers, including in relation to their fiduciary duties to clients, as well [as] lead to more ... litigation' ... 'We need to get the rules right'.

Nick Cater wrote 'Unethical litigators cash in on the left's "lawfare"', saying:

Class actions once allowed grievances by people of limited means to settle at an affordable price. Today they are a cash cow for lawyers, who scour the transcripts of royal commissions, soliciting for business.

Until five years ago, the number of class actions filed each year hovered around the high teens. In the past two years they have been lodged at a rate of about one a week.

So we are talking 50-plus when a few years ago there were 12.

Forget the ... narrative of the passionate lawyer acting pro bono for the marginalised and vulnerable. Three-quarters of these are so-called funded cases, investment vehicles for financiers ...

A bushfire victim, for example, awarded \$250 000 in a successful class action, would typically receive about \$210 000 after legal costs ...

If this was allowed to play, we could see the victim receive \$130 000. From \$210 000 to \$130 000. That is because of the additional profits that they could choose. The bill:

... would allow lawyers to loot their own clients by claiming costs as a percentage of damages. Contingency fees are banned everywhere else in the country for good reason.

Justice is ill-served by lawyers motivated to inflate claims of marginal quality and merit ...

...

Worse, contingency fees will be charged on an opt-out basis.

That is really important. An opt-out basis means that you may not even know whether you have been caught up in this, and all of a sudden you receive a bill. You may be unintentionally caught up in this, and that is one of the issues that we have in terms of this particular bill. There are a number of points, and I am sure the government will talk about trying to help the more vulnerable. There are some really good points that the ABC actually raised in 'Why giving lawyers a profit motive won't help the system's neediest'. Basically this, which was posted on 29 June 2018, said:

The proposition that contingency fees will allow greater access to justice, by permitting uneconomical claims presently ignored by third-party funders to be pursued, should be carefully tested.

...

It is hard to see the profit motive associated with contingency fees encouraging lawyers to pursue small claims with low potential damages ...

Say you are in a situation where you are really vulnerable and you do not stand to gain a whole lot of something as a windfall but you need representation. Take a situation where you have a developer in my area—in, say, Caulfield. You might have, say, a developer that decides they are going to put up a whole lot of apartments and block out the sun, and you have got a whole lot of houses that have got solar panels that they have put on and the government has said to them, hypothetically, 'We're going to ensure that your sun is protected because you have these solar panels that you've invested in and

now this developer has taken out your sun'. These various houses that have put in the solar panels on a government rebate and have paid for 50 per cent of the solar panels themselves might want to take issue with the government and might want a class action. They might only stand to get themselves \$20 000 or \$30 000 each back on their solar panels. It might be worth a couple of million dollars—\$20 000 is a lot for an individual. Certainly for many of my residents in Caulfield, in Elsternwick, in surrounding suburbs that \$20 000 could put a lot of food on the table and pay electricity bills. But do you think a Maurice Blackburn is going to take an upside of \$2 million on a contingency fee where they get 20 or 30 per cent of that to run a case for six months versus a case that is going to bring them a \$20 million windfall of which they get 40 or 50 per cent? Where is the balance for the vulnerable? Which cases are the big Slater and Gordons and Maurice Blackburns going to go for? Are they going to go for the big-ticket items, or are they going to help the most vulnerable? That is what this is all about. They are looking for the uplift. The big law firms are looking for the uplift; they are not looking to help the little people, and that is where our concern is here. It is fairness.

We all know there are many lawyers on that side and we have got a few on our side. In fact my son is about to study law at Monash. We are very proud of that. He has signed up to hopefully be able to do good for society, community and everything else.

Mr Edbrooke: He could work for Slaters!

Mr SOUTHWICK: He will not be joining Slaters. I can assure you he will not be joining Slaters or Maurice Blackburn. No, he will not be, member for Frankston. He will not be doing that. But hopefully he will be doing what we would hope most lawyers would set out to do, and that is to seek justice for all. We do not want to see that being skewed by a motivation for profit. We have no problem on our side with business, with free enterprise. We are a party of all of that. But we do not want lawyers to get caught up in a profit motivation ahead of a justice motivation and a fairness motivation. That is why we think it is a very slippery slope for Victoria to be the first state to really trial this. Have a look at what is happening in America, the absolute lawsuit capital. We are two behind them; we are just behind them. We are really concerned that this is what might happen because of the government.

As I said, the biggest donations by Maurice Blackburn and Slater and Gordon are to the Labor Party—they are on that side, not on our side. This is a free kick to them. This is a thankyou very much. It is a handshake to Maurice Blackburn, Slater and Gordon and other major donors of the Labor Party to say, 'You know what, we'll give you another uplift'. I tell you what: if anyone complains about developers and what they do, this could be potentially very, very toxic where you see a windfall of millions of dollars, and we are talking only a few law firms here that could even enter into a market like this. This is big risk, and a small law firm is not going to get involved in this. Only the big Slater and Gordons and Maurice Blackburn and others are going to get involved in this. The Labor Party's donors—they are the ones that are going to get involved, they are the ones that have the biggest risk in this, and they are the ones that we have the most concern about with all of this.

On that note I am going to wind up our contribution and ask that the government considers our amendment. We have no problems with the other two parts of this bill. We think the other two parts of this bill are fair and reasonable, bringing things in context with other states. I am always one that says Victoria should be leading the way on a number of things, but I also have concern when we are the only jurisdiction doing something. That is particularly so around fairness, particularly so around the law system, that potentially could be a real concern where we have had the feds, where we have had other states, where we have had law firms, where we have had industry—where we have had a number of people—warn us about the unintended consequences of being able to give a massive uplift of contingency fees to allow lawyers to effectively gouge a huge amount of money that ultimately should go to the most vulnerable and ultimately should go to those people that are seeking that compensation in the first place.

On that note I will conclude by once again asking the government to support our amendments.

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) (18:57): It is an absolute pleasure to rise this evening and speak on the Justice Legislation Miscellaneous Amendments Bill 2019. From the outset, I just want to say that while we have listened to the opposition, I think there is a fair bit of misunderstanding about where this bill is going and what access for justice it provides to Victorians. It is also interesting to hear members of the opposition saying they want Victoria to lead but they are not willing to take those steps to ensure Victoria does lead. This bill is essentially, in a nutshell, about improving access to justice and making it easier for people to bring class actions against employers and groups that might be responsible for wage theft, silicosis and other types of wrongdoing.

I just want to address a real flaw in the opposition's reasoned amendment and the logic behind that, because I am not a lawyer and I take my advice on bills like this from representatives of lobby groups and lawyers. We have seen in the reasoned amendment that essentially the opposition would like to remove contingency fees from this bill and continue on. The previous speaker has outlined some reasons for that. But I just wanted to say that the fact is that three independent bodies, peak bodies, have recommended that this model go forward and be legislated, and they are the Victorian Law Reform Commission, the Australian Law Reform Commission and the Productivity Commission. They have recently recommended the ban be lifted across Australia, and Victoria will be the first to do that, in respect of these class actions. The Supreme Court has even been consulted on the proposed group costs order, or the amendments, and is supportive of this bill. Where I am coming from is that I wonder how we can have such a hurried and rushed reasoned amendment that actually does not make much sense if you read the bill book that is provided to all members and if you have been briefed on it. It is very clear that the experts that people like me rely on for information about legislation that certainly will—

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

MARYBOROUGH HOSPITAL

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (19:00): (1863) My adjournment is to the Minister for Health in the other place, and the action I seek is that she ensures the full \$100 million promised by Labor for a new Maryborough hospital is allocated in the upcoming May budget, as anything less than the total amount will be a clear broken promise. On 31 October 2018 a media release from the Premier announced that a re-elected Andrews Labor government would:

... provide \$100 million to transform the Maryborough Hospital, giving patients the quality care they need, and doctors and nurses the facilities they deserve.

I matched that commitment on the same day. A bit later than that, on 23 November 2018, the then—and now—Treasurer put out a media release attacking me and my party because we had said that we would stage the funding of the Maryborough hospital over two terms. The Treasurer's media release related that this was no good, and he reiterated that:

A re-elected Labor Government will invest \$100 million to rebuild Maryborough Hospital, which will include acute medical and surgery beds, another operating theatre and more consultation rooms.

Finally, on 27 May last year, Minister Mikakos put out another media release, entitled 'Building the Best Hospitals for Victorian Patients', which included the line:

The \$100 million redevelopment of Maryborough Hospital is on track ...

However, in last year's budget Maryborough hospital was not funded, and so it will need to be funded in this budget in full if the government is to in fact fulfil its promise prior to the last election and deliver a \$100 million hospital to the people of Maryborough in this term. So I therefore request the minister ensure that in this upcoming budget she makes sure that that \$100 million is allocated, because

otherwise the good people of Maryborough will be very entitled to say to her and to the Andrews Labor government that this is in fact a broken promise.

CHISHOLM ROAD PRISON PROJECT COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP

Mr EREN (Lara) (19:02): (1864) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Corrections. The action I seek from the minister is to meet with the Chisholm Road prison project community advisory group. As the minister would know, the Andrews government has invested more than \$1.8 billion to ensure our prisons remain safe and secure and are able to keep pace with demand. Part of this record investment in community safety includes the new maximum-security prison at Chisholm Road, which will have 1248 beds, with the prison operational in 2022. The building of the new maximum-security prison will support hundreds of jobs across the steel, manufacturing, construction, engineering and other sectors. The build of the new prison is anticipated to create up to 900 jobs during peak construction periods and more than 650 ongoing jobs after construction.

The Chisholm Road prison project is enhancing community safety while creating hundreds of local jobs, with apprentices, trainees and engineering cadets comprising 10 per cent of all new workers during the construction phase. This is a very important project in my electorate, and I was very pleased to have the minister in Geelong to turn the first sod on Thursday, which was great.

The Chisholm Road prison project community advisory group did a tremendous job leading up to that day. It was established in October 2018 to help guide the development of this new prison and ensure the local community is informed and engaged as the project progresses. Of course it would be great if the minister came and visited and had a meeting with this very important group. Again, the action I seek from the minister is to meet with the Chisholm Road prison project community advisory group.

COUNTRY FIRE AUTHORITY WARRANDYTE STATION

Mr R SMITH (Warrandyte) (19:04): (1865) Given that my adjournment tonight is in relation to the CFA, I would like to start off by just putting on the record my sincere thanks to all of the CFA brigades in the Warrandyte electorate for their hard work, their bravery and their commitment during the recent Victorian and New South Wales fires. Crews and tankers from Warrandyte North, Warrandyte, Wonga Park and Warrandyte South CFAs were on the ground in New South Wales and in regional Victoria from October 2019 whilst keeping our own communities safe at the same time. So I just want to put that on record.

As such my adjournment matter tonight is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. As the minister is aware, the Warrandyte CFA recently applied for the 2019–20 volunteer emergency services equipment program (VESEP), which had brief support from the minister when I raised it last in this place, support which then evaporated along with the chances of Warrandyte CFA's application. In recent correspondence the minister stated that the Victorian government 'values the work of the Warrandyte CFA brigade who dedicate their time and skills to keeping the community safe'. The minister also stated in her correspondence that the Warrandyte CFA needed to provide 'further detail and information' for their grant application.

I viewed the brigade's application and can confidently say that this thorough 40-page document clearly states all the relevant information and details for the proposed works. The minister may also want to have her department re-look at the information they have about previous VESEP grants, because in her letter the minister claims that the Warrandyte CFA received such a grant in 2016–17, which simply is not true.

The minister also claims that the CFA's land and building service will be working closely with the brigade to re-scope the project. That is yet to happen, and it is very unfortunate that the government did not believe that the safety of the Warrandyte volunteers was such a high priority when they denied this grant request. In the absence of the minister's support, this highly respected brigade will have to continue to break OH&S regulations and be forced to change into their turnout gear in the engine bay

of the station whilst doing their best to keep our community and others safe. So I would ask the minister to direct the CFA to approve this application or make funds available through other forms to ensure that the safety and wellbeing of these volunteers is no longer being put at risk.

DROMANA SECONDARY COLLEGE

Mr BRAYNE (Nepean) (19:06): (1866) My adjournment is for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is that the minister come and visit Dromana Secondary College. Dromana Secondary received \$2.36 million in last year's state budget to replace old buildings with new permanent modular buildings, works and money that will make a huge difference to this school community. With the old structure now completely removed from the site, we look forward to the new buildings coming in for a starting time of term 3 this year.

Making sure our schools are well resourced and supported is one of the most important parts of my role. Having the minister down to open this and speak with principal Alan Marr and student representatives would be a huge thrill for that school community and an opportunity for our students on the peninsula to show the government that we produce some of our country's best talent from our Mornington Peninsula.

COUNTRY FIRE AUTHORITY EUROA ELECTORATE BRIGADES

Ms RYAN (Euroa) (19:07): (1867) My adjournment matter this evening is also for the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and I am pleased that she is at the table tonight. The action I am seeking from the minister is an announcement of funding for upgrades to CFA stations and firefighting equipment across my electorate.

I am particularly grateful to those volunteers who have gone away through this remarkable fire season, particularly on strike teams, many of whom have worked through very extreme conditions. We have been pretty lucky in the Euroa electorate compared with other parts of the state, but there are increased concerns in my brigades about their firefighting capability, and I guess we all know that it is only a matter of time before we are fire impacted as well. It might not be this year but in future years.

At Pyalong, Heathcote, Strathbogie and Molka volunteers are in desperate need of new CFA stations. At Pyalong volunteers have run out of room. They have no toilets at the station, and they have been told they are on the list but they are stuck in a bureaucratic impasse. I met with their brigade captain, Brendan Kelly, and other volunteers last week, who told me it is extremely difficult for them to recruit new members without appropriate facilities.

Heathcote CFA volunteers have similar problems. Their station has no change facilities, which makes things particularly difficult because 20 per cent of their brigade is female. They are also having to do much of their cleaning of vehicles on the footpath because there is not enough space. For seven years they have been lobbying for a new station. Volunteers have identified a number of potential sites, but the government will not accept any of them, leaving them frustrated and disheartened.

Strathbogie CFA has been circulating a community-driven petition which is calling on the government to urgently fund an upgrade of their fire station to provide more space. They are so cramped they cannot house their ultralight tanker in their station. Instead a neighbour has agreed to park it next door, and again an ideal site has been found but no action has been taken.

Forget about having a toilet at Molka; the CFA station does not have any power or even running water. The CFA have put some solar panels and batteries on the shed to have enough lighting to get the truck out at night, but the brigade has been virtually forgotten.

As Lima South CFA volunteers have told me, they are concerned about the age of their truck, which is 30 years old. Equipment of this age just cannot be as reliable as it once was. And the other thing I should point out is that changes recently to the guidelines around strike teams mean that only trucks with crew cabs can now be deployed, and as a result across the Benalla group we have 20 brigades but

only six trucks with the necessary crew cabs. Without investment in new trucks, the brigades' capacity to deploy during long campaign fires like those we have seen is heavily reduced, so the question in many people's minds is: where is the fire services levy going?

MORDIALLOC ELECTORATE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (19:10): (1868) My adjournment this evening is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and the action I seek is for the minister to come out to the electorate of Mordialloc and see the progress of the Mordialloc Freeway project, a substantial infrastructure investment in our community which is well underway, and to meet with some of the incredible workers who are building the Mordialloc Freeway. This project has been decades in the making. It was a commitment in previous budgets of the Andrews Labor government. Going from a bypass to a freeway, this 9-kilometre road will transform how we get around our community.

It is an action-packed year down our way. Down in our patch it is all happening. We have got the Mordialloc Freeway underway and level crossings underway. In May the occupation starts at Mentone and Cheltenham—a 53-day occupation and a significant amount of work. Our local community has dealt with a lot of disruptions with the Carrum level crossing removal. We will front up again. We will give people a lot of notice when we get underway with that. We will let people know about those changes to road infrastructure and the construction impacts when we get underway with the Mordialloc Freeway. And then of course there are the Bonbeach, Chelsea and Edithvale level crossing removals—heavy occupation in September 2021. It is an action-packed 18 months, and it is an absolute excitement, joy and pleasure in our patch to see the transformation.

This is not only a once-in-a-generation but a once-in-a-hundred-year chance to make our community better for the future. When you think about the Mordialloc Freeway, its iteration back in the 1970s and where we find ourselves today, some 3.2 million tonnes of soil have been moved out and 400 jobs are underway and supported through this process. When I was out there when we did the smoking ceremony to recognise the connection to land of our Indigenous people, it was such a humbling and incredible experience, and then to also see veterans in construction uniforms was something that I was really proud to see. I know the now Minister for Corrections had a substantial role in that as well; to see veterans getting that chance on major infrastructure projects was a source of great pride when he was Minister for Industry and Employment. It makes a difference in lives and gives people that opportunity to do more as they go through and transition into civilian life.

So the Mordialloc Freeway is up and about. We are up and about down in the Mordialloc electorate as we anticipate this incredible project and the transformational benefits it will have, and I cannot wait to have the transport minister out to visit my patch and see the progress getting underway.

LATROBE VALLEY POLICE RESOURCES

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) (19:13): (1869) My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. The action I seek is for the minister to provide the Latrobe Valley region with sufficient police resources to help address the incidence of crime within my community.

I want to place on the record my support of my local police, who on the whole do a wonderful job in what can be a very challenging and sometimes dangerous environment. I know many members personally, and I well understand the sacrifices they make in serving and protecting our community. For police to undertake their duties to their maximum capacity we need to ensure they are adequately resourced so that in turn they are able to make our community safe.

I was recently contacted by a concerned group of local residents who had been the recent victims of criminal activity. Subsequently we were able to help coordinate a forum in which senior personnel from Victoria Police attended along with approximately 100 people from the local community. Whilst I was not able to attend personally due to Parliament commitments, a number of issues were raised

and they were highlighted in the *Latrobe Valley Express* of 10 February. Within the same article Latrobe Acting Inspector Peter Fusinato said, and I quote:

“It’s a tough gig, we work hard at it and we’ve been under resourced. The normal response would be that we would rally the troops ...

“When we have an identified an issue within the division, we throw as much resources at it as we can.

“This was identified clearly in January with your crime spiking and we didn’t have the resources to throw at it, so it’s been a minimal response to the best ability we could.

I would say, to be fair and reasonable, that local police were dragged away from the region due to bushfire events, and there is certainly understanding from me and the community; however, the Latrobe region does have extremely poor crime statistics. When you look at it from a local government area perspective and criminal incidents per 100 000 population, unfortunately our community sits second behind Melbourne city. So unfortunately there are a lot of criminal incidents within our community, and as a consequence it is important that we have adequate police resources to tackle that.

Of course there is much community frustration also relating to the punishment, or lack thereof, handed down to offenders once they are apprehended. One resident told our local paper, and I quote:

They know when they get caught they’re going to be slapped on the wrist.

So it is imperative that offenders are dealt with knowing the impact their actions have upon their victims as well. The reality is that many of our local people are living in fear at the moment, and it is imperative that the government provides adequate local police resources and that those coming before the courts have penalties applied that reflect community expectations. If that means that the government needs to increase penalties or change laws to ensure that criminal activity like has been happening in our community will not be tolerated, then so be it.

LYNBROOK BOULEVARD–SOUTH GIPPSLAND HIGHWAY, LYNBROOK

Mr MAAS (Narre Warren South) (19:16): (1870) The matter I wish to raise is for the Minister for Roads in the other place, and it is in regard to road safety and associated infrastructure improvements in Narre Warren South. The action I seek is that the minister join me in my electorate to inspect the intersection of Lynbrook Boulevard and South Gippsland Highway. This intersection has received \$200 000 from the Andrews Labor government for improved road safety measures. I know this local upgrade will be welcomed by Narre Warren South locals as investment in road safety is an issue frequently raised with me by my constituents.

The \$200 000 project will see two new flashing lights installed on the southern end of the intersection to reduce the chance of rear-end collisions, and further signage improvements will take place on the northern end to ensure drivers are aware and alert when approaching areas of built-up traffic. Local residents have been asking for intersection upgrades, and I am proud that the Andrews Labor government is delivering these much-needed safety improvements. Works on the intersection are almost complete. As this important intersection is on the border of my electorate I look forward to working with the member for Cranbourne and the relevant departments and community members as this government continues to improve safety and congestion on our roads.

DROUIN SECONDARY COLLEGE

Mr BLACKWOOD (Narracan) (19:17): (1871) I raise a matter for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is that he provide funding for the transition of outdoor courts to a covered outdoor learning area at Drouin Secondary College. Last week I met with representatives of the college, including school captains Freya Peck and Jack McConville. They explained the amazing growth in numbers the college is experiencing and the difficulties this is causing with learning space scheduling and catering for the demand on college facilities. Their plan is to provide an all-weather sheltered teaching and learning space that will cater for four to five classes at one time rather than the two classes the two courts currently provide for.

The covered area will also provide shelter during recess and lunch, and it will provide breakout spaces for other key learning domain subjects, a space that the whole school or large cohorts can use for activities and a space that can be used by community and sporting groups for training, youth games and community events. As weather during the majority of terms two and three is not conducive for regular use of outdoor grassed areas or the current outdoor courts, the safety of the students will be vastly enhanced with the provision of a sheltered area.

In terms of cost, the project is estimated to be around \$550 000. The college does not expect the entire amount to come from government and is prepared to undertake a fundraising program targeting local business, the Bendigo Community Bank and parents and friends of the college. In the past the generosity of the Drouin community has supported projects at the college and supplemented government funding to ensure all students receive the best chance possible for an excellent education.

Enrolments at the college are increasing by about 10 per cent per year and at present stand at about 1100. The population of Drouin is increasing at about the same rate or higher. The current population of Drouin is around 20 000 and is expected to reach 50 000 in about 10 to 15 years. Drouin Secondary College is held in very high esteem by the community and has an excellent reputation for strong student endeavour and success, parent support and the hard work and commitment of teachers and staff. I ask the minister to consider this request from the college very seriously while being mindful of the pressure mounting from population growth and the needs and safety of current students.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: If there are no more adjournment matters this evening, I call on the Minister for Corrections to respond to the member for Lara.

RESPONSES

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie—Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support) (19:20): It is my honour to respond to the member for Lara. I had the pleasure of being with the member for Lara last Friday at the sod-turning for the Chisholm Road prison in his electorate, our new maximum security prison that is all about investing for the future, and with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services next to me and her rollout of over 3000 police, we do know we do need to invest in the future.

So the answer to the member for Lara is a big 'yes'; it would be a pleasure and an honour to meet with the community advisory group. This is a very important community advisory group in the member's electorate. He has been a great advocate for his community particularly, as he outlined in his contribution, with the opportunities for procurement, and we know through the work of G21 Geelong Regional Opportunities for Work there is all sorts of work we can do to make sure this is not only a win for our corrections system but a win for the local community. I look forward to that meeting in the very near future.

Ms NEVILLE (Bellarine—Minister for Water, Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (19:21): It has made it hard to be as efficient as I normally am, so I have got a number of issues to address tonight. If I could just start with the member for Warrandyte, I just want to be really clear that with decision-making—and it probably also goes for the member for Euroa but I will touch a bit more on her matters as well—the recommendations are made by the CFA. The decisions are made by the CFA. I know that we have seen some people in Canberra who might think about directing people to change recommendations and infrastructure. I do not direct the CFA; in fact I think we have all been criticised for trying to direct the CFA, and we should not take on the CFA. So I do not do that. I take the advice of the CFA. I will of course take up the issues that have been raised by the member for Warrandyte to make sure that the CFA—it is not bureaucrats; it is the CFA, the chief fire officer, deputies, the assistant chief officer, the operation managers who will go out there and talk to the brigade about their issue. I will make sure that happens. It was in my letter. I am disappointed it has not happened, and I will make sure that that occurs.

Similarly for the member for Euroa, firstly, I just want to be very clear that since we came to government we have doubled the budget for equipment and for buildings for the CFA, and we are in the process because basically none of it happened. There was a funding cut. The previous government got rid of the 20-year rule around appliances as well. We used to have a rule. The Labor government then introduced the volunteer emergency services community program under the Bracks-Brumby government. So we have increased the funding to the CFA by 40 per cent to equipment and buildings—doubled that funding. We are absolutely investing in new buildings and equipment. Nagambie and Broadford I think in the member's electorate are being rebuilt. They are under construction; it is fantastic to see. So on those stations that the member has raised I will seek advice and get the CFA to provide the advice to me about that.

I will just speak on Pyalong because I know the member raised this in the media this week. I made some inquiries about it and I was told by the CFA that originally when a toilet was to be funded the brigade had said no. I have gone back to double-check that and to see if that is still their position, because there are some quite challenging septic issues there, but I have gone back on that. But let us be really clear: we are doubling the investment in appliances, we have doubled the investment in our build. We will continue to do that, and I am positive we will continue to do it at an increased rate.

In terms of the member for Morwell in terms of policing, I know particularly family violence is where we are seeing the biggest growth unfortunately in the Latrobe Valley in terms of family violence and the crime rate increase. That is why it was one of the first priority areas for the specialist family violence police as well as the additional police around family violence, but I take the point, and that is why we do need more police—no question. We have actually got 2600 more police now than when we came to government, and we have funded a staffing allocation model. We have got about another 1200 to go yet. I am hoping to make some announcements soon. That model takes account of crime rates, it takes account of regional communities, all of that, and I am hopeful that we will continue to see improved policing numbers in communities like the Latrobe Valley and other regional parts of Victoria.

A number of other members have raised issues, and I will pass those issues on to the relevant ministers.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The house now stands adjourned until tomorrow.

House adjourned 7.25 pm.