PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Book 3

24, 25 and 26 February 2015

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FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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Deputy Speaker:

Mr D. A. NARDELLA

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

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The Hon. D. M. ANDREWS

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier:

The Hon. J. A. MERLINO

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

The Hon. M. J. GUY

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

The Hon. D. J. HODGETT

Leader of The Nationals:

The Hon. P. L. WALSH

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Ms S. RYAN

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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Andrews, Mr Daniel Michael	Mulgrave	ALP	McLeish, Ms Lucinda Gaye	Eildon	LP
Angus, Mr Neil Andrew Warwick	Forest Hill	LP	Merlino, Mr James Anthony	Monbulk	ALP
Asher, Ms Louise	Brighton	LP	Morris, Mr David Charles	Mornington	LP
Battin, Mr Bradley William	Gembrook	LP	Mulder, Mr Terence Wynn	Polwarth	LP
Blackwood, Mr Gary John	Narracan	LP	Napthine, Dr Denis Vincent	South-West Coast	LP
Blandthorn, Ms Elizabeth Anne	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Nardella, Mr Donato Antonio	Melton	ALP
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Knight, Ms Sharon Patricia	Wendouree	ALP	Watt, Mr Graham Travis	Burwood	LP
Languiller, Mr Telmo Ramon	Tarneit	ALP	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Rowville	LP
Lim, Mr Muy Hong	Clarinda	ALP	Williams, Ms Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
McCurdy, Mr Timothy Logan	Ovens Valley	Nats	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP

[1] Resigned 2 February 2015

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

Joint committees

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

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

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Tuesday, 24 February 2015

The SPEAKER (Hon. Telmo Languiller) took the chair at 12.04 p.m. and read the prayer.

SWEARING IN OF MEMBERS

Member for Richmond

The SPEAKER announced the election of Mr Richard Wynne as member for the electoral district of Richmond, pursuant to writ issued on 4 November 2014.

Mr Wynne introduced and affirmed.

GIPPSLAND SOUTH BY-ELECTION

The SPEAKER — Order! I advise the house that on 17 February 2015 I issued a writ for a by-election for the electoral district of Gippsland South to be held on 14 March 2015.

CONDOLENCES

Hon. Evan Herbert Walker, AO

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I move:

> That this house expresses its sincere sorrow at the death of the Honourable Evan Herbert Walker, AO, MLC, and places on the record its acknowledgement of the valuable services rendered by him to the Parliament and the people of Victoria as a member of the Legislative Council for the electoral province of Melbourne from 1979 to 1992; Minister for Conservation and Minister for Planning from 1982 to 1983; Minister of Public Works from 1983 to 1985; Minister for Planning and Environment from 1983 to 1986; Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs from 1985 to 1988; Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources from 1988 to 1989; and Minister for Major Projects, Minister for the Arts and Minister responsible for Post-Secondary Education from 1989 to 1990.

Our city was not always the world's most livable. In my lifetime you could have heard the wreckers tearing down some of our finest buildings and uprooting some of our proudest trees. You could have seen the young faces of urban poverty and despair, peering out from streets and lanes in the dense inner suburbs. And over on the other side of a lonely river that carved through the heart of our city, you could smell the smoke and the sludge of 100 factories.

On its southern bank, too, were the cheap flickering carnival lights of circuses, skating rinks and nightclubs, where today one of the world's finest performing arts and cultural centres now stands; where today some of the country's tallest buildings, biggest attractions and best restaurants greet international tourists by the million; and where just last weekend thousands of families lined up along the riverbanks to watch the fireworks and take in the atmosphere of the White Night festival, enjoying the sights and the sounds of a city at its best.

Two kinds of people got us here. Two kinds of people during the 1970s and 1980s helped us build a new city and forge a new identity — architects, designers and planners who conceived of it, and leaders in business and politics who believed in it — and Evan Walker was both. Of course there was more to this man than 1.7 square kilometres on the other side of the Yarra — indeed so much more to his contribution to our capital city and to our state. Let us consider Southbank a snapshot of Walker's will and Walker's way as a young person, as a private citizen, as a minister and as one of Melbourne's leading thinkers, planners and doers.

According to an interview conducted for an *Age* article later in his life, Evan Walker 'learnt a lot about the river and its relationship to the city by living on its poor side'. The YMCA on the corner of City Road and Sturt Street was his home for a year while he worked as a junior draftsman at the Australian Paper Mills plant on the Yarra bank. The article says:

> Walker was constantly dismayed by the transition from the sublime to the grime — the way the Yarra on the east side of Princes Bridge was fit for private school chaps to row on but became a horrid drain within a few metres of the west side of the bridge.
>
> Every day … he could see the flotsam caught in blackberry bushes that lined both embankments. He got an overwhelming sense that the city had 'turned its back' on the Yarra.
>
> 'The river was a drain', he says. Factories disgorged their waste directly into the river, described at the time as being 'too thick to swim in, too thin to plough'.

A few decades later, as the Minister for Planning in the newly elected Cain government, Evan Walker changed everything with a single bold stroke of a pen, pulling the precinct under his remit and declaring it open for business. In his four transformational years as the Minister for Planning and Environment and later as the Minister for Industry and the Minister responsible for Post-Secondary Education, Walker helped solve many of the problems he identified in his first contribution in the other place in 1979, such as our fading reputation as 'one of the world's most beautiful 19th-century cities' with 'buildings of great elegance' that were 'under threat' and our 'worst examples of social dislocation, of human degradation and economic injustice.' He went on to say:

> Amidst the symbols of wealth and privilege which surround us are areas of grinding poverty, of real housing shortage, of derelict school facilities, of high levels of pollution …

In the years he spent as Victoria's Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs we saw that Evan Walker's efforts extended not merely to Melbourne but to the borders of our state. He had a reputation as an honest broker who got things done for farmers and growers. He saw his goals as more than simply economic. In a 1985 interview with the Warrnambool *Standard* he noted that productivity of the land was very important but that the wellbeing of the families in rural communities was just as important.

For a time he worked on farms, helping milk some 80 cows in Corryong and working on the wheat harvest in the Mallee, but he was better known as an architect. Walker studied at RMIT and the University of Melbourne, where he topped his final year in 1959. A scholarship took him to Canada, where he studied, worked, wed, built a successful firm and even campaigned for Pierre Trudeau.

On Walker's ultimate return to Melbourne in 1969 his politics came with him. Ten years later he was elected to the Victorian Parliament, representing Melbourne Province, but he was sworn in as Labor's deputy leader in the Legislative Council before he had even taken his seat. His biography is not typical of the movement — our movement — at that time. As always, his presence, his promotion and his achievements heralded the forces of change, whether simply in our party or in our society at large.

Very few of us in this place, having lived a public life, can hope to depart it with universal acclaim, but the tributes we have heard over the last week from all sides of politics tell us that Evan Walker was among the exceptions. He died after a long illness that robbed him of his mobility but never his dignity. I know his former colleagues will remember fondly the quote that he was an architect in Parliament, not a politician, as he often said in his first years as a minister.

I know the people of Melbourne acknowledge the author of our modern livable city; the leader who protected our past and planned for our future. I know that Evan's wife and partner Judith, and their children Chris, Ben and Rebecca and their families will treasure the years they spent with this decent and honest man: an abundant life, a profound legacy, style and substance, a shaper and quite simply a policy giant. On behalf of the Victorian Labor Party and the Victorian government I offer his family and his friends my condolences, and on behalf of all Victorians I offer him my thanks.

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — I rise to acknowledge on behalf of the coalition parties, the Liberals and The Nationals, the life of Evan Walker. Many of us end up being known for what we have achieved in this place, but Evan Walker was someone who, despite becoming a politician — and a successful one at that — always kept a strong interest in his pre-political career and eventually headed back to that field after his political life, where he made further contributions. Evan Walker began an architectural firm with his friend Daryl Jackson in 1963, and together they made a lasting impact upon our city. In the late 1960s he travelled to Canada, where he met his wife, Judith, and volunteered in the political campaign of the Canadian Liberal leader Pierre Trudeau.

Becoming politically active here in Victoria, Mr Walker was one of the people who contemporised his own party, the Labor Party, and eventually gained election to the Legislative Council in the 1970s. He was a member for Melbourne Province from 1979 until 1992, and he became not just the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Council but also the Leader of the Government for seven years from 1983 to 1990. As has been said by the Premier about his ministerial career, it was vast, including the following portfolios: agriculture and rural affairs; industry, technology and resources; major projects; arts; post-secondary education; conservation; and of course planning.

Speaker, the house might indulge me a little if I concentrate my remarks on Mr Walker's career as planning minister — a planning minister from the Legislative Council — because there have been a few of us in that job: Alan Hunt, Evan Walker, Justin Madden, me and almost Mr Brian Tee. There have been a number of us who have come from that chamber having held that position.

While I was looking at a range of newspaper clippings about the life and activities of Evan Walker, I noticed a series of articles that could not escape my attention. They are from the *Age*, and they are about planning. They report on a series of rolling discussions with the then new planning minister. When he was appointed in 1982, the headline said of the new and enthusiastic minister that he was going to keep a low profile on planning. They discussed protection, conservation and heritage, all of which were the new minister's priorities. By 1982, a few months later, the headlines screamed:

> The job's harder than I thought, says Mr Walker.

Evan Walker also said:

> I'm a bit stunned by the sheer volume of work.

Twenty-eight years later I would entirely agree with that second round of headlines — and no doubt none of the other 13 former planning ministers of this state would disagree with Mr Walker saying that the job of planning minister and the planning portfolio itself since the 1970s has not been the easiest gig in a government. But Evan Walker did great things in the planning portfolio. Some have called him the father of urban renewal in our city, and I believe it is a title he does deserve.

Melbourne of the early 1980s was the doughnut city: a city with heavily populated growing outer suburbs and a CBD core that was desolate after dark. Nothing really happened in our downtown area. The south bank of the Yarra was occupied by sheds and factories, and the Docklands is where the smaller ships, avoiding the costs of the big port, unloaded goods in between the rail hump yards. It was Evan Walker's vision for Southbank that began the change of our inner city. As a boy of the early 1980s I remember the road with the deep grass nature strip leading down to the south bank of the Yarra. It was the only open space on the southern side of the river because the factories of industrialised south Melbourne, whether it was Allen's Sweets, the skipping girl lights or a range of newly opened car yards, filled up the rest of the space. All that began to change under Evan Walker's policy reign. As this house may know, I am a bit of a fan of Southbank. It inspired me in my time as planning minister and particularly with regard to what can be achieved with urban renewal.

For those who would pillory urban renewal — and Evan Walker as well had his detractors — I say, look at Southbank in 1985 and at what it has become today. This massive change was facilitated by: the Lower Yarra River development plan of 1985; the Southbank promenade, designed by leading architects Denton Corker Marshall and opened back in 1990, facilitated by Evan Walker; the pedestrian footbridge, which the current Lord Mayor believes, quite rightly, could be named in his honour; and buying up many long-term Crown leases which were able to be facilitated as Southbank urban renewal.

It was Evan Walker's vision to change this area, to turn what was a poorly maintained, dirty old factory area into modern, attractive and welcoming urban spaces. When the then Department of Main Roads occupied the first commercial building and the Southgate complex opened, Southbank began the unstoppable urban renewal that is still happening in our city today. It became a place for people, not a place for factories and machines. Importantly, Melbourne found the Yarra. At that stage it was a river much maligned by those from interstate. Public policy began to shift our city towards it, and opportunities for focusing on and meeting those spaces were designed towards the river. This drive to upgrade our inner urban landscapes, focusing on the Yarra, saw thousands of people return to the city and to the core of our town, which has come to characterise a contemporary metropolis here in Melbourne, far in excess of any other in this nation.

As Southbank began to fill, subsequent governments saw Docklands, Docklands North and even Fishermans Bend as places that can and should change to see our city change into a contemporary, modern metropolis which has a heart of people, not empty office spaces and windswept, vacant streets. That was Evan Walker's vision for our city. It has been a strong, lasting and successful one.

But his vision of a modern Melbourne was not just for the central city area; it was also for our suburbs. Planning policy under Evan Walker endorsed and actively focused on the key Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works planning strategy for 14 key growth centres around the city to be built up. Those growth centres are the core of what we now call activities areas and build upon the 1956 metropolitan plan for Melbourne. Our city planners began to think in policy terms that we could no longer be focused on one style of growth — we had to achieve that mix of inner city urban renewal, density in defined suburban locations and the cottage housing industry mix that was still happening in the outskirts of the city.

Evan Walker started his tenure as planning minister being described as a conservationist, and if you look back, you see that within a few years he was falling foul of those same claims that are set against every planning minister — that he was 'too overdevelopment'.

Irrespective, as planning minister Evan Walker has left a marvellous legacy for our city. For those who recently contemporised his strongest piece of legislative work, the Planning and Environment Act 1987, or took inspiration from his belief that our city's greatest strength was that of its people centred around a vibrant, active city core, he was a person of vision and one not without opinions. After leaving Parliament, Evan Walker continued his interest in planning public policy and headed up the architecture faculty at Melbourne University. He once said that he joined politics because 'I wanted to be at the front end of the decision-making process' — and that he most certainly was.

He was a man who passionately supported the abolition of the Legislative Council, who, along with Alan Hunt,

is seen as a leader in the planning ministerial tree and who left a vision, a legacy, that many others have sought to add to or emulate. Can I say that our city is richer for his tenure and will be deeply appreciative for the planning policy settings that he began.

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — It is an honour to join with the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in paying tribute to Evan Walker. Evan was one of the few people who can be said to have fundamentally changed the face of Melbourne for the better. Evan Walker will be remembered for his incredible foresight and innovative planning and for being instrumental in some of our most iconic precincts. Born on 11 October 1935, he attended Box Hill Grammar School and then Melbourne High School. He graduated with a bachelor of architecture from the University of Melbourne. He established architecture firm Daryl Jackson Evan Walker — still influencing the evolution of our city today as Jackson Architecture.

Evan Walker spent time in Canada during the 1960s, including while achieving his masters of architecture, but ultimately he returned to Australia, joining the Australian Labor Party in 1969. He was elected to the Victorian Legislative Council for Melbourne Province in 1979, and following Labor's victory in 1982 he became Minister for Conservation and Minister for Planning. We have heard about the many other portfolios that Evan had during his parliamentary career.

Evan Walker retired from politics in 1992, but nearly a quarter of a century later his legacy is felt each and every day in our city. Evan Walker understood the profound benefits — social, economic and environmental — of world-leading urban design and landscape architecture. We have him to thank for starting Southbank, one of the most significant initiatives to revitalise Melbourne's CBD and help turn the city towards the Yarra. Meagan and I were at Southbank a couple of weeks ago enjoying a meal at one of its great restaurants. It was a beautiful night, and as we enjoyed our meal we watched elite cyclists speed down the straight as part of the prologue for the Herald Sun Tour. It was an amazing spectacle.

It was a beautiful night, we were looking at the great vista of our city and seeing a major event in the heart of it, and we marvelled at what a magnificent precinct Southbank is. It is a triumph and celebration of all that is great about Melbourne. These moments of happiness and joy that give people a sense of community in our city and in our state are the legacy that Evan Walker has left for all of us.

Evan is also credited with the development of Melbourne's sporting precinct and the design and installation of the MCG lights. Back in those days the installation of those lights was an incredibly controversial project, and it was steered through successfully thanks to the statesmanship of Evan Walker. What a great outcome it was for our state.

We are all custodians of the Melbourne and Olympic parks precinct and all that it means to Victorians. Whenever in government, we on both sides of the chamber are responsible for ensuring that we enhance, not detract from, what is acknowledged as being one of the best sporting and cultural precincts anywhere in the world.

Evan Walker's influence remains strong. I recall that when previous Labor government members were discussing the design of a new rectangular stadium, we were seriously contemplating either a bog-standard ground and grandstand design or an award-winning architecturally beautiful stadium. We did not want to let down people like Evan Walker and other pioneers of the Melbourne and Olympic parks precinct. We did not want to fail to meet the high expectations of our community. Whenever we do something in this precinct — such as the work the former Kennett government did with Hisense Arena — every generation has a responsibility to ensure that the foundations laid by the likes of Evan Walker are enhanced. That is what we all endeavour to do.

Evan Walker also worked with former Liberal planning minister Alan Hunt on the heritage protection of Collins Street and other parts of our city.

'Visionary' is a word too often thrown around, but as the Premier said in his remarks, there is no better testament to Evan Walker's great vision for our city than the hundreds of thousands of people who thronged the banks of the Yarra for White Night last weekend.

I offer my sincere condolences to Evan's wife, Judith, and their children, Chris, Ben and Rebecca. Evan Walker's contribution in this Parliament has given us so much to be thankful for. We give him thanks today.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — On behalf of The Nationals I join the Leader of the Opposition in speaking on the condolence motion moved by the Premier for Evan Herbert Walker, AO, MLC.

Evan Walker was born on 11 October 1935 and was educated at a number of schools, including Box Hill Grammar, Melbourne High School, RMIT, University of Melbourne, University of Toronto and Victoria University of Technology. What is interesting is that at

14 Evan left school for a period of time and went to Corryong to work on a dairy farm and milk dairy cows because he had a long-held ambition to become a farmer.

As the story would later be told, his father wrote to him asking how it was all going, and he realised at that stage that maybe his career was not in milking cows and that he should perhaps apply himself more at school. He went back and studied architecture, and the previous speakers have clearly set out what he achieved as an architect. I am sure he was motivated to study by the thought every morning of whether he should get up to milk cows or go to university and get on with the career that he in fact chose, and I am sure that he would have thought that he made the right choice.

He had the opportunity to study in both Australia and Canada. He started an architecture firm with Daryl Jackson here in Melbourne in 1963, but he also practised and lectured in architecture in Toronto. Having read Evan Walker's CV, it is obvious that he worked with many and varied communities in a range of professional roles before entering Parliament. That is the perfect career for a parliamentarian — to have had varied roles in both community and professional organisations. When he came to the Parliament Evan Walker was very well qualified to be a politician and to manage the portfolios he took on during his political career. He was elected an MLC for Melbourne Province in 1979 and served until 2 October 1992. Reports at the time said he represented the new Labor breed, a man who was quite tall and handsome and considered to be urbane. I do not know what that says about that generation of Labor politicians, but he was held in high regard.

Others have focused on his political career as the planning minister. As an ex-minister for agriculture, I will touch briefly on some of his work in that portfolio. I notice from his CV that for a period of 12 months he was the Minister for Planning and Environment at the same time as he was Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs, which no doubt brought some challenges with the different groups he would have had coming to talk to him.

It is always the way that maiden speeches are read by the most people when a condolence motion is being prepared. It is interesting to read about the aspirations people have when they come into this Parliament. In his maiden speech Evan Walker started off very well by congratulating the President of the time — but he then quickly added that he would probably be the last ever President, because at the time the Labor Party supported the abolition of the upper house. I am not sure whether there is still on the other side of the chamber a will to abolish the upper house. He spoke about the fact that except for a Mr Robert Hamilton, who had represented the electorate of Toorak for a short a period of time, he was the first architect to be elected to the Victorian Parliament. We have now had a Premier who was also an architect and very committed to the future of Melbourne as one of the world's most livable cities.

Evan Walker spoke about the way a lot of professional people, such as those in the fields of law and medicine, help people when they are in trouble, whereas architects plan for the future and help people achieve their aspirations. The way he himself did that has been well articulated by the previous speakers. He talked about Messrs Knight and Kerr, who designed Parliament House. It is interesting to note that they built these chambers in 11 months; if that was able to be done, there was obviously not the red tape then that we have in this state now.

He talked about his personal commitment to the radical redistribution of wealth and power in society, both from an ideological and a practical point of view. That is something he practised throughout his time in politics. Another thing that stands out is that at the time he made his maiden speech Melbourne Province was home to no fewer than 8 of the 12 Victorian Football League clubs, so he struggled to decide which club to barrack for. The AFL has now spread right across Australia. It has changed substantially since that maiden speech in 1979.

Evan Walker made a major contribution to this state. In June 1985, as Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs, he faced a demonstration of 35 000 farmers. I can inform the house that I was one of those 35 000 farmers who were not happy about the agricultural situation here in Victoria. My impression of Evan Walker at that time was that while many farmers may not have agreed with him, they believed he was someone who listened, who would talk with them and who did care. That is something he said in his maiden speech — he cared about building a fair and just society.

Evan faced issues with the dairy industry when some farmers faced cost price pressures because the returns for milk were not equal to the prices. If my memory serves me correctly, there was a dairy blockade at the time and during that blockade dairy farmers poured their milk out onto the ground. Evan had to invoke the Essential Services Act 2005 to ensure that milk was sent to the dairy companies which made it available in Melbourne.

Evan would have had a varied life as a minister. In the portfolios he held, particularly the agriculture, conservation and planning portfolios, he would have had some contentious issues to deal with, but, as I said, my recollection is that people saw him as someone who listened to, engaged with and cared about people.

To Judy, to Mr Walker's children and to his extended family I offer the sincere condolences of The Nationals. Vale Evan Herbert Walker, AO.

The SPEAKER — Order! I call on the tall Minister for Planning, who is looking well. Welcome!

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Planning) — Thank you, Speaker. With your indulgence, I congratulate you on this magnificent achievement of yours. I know it is a matter of great pride for you and your family. You have come a very long way from the public housing towers of Racecourse Road in Flemington. Your new position here as Speaker of the house is a fantastic achievement. I am sure Evan Walker would have been immensely proud to see that the opportunity to be a representative of the Labor Party in this Parliament has been provided to you and to all members on this side, and in your case he would have been proud to see that you have been provided the opportunity to hold the high office of Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

It is a measure of the respect and standing of Evan Walker that no less than seven former premiers from across the political divide attended his funeral yesterday. Former Premier John Cain, Evan's children, Chris, Ben and Rebecca, professional colleague and friend Daryl Jackson, and former staff member Michael Henry spoke beautifully about his life and achievements. The notices of condolence that were published in our daily newspapers last week spoke to the deep affection many had for Evan and the respect with which he was regarded. All of these tributes agreed on one point — that Evan was the greatest planning minister this state has seen. That is certainly my view.

Evan was a man of vision. He had professional training as an architect, and he had a political career that taught him how to get things done and how to stay focused on the long-term goal of making Victoria a better place to live. Evan's role as deputy leader in the Cain government placed him at a critical point in history — a turning point. After 27 years of Liberal governments, Victoria turned to Labor, which at the time was led by John Cain. Evan's appointment as Minister for Planning and Environment gave him the platform to execute a sweeping set of reforms that transformed not only Melbourne but also regional Victoria.

Evan came to office 10 years after that other great visionary who also very recently passed, Tom Uren, and he delivered a second generation of reforms following up on Uren's urban development initiatives. Whitlam gave the suburbs sewerage, transport, schools and hospitals, and Evan Walker injected design, lifestyle and that often abused term, livability, to the city.

Melbourne today is a welcoming, exciting and dynamic city. It leads the way in major sporting events, and its streets are adorned with the best Victorian, art deco and modern architecture. It boasts Australia's best restaurants, bars and cafes. It is a city with Australia's finest network of parks, bike paths and rivers. It is a city of art and culture, business and innovation, design, fashion and of course festivals.

These things were dying in 1970s and were revitalised by a welter of reforms that can be traced back to the Cain and successive governments, and the seminal influence that Evan Walker had on modernising Victoria's outlook. Evan is often credited as the man who created Southbank, but he did so much more than that. Melbourne today is a city that proudly embraces the Yarra River, but in the early 1980s the Yarra was politely described by some as a utilitarian space. Those who were brutally honest referred to it as a post-industrial sewer. There is no doubt that much of the riverside in the centre of our city was abandoned and redundant. Today it has been transformed, and Evan's much-loved analogy of a four-poster bed was that Flinders Street station and the arts precinct were at one end and a convention centre and the Docklands were at the other. Of course, this has come to fruition, and now many Melburnians cannot conceive of our city without this beating heart.

The principal architect of this turnaround — and I use the term 'architect' in both the professional and the general sense — were Evan Walker and of course the Secretary for Planning at the time, David Yencken. There is a memorial to them on the banks of the Yarra River near the *Polly Woodside*, which features a picture looking back at the city of the 1970s. All you can see are ships unloading, factories, trains and wasteland. I invite everyone here today to visit the memorial and look back along the river to see the vibrant spaces that have been created and the active life that has been returned to the river and its precincts, largely due to the efforts of one man — Evan Walker.

This was by no means his only achievement. He introduced effective heritage controls and applied urban conservation zones and the first-ever planning controls of the inner city. In addition, rural land was protected

through the reports of the Land Conservation Council, and the Leader of The Nationals spoke about Evan's very strong interest in rural Victoria. As Minister for Planning and Environment he produced Australia's first greenhouse gas strategy in 1988, appointed David Scott as the first environment commissioner, and produced the state's conservation strategy. Perhaps his greatest achievement was transforming how environment and planning decisions were taken, ensuring that every cabinet submission had to detail the environmental issues around a proposed policy.

When I was preparing for today's debate, a number of Evan's former colleagues provided me with their own personal insights. Caroline Hogg, a former minister and member of the Legislative Council, spoke of his calm leadership and the respect that he earnt from the then opposition, as well as the important collaboration he had with the President of the upper house at that time, Alan Hunt, in the management of the Legislative Council. We should not forget that for almost the entire period of the Cain government, except for six weeks, Labor did not control the Legislative Council.

Caroline also observed that she never saw Evan happier than when on country trips. As Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs, he would take the cabinet subcommittee for overnight trips to the regions, meeting councils, community groups and farmers, addressing major public forums and finishing the day in the local pub, meeting Labor Party stalwarts. Such was Evan's easy going and accessible manner that rural communities were naturally drawn to him.

After his parliamentary career ended Evan lectured at Melbourne University and recommenced his love of art and painting as one of the Elgin painters group — a loose association of former MPs, academics and other professional colleagues. Evan painted with the group and exhibited at their annual shows each year, and I attended a number of those openings. Barry Pullen, another former minister and member of the Legislative Council, and one of the Elgin studio participants, described his work as perhaps the finest of the group, and all of his works sold well at exhibition.

My last conversation with Evan was a couple of years ago, where in the company of Judy, his loving and devoted wife, he came to my electorate office to canvass his concerns about what he saw as an encroachment by a large residential development on the banks of the river and its potential impact on public access along the riverbank and bicycle path. These issues were ultimately resolved. Typically, Evan's interest was in the public realm. As we bid farewell to this great parliamentarian, we also must acknowledge the extraordinary love and devotion of his wife Judy and children, particularly as the ravages of Parkinson's disease took away his mobility and function. If I can be half the Minister for Planning that Evan Walker was, I will have done my public duty. Vale Evan Walker.

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) — I rise to contribute to debate on the condolence motion for the Honourable Evan Walker. I do this as the member for Melbourne because much of my electorate now covers much of his old province, but I also do it on behalf of the Victorian Greens.

I never met Evan Walker, but I dearly wish I had, because walking around my electorate there is so much that is the product of his vision and his work. As we know, it was his architectural talent and vision that was responsible for not only the development of the Southbank precinct but also the protection of the beautiful heritage buildings on Collins Street, just a stone's throw from where we stand today. He was perhaps ahead of his time when he campaigned for city streets to be car free and for the development of green space in the city to allow pedestrians to take in the beautiful Melbourne streetscape. His environmental credentials have been well outlined by the member for Richmond.

As a Tigers fan, I owe Evan Walker particular thanks for the MCG lights, although they do not seem to have improved the Tigers' fortunes since the 1980s. I am also proud of the way he embraced the Greek and Italian communities, who had recently made Melbourne their home, paving the way for a proud multicultural city that is made stronger by the diversity of its residents. I am sure that he would be proud of and excited by the fact that recently migrants have been coming to Melbourne from as far afield as Africa.

I am particularly proud of his advocacy for gender equality in Parliament. Reading through his address-in-reply speech, I note this quote:

> I am proud to be a member of a team that, for the first time, includes a woman. The representation of women in this house has long been overdue … I look forward to the day when there is a reasonable representation of women in this chamber.

I am sure he would have been proud that the last three members for Melbourne have been women.

I was honoured to attend his funeral yesterday and meet his wife, Judith. Having buried my own father less than a year ago, I send particular condolences to his children; I am sure they will miss him terribly. Personally, and on behalf of the Greens, I say thank you to Evan Walker. May he rest in peace.

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing) — I rise to support the condolence motion for the late Evan Walker. I wish to pay tribute to Evan's years of service to the Victorian Parliament, to the people of Victoria, and as Minister for Creative Industries I pay tribute in particular to his support for our arts, cultural and creative industries. I also pay my respects as the member for Albert Park, recognising that the development of the south bank of the Yarra is one of his enduring contributions.

The member for Richmond and the Premier referred to how moving Evan Walker's funeral yesterday was. I was also moved, in particular by the powerful reflections on how his faith drove both his public and private commitment to the people of Victoria, his family and his portfolios. I was particularly taken by the contribution in the service of the reading from Revelation 21:2:

> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God …

Evan Walker's life was a testament to building that new Jerusalem in reality in this state. He built it in bricks and mortar but also in moral and practical ways through his own life. His city of God was in the city of man, and we in this town and this state see the monuments to his vision and his efforts all around us. There can be no greater enduring monument to a person's public and political life.

I want to briefly address Evan's contributions to the fields of arts and creativity, which were part of his bringing together the city of God and the city of man in the form of the politics he brought to this Parliament. As Minister for Planning from 1982 to 1986, as many have outlined, he championed the development of today's Southbank. In particular, he laid the foundations for the vibrant arts precinct we have there today. He had a vision for that area of Melbourne and for the role of arts and culture in our lives. He saw past the warehouses that lined the Yarra River at the time and imagined an integrated cultural village. It has been relayed to me that soon after the Rialto opened in October 1986, Evan, who was then Minister for Planning, and Race Mathews, who was then Minister for the Arts, were at a function in the new building, which was then Melbourne's tallest. Looking out of the window, Evan pointed to Southbank below and said, 'That is sufficient legacy for us — if we are remembered for nothing else and begin to get that right.' He did indeed get things right. Southbank was transformed from an industrial wasteland into a precinct for the arts, leisure and tourism, and for housing. Evan was passionate about the role of public art in our civic infrastructure. He was instrumental in introducing a public art allocation for all building and construction projects and he was especially proud of ensuring that public art was factored into the redevelopment of the MCG. As we learnt yesterday, his direct personal intervention influenced the design of those now monumental light towers at the MCG. He was also passionate about arts training and the importance of getting children involved in the arts from an early age. After leaving politics Evan continued to work in this area as a member of the Victorian College of the Arts Council, serving as its president from 1995 to 1999. As we have also heard, after leaving politics Evan returned to architecture and academia as the dean of the faculty of architecture and planning at the University of Melbourne. His contribution continued well past his time in this Parliament, and it endures.

Our thoughts are with Evan's wife, Judy, and his family at this difficult time. His legacy endures through his vision, his efforts and the many monuments of his life's work. Vale Evan Walker. We are poorer for his passing and enduringly richer for his efforts.

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — Later this year Melbourne will celebrate its 180th anniversary, and the question might be asked: what have been the guiding influences which have seen the development of the city of Melbourne? Last year's Melburnian of the year, Brendan Nottle, narrated the story of a fellow by the name of Henry Reed, not known to many in popular terms in this state, who arguably made a contribution that was as significant as that of Batman, Pascoe Fawkner and Henty in the settlement of Melbourne. Arguably, he was the first person to have a significant commercial influence on operations in what we now know as Victoria from Western Port Bay to Portland. It was Henry Reed who financed the expedition of John Batman into Melbourne.

Reed, who lived in Tasmania, was understood to have a vision for and a view on engaging people in the commercial life of the community, protecting the vulnerable and addressing the concerns and social issues which created victims. He was also driven by a spiritual goal and in the 1820s he attended a jail in Tasmania where seven condemned men were due to die shortly. In what a historian described as 'wrestling for their souls' he won the reprieve of one person. Reed's legacy lives on in Melbourne today as well through his grandchildren. One of them founded Qantas, another was responsible for what became the Heide gallery and another formed part of the China Inland Mission in yesteryear.

Melbourne built upon that legacy of Henry Reed in terms of commerce and a values framework, and it is a framework that was carried forward. People refer to the stature of planning ministers, and stature is measured not so much by physical height as by vision for the city. A number of people have had a vision for the city of Melbourne.

In an article published in the *Sunday Age* of 16 September 1990 entitled 'God, politics and being ordinary', Doug Aiton described Evan Walker's upbringing within a Methodist context, his father having been the principal of Box Hill Grammar for 36 years. Doug Aiton explained that a speech to the Wesley Mission entitled 'Keeping society honest' was a theological dissertation about the nature of honesty, religion and state written and delivered by Evan Walker, Christian and politician. I might note in passing that it is my understanding that Evan's wife, Judy, is the daughter of medical missionaries who served in Asia in yesteryear.

The question might be asked, 'How do we make the world a better place?'. For Evan Walker the answer was to build a fair and just society. A number of contributions have been made today, and the member for Richmond alluded to the service for Evan yesterday. Warren Clarnette, Evan's parish minister at the Auburn Uniting Church, suggested that there were two cities that defined Evan Walker's life: the city of man and the city of God. He said:

> Few have done more than Evan in building the city of man, as we have been reminded this morning. He spent his life in service to others across many fields of endeavour. His memorials appear on the Melbourne skyline.

He continued:

> Evan lived by a different hope and a different courage, which led him to believe that our life's work is never wasted; it is recognised, treasured and stored. That is the meaning of the holy city. For reasons beyond our comprehension, there would be irreparable loss if humanity and its works were unrecognised, wiped out or forgotten. That is why we may say that nothing we have ever done is lost.

In addition to the work of Henry Reed in funding the early settlement of Melbourne, there is the work of Governor La Trobe, a person who had a vision for the city of Melbourne as well as a value framework and an ethos. La Trobe himself was the son of a Moravian minister. The Moravian Church was a Protestant grouping that had made its way to England as a result of some of the trials and tribulations in France and Europe in the 18th century or thereabouts. La Trobe's family made a strong contribution to ending slavery in the West Indies. His father and a group of people who had gone out there had a commitment to bringing about just outcomes. They worked with William Wilberforce in 1807. La Trobe's uncle, Benjamin Latrobe, was an architect who helped design and was a major architect in the development of the White House and the Capitol building in Washington, D.C., and a number of other public buildings in the United States.

Charles La Trobe visited Washington in the 1820s or 1830s or thereabouts and made some notes of his travels, which were published and are probably available in the parliamentary library. The man who landed in the Port Phillip District in 1839 at about the age of 39 had a vision of architecture that existed in Washington and through his travels throughout Europe, which were recorded. He also had a mission to protect the Indigenous population in Victoria at the time. La Trobe made an invaluable contribution in the realm of the State Library, the University of Melbourne, our parks and precincts. Evan Walker shared his vision, which was a faith-guided focus to make our community and our city a better place. The legacies of Henry Reed, Charles La Trobe and Evan Walker have dual parallels.

I will make a couple more brief comments. Evan Walker had a vision of this place becoming a unicameral Parliament, and I am yet to see that being taken up by the government today. We on this side will not take up that particular cause.

He also commented on the difference in the future prospects of 10-year-old migrant students who attended the former Victoria Park Primary School as opposed to those of students who attended Melbourne Grammar School in that precinct. I note for the record that my wife attended Abbotsford Primary School as a 10-year-old migrant, but she was never deterred or fazed by the horizons of those who went to Melbourne Grammar.

Mr Walker criticised the Melbourne underground rail loop, our bridges and the arts centre. He was a person of independent vision. He contributed to the building of education facilities in this state, which was founded upon his focused approach and expertise in university architecture and accommodation. In his retirement years he established a dialogue with Swinburne University of Technology lecturers. He also established a discussion group at his local church. I understand he was such a charismatic figure that the daughter of a former Liberal Premier in this house joined his Hawthorn branch of the Labor Party in 1977.

In closing, I will make a couple of final remarks. My nephew's wife is the great-niece of Evan Walker. I happened to hear her speak at a 21st birthday party, and she gave an outstanding speech on that occasion. It may

be a legacy that goes back to the early days of the 1840s, of Henry Reed, Charles La Trobe and the first Walker, who arrived in the Port Phillip District in 1840. Evan Walker had a forebear who served in the other place.

In conclusion, a parishioner at Auburn Uniting Church commented to me that he once congratulated the church caretaker on the great job he had done within the church precinct, and he replied, 'If you need a pair of hands to help, I've got them'. Evan Walker contributed to the development of the city of Melbourne, and I convey my condolences to his family.

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) — Evan Walker was a towering figure who still casts a long shadow across his beloved Melbourne. From the urban renewal of Southbank, to helping return the Yarra River to the people, to designing the MCG lights, Evan Walker could not only see the big picture but harnessed the intellectual curiosity, creativity and the parliamentary acumen to see it built, no matter the opposition. Fittingly, a T-square adorned the coffin of the architect widely regarded, in tandem with the late Alan Hunt, as Victoria's finest Minister for Planning.

'As long as the stories are told, the spirit lives on', his daughter, Rebecca, told mourners commemorating Evan Walker's enlightened view and urbane style. They not only filled Auburn Uniting Church for yesterday's state funeral but caused it to overflow 10 rows into the garden. The Premier read Evan Walker's favourite poem from Tennyson. It included a line that aptly described Walker's life and times in Victorian politics: 'The old order changeth, yielding place to new'.

Victoria's longest serving Labor Premier and Evan Walker's leader, John Cain, set the political scene: the architect entered politics recalling how tough the times were for the ALP to win power in this state, even after a generation in the political wilderness. Gough Whitlam led a federal intervention, paving the way for an end to the sectarian bitterness of the great split. Evan Walker took the risk of entering Parliament in 1979 in the upper house as a member for Melbourne Province, which according to John Cain led to a first-class study in public life and a distinguished ministerial career. Cain and Walker were children of the Depression who savoured the privilege of education and intuitively understood the dignity of work.

Evan Walker employed a laid-back style with a dash of Pierre Trudeau's cool. An anecdote was told by his former adviser, Mike Henry. He said Evan used to always explain that he needed to casually slip a golf game into his schedule just in case he had to host visiting dignitaries. That was until he turned up at the flag on the ninth hole one day where he found a message that said, 'Ring the Premier'. As a former political reporter, I remember ringing him at home one time just after 7.00 a.m. regarding an article, and the response from his wife was that he could not comment because he was in the bath. We at the *Herald* actually thought we should consider publishing that, but then we thought it might encourage other ministers of the day to take a dive, so we let that one go.

Evan Walker's ethos was echoed by former Labor Premiers Steve Bracks and John Brumby, who attended the service, and the breadth of regard for him was displayed by the attendance of former Liberal Premiers Jeff Kennett and the architect who rose to become Victoria's leader, Ted Baillieu.

The order of proceedings bestowed a gospel reading on the Honourable Barry Jones, but no-one who knows Barry believed that would suffice. Accordingly, Barry ad-libbed an introduction and fittingly acknowledged his friend's tact and courage, noting how his memorials stand on the Melbourne skyline.

Evan Walker understood the civilising influence of government and how it can play a role to help foster economic development without sacrificing the human factor. He was a Minister for Planning and for the long term, not simply a Minister for Property Developers and for the short term. This is an issue that we have to address today as we look at how Melbourne evolves as a metropolis, without shredding the fabric that has made us the world's most livable city.

At the service the quip was made that when a group of property developers turned up at Evan Walker's office he said, after he heard their approach, 'You might be better off doing business in New South Wales'.

Too often Australia has been guilty of showing a casual disregard for beauty. 'It is taken for granted that Australia is ugly', Anthony Trollope quipped. This is an issue that we need to address, because good architecture is a symbol of our creative sense and our sense of ourselves. It is taken up by communities as an emblem of pride. Every time we disregard the human factor, we diminish communities. In the end, it is false economics. Good architecture will ultimately cost less than ugliness.

This is not simply an issue for Melbourne as a metropolis or for our suburban sprawl. The choice between ugliness and beauty is deeply significant. Tim

Winton aptly described it for rural and regional people when he said:

> Through my stories and novels I have long considered the way in which people cope with physical and social isolation, and because I enjoy small town life I remain curious about the effects of environments that are carelessly designed, quickly built and unattractive, since this is the reality that confronts me where I live.
>
> In regional Australia depression, suicide, addiction and domestic violence are major blights, with origins many and complex.
>
> Public discussions of the causes generally include factors of isolation and landscape as well as limits to education, healthcare and romance, but nobody mentions built ugliness as even a minor contributor.
>
> I love the sense of sanctuary small towns provide, the possibility of intimacy they retain, the way you can keep an entire population in mind as a distinct group of faces and traits and characters rather than an abstraction. Living in a tiny community in a rugged landscape requires a form of hardiness I admire. My hope is that soon the hardy will not fear beauty but expect it.
>
> In my own lifetime the culture has transformed itself in so many other ways. It is no longer a class sin, for instance, to aspire to something other than what you were born to. Perhaps the range of our aspirations will expand so that Australians beyond the cities will insist upon beautiful buildings and streetscapes that reflect a love of the continent that sustains them.

To Evan Walker's family and friends, and to those who appreciate his sensibility, we all hope for an enlightened view — like his — for the future, where our ministers for planning and our architects give the benefit of the doubt to beauty over ugliness, because I think that would be a fitting tribute to Victoria and especially to Evan Walker.

The SPEAKER — Order! I wish to pay tribute to Evan Walker, who had an impressive political career. He began his parliamentary career in 1979 as a member for Melbourne Province in the other house. I did not know Evan personally, but I have heard so much about him from my colleagues, especially about Evan's contribution during his eight years as a minister in the Cain government. I would like to acknowledge Evan's contribution and dedication to the state of Victoria in planning, the environment, arts, education and community organisations. I particularly wish to acknowledge his work with the Victorian Community Council Against Violence, of which he was chair from 1997 until 2001.

To Judith, Chris, Ben, Rebecca and all other members of Evan's family, along with his friends, I offer my heartfelt condolences. He was a good man. We will all miss him.

I ask members to signify their assent to the motion by standing in their places in silence.

Motion agreed to in silence, honourable members showing unanimous agreement by standing in their places.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I move:

> That, as a further mark of respect to the memory of the late Honourable Evan Herbert Walker, AO, MLC, the house now adjourns until 2.15 p.m. this day.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned 1.11 p.m.

The SPEAKER took the chair at 2.17 p.m.

RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

Question time

The SPEAKER — Order! Before calling for questions I wish to make a ruling about the new procedures. The house has agreed to new sessional orders and given the Speaker the power to implement them. The community has an expectation that question time procedures will be improved and that sessional orders will be complied with. The Chair will enforce the sessional orders.

Ministers statements must focus on government business. They may briefly mention actions of previous governments, but statements must not concentrate on this area. Constituency questions must relate to constituency issues and not encompass broader policy issues, which are the purview of questions without notice.

The new sessional orders have been brought in by the government, and it is the Chair's expectation that ministers will comply with the time limits set down for providing written answers. If a minister has not answered a constituency question within the 30-day time limit, the member who asked the question should make a point of order at the beginning of constituency questions drawing this to my attention and asking that I write to the minister requesting an explanation as to why the minister has not answered.

I will provide a copy of that letter, and the minister's response to it, to the member. If a response to my letter is not provided within a reasonable time, the member who asked the question may make a point of order at the beginning of constituency questions drawing this to

my attention. The minister will be given an opportunity to explain the late response in the house immediately or, if they are not in the chamber at the time, at the next available opportunity. The minister must still provide a written answer to the original question, as required by sessional orders.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, in relation to the new procedures under sessional orders and the ruling that you have given, I wish to also raise with you the issue of how this new period is to be recorded and described in documents, including *Votes and Proceedings* and *Hansard*, relating to the Legislative Assembly daily program.

As you will be aware, there are now multiple components of what was previously referred to as 'question time'. There are questions themselves, there are ministers statements and there are constituency questions. I submit that, either now or on notice, it would be worthwhile to have guidance as to how this period is to be recorded and described. Is it to continue to be referred to as 'question time' or, as I would submit, will it be referred to as 'question and statement time'? Alternatively, will we record a change of business from question to ministers statement, back to question and back to ministers statement as proceedings unfold? Will we have a separate record of constituency questions? These are all matters of procedure, but I submit that we are best off clarifying them early on so everybody knows where they stand.

The SPEAKER — Order! I thank the manager of opposition business for raising this matter. There will be clarification in relation to ministers statements and constituent questions, and that will be done accordingly.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

VicRoads relocation

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Is it government policy to relocate the VicRoads headquarters to Ballarat — yes or no?

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question, and I note that the announcement by the previous government was simply done as a press release. We have searched far and wide in the office and throughout the department for anything more than a press release — a small thought bubble — about when the former Premier went to Ballarat and decided he had a very desperate idea to say that he would suddenly start moving 500 or more staff out of VicRoads without a proper assessment of what was required. Nothing was actually done.

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Speaker, the question was very narrow. It had to do with what the government's policy is. This regurgitation of what the — —

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order. The member for Warrandyte will not enter into debate or repeat the question.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr DONNELLAN — Well, the office was clean. There was nothing there, mate — nothing there at all.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Minister for Roads and Road Safety!

Mr DONNELLAN — I will ignore interjections. Any move of VicRoads will be undertaken properly and with due prudence. We will consult with staff. We will not go up to Ballarat with a thought bubble, suddenly get up there and make an announcement that puts many of the staff at VicRoads ill at ease. This will not be done in a sudden rush up the Western Highway: as we head up there, desperate to win the seat, we will say we will do anything to get your vote. That is not what we will do. We will make a proper assessment of VicRoads' requirements, and we will consult with staff accordingly. We will not insult them by just making policy on the run.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — Given that the minister will not say if it is still government policy to relocate 600 jobs to Ballarat, I wonder if he could inform the house of how many times the members for either Buninyong or Wendouree bothered to lobby him to get those 600 jobs up to Ballarat.

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his follow-up question. Both members are very much strong advocates for their electorates, and I congratulate them on that. That is the reason they won at the last election — because they were strong advocates and because they did not go up there with thought bubbles and carry on like a pack of pork chops. They actually did their assessment correctly.

Ministers statements: Royal Commission into Family Violence

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I rise to make a statement and to update the house in relation to our government's strong action to make sure that the no. 1 cause of death and disability among women under the age of 45, the no. 1 law and order challenge in our state today — the national emergency that is family violence — is finally given the attention that it deserves.

I was very pleased and proud on Sunday to attend the Governor with Australia's first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence to sign the letters patent, the final legal instrument in the establishment of Australia's first Royal Commission into Family Violence. This is an article of faith. This is a commitment which I gave on behalf of my party and which we are delivering on behalf of every Victorian who values the safety of our women and children and a civilised and decent society.

The place that ought to be sanctuary, the place that ought to be the safest — the home — is where all too often women and children are at their most vulnerable. We cannot settle for that. We must better punish the guilty. We must better protect the vulnerable. We must have just a semblance of the courage that Rosie Batty and others have displayed and admit that we, all of us, do not have all the answers, that this system is broken and that women and their children are being betrayed by all of us and our indecision over such a long period of time. We must do more. We must do better. That is what this royal commission is all about: the answers we need to make sure that we have the system that Victorian women and their children most definitely deserve.

West Gate distributor

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I refer to the far-from-shovel-ready West Gate distributor project, and I ask: will the minister immediately release the business case for this project?

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — I thank the shadow minister for roads and infrastructure for his question. What a marvellous project it is. As the shadow minister would be well aware, we have put out the first stage of that project for expressions of interest. That stage is about strengthening Shepherd Bridge; it is about putting in better access for bicycles and the like. It is very interesting that for some reason — —

Mr Guy interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

Mr DONNELLAN — We are trying to deal with what are serious issues over in the west in terms of congestion and in terms of trucks travelling through the inner city. I know that the local community is incredibly supportive of this project. It is very much a pity that the opposition, including its federal leadership, is not prepared to come on board and say — —

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is debating the question and is not responding to it.

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

Mr DONNELLAN — It is very obvious that opposition members have no interest in taking trucks off the roads in the inner city, which is tragic. It is tragic because, more than anything else, it took some time to get on with the job. We are getting on with the job. We understand there is an urgent need in this state to deliver jobs because the last lot sat still for four years, and everything went into the deep freeze. We make no apologies about getting on with the West Gate distributor. We took it to the election, the public supported the proposition and we make no apologies for getting on with the job.

Honourable members interjecting.

Supplementary question

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — Will the minister inform the house whether his reluctance to release this business case is because it just does not exist?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Government and opposition members will come to order. The minister is entitled to be heard in silence.

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — I thank the shadow minister for his supplementary question. I note that business cases are very important in relation to major investments. I note the last business case we saw was one for a dud road project.

Ms Ryall — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is offending against section 58 of the standing orders and also debating the question. His job is not to attack the opposition but to answer the question.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister will come back to answering the question.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, I draw your attention to sessional order 11(2) in relation to your power to determine that an answer to an oral question without notice or supplementary oral question is not responsive to the question. I submit to you that the minister's answers to both the substantive question and the supplementary question were not responsive to the questions. Both the principal question and the supplementary question were very narrow and specific questions that related to the business case for the West Gate distributor project and, in terms of the supplementary, whether that business case exists. In response to neither question did the minister address those issues, so I submit, Speaker, that you should invoke and apply your powers under the new sessional order in accordance with the guidance you gave to the house at the beginning of this session.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, I am delighted to see opposition members utilising the sessional orders we have introduced to make this Parliament more accountable and more responsive. It is great to see them on board with the sessional orders that they opposed. Putting that aside, I put it to you, Speaker — —

An honourable member interjected.

Ms Allan — Someone's got to. I put it to you, Speaker — and I am sure you will come to your own conclusions, notwithstanding the advice of the manager of opposition business — that the minister did directly address the substance of the question, which went to the West Gate distributor project, a very important project for the west of Melbourne. I would suggest that despite the counsel of the manager of opposition business you let the answer stand.

Mr Watt — Speaker, I rise to support the point of order raised by the manager of opposition business, given that the minister did not mention 'business case' in his initial answer and that in his supplementary answer the only time he mentioned 'business case' was in — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The member will not repeat the question and will not enter into debate.

Mr Watt — I rise to support the point of order of the manager of opposition business.

The SPEAKER — Order! I believe that the minister was unresponsive to the supplementary question. I therefore ask the minister to provide a response in writing.

Ministers statements: Royal Commission into Family Violence

Ms RICHARDSON (Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence) — I rise to update the house on a significant challenge facing the Royal Commission into Family Violence, our community and the Parliament itself. Today the Premier provided an update on the establishment of the royal commission — a $40 million commitment, a truly historic moment for Victoria and an opportunity for reform like no other. The Premier's determination, his leadership and indeed his willingness to say and do what needs to be done are a very welcome and significant change in approach here in Victoria.

I say in particular that having men speak out about family violence is critically important as well. This is not simply a women's issue to be dealt with by women simply because women bear the largest burden of family violence. This is a whole-of-government, whole-of-society crisis that demands that each and every one of us respond accordingly.

Politics is often described as a contact sport. The temptation is always there, no matter what the issue, to respond in the same old adversarial way as we have always done, but the issue of family violence requires so much more of us. In fact it demands so much more of us. While I welcomed the Leader of the Opposition's statement today that our reforms to tackle family violence will enjoy a base level of support — and I know he wants to see significant reform — I was somewhat disappointed that he then went on and applied the same kind of adversarial approach to the rest of his remarks.

Moreover, his comments, like the comments of the member for Hawthorn, were simply without foundation. I am certain he did not wish to upset anyone by what he said, least of all victims of family violence, who want to see tougher penalties for perpetrators, but we owe it to them and to our communities to tackle this issue differently. That is what our Premier and our government are determined to do, and I feel confident that members opposite will want to do the same.

West Gate distributor

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I refer to Labor's claimed 'shovel-ready' West Gate distributor

project, and I ask: will the Hobsons Bay and Maribyrnong councils be the project's planning authorities or will the minister ask VicRoads to override them?

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — I thank the shadow minister for his question. What a marvellous project it is, as I have said many times. As members would be aware, the first component of the project is out there in the street giving confidence to the community that we are actually getting on with the job — that we are not sitting still, that we made a commitment at the last election and that we are getting on with the job. In terms of planning and the like, we will do the appropriate things with all the current legislation and abide by all the appropriate environmental and legislative requirements that we need to meet.

Supplementary question

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — I note that the West Gate distributor project is no longer shovel ready but is marvellous. Given that the Hobsons Bay and Maribyrnong councils have not commenced any planning scheme amendments for the project, how can the minister still stand by his ridiculous claim that this project is shovel ready?

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — The shadow minister is completely wrong. The first stage of the project is in Maribyrnong, and in due course all councils will be consulted on this project. The first stage of the project is all in Maribyrnong. It is not in other — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister is entitled to be heard in silence. I remind the house that members of the public want to hear questions and answers, as does the Chair.

Mr DONNELLAN — It is a pity the shadow minister does not get out there and visit the project to actually understand what the first component of the project requires, and that is engaging with Maribyrnong City Council. Let us be very clear: the shovels went away for four years under the previous government. We are getting on with the job. We are not sitting still. We are not — —

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

Ministers statements: transport

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I rise to report to the house about the investment the state is making in bringing forward our transport plans and also making sure that we are growing the Victorian economy. The Andrews government is getting on with the job. The previous government squandered the opportunities of this state, and those opposite gifted Victoria with four years of lazy and 5 minutes of crazy. We have brought forward investment to get the Victorian economy back on track. No longer the insidiousness and — —

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Speaker, members of the house would take offence at the Treasurer's callous disregard for those with mental illness in using the term 'crazy'.

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

Mr PALLAS — We have brought forward investment in our transport infrastructure, including such things as $100 million for the early works on our level crossings; $30 million for the Murray Basin rail project, stage 1; $35 million to strengthen 48 bridges in regional Victoria; $50 million for regional roads, making sure that level crossings in regional Victoria are dealt with; $3 million for planning and suburban roads; $100 million for the Flinders Street station — a real do-over, not the nonsense those opposite were doing Victorians over with — and $40 million to establish an authority to get Melbourne Metro going.

We saw what the previous government's recipe was for this state. We saw public infrastructure spending cut by 5 per cent on its watch. We saw construction jobs lower when those opposite left government compared to today. After only three months in office we are giving the Victorian economy the adrenaline shot it so dearly requires — market-led proposals that will ensure that Victorians get value for money and that there is transparency. Ultimately, unlike those opposite, who wasted the last four years, we will not waste a minute. We are getting on with it.

Food safety

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — My question is to the Minister for Health. Given the recent hepatitis A outbreak linked to imported Chinese berries and SPC's call last week for more comprehensive testing after heavy metal contamination was found in imported canned peaches, are any steps being taken by the government to introduce more thorough testing of imported produce being sold to Victorians?

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) — I thank the member for her question and congratulate her on her recent election and continuing advocacy for our local community. Similar to the member, I too share concerns about ensuring that the food that is imported, sold and consumed is safe, not just for all Victorians but also for the industries that are affected by the importation of food.

Responsibility for the regulation of food safety is dependent upon three separate tiers of government. In respect of imported foods, which goes to the heart of the member's question, a significant onus is on the commonwealth Department of Agriculture. It runs the imported food inspection scheme. That scheme is responsible for inspecting foods as they enter the country. It applies a risk-based approach that then determines the level of inspection, or the percentage of inspection, of a particular food category.

I read today with much interest a statement by commonwealth ministers that berries would now be considered a medium risk. They were previously categorised as 'surveillance', which meant that 5 in 100 packages were inspected. They have now been reclassified as a medium risk, and 100 per cent screening will be provided of those frozen berries that are linked to factories in China that have an association with the hepatitis A that has been diagnosed.

While it has taken almost a week, certainly on behalf the Victorian government I welcome those additional inspections. I also make the point that it was in fact the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services that led to national notification of this issue through its robust processes. More broadly, I am keen to explore this with my colleagues who will also sit on the ministerial council of what is called FSANZ — Food Standards Australia New Zealand. We would like to consider and reflect upon whether or not the surveillance standards in that code adequately reflect the risks of the particular items that are now being imported.

The Victorian government has a responsibility, in conjunction with local government that goes to surveillance at the point of sale as opposed to the point of importation, and we will continue to work on that end. This whole discussion has also incited a discussion about country-of-origin food labelling. On this I have directed my department to work with other departments and the Municipal Association of Victoria to identify the extent and impact of non-compliance with current country-of-origin requirements. I look forward to working with the commonwealth and other levels of government to ensure that our food supply is as safe as it can be.

Supplementary question

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — My question is again to the Minister for Health. Given that there clearly are risks associated with food being imported into Australia, I ask the government: will it commit to buying locally grown and manufactured food for government procurement policies in relation to food that it is providing to Victorians?

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) — I thank the member for her supplementary question. Obviously, given the region she represents, she has a very strong commitment to and interest in the local food manufacturers. I can assure her that the Victorian Labor government supports Victorian food manufacturers. We are very strong supporters of growing local agriculture. We have committed $200 million in our Future Industries Fund. We have identified food and fibre as one of the six most important growth industries for this state. Prior to the last election Victorian Labor also committed to a Victorian industry participation program.

The purpose of that policy is all about supporting local procurement where possible. I am sure the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister for Industry will take a passion to locally produced fruit, like they do to locally produced steel.

Ministers statements: Flinders Street station

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Planning) — I am pleased to inform the house of a really important initiative — the renovation of Flinders Street station.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr WYNNE — It is marvellous. I thank the member for his contribution. Flinders Street station is a major transport hub in Melbourne. At one point it was the busiest railway station in the world. Flinders Street station, as we know, is at the heart of the cultural precinct here in the city. It is on one of the busiest intersections — the corner where people have met for decades under the Flinders Street clocks. The station is one of Melbourne's iconic Victorian era buildings and recently, just last weekend, it was a focal point for the fabulous White Night festival.

However, the station's decline has seen this important precinct really fall into decay. Over the past 20 years state governments have considered many proposals to redevelop the station and the surrounding area. These

have varied in scope, ambition and cost. Yet despite public concern about the decline of the station's buildings and the deterioration of the beautiful ballroom in particular, a project has yet to proceed. In the meantime, one of Melbourne's most beloved icons was literally falling apart and becoming a danger to the public. It should have been the pride of our city, but it was becoming an embarrassment.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, we are on new ground with these ministers statements, but I refer to the guidance that you gave to the house at the commencement of this sitting, in which you indicated that ministers could make passing reference to the context in which they were making their announcement but that the bulk of their announcement needed to relate to the new initiative.

The minister has had considerable latitude to set the scene for what he might inform the house about in relation to this new initiative. I submit that he is going beyond passing reference in setting the scene and is dwelling unnecessarily extensively on the past, whereas the purpose of these statements, as we understand it, is to inform the house of new government initiatives, projects and achievements. I ask you to bring him back to that.

The SPEAKER — Order! I accept the point of order, but the minister was being relevant in referring in passing to the former government's position. I do, however, remind the minister of my ruling. He should only refer to the previous government's management in passing.

Mr WYNNE — Labor has a realistic plan for Flinders Street station. A $100 million project will commence this year. It will create jobs, boost the surrounding cultural district and make the station a pleasant place to be for tourists and commuters alike. We are getting on with the job of refurbishing Flinders Street station.

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

East–west link

Mr O'BRIEN (Malvern) — My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer rule out legislating to limit or annul compensation provisions in the east–west link contracts — the contracts on which the Premier said no compensation would be payable?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I remind members that the Chair needs to hear the question in order to make a ruling should that be required. I also remind them that members of the public want to hear the question and the answer.

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I absolutely and unreservedly assure those opposite and the Victorian people that this government will unreservedly give a guarantee that it will not sell out the interests of the state like those opposite did.

Ms Ryall — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is entering into debate, and he is also using this as an opportunity to attack the opposition. I suggest — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The member will resume her seat. There is no point of order.

Mr PALLAS — This government, the Andrews Labor government, has a mandate — a mandate endorsed by no higher authority than the Prime Minister of this country. He told the people of Victoria they had a referendum on this project, and they robustly embraced that right. We will do whatever is necessary to protect the public interest. Be assured that when those opposite signed contracts — or what were purported to be contracts — without effectively insuring the interests of the taxpayer, squandering 55 cents in every dollar invested and threatening to toll every freeway in inner city Melbourne, we know what motivated them. It was their own political hides and not the welfare of the Victorian people.

Supplementary question

Mr O'BRIEN (Malvern) — My supplementary question is to the Treasurer. Has the government given any direction to prepare legislation to limit or annul compensation provisions in the east–west link contract — yes or no?

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I thank the former Treasurer for his supplementary question. Let me be clear that this government stands ready to protect the Victorian taxpayer and people's interests, and we will deal with the consortium in as responsible a way as possible. Responsibility will be the keynote of our actions.

Ms Ryall — On a point of order, Speaker, the question asked was very specific, and we have not heard a response at all at this point in time. Under standing orders 58 and 110, the response is irrelevant. I ask you to direct the minister back to answering the question.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister will continue answering the question. There is no point of order.

Mr PALLAS — The protection of the state's interests might be a new and novel concept to those opposite, but it is not for those on this side of the chamber. Let me be very clear that we will leave these options available to the state, and we will advise those opposite and the Parliament in due — —

Mr O'Brien — Speaker, my point of order is on relevance. The supplementary question was a narrow question about when a direction was given to prepare legislation. That was the limit of the question, and it requires a yes or no answer. I ask you to bring the Treasurer back to answering and being responsive to the supplementary question.

The SPEAKER — Order! I call on the minister to come back to answering the question in a responsive way.

Mr PALLAS — In accordance with the statements we made before the last election, we stand ready to use any and all methods available to the state to protect its interests.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, I again draw your attention to sessional order 11(2) and your ruling on the point of order just momentarily before the Treasurer concluded his answer. I submit that in accordance with your ruling the Treasurer was not being responsive to the question, and I ask you to determine accordingly.

The SPEAKER — Order! There are two things to be said on this matter. On the point of order, I ruled that the minister was in order. I will take into account the comments made by the member, but the minister was in order.

Ministers statements: transport and employment

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — Last week the Andrews Labor government demonstrated just how serious it is about getting on with delivering the sort of public transport that Victorians need and deserve. We have not seen so many public transport and indeed transport projects announced in one short week for well over four years.

We started the week on a Sunday, as we always do, and on that Sunday we announced the 50 level crossing removal project, establishing the authority and an initial injection of $100 million to get on with this project straightaway. On Monday it was the Melbourne Metro rail project, a project that sat on the shelf for four long years. We are getting on with that project immediately with $40 million being fast-tracked. On Tuesday it was Mildura and the Murray Basin rail freight project, with $30 million to spend on immediate works and a commitment to a significant project that underpins that initial program. On Wednesday we announced $100 million for Flinders Street station. On Thursday we announced funding to fix regional roads and level crossings. These are not only transport projects; they are vital job-creating projects in a state that for four years was left languishing without a jobs plan.

We will create 4500 jobs on the level crossing removals, 3500 jobs on the Melbourne Metro rail project during peak construction, 250 jobs at Flinders Street station, 54 jobs on safety and maintenance works for the Mildura line and 110 jobs on the Stronger Country Bridges program.

Mr Pesutto interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Hawthorn will come to order.

Ms ALLAN — From the comments of those opposite it is certainly clear that they still have not worked out that for every dollar spent on a transport program, you should be looking at how you can create jobs here in Victoria — not overseas, not somewhere else, but right here in Victoria. That is exactly what we will do with our transport and jobs program.

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

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Warrandyte electorate

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — (Question 56) I raise a very important issue for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety with regard to traffic congestion and bushfire safety in my electorate. The former government committed to a multi-agency review of how roads in Warrandyte, and particularly Warrandyte Bridge, would cope in the event of an emergency evacuation. In addition there was a commitment for VicRoads to investigate longer term solutions to issues, including access to water supply for local fire brigades, bridge widening to improve traffic capacity and additional Yarra River crossings. Emergency management commissioner Craig Lapsley wrote to me about this issue:

> The emergency management dimensions of this issue are significant and have significant potential in terms of life loss during a bushfire emergency …
>
> The challenge of providing a solution must be addressed as a whole of government, and directly involve a range of departments and agencies.

The coalition government in partnership with the emergency management commissioner, local councils and the government agency, VicRoads, had begun significant work to address these serious congestion and safety issues. When will this completed work, with realistic and planned solutions, be made available to my community?

Yan Yean electorate

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — (Question 57) My constituency question to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Yan Yean Road is an important link in the outer northern suburbs servicing a corridor of increasing residential development, but the current windy two-lane unsubdivided road is dangerous and congested. Residents in the north deserve safe and reliable roads to get them to work and get them home in one piece. I refer the minister to the government's commitment to duplicate the road at a cost of $95 million and the proposed state declaration of this road, instigated by Labor in 2010, that was deferred indefinitely by the Liberal-Nationals government. Can the minister advise when he will reinstate the proposed state declaration of Yan Yean Road, north of Kurrak Road, so that the much-needed future planning upgrade between Kurrack Road and Bridge Inn Road can be scoped, planned and designed in readiness for funding and a future upgrade?

South-West Coast electorate

Dr NAPTHINE (South-West Coast) — (Question 58) My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and I ask: when will the government install electronic flashing 40 kilometre-an-hour school speed zone signs on Commercial Road, Koroit, to better protect students, their families and staff at the Koroit and District Primary School?

Ivanhoe electorate

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) — (Question 59) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I ask the minister to visit the East Ivanhoe shopping village to discuss with locals, both traders and residents, the Andrews Labor government election commitment to introduce a 40 kilometre-an-hour speed zone limit in the shopping strip. In particular, in East Ivanhoe — —

Ms McLeish — On a point of order, Speaker — —

The SPEAKER — Order! Given that I need to make a judgement in relation to constituency questions, I would rather take points of order on constituency questions after the question is put to the chamber. I ask the member to raise the point of order after the member finishes raising his constituency question.

Mr CARBINES — I know the East Ivanhoe shopping village is bookended by Mother of God Primary School, Ivanhoe East Primary School and Ivanhoe Grammar School. It is a very successful shopping strip, and the Labor government made a commitment to deliver a 40 kilometre-an-hour speed zone in that area.

It was ignored by the previous government, a government that chose to deliver ad hoc 40-kilometre-per-hour speed zones across Victoria, but ignored Labor electorates and ignored the criteria set down by VicRoads. I look forward to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety visiting the electorate to discuss these matters with the local school community, residents and traders and to follow up on the petition that was supported by residents in my electorate to ensure that a 40-kilometre-per-hour zone is instituted in East Ivanhoe, a great part of the Ivanhoe electorate.

South Barwon electorate

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — (Question 60) My constituency question is to Minister for Roads and Road Safety. When will the minister commit to matching the coalition's 2014 election commitment to fund the signalisation of the intersection of Beach Road and Surf Coast Highway, Torquay?

Broadmeadows electorate

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) — (Question 61) My constituency question is to the Treasurer. I invite the Treasurer to come to an economic and cultural development summit in Broadmeadows to look at how we can have a coordinated strategy for jobs and growth, given that the former coalition government in this state and also the federal government have allowed the unemployment rate to reach 26.4 per cent. That unemployment rate is higher than that of Spain and equal to that of Greece. I also note that the Prime Minister is now talking about a new strategy for national security. In the community that I represent, we have the highest number of Muslim families, twice the number of any other electoral district. We also have Christian refugees from Iraq and Syria living side by side, who want to have hope. They need jobs, and we

need a strategy that coordinates this. I hope the Treasurer will agree to come out to help our coordinated strategy, which has already been supported by the City of Hume. This issue is above politics.

Ringwood electorate

Ms RYALL (Ringwood) — (Question 62) My constituency question is to the Premier. Given the Premier has ordered work to stop on the east–west link project, what is his response to the tradies, independent contractors and small and medium business owners in Ringwood, who ask: now that the work has been stopped, how do you expect us to survive and put food on the family table?

Kororoit electorate

Ms KAIROUZ (Kororoit) — (Question 63) My constituency question is to the Minister for Public Transport. My question relates to the $220 million commitment made in 2009 by the Brumby government to fund four new railway stations, including Caroline Springs station. In 2011 the previous government redirected funds away from Caroline Springs, in an area where 30 per cent of households in the city of Melton do not live within 400 metres of public transport. Despite Caroline Springs being located in a major growth corridor, the former government neglected the people of the west and provided no promise of funding for the Caroline Springs station.

The only trace of the Caroline Springs railway station is the famous 'road to nowhere', which leads to unkempt scrubland. The halt in the construction of the Caroline Springs station has had adverse effects on the local community in Caroline Springs. They are becoming socially isolated and disconnected from the networks of metropolitan Melbourne. Can the minister commit to building the Caroline Springs railway station and outline the time line for the project's completion?

Kew electorate

Mr T. SMITH (Kew) — (Question 64) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety regarding the promised upgrade to the Chandler Highway bridge. Given Labor's 16 June 2014 press release that said works would start immediately upon it coming to government, why has work not started already on the Chandler Highway bridge?

Essendon electorate

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — (Question 65) My constituency question is to the Minister for Police. I ask the minister to provide me with an update on current policing activities on the Flemington housing estate. The Flemington housing estate has a very large culturally and linguistically diverse community. In the past there has been some tension between officers at the Flemington police station and some residents of the estate. In more recent times there has been some improvement, but the residents are keen to explore how this relationship can be strengthened. Therefore I ask that the minister consider coming to Flemington to meet with the sworn officers at Flemington police station as well as with representatives of the community.

RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

Sessional orders

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Box Hill raised a point of order about the way new question procedures will be recorded in various parliamentary documents.

I advise that *Votes and Proceedings* will now have a heading 'Questions and ministers statements (Under sessional orders)', whereas the previous heading was 'Questions (Under SO 55)'. There will be a separate heading 'Constituency questions (Under sessional order 9)'. Hansard will adopt a similar approach. Answers to constituency questions will be published in the weekly *Hansard* immediately before answers to questions on notice for the day on which they are received.

The Clerk's daily running sheet, the informal summary document printed on green paper and circulated in the chamber each day, will continue to refer to 'Question time', which covers questions without notice and supplementary questions, ministers statements and constituency questions.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING REFORM AMENDMENT (CHILD SAFE SCHOOLS) BILL 2015

Introduction and first reading

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 to establish a framework to require registered schools to take appropriate actions to manage the risk of child abuse and to further strengthen the regulation of schools by enhancing the functions and powers of the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority and for other purposes.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — I ask the minister to provide a brief explanation of the bill, additional to the long title.

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — This bill implements two of the recommendations that came out of the Betrayal of Trust inquiry conducted by this Parliament, specifically related to education. They are recommendations 12.1 and 16.1.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

LIMITATION OF ACTIONS AMENDMENT (CHILD ABUSE) BILL 2015

Introduction and first reading

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Limitation of Actions Act 1958 to remove limitation periods that apply to actions in respect of causes of action that relate to death or personal injury resulting from child abuse and for other purposes.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — I ask the Attorney-General to provide a brief explanation of the bill and in particular to explain whether there are any departures from the exposure draft bill released under the previous government.

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — The bill implements another of the recommendations of the Betrayal of Trust inquiry, in regards to limitation of actions. It is a slightly different bill to the one that was in the exposure draft that went out.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELLBEING AMENDMENT (HAIRDRESSING REGISTRATION) BILL 2015

Introduction and first reading

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 to make provision in relation to the registration of premises in which certain businesses are conducted and for other purposes.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — I ask the minister to provide a brief explanation of the bill to the house.

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) — The purpose of the bill is to amend the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 to provide for registration on an ongoing basis, as opposed to a periodic basis, of premises in which certain businesses are conducted. For the main part, this bill relates to the provision of hairdressing and make-up services.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

LEGAL PROFESSION UNIFORM LAW APPLICATION AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Introduction and first reading

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014 and for other purposes.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — I ask the minister to provide a brief explanation of the bill.

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I am happy to provide a brief explanation, given the keen interest that I know the member for Box Hill has in this particular area of legislation. The bill will make further amendments to the overarching national legal profession legislative framework, in which both the Victorian and New South Wales governments are integrally involved, particularly in regards to this bill. It primarily goes to the question of the nature of costs disclosure.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

VETERANS AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Introduction and first reading

Ms GARRETT (Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Veterans Act 2005, the Sale of Land Act 1962, the Australian Consumer Law and Fair Trading Act 2012, the Residential Tenancies Act 1997, the Motor Car Traders Act 1986, the Co-operatives National Law Application Act 2013, the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 and other Consumer Acts and for other purposes.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — I ask the minister to provide a brief explanation of the bill.

Ms GARRETT (Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation) — This bill makes a range of amendments to a number of acts, varying in degrees of import. Of most note are amendments to the

Veterans Act 2005 regarding the management and accessibility of patriotic funds and also updating trust deed arrangements. These are being done, as the opposition knows, in close consultation with the veterans community and the RSL. There is a range of minor amendments to the other pieces of legislation. There are provisions in the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 relating to record keeping of rooming houses in terms of gas and electrical inspections, which will be welcomed by those who rely on that form of housing.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

Statute Law Revision Bill 2014

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

Tabled.

Ordered to be published.

Alert Digest No. 1

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) presented *Alert Digest* No. 1 of 2015 on:

Back to Work Bill 2014
Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment (Veterans Reform) Bill 2015
Education and Training Reform Amendment (Funding of Non-Government Schools) Bill 2014
Interpretation of Legislation Amendment Bill 2015
Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015
Statute Law Repeals Bill 2014
Statute Law Revision Bill 2014
Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015
Wrongs Amendment (Asbestos Related Claims) Bill 2014

together with appendices.

Tabled.

Ordered to be published.

DOCUMENTS

Tabled by Clerk:

Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 — Notice under s 32(4)(a)(iii) in relation to Waste Management Policy (Ships' Ballast Water) 2004 and Statutory Rule 69/2006 *(Gazette G5, 5 February 2015)*

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

Ballarat — C187

Bayside — C112

Boroondara — C207

Colac Otway — C74

Corangamite — C37

Surf Coast — C102

Statutory Rule under the *Building Act 1993* — SR 8

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:

Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rule 8

Documents under s 16B in relation to:

Gambling Regulation Act 2003 — Victorian Pre-commitment Player Account Equipment Technical Standard

Public Holidays Act 1993 — Easter Sunday 2015 Public Holiday

Road Safety Act 1986 — Guidelines for assessing fitness to drive under s 27.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Program

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — 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 p.m. on Thursday, 26 February 2015:

Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment (Veterans Reform) Bill 2015

Interpretation of Legislation Amendment Bill 2015

Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015

Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015.

I would like to make a couple of remarks on these bills and on the program being proposed for the week ahead. Following the hopefully successful passage of the

government business program that we have put to the house this afternoon, we propose that the house deal firstly with item 2 on the notice paper, which is the proposed amendment to the *Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Regional Strategy Plan*, moved in the name of the member for Preston. This has been on the notice paper since the previous Parliament, and executing it is part of the government's requirements under the planning arrangements.

Hopefully that will move through expeditiously to allow us to return to the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech, enabling the five remaining new members of the Parliament to make their inaugural speeches, which will be a great occasion for them in this place. It will be very useful for them to get up and have their say on behalf of their communities. It will be an important part of their political life.

Following that, time permitting later today, we will return to the second-reading debate on the Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment (Veterans Reform) Bill 2015, but that will depend on the time available to us for the rest of the afternoon. During the rest of the week we will work through the remaining bills. I make the observation that we will be doing so under the new sessional orders. That is why the guillotine is being set for 5 o'clock on Thursday; it is in line with the new sitting hours that we have introduced to make the Parliament — we are not losing any debating time — a much more human-friendly place without those late-night sittings. That means we can all get home safely, and we will not need to have those late-night finishes. I think that will be good for the Parliament and its staff, and it will hopefully see a lift in members' performance and the quality of debate as well.

We understand that in operating under the new sessional orders members will take a little while to get used to the new arrangements, particularly on Wednesdays and Thursdays, when question time will be at 11.00 a.m., which is quite a departure from the previous arrangements. Some other parts of the day will also be reordered. I expect there might be a few bumps and lumps, but I am sure members will adapt to it pretty quickly. It will be an improvement overall.

As we have seen during question time today, the abolition of Dorothy Dixers has already meant that the Parliament runs much more smoothly. It is quite remarkable to note that those opposite continue to oppose the sessional orders that actually improve things for them. We are giving opposition members more tools than they ever gave, when they were in government, to the former opposition. They are clearly continuing to be the chaotic, lazy outfit that they were in government.

They are not interested in doing the hard work. Even though we want them to and we are offering assistance to them to do so, they are clearly rejecting that assistance. Notwithstanding that, I am very pleased to see that so far under the new sessional orders things have gone smoothly. We will work through those issues over the rest of the week, and I hope that the opposition will find its way to supporting the government business program as put to the house.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — As the Leader of the House says, we are operating under the new sessional orders. They have not got off to a good start. We have seen, if anything, even more grandstanding from government ministers than we saw under the standing orders.

Mr Donnellan interjected.

Mr CLARK — That was to the point where the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, who is getting very agitated, had to be instructed to actually answer the question in accordance with what was promised in this house and in the government's pre-election policies. Whereas those opposite promised that we would have a longer question time, more questions and less grandstanding, in fact we have a shorter time for questions, fewer questions and more grandstanding. The Leader of the House's commendation of the sessional orders is something like the 13th chime of the clock — it casts in doubt everything else that the Leader of the House has had to say.

There are four bills on the government business program. It is probably fair to say that of those bills two will be the subject of substantial debate; one is simply giving effect to measures that were put in train under the previous government and probably will not take up a great deal of time; and the fourth of the bills is one about which one has to ask oneself whether the Attorney-General has run out of things he can do, so he has brought this bill to the house. One has to question his sense of priorities, given the long list of other legislative options that were available to the Attorney-General as work in progress that was left for him by the previous government. The opposition does not oppose the government business program, given those considerations, but there are two specific matters to which I wish to refer.

First, I put on the record another of the now government's pre-election commitments — namely, to make consideration in detail a standard part of the

deliberations on bills in the Legislative Assembly — and indicate to the Leader of the House that the opposition is proceeding on the assumption that the government will be honouring its election commitment and that accordingly non-consideration of a bill in detail will be the exception rather than the norm. No doubt the Leader of the House will raise with the opposition whether she thinks in a particular case there is good reason not to consider a bill in detail.

Ms Allan interjected.

Mr CLARK — Again, it has not been an auspicious start to the Parliament where the Leader of the House was not able to comply with the government's pre-election policy in relation to any one of the bills that went through the house in the last sitting week. The Leader of the House interjects that she thinks that providing information about whether or not the government wants to depart from its election commitments is part of my job rather than hers. If it makes it easier for the Leader of the House, let us proceed on the assumption that each and every bill will be considered in detail, since the Leader of the House does not want to come across the chamber and raise with me when she wants to depart from that commitment. Certainly we expect that the government will honour its commitment that consideration in detail will be a standard part of every bill, and the record will tell whether or not the government is honouring that commitment, having got a zero on the record in the last sitting week.

The other matter I raise is the perplexing issue of what is intended to happen with lunchbreaks under the new sessional orders. This is a matter on which the government's position has changed from time to time. At the initial briefing the opposition was given it was indicated that it was intended that there would not be lunchbreaks, then we were told that there would in fact be lunchbreaks and then we were told again that there would not be lunchbreaks. Certainly the entire debate on sessional orders last sitting week proceeded on that basis.

I indicated that the opposition thought it was worthwhile that there not be lunchbreaks, but of course, as a number of my colleagues raised, if there were not going to be lunchbreaks on Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays, then it was important that the needs of staff be taken into account. A number of members — the Leader of the House through interjection and you, Deputy Speaker, in your role as a member of this house — made remarks on that. The entire debate last sitting week was on the assumption that the house would sit through what would otherwise have been the lunchbreaks on Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays. As I understand it, it still remains to be resolved. However, I hope the government stands by that position.

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — This is a new dawn. This is very much serious reform of sessional orders. That is very much the purview of the Labor Party, as members would be aware through the history of this house and that of the upper house. Reform to make this house more democratic is very much the purview of the Labor Party, and again it has very much led the charge. I have always thought that realistically lunch and dinner were for wimps, in a sense, and that we should be working through and looking at delivering family-friendly hours so that members could head home after 8 o'clock. I think that is important because you would hope that a party that puts itself forward as having family values would support that proposition. I think it is a better proposition that we finish at 8 o'clock.

The removal by sessional orders of Dorothy Dixers is a benefit to the opposition and also to this house. It means we will have a better quality of questioning and that we will not have the ongoing grandstanding, which, as the member for Box Hill has indicated, used to occur under the previous government — I think he was about to say 'under the previous government' and then corrected himself at the last minute and decided it was under this government.

At the end of the day it is not our job necessarily to always assist the opposition, but I think the reforms we have made to sessional orders have made it easier. We have made a commitment to provide for consideration in detail of bills. That was not something the previous government offered very often to the then opposition. I love these crocodile tears, implying that we are suddenly meant to provide more consideration in detail. I think that under the previous government there were — what? — two or three bills that were considered in detail. We are going to be offering consideration in detail of more bills, and I would really have thought that would be welcomed by the opposition. For many years that was a real rarity.

We have made these commitments, and we will stick by them. At the end of the day we are very much the great reformers of this house. We are providing a new dawn. We are not here to shut down this house, as the previous government did, using its capacities to do so. We have opened up the house to further questioning and so forth. I do not think that if we have to sit through lunch and dinner anyone will die in the house, to be

honest. I think most of us will survive the trauma of not having a tucker — —

Mr Foley — A bloke's got to have doughnuts.

Mr DONNELLAN — Okay, doughnuts. We will provide the member for Albert Park with a happy doughnut, maybe a Krispy Kreme, every week. For those of us who can do without a Krispy Kreme and get on with the job, I think it is appropriate that we sit through the day and finish at 8 o'clock, a family-friendly hour.

We have got the address-in-reply debate coming up, and I know many new members will want to get on with talking about what we have brought forward in terms of their electorates and the like — the infrastructure program we have for their electorates, the job opportunities we are providing to their communities and what we are doing to deal with congestion across the state. I therefore think this is a reasonable government business program. I note that the manager of opposition business has indicated the opposition will support the program. I disagree with the member for Box Hill's assertion that this is not a better house now that we have introduced these new sessional orders. I think they make the house more open, transparent and democratic. Removing Dorothy Dixers and getting people home at a reasonable hour are appropriate measures in the circumstances. I therefore welcome this week's government business program. I think it is a good business program, and I am very much looking forward to the address-in-reply debate, when some of our youngies, as we would say, who are coming on board will want to talk about the marvellous infrastructure program we will be delivering for the community of Victoria.

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — I rise to make a contribution with regard to the government business program. As other speakers have said, four bills are up this week, and I note that when we were in government if we had put up four bills we would have been called a lazy government that did no work, particularly by the now Leader of the House.

In terms of the four bills, I note that the Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment (Veterans Reform) Bill 2015 is a very good piece of legislation. In fact virtually the same bill was introduced by the coalition in the upper house during the previous Parliament. That is very good legislation in terms of remembering our war veterans. The Interpretation of Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 is a very standard bill. As the manager of opposition business said, the Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015 and the Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015 will probably be the subject of quite vigorous debate, particularly the summary offences bill. We are starting to see the repayment of favours to the unions commencing with the move-on laws. The manager of opposition business referred to the 16 October press release put out by Labor headed 'Labor to clean up Parliament with "honesty reforms"'. The release says:

> The 'consideration-in-detail' stage will be introduced as a standard feature to enhance scrutiny.

We want to see that introduced. That is the commitment the government has made, but last sitting week no bills went into the consideration-in-detail stage, which represents an immediately broken promise. While the manager of opposition business said we would not be opposing the government business program at this stage, if that were to continue — if no consideration in detail were to be given to bills, so that that scrutiny was not occurring — then obviously that position will change in the future.

With regard to Dorothy Dixers, which have been mentioned a few times here in relation to the sessional orders, as far as the reform goes, the Dorothy Dixers have just been replaced by ministerial statements. There is no difference; it is just that there is no government backbencher asking the question. With those few words, I conclude. As I said, the opposition will not be opposing this program.

Mr BROOKS (Bundoora) — It is a pleasure to join the debate on this important business program. It is a very good business program that follows on from last week's program, which demonstrated the way in which this government is able to manage the business of this house and get legislation through the house in a very stable and orderly way.

Under the new sessional orders, with the earlier start of the sitting day, we have already seen today the house able to get through some important business. The first item of business today was the swearing in of the member for Richmond, and it was great — I think all members would agree — to see him back here in full health and sworn in. There was then a very important condolence motion. All of that occurred well before what would have been the start in a usual sitting week previously. We were therefore able to get underway earlier and get work done, and we had some great contributions today from both sides of the house on the condolence motion for the late Evan Walker. I think they caused members here to reflect on the importance of making a lasting contribution to the state. It was a great and inspirational debate to listen to.

Under this business program that has been put forward by the government there are of course four important pieces of legislation. The Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment (Veterans Reform) Bill 2015 is an important bill aimed at protecting the ashes of veterans. There is also the Interpretation of Legislation Amendment Bill 2015.

The Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015 is an important piece of legislation. Committee work is some of the most valuable work, and probably the most underrated work, that members of Parliament perform across both sides of the house. Parliamentary committee work provides an opportunity for members to work together, often without the partisan nature of this place, to come up with answers to complex and difficult challenges for our society and to come back to this place with recommendations and potential solutions. Parliamentary committees do great work. How they are structured and operate in this Parliament is an important question, so it is important to debate the bill. I am sure it will be keenly debated across the chamber, which is a good thing.

Regarding the Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015, clearly there is an ideological difference between the ways in which we see these issues. No doubt we will have that debate this week, and this business program allows for that. This business program provides the ability to consider a range of issues, including legislation, and we have debated a great condolence motion today. This all fits within the new sessional orders, which seem to be working quite well.

As I think was picked up by the Leader of the House in her contribution, it is not up to the government to identify which bills the opposition wants to consider in detail. It is up to the opposition to nominate the bills it wants to take into a consideration-in-detail stage and seek that from the government. We will wait and see what the opposition wants to do.

I am also concerned that opposition members are so worried about their lunch break. Of all the challenges we face, what they raised was the time for lunch — whether we would have time to rush out and get a sandwich. As most members know, the normal operation of this place allows members to move in and out of the chamber during different parts of the day, and I am pretty sure that members opposite will be able to find the time to sneak out and grab a sandwich from the cafeteria or call out for a pizza, as the case may be, to satisfy their hunger and still be able to perform their duties in this house. Importantly the sessional orders allow for members to leave this place after the adjournment debate, which commences at 7.00 p.m., and either spend a little more time with their families or, importantly, attend community or stakeholder engagements to ensure that they remain connected with the community.

The new sessional orders make good changes, which should have been made a long time ago. It is good that this government has introduced these changes and helped to modernise the Parliament. This is a good business program. It takes us forward, and I commend it to the house.

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran) — It appears on paper that this is a reasonable government business program. The Greens believe that the legislative guillotine that is the government business program should be used sparingly and certainly not when there are proposed amendments before this house, as there were last week. This week we do not have amendments that require to be considered in detail. We will be seeking further consideration of the changes to parliamentary committees, and I will be happy to circulate our reasoned amendment to that effect, but we do expect that when there are proposed amendments to legislation the government will make good on its promise to make a consideration-in-detail stage a standard feature for the passage of bills in the Legislative Assembly. If we do not believe that there is adequate time for this to occur, we will vote accordingly.

The Greens suggest that given the make-up of the upper house, it is in the best interests of the government's legislative program to have bills and amendments fully debated in this house.

Ms Allan interjected.

Mr HIBBINS — The Leader of the House has many opportunities to contribute in this house, and she certainly does take them, so I would ask — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Ms McLeish**) — Order! The member will be afforded some quiet to allow him to be heard.

Mr HIBBINS — If we rush through them, we will simply see bills ending up back here after being amended in the other place, re-treading old ground. With that said, we will happily not oppose the government business program.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Newmarket Phoenix Soccer Club

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — I was delighted to recently attend the open day for the Newmarket Phoenix Soccer Club. The club is a new creation as the result of the merger of the Parkville Panthers Football Club, the Flemington Eagles Soccer Club, the North Lions Soccer Club and the Oromo All Stars. It will field numerous under-age teams as well as a couple of senior sides.

The open day event, which was held at Debneys Park and the Flemington Community Centre, was a huge success. It is worth pointing out that if the east–west link project had proceeded the Flemington Community Centre would have been demolished and open space around the oval would have been permanently lost. The day itself was terrific. There was a jumping castle for the kids as well as face painting, and it was clear to me that it truly was a terrific day for the representatives of the Flemington estate who attended.

I acknowledge the fact that Flemington Rotary members gave up their Sunday afternoon to run a sausage sizzle to raise valuable funds for the community. I also acknowledge the great role the Flemington branch of Bendigo Bank has played in getting behind and sponsoring Newmarket Phoenix. Sport, and soccer in particular, is incredibly important to this community, and it is wonderful to see so many local businesses and organisations, such as Rotary and Bendigo Bank, donating their time and money to support this worthwhile initiative. What also became apparent during the course of the day was that by working together we can improve the quality of life for those people who live on the estate. Staying active, living healthy lives and developing links and contacts that go beyond your family and your community are just so important, and I compliment the Newmarket Phoenix and wish it all the best in the upcoming season.

Lady April Hamer

Ms ASHER (Brighton) — I convey my condolences to the family of Lady April Hamer, who sadly passed away on Wednesday, 7 January. Lady April Hamer was the wife of Dick Hamer, who in my opinion was one of the outstanding Liberal Premiers of the state of Victoria. Dick passed away in 2004.

Those members of this house who have read Tim Colebatch's excellent biography of Sir Rupert Hamer will have seen references to Lady April, and I commend Tim Colebatch for writing a wonderful obituary about Lady April. She was not a natural party person, and she found herself married to a long-term Premier. Mr Colebatch references her absolute fear of public speaking, but she nevertheless did it to conform with the role of what was expected, in those days anyway, of a Premier's wife.

She joined the Canterbury women's section, and she was a particularly supportive spouse to Sir Rupert Hamer. She was well known for her passion for preserving the environment and Melbourne's green wedge parkland areas. Like her husband, she was not afraid to make controversial statements on matters about which she felt very strongly.

I pass on my condolences to Christopher, Julia, Sarah, Alastair and their families. Both the Hamers made outstanding contributions in their very different ways to the state of Victoria. Lady April will be sadly missed.

Greater Dandenong State Emergency Service unit

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) — I would like to congratulate the Greater Dandenong State Emergency Service (SES) for the tremendous and unrelenting work it undertakes across my electorate of Dandenong. I had the pleasure of visiting the premises of my local SES in Mills Road, Dandenong, last week, where I met with the unit controller, Paul Daniel, and members of his tight-knit team of volunteers. With a growing base of 35 volunteers and a committed and active core, the unit is made up of a unique group of men and women with diverse skills and backgrounds who perform an invaluable function as part of the SES network across Victoria.

In times of flood and storm these are the first responders — the people we call and rely on for help, often in times of desperate need. Outside of responding to emergency calls these volunteers are involved at a number of different levels across the community. Through education and awareness programs, continued fundraising and community engagement the unit ensures that the SES can continue to function at its optimum.

Being amongst this group of committed people brought home to me the great spirit of volunteerism that exists across Victoria. As Parliamentary Secretary for Carers and Volunteers I am honoured to represent and advocate on behalf of Victorians like those at the Greater Dandenong SES unit. The Greater Dandenong SES unit is a credit to my electorate and a credit to Victoria. Long may its great work continue to serve us in times of emergency.

Alan Stuart

Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East) — I wish to put on public record the outstanding efforts of a great Australian from my electorate of Gippsland East, Mr Alan Stuart. Alan was recently awarded an Order of Australia medal and was named East Gippsland Shire Council's Citizen of the Year and Lindenow Citizen of the Year at the East Gippsland Australia Day celebrations.

Alan has been an active member of the Mount Taylor Country Fire Authority brigade, near Bairnsdale, for almost 60 years. Joining as a 15-year-old, he went on to serve as captain for over a decade. He was a founding member of the Bairnsdale racecourse committee of management, serving for 34 years, and was awarded a life membership of the polocrosse club. He also served on the Mount Taylor hall and campdraft club committees.

In more recent times Alan has dedicated countless hours to fire recovery efforts throughout Gippsland. In 2003 he coordinated a volunteer effort to clean up burnt fencing and sheds and then erect new fencing in the areas of the high country affected by bushfire. He organised 33 volunteers and their families into groups, working over 11 weekends on properties in Gelantipy, Black Mountain, Bindi, Benambra and Suggan Buggan. Following the Black Saturday fires in 2009 he coordinated another volunteer clean-up and fencing venture in Callignee, Currajung and Traralgon South for 35 weekends, spread over 18 months.

More Alan Stuart-coordinated volunteer clean-ups then occurred following fires in 2011 in Tostaree, and his latest efforts have concentrated on the Glenaladale, Buchan and Bonang-Tubbut communities. Alan is a very humble man and a great East Gippslander.

Kim Thien Troung

Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Local Government) — I rise today to honour and congratulate an outstanding member of my local community, Kim Thien Troung, Brimbank City Council's Citizen of the Year for 2015.

In 1980 Kim Thien Troung came to Australia as a refugee. Kim's journey from Vietnam was incredibly arduous, as she battled to overcome hunger, sickness and storms on an overcrowded vessel before being confronted by pirates and shipwrecked on an island off Malaysia's coast. She eventually made her way to Australia, where she married and had three young children. Unfortunately she was widowed not long afterwards. Kim tirelessly worked to support her elderly mother and her young family.

Despite her great hardships, which would force many of us to look inwards, she looked outwards and looked at a way of giving back to the community. In 2009 Kim established Kim's Foundation of Hope, which raises funding to transport, house and treat sick, disabled or orphaned Vietnamese children. To date this foundation has raised over $330 000 and has saved numerous children's lives, both here and in Vietnam. I sincerely wish to congratulate Kim on being Brimbank's Citizen of the Year for 2015, an award truly earnt through amazing acts of kindness. It is people like her who make me proud to live in the western suburbs of Melbourne.

Koroit & District Primary School

Dr NAPTHINE (South-West Coast) — I call on the government to follow through with the actions that had already been undertaken by the previous government to install solar-powered electronic flashing 40-kilometre-per-hour school zone speed limit signs on Commercial Road, Koroit, outside the Koroit & District Primary School. The installation of electronic flashing 40-kilometre-per-hour school zone speed limit signs will significantly improve safety for the schoolchildren, their families and the wider school community.

Koroit is a great township, built on the wonderful Irish history of growing potatoes, dairying and raising families, situated on the rich volcanic soil adjacent to the magnificent Tower Hill Wildlife Reserve and overlooking the Southern Ocean. Today Koroit is a vibrant, diverse and growing community of over 2000 people. The local primary school is located on the eastern side of the town, on the very busy Commercial Road, which is the main thoroughfare through the town for trucks, commercial traffic, tourists and locals. The school is also next door to the very large, active and growing Devondale Murray Goulburn milk processing plant, which means that hundreds of milk tankers travel past the school each and every week.

In August last year, year 6 student Samuel Sutcliffe collected 500 signatures on a petition requesting flashing 40-kilometre-per-hour school zone speed limit signs at Koroit primary school. The school supervisor, Susan Hand, said the current crossing was 'scary'. She said that they had a lot of visitors and a lot of trucks. I urge the government to get on with the job started by the previous government and install safer electronic flashing school zone speed limit signs at Koroit.

Wallan

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — I rise to commend the Mitchell Shire Council on the work it is doing to make the township of Wallan a truly iconic country town which plans and looks to its future, values its history and looks to ensure that its local economy is improved and that there are jobs for the people who are moving to this community.

Wallan is situated just north of metropolitan Melbourne's northern suburbs and truly straddles city and country. The revitalisation of Wallan's town centre and the building of a rail trail from Seymour to Wandong are very important. The Andrews Labor government has committed $1.5 million to support Mitchell shire's equal contribution to revitalise the Wallan town centre. The government has also supported planning funding for the rail trail down to Wandong.

Last week I had the privilege of meeting with the Wallan community liaison group, led by Rob Eldridge, and the Mitchell shire to discuss the group's long-term vision for Wallan and its surrounds. There are certainly opportunities to continue the trails from Wallan all the way to Melbourne, eventually connecting to the Merri Creek trail. This is an important project for the Mitchell shire and for Wallan. More and more people are taking up cycling for fun, and it is important that this growing community get the health and tourism benefits that these trails can bring.

Murray Basin rail project

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — Reliable and economic rail transport of produce and minerals from north-western Victoria has been a priority for some time. The coalition committed $220 million towards this in the 2014 budget, and the project got underway in spring 2014 with the upgrade of the Hopetoun line. The next phase of stage 1 was the undertaking of pre-standardisation maintenance on the Mildura line.

A project as significant as this has many fathers, and I pay tribute to those who have walked this journey with us — the Rail Freight Alliance, the Mildura Rural City Council, the users, including Ken Wakefield of Wakefield Transport, GrainCorp and Iluka Resources, and of course my Nationals colleagues — for their support to find the funds to commit to this project. The community has also provided valuable support to this project. This is a project that is vital to my electorate and significant to Victoria. The time has come, and I urge the government to get on with the project.

Robinvale gas supply

Mr CRISP — Regional gas is another significant project in my electorate. The supply of natural gas to Robinvale has been well received. Supplying natural gas to smaller rural communities, particularly those on the Murray, has been a huge challenge, and it was the coalition government that came up with the plan to deliver this. The innovative engineering and supply contracts to do this have been let, and the community is very much looking forward to the contractors getting on with this project.

River safety

Mr CRISP — Finally, I thank Life Saving Victoria and the Mildura Life Saving Club for presenting their river awareness program to the 400 year 8 students in my region, giving them and those who care for them confidence in river safety.

Epping Cricket Club

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) — On 8 February I had the great honour of attending the Epping Cricket Club's family fun day and past players celebration. This was a particularly special event, with the launch of the just-published Epping Cricket Club history and the celebration of 137 years of continuous active operation — an achievement that I am sure puts the Epping Cricket Club in a small but elite group of longstanding cricket clubs in Victoria. This achievement is a credit to the club's members, past and present, whose dedication and commitment to the club and its place in the community has ensured its longevity. It is a legacy to be proud of.

The past players celebration was the perfect opportunity to launch the Epping Cricket Club's history, written and researched by Geoff Rose, a member of the Epping Cricket Club, a past player and the son of one of the best cricketers to come from the area. We are lucky that Geoff's interest in family history became an interest in the Epping Cricket Club's history. The book includes commentary, photos and newspaper articles, and it is a fascinating and enjoyable read. It has stories of people, humour, fun and generosity, and it describes a club that raised money for charity, built facilities and advocated for the community. It is littered with funny stories about great characters from the cricketing community.

I thank the organisers and hosts, David Fitzpatrick, president, and Kerry Fitzpatrick, secretary; Geoff Rose; Mick Reid; and the many others who organised the day. Also it was a pleasant surprise to see Neil O'Keefe, former player and former federal Labor member for

Burke, and his wife, Rhonda. It was a great day filled with lots of laughs and great discussion on great ideas for the future.

Rotary Club of Prahran

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran) — On 5 February I attended a homelessness forum hosted by the Rotary Club of Prahran at the Prahran RSL. The panel members — Jo Swift, CEO of Kids Under Cover; Rob Ellis from the Salvation Army; Linda Bradley from the Sacred Heart Mission; Tracey Swadling from Prahran Mission; and Senior Sergeant Dagmar Andersen from Victoria Police — gave attendees a greater understanding of what constitutes homelessness; the causes of homelessness, such as family violence, mental illness and substance abuse; what we can do to reduce homelessness, such as early intervention and providing assistance for young people to enter the private rental market; and the importance of the continuation of the Council of Australian Governments national partnership agreement on homelessness.

I applaud Prahran Rotary for shining a light on the critical issue of homelessness and thank Susie Cole and Prahran Rotary president, Graeme Newton, for organising the event. I commend the panel members, their organisations and their colleagues for the work they do for our community.

Pound–Shrives roads, Hampton Park

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — Just last week I had the great pleasure of announcing that the Andrews Labor government has provided $5.2 million to upgrade the notoriously dangerous and congested intersection of Pound and Shrives roads in Hampton Park. As part of the Safe System Road Infrastructure Program the intersection will be converted into a two-lane roundabout.

This was the culmination of years of hard work by so many within our local community. We were sick and tired of the ever-worsening congestion and constant accidents that plagued this intersection. Yet in four years did the previous conservative government take action? Did it heed the calls of local residents? Did it even lift a finger? No. It did absolutely nothing, despite the community's concerns and despite my efforts to get it to pay attention. I raised the matter in Parliament, I wrote to both the former Minister for Roads and Ports and the former Treasurer, and I collected signatures for several petitions that were all presented to this very chamber. We were ignored.

Throughout this time I regularly spoke to our then shadow Minister for Roads, and we both agreed that action must be taken. Within only 70 days of being sworn in we are starting work. We are getting on with the job of upgrading this intersection and making our roads safer.

Many people were involved in our campaign, including local resident Kylie Christmas, who spent years collecting countless signatures; Tony O'Hara and Warren Calder from the Hampton Park roads committee; Derek Gardner, another local resident and fierce advocate, who I believe has written to me more often than any other; Michele Halsall and Simon Difilippo, who were always fighting with me; and finally Vanassa Gerdes and Erica Maliki, tireless advocates for everything that is Hampton Park. Thank you to everyone who joined our campaign. We did it! It is a great illustration of how the Andrews Labor government is getting on with it.

Esther Park, Mooroolbark

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — Prior to the 2014 election $250 000 was committed by the former Napthine government in recognition of the need to modernise the Esther Park pavilion, home of the Mooroolbark 'Barkers' Soccer Club, to keep pace with rival soccer clubs. The Barkers have a rich history and a strong following, with five senior men's teams and two senior women's teams competing in both the Football Federation Victoria provisional and state leagues and the Bayside Football Association leagues.

It was with extreme disappointment that I was advised this week by the Minister for Sport that the Andrews government will not be providing the much-needed sport and recreational facilities funding for the Esther Park sports pavilion. This will negatively impact on community health and have adverse effects on youth engagement. It is clear that the Andrews government's concern for the people of Mooroolbark, especially young people and families, is only skin deep.

Many families are deeply involved in the club, with parents taking on roles such as training, fundraising and team management. What has made the minister's response even more disappointing is his lack of recognition of the work the club is doing in reaching out to our new citizens, such as the Chin community.

Gender equality

Mrs FYFFE — Sunday, 8 March, is International Women's Day. In a report by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency it was found that women in

management often get paid as much as 45 per cent less than their male peers. It is my fear that this will dampen the motivation of our potential female leaders. Even in the generously paid public service, women and men are not paid equally. In my role as a member and as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly I came across many wonderful women who ran rings around their male counterparts.

Islamic State

Ms KAIROUZ (Kororoit) — Members in this place would be aware of the recent barbaric murder of 21 Coptic Christians on a Libyan beach. While news reports describe these killings as executions, I will not use that term. That term implies some state sanction, and the cruel and brutal organisation that calls itself Islamic State, formerly known as ISIS, or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, can never be a state. These deaths are further grave examples of the depths to which this inhumane and vicious band of criminals is capable of descending, following on from the many recent atrocities committed by them, allegedly in the name of Allah.

As much as I seek to avoid the most graphic coverage of these callous acts, I cannot help but conjure a mental image from the many press reports. I have been filled with horror and revulsion by thoughts of the terror which must have been faced by these poor young men, whose only crime was to be Christian. The shocking reality of these crimes is so sickening that it is hard to rationalise its occurrence in the 21st century. I have been most affected by images of relatives, their eyes filled with tears and faces expressing disbelief, racked with grief and pain. I cannot imagine their pain, their broken hearts and how they will manage to make any sense of this crime.

I am sure the sadness I feel is shared by all members in this place and that we will be united in our condemnation of an evil which has no limits. I know that free-thinking and peace-loving people of all nations and religions in the world, including Muslims, resist this vile beast with every fibre of their being. I am sure too that all our hearts go out to members of the Coptic church here in Australia and indeed around the world.

Mornington electorate intersections

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — As the towns in my electorate have grown, so too have the pressures on local roads. In particular, the volume of cars on arterial roads has put pressure on many intersections of such roads with lower order roads. The Nepean Highway has a number of intersections that now require urgent attention — in Mount Eliza at the intersections with Volitans Avenue and with Tower Road and in Mount Martha at the intersections with Uralla Road and with Forest Drive.

The intersection at Forest Drive has been the subject of discussion with VicRoads, and a number of actions have occurred over the past 12 months, in part as a result of varied traffic patterns following the opening of Peninsula Link. Many more vehicles now turn right from Forest Drive to head south from that intersection and to access the northbound lanes of the Mornington Peninsula Freeway. This was originally a section of highway with a 100-kilometre-an-hour speed limit, but it was reduced to 80 kilometres an hour after discussions between me and the then regional manager of VicRoads.

The former Minister for Roads took a keen interest in the process and further developments were under discussion, but unfortunately the state election intervened. Throughout this process VicRoads has been most helpful, but the reality is that a major and expensive improvement is required at this intersection. The government needs to find the funds and find them urgently. In December 2014 I gave a notice of motion raising this matter. That motion remains on the notice paper undebated. The Minister for Roads seems to be having trouble finding shovel-ready projects; perhaps he could move this one to the top of the list before another fatality occurs.

Aspendale Primary School

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) — I recently had the opportunity to attend the Aspendale Primary School student leadership ceremony, which was a wonderful event. I pay tribute to Tom and Lauren, the student leaders. In my conversation with Karen, Tom's mum, and his grandmother, Evie, they expressed utter pride and happiness. I congratulate Tom and Lauren. Aspendale Primary School has a unique leadership program where it puts forward all students as leaders, whether it be in environmental roles, a role in the community with local council or a local government role. This is a wonderful opportunity to build resilience in our community and teach students accountability. It was great to pay tribute to all those students.

Parktone Primary School

Mr RICHARDSON — I would like to reflect on my visit to Parktone Primary School in Parkdale and pay tribute to principal George Danson and the students and teachers. Not long ago this school was on its knees, with just 120 students. The student population is now

500 strong. It is thriving. It has a wonderful program based on Stephen Covey's book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, customised to teach students how to perform in leadership roles. I pay tribute to George Danson and his team. I look forward to working with the school into the future to help meet its growing needs.

Ben Currie

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) — I recently attended a fundraising event for local lad Ben Currie, who at age 19 is currently racing in the British Superbikes Pirelli National Superstock 600 Championship. Ben's next goal is to race in the 2015 Superbike World Championship, and our local community is getting right behind Ben in his future racing endeavours.

Reverend Sathia Anthony

Mr NORTHE — Last week I had the pleasure of attending the Anglican Diocese of Gippsland induction ceremony for Reverend Sathia Anthony. I wish to pass on my best wishes and a big welcome to Sathia and his wife, Sandra, and we look forward to his ministry in the Moe, Newborough and Yallourn North areas.

Boolarra Folk Festival

Mr NORTHE — This weekend the 13th Boolarra Folk Festival takes place, with a day and evening of free entertainment on offer. In addition to the quality entertainment there will be a wide array of stalls, arts and crafts and food available for the many hundreds of visitors who are expected to attend. I congratulate Ray Stewart and his committee, which does such a marvellous job of hosting this terrific local event.

Latrobe community fun run and walk

Mr NORTHE — On Sunday the DFP Recruitment Latrobe City Community Fun Run and Walk will take place, with funds raised to be donated to Gippsland Rotary Centenary House. I am sure the day will be a great success. I congratulate the Traralgon Harriers, in particular president Will Hanrahan and his committee, for its amazing effort in coordinating this event.

Morwell multicultural celebrations

Mr NORTHE — On Sunday Soula Kanellopoulos and her band of volunteers will host International Women's Group Harmony Day and multicultural celebrations in Morwell. This is always a wonderful day to celebrate the diversity of our local community, with plenty of entertainment complemented by good food and fellowship. Well done to Soula and her team.

Essendon Maribyrnong Park Ladies Cricket Club

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie) — I rise to acknowledge an important pillar of my community, the Essendon Maribyrnong Park Ladies Cricket Club — the oldest continuing women's cricket club in the world. It formed as the Essendon Ladies Cricket Club in 1905 and merged with the Maribyrnong Park Women's Cricket Club in 1981. The Essendon Maribyrnong Park Ladies Cricket Club had a fantastic result this year, beating Box Hill in the Twenty20 final. I would specifically like to congratulate Molly Strano on being player of the match, having made 44 runs from 46 balls. The team's coach is former Australian captain Karen Rolton, who holds the test batting world record of 209 not out with an average of 60.68.

The club has a proud history and has fielded eight Australian players, including captains Raelee Thompson and Margaret Jennings, as well as current Australian squad spin bowler Kristen Beams. The club has also produced numerous junior and senior Victorian players — too many to mention here today. Well done to all club members on a successful season and best wishes for the season to come.

Moonee Valley Festival

Mr CARROLL — Last Sunday, 22 February, I joined the thousands of people who once again converged on Queens Park, Moonee Ponds, to enjoy the 38th annual Moonee Valley Festival, Moonee Valley's largest free community celebration. A fun summer day full of excitement was had by all, with market and food stalls, roaming performers, entertainment stages, business expo sites and community activities and displays showing what is happening in the city. It was a pleasure to attend the champagne breakfast prior to the festival commencing.

This event is a fantastic example of community spirit, with individuals and families, young and old, from all walks of life taking part. I congratulate everyone involved in the 2015 Moonee Valley Festival, especially the City of Moonee Valley, the staff, the volunteers, the generous sponsors and of course the vibrant local community.

Shannan Griffiths

Mr GIDLEY (Mount Waverley) — I rise in the Parliament to congratulate Shannan Griffiths from Huntingtower School on being awarded a Premier's Spirit of Anzac Prize for 2014–15. Shannan was one of just 12 students selected from across the state for her

moving essay on the spirit of Anzac. It was a pleasure to join Shannan and her family at Parliament House and to see her receive the award, and I wish her well for her visit to World War I battlefields later this year.

Shashira Wijesuriya

Mr GIDLEY — Today in the Parliament I congratulate Shashira Wijesuriya from Glen Waverley Secondary College on being awarded a Premier's Spirit of Anzac Prize for 2014–15. Shashira was one of just 12 students selected from across the state for her exceptional essay on the spirit of Anzac. It was a pleasure to join Shashira and her family at Parliament House as she received the award, and I wish her well for her visit to the World War I battlefields later this year.

Essex Heights Primary School

Mr GIDLEY — I take this opportunity in the Parliament to acknowledge and congratulate the 2015 school leaders of Essex Heights Primary School and wish them well in their leadership positions, particularly school captains Andre Aiuto, Mitha Mallichetty, Petro Pirozek and Tiffany Xia; music captains Victoria Yu, Zoe Guymer and Jeremy Lau; library captains Inga Griffiths-Hunt, Kailly Shi, Callum Gribbin and Ashika Ranasinghe; art captains Kristen Molloy, Sapir Triffon, Lynne Zhang and Anna Lin; sustainability captains Hugh Chen, Cindy Li, Hayeon Choi and Sho Takayanagi; Indonesian captains Jane Kim and Aaliyah Mohammad Akshir; and sports captains Sienna Spencer, Tom Prior, Lauren Taylor, Victoria Porfyris, Leo Yu, Ashley Chung, Megan Cornell and Kye Bongiorno. I also wish the principal, Mr Crossett, staff and school council well for the school year ahead.

Tet festival

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — Last Saturday I was a guest at the Vietnamese Community in Australia's Tet festival at Sandown. Well done to Bong Nguyen and the volunteers on a wonderful event. The festival was very well attended. The Premier was welcomed by the community, as were the federal Leader of the Opposition; the federal member for Gellibrand, Tim Watts; Nam Quach, mayor of the City of Maribyrnong; Sean O'Reilly, mayor of the City of Dandenong; Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen, the first Vietnamese-Australian bishop in Australia; Professor Tien Kieu from VNTV; Cr Loi Van Tung, whose daughter was the master of ceremonies; and Kim Thien Truong, Citizen of the Year for the City of Brimbank, who was mentioned in an earlier members statement. She has done a marvellous job of helping children from Vietnam with severe medical needs.

The festival was a marvellous celebration of academic achievement, not only of those involved in the Tet festival but of young Vietnamese. Above all, it celebrated the bravery of those in the Vietnamese community who left their country by hopping on a boat and coming to Australia 40 years ago. What a contribution they have made to this country.

Roads

Mr DONNELLAN — I also want to mention a recent announcement in my local area, in the city of Casey, in relation to the intersection of Pound and Shrives roads, Narre Warren South, which was very dangerous, but the Andrews government is getting on with the job and providing immediate funding to fix that corner by putting in a roundabout. I also mention that the government is bringing forward works on the $175 million project at Thompsons Road, Cranbourne, and getting on with the job.

Diamond Valley Special Developmental School

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — I rise to commend Diamond Valley Special Developmental School, which the member for Eltham and I had the privilege of visiting last week. The school has been a longstanding innovator in the provision of schooling for kids with special needs. I am really proud of the leadership of principal Brendan White and assistant principal Pennie Moffatt, who have been involved in longstanding curriculum development to ensure that mainstream educators get a better understanding of what the curriculum needs are and how children with disabilities can be fully integrated into our education system, which I know this government and the Minister for Education, who is in the house at the moment, are very passionate about.

Those involved in the school will leave a longstanding legacy, particularly Brendan White, who has been principal for 12 years. In that time he has established a number of base rooms at other schools in the district including Apollo Parkways, Montmorency and Briar Hill primary schools and Greensborough College. It was a privilege to sit down with Brendan last week and look at the future requirements of kids with special needs who live in the growth corridors so that they do not have to travel too much.

The school particularly wants to set up a base room in Whittlesea, and I look forward to working with the Diamond Valley Special Developmental School towards a Whittlesea base room.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Proclamations

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) — I move:

That this house authorises and requires the Clerk to table copies of proclamations of the Governor in Council fixing dates for the coming into operation of acts, as published in the *Government Gazette* from time to time.

Motion agreed to.

UPPER YARRA VALLEY AND DANDENONG RANGES REGIONAL STRATEGY PLAN

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Planning) — I move:

That under section 46D(1)(c) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987, amendment no. 121 to the *Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Regional Strategy Plan* be approved.

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Planning) — As we know, all planning scheme amendments sit before the houses for a period of 10 days. This planning scheme amendment was introduced by the previous government, and although the Parliament was prorogued the rule about the 10 sitting days still applies. Today is the last day for this matter to be dealt with by the Parliament in both houses, and my understanding is that this matter will also be addressed in the upper house as a matter of urgency so that this issue can be resolved. The amendment is required to enable the premises at 261 Mount Dandenong Tourist Road in Ferny Creek to be used and developed as a restaurant and caretaker's residence.

The shadow Minister for Planning is at the table — we have reversed roles. In relation to planning scheme amendments it is important that the process has been properly instituted, the local government authority and the community have been consulted and, where possible, agreement has been forthcoming from the council before these matters are presented to the Parliament for further scrutiny and debate. I am pleased to say that the proposal has been through a full public consultation process and considered by an independent panel, which has supported the amendment to the Yarra Valley planning scheme.

The proposal also has broad support from the community within that area. It would be fair to categorise this particular amendment as a relatively localised and quite minor amendment, but it is required to come before the house because the Planning and Environment Act 1987 requires approval of any amendment to the strategy plan to be ratified by both houses. It is a very straightforward matter. It is a matter that was introduced by the previous minister, it does have the support of the local council and it has been through an independent panel process. I commend it to the house.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — The opposition supports this motion. As the minister indicated, it was a process that was put in train under the previous government, and the explanatory report prepared in relation to it indicates, as the minister said, that it applies to the premises at 261 Mount Dandenong Tourist Road, Ferny Creek. My understanding is that the premises are a restaurant together with a caretaker's house. It has been operating for some years, but it has come to light that there is a planning anomaly, as it were, which raises some issues as to whether all legislative and procedural requirements in relation to planning permits and other matters have been met, and this amendment is intended to resolve that. It is an amendment to the *Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Regional Strategy Plan* under section 20(4) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 to allow an amendment to be made for the site.

In essence this is an amendment that will allow a small business in the area that has been operating successfully without any difficulties for some time to continue to operate. As the minister indicated, it is important that the appropriate process be followed, and as the house would expect, under the previous minister the proper process was followed, and this motion before the house is the result. The opposition is pleased to support the motion so that this matter can be resolved and this small business can focus on delivering services and adding value to the Victorian economy.

Motion agreed to.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed from 12 February; motion of Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) for adoption of address-in-reply.

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — I am pleased to rise to respond to the address from the Governor. His Excellency laid out the program of this government in the Legislative Council chamber on 23 December last year. I was not present to hear that speech; indeed I am glad I did not waste my time, because quite frankly the address was entirely substance free. In saying that, I certainly do not intend to reflect on the Governor. This

is a speech written by the government, not by the Governor. Had it been his own speech, I have no doubt it would have been a speech of substance, but sadly it was not. I note that this new Labor government was so lacking in confidence in its product that the document was never printed. Instead we received advice from the Clerk that an electronic copy was available. That certainly makes it so much simpler. There are no pesky hard copies hanging around — just hit the delete button, and it is gone. The ephemeral physical form of the address was entirely appropriate given that this is a lightweight agenda from a lightweight government.

This speech provides no long-term vision for the state. It totally ignores the pressures of population growth and it totally ignores the need to invest in job-creating infrastructure. It clearly says that the Premier has forgotten his words of 2011 that Labor simply 'couldn't keep up'. With this plan the state will certainly not keep up; it will simply sink further and further behind. It demonstrates a complete lack of vision and a complete lack of a coherent plan, but perhaps that is unsurprising, because Labor owes this win neither to its political skills nor to any capacity to capture the imagination of the Victorian community. Labor has absolutely no imagination at all.

Mr Foley interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Ms Ryall**) — Order! The member for Albert Park will desist.

Mr MORRIS — I will have more to say about that to the member in a minute. The election was simply a triumph of narrow self-interest over public benefit — the narrow self-interest of Labor seeking to grasp and wield political power — and nothing more than that. The election was a triumph of the narrow self-interest of Labor and its mates, the public sector unions, and of course those unions are now desperate to claim their reward for getting Labor into office.

In the space of a few short weeks we have already seen the government roll over to the Ambulance Employees Australia of Victoria. We have seen the United Firefighters Union of Australia knocking on the door with its hands firmly held out. We have seen the Health Services Union run its colours up the mast — a 20 per cent increase if you do not mind! The support of the union movement for this government did not come cheap, and the Victorian taxpayer is about to find out just how large Labor's debt to them has become.

This was a campaign built on Labor lies. If there was ever any doubt about this, it was clearly confirmed on election day. We had bogus firefighters in bogus uniforms, we had hospital beds outside the polling booths, we had unionists from Trades Hall and from electorate offices around the state masquerading as emergency services workers, or worse, as concerned independent individuals. Those of us who were on the ground could smell a rat if one was around, and there were plenty of rats around on 29 November.

Mr Foley interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Ms Ryall**) — Order! The member for Albert Park! If I call for order, then as the Acting Speaker I expect respect.

Mr MORRIS — There were plenty of rats on the ground on 29 November, and if members of the general public or indeed the house had any doubt, all they had to do was read the *Age* of 12 December.

Mr Foley interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Ms Ryall**) — Order! The member for Albert Park knows how to raise a point of order, and so I would expect him to raise a point of order instead of yelling from the sidelines when he has been called to order on many occasions. I ask him to desist.

Mr Foley — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I ask the member whether he believes his calling working people 'rats' is a parliamentary term.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Ms Ryall**) — Order! What is the point of order?

An honourable member interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Ms Ryall**) — Order! It is not a point of order.

Mr MORRIS — I would have thought the member for Albert Park, or indeed the Minister for Housing, has been in the house long enough to understand that a point of order is not taken in order to ask a question. But as we saw in Shane Green's feature on Luke Hilakari, the fingerprints of Trades Hall are all over this election victory. That is more than we can say for a number of the members opposite, because they were conspicuous by their absence from their own campaigns. That tactic certainly raised a few eyebrows in the community. But having seen their performance in the opening weeks of this Parliament, I am no longer surprised. They will soon learn that as sitting MPs they cannot be so self-effacing, particularly if they want to be re-elected. They will be trying to defend the antics of Dodgy Dan and his mad gang. They will be trying to defend — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Ms Ryall**) — Order! The member for Mornington will refer to members in this house by their correct title.

Mr MORRIS — Certainly, Acting Speaker. But they will find themselves in the firing line. They will not be able to hide behind the union movement.

I believe the Napthine government was a very good government. Certainly the first rule of any administration should be to leave the state in a better place than it found it in, and that is what the Napthine government did.

I have some matters that I would have liked to canvass about activities in the local government sphere. Unfortunately the number of interjections and points of order will not make that possible. But I will say very briefly that I was very proud of the work undertaken by the Ministerial Advisory Council on Public Libraries. I had the privilege of chairing that committee. We produced a landmark review of public libraries and concluded that a new model of service provision was necessary — a collaborative model that recognises the reality of the 21st century when it comes to libraries. I particularly want to recognise the valuable work that was undertaken on that committee by my deputy, Joanne Duncan, the former member for Macedon. We produced a truly bipartisan report. I look forward to its implementation.

There are also issues around cost shifting, which the former government not only slowed down but actually reversed, increasing substantially the amount of money going to local government from the state government — by 35 per cent over the four years. However, I am particularly interested in the proposal to cap rates in line with CPI, and I will certainly be watching that initiative closely. Yes, local government rate increases have been excessive, and they have been excessive over an extended period. The rate of increase declined substantially over the last four years, but it is still too high. It declined because in the 57th Parliament the government worked with local government. What Labor apparently fails to understand is that the rate of increase above CPI is driven mostly by labour costs — nothing more, nothing less. Hopefully the Minister for Local Government, given that she is also the Minister for Industrial Relations, will quickly come to terms with that fact.

If rates are capped and labour costs increase, then councils will be left with only two options. They can sack staff or they can cut back on capital works. I do not think the Community and Public Sector Union and associated unions will allow staff numbers to be cut. I cannot see that happening. That means there is only one inevitable outcome from this rate capping, and that is that spending on capital works will plummet, the infrastructure gap will widen and once again the next generation will be called upon to pay for another Labor folly.

Yes, we need to fix the problem of rate increases, but we need a much more nuanced approach than we have seen coming out of this government. Councils need to have the capacity to provide the services and facilities required in the municipal districts. We now have a new coalition government — a coalition of Trades Hall, the Greens and the parliamentary Labor Party. Anyone who witnessed the vitriol directed from the government benches towards the members for Prahran and Melbourne in the last sitting week would think that the Labor Party and the Greens were sworn enemies. Indeed I heard the word 'quisling' emanate from a person who most needed the support of the Greens to get back into this house.

The suggestion that the two groups are sworn enemies, or at least that the Greens are an anathema to the Australian Labor Party, is clearly a tale of fiction. If we look at the evidence from the polling place, we can see that lie is exposed. This was no sweeping Labor victory; Labor simply fell over the line with a few seats. If it was a victory, it was a victory that was based on lies — the TAFE lie, the education lie, the health lie and, perhaps worst of all, the east–west link lie — lies that we have heard time and again. As we heard from the member for Warrandyte, lies and intimidation were hallmarks of the Labor campaign. In the end, what did it achieve? Certainly it achieved government. We cannot argue with that. But it did not achieve widespread support in the Victorian community. Labor has no sweeping mandate from this election victory.

Overall, Labor received 38.1 per cent of the vote, well behind the Liberal-National coalition vote of 41.99 per cent. In nine seats the Liberal candidate received a greater number of votes than the final ALP victor. In the case of nine Labor members, their personal support was less than 40 per cent, including three ministers and the Deputy Premier. Fewer than 4 in 10 voters supported the Deputy Premier, so how can he claim to have the support of this state?

And it gets worse. Three government members were elected with the support of less than 35 per cent of the vote. The Minister for Housing took the prize for the lowest personal vote of 32.33 per cent, more than 9 per cent behind his Liberal opponent, but he is back! The Minister for Consumer Affairs, while finishing behind the Greens on primary votes, got up on the back of

Liberal preferences. The member for Frankston, with just under 35 per cent, benefited greatly from the support of the former member, Mr Shaw. The Minister for Planning — not unusually — survived a very tight tussle.

This is not a government with wide public support. It is a government which took a seat-by-seat, populist approach. It had only one goal: to garner enough seats to form government — no more, no less. Absolutely no commitment was given without an expectation of gaining seats — and some commitments were given regardless of the damage their implementation could do to the state. It was cynical, manipulative politics at its absolute worst.

As others have remarked in this debate, it is indeed a privilege to sit in this place. For me, it is a privilege to represent the beautiful Mornington Peninsula — indeed, since the redivision, a much larger slice of the Peninsula. The contrast between the 56th Parliament and the 57th Parliament could not have been greater. There is a long list of investments made in my electorate in the 57th Parliament, and almost none in the 56th. None of us would have the opportunity to sit on these benches without the help of our political supporters, our friends and our family. The Mornington electorate is exceedingly well served by a good group of people, including Greg Dixon, Alex Screen, Terry Leech, Reagan Barry and Peter Angelico. I thank them all for their input into this most recent campaign. I also wish to thank my electorate staff, including Robbie Phillips, who has now retired, and particularly my office manager, Raeleigh Speedie. She is absolutely critical in ensuring the smooth running of the well-oiled machine that is the Mornington electorate office.

Finally, and most importantly, I wish to thank my strongest supporter, my wife, Linda. Without her energy, enthusiasm and consistent hard work, it would be so much harder to undertake the job that I do and to do it in an effective manner, if at all. To Linda, I say: 'Thank you, Darling, for all your help and support over what is now quite a long period'.

In conclusion, I wish to congratulate both the member for Tarneit, the Speaker, and the member for Melton, the Deputy Speaker, on their election to high office. I believe both are men of integrity, and while I am sure we will have a divergence of opinion from time to time, I know both will serve the Parliament exceptionally well. While I certainly do not in any way endorse the content of the Governor's speech, I do commend the motion to the house.

Debate interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER — Order! Before calling the member for Geelong, I wish to acknowledge in the gallery the former member for Geelong, Ian Trezise, and the former member for Yuroke, Liz Beattie.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed.

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) — Thank you and congratulations, Speaker, on your appointment. I was impressed by your story about your journey to this place. I also wish to congratulate the Deputy Speaker.

I acknowledge the original custodians of the land on which we meet and pay my respects to their ancestors past, present and future. I also acknowledge the Wathawurung people, the traditional custodians of the land within the Geelong electorate.

I am so proud and honoured to have been elected by the people of Geelong and feel privileged to represent my community and the Australian Labor Party. I thank the people of Geelong for putting their confidence in me to represent them in this place. Geelong has a proud working-class history, and it is well known for its union strength. There is a great history of workers taking on many struggles, some of which were won, some lost. Fanny Brownbill, a past member for Geelong, was the first women to hold a seat for Labor in the Victorian Parliament. From 1938 to 1948 she represented the people of Geelong and had a particular interest in the welfare of women, children and the aged. I had the pleasure of meeting her son, who told me many great stories about his mother. There are two stories that I will always remember. One is that she sat in the Parliament knitting warm clothing for the poor children in the winter months, and the second is that she cooked a roast lunch for the poor every Sunday in Geelong. Fanny Brownbill's stories and achievements should be celebrated.

Born in Geelong, I grew up in Corio with my parents, Doug and Liz; my brothers, David and George; and my sisters, Lyn, Jenny and Beth. I went to Corio Primary School and then on to Corio Technical School. Proudly growing up in Corio, I saw and felt the impacts on life of being a low-income family. As kids we did not have much materially, but we were blessed with loving and supportive parents. I entered the workforce at 15 in a local cake factory. Having had instilled in me at an early age the values of social justice and supporting

others in need, I decided that working in a cake factory would only be a temporary job. As with many great plans, life events dictate our future, and I remained at the cake factory until I met and married Allan Couzens.

The Couzens family moved to Geelong in the late 1960s from Framlingham, near Warrnambool. The Framlingham mission was established in 1861 by the Anglican Church. The family made the decision to move to Geelong because there was still a fear that Aboriginal children may be removed from their families. They moved to Corio, where they settled with their seven children. Allan's father, Uncle Stan Couzens, was a Victorian Indigenous artist. Uncle Stan's works were included in the 'Couzens Family Exhibition: I come from …' at the Melbourne Museum in 2008. Sadly, Allan never got to see his father recognised for his artwork. Whilst playing football for Corio in a preliminary final at Bannockburn, just outside Geelong, he collapsed during the game. I travelled in a car behind him, with the ambulance sirens and lights going, on the way to Geelong Hospital. About halfway there the siren and lights were turned off, and I knew then he was gone.

We had three very young children, Leah, Andrew and Mark. The shock and grief that reverberated throughout both our families was something I would not want to see anyone experience. The days following were a painful blur. The kids and I were staying at my parents' home in Corio. My father took a phone call, then he came into me and said, 'Nipper Trezise, the member of Parliament for Geelong North, just called, and he wants to know if he can help or if you need anything'. My initial reaction was to wonder why a member of Parliament was calling me. Later I realised that he was calling me because he cared about the people in his electorate, and although I cannot say this was the catalyst for my interest in politics it was certainly the start of my interest in my community, and it gave me a sense of how important it is for people to know that someone cares.

I learnt how your life as you know it can change within seconds. The support from my close friends, Cathy Walker, my family, the Corio football club and the Geelong community was fantastic — something I will never forget.

I strongly believe we are all defined by our past and our actions, and I know that I am a person who has committed my life to making our community a fairer place for all — that is, a community where everyone, no matter their circumstances in life, is given a real opportunity to succeed and, when needed, a helping hand.

A few years later I had the pleasure of working on a number of community issues in Corio and Norlane with Nipper Trezise, under the Cain government. Nipper was a great member of Parliament and a great role model.

I met my partner, Paul, who took on Leah, Andrew and Mark as their father. Later we had another son, PJ. My partner, Paul, has been a great father to all four children and a great support to me. His encouragement has enabled me to get where I am today.

I quickly established a career in my chosen field of community development and started working in the areas of housing, disadvantage and homeless youth. After a few years working in the community sector the move was on for community sector workers to have qualifications. I came to appreciate the importance of an education. I decided it was time to get some qualifications and completed a bachelor of arts in social science whilst still working full-time.

Throughout my life I have seen the importance of government providing quality services to our community. I have always actively done things about issues of concern to me and have not just sat back. This is why I joined the Australian Labor Party. I have held various roles within the ALP, including secretary of the Geelong West branch.

During the Kennett government years the housing service I worked for lost its funding, and I took up a position in consumer law until I was employed by the then state member for Geelong, Ian Trezise, in 1999, when he won the seat of Geelong by 16 votes. I have been privileged to work for Ian Trezise for 15 years, alongside electorate officer, Justin Mills, and Jeannette Johanson. Together we have seen births, deaths and marriages and worked hard for the Geelong electorate. Ian was one of the most admired and respected members of Parliament I know. He worked hard for every one of his constituents who needed help and advocated for and on behalf of the Geelong electorate. Ian always took the time to listen to constituents and local groups about the issues that mattered to them. Whether he could solve their problem or not, they held a great deal of respect for him because he took the time to listen.

Ian strongly advocated for education, health and jobs in our electorate, and of course supported his union comrades throughout his 15 years of service to the people of Geelong. Ian has been my greatest mentor. I want to thank Ian, my dear friend, for all he has done on my campaign and for me and my family. I miss seeing

him every day, but I also know he is with us all the way.

I also volunteer my time with the Barwon South West Redisupport Team which sets up relief centres in times of emergency, such as bushfires and floods. In January I worked with the Ararat team of volunteers at their relief centre during the bushfire crisis. They were doing an amazing job but needed a break. I was pleased to hear in conversation that they had just heard the Premier on the radio and how impressed they were that he had thanked the volunteers in relief centres across Victoria.

It is with real sadness that I leave the Geelong Trades Hall Council executive and delegates, and of course the Women Unionists Network, in an official capacity after more than 20 years. My time at Geelong Trades Hall has been a great learning experience and an opportunity to support workers in Geelong. I want to thank them all.

I particularly want to thank comrade secretary Tim Gooden for his support. Over the years we have worked closely together in my role as president and vice-president. Together we took on many campaigns and struggles, and I truly valued Tim's hard work on behalf of unions and their members.

Just as importantly I want to thank Anne Morrison, the office manager of Geelong Trades Hall. I have worked closely with Anne on many trade union matters, in particular the Women Unionists Network. I have valued Anne's friendship for many years and have greatly appreciated her unquestioned support. We have supported each other during difficult times. Anne's husband, Bill, was also a great support to me, and it is important to me that I acknowledge that support because Bill passed away a few years ago. I know he would be so chuffed that I am now here in this place.

I also want to acknowledge the passing of Mel Dwyer in December 2014. Mel was the local organiser for the Australian Nursing & Midwifery Federation. Mel and I had a cheeky relationship, and I was shattered at his sudden death.

I thank EMILY's List and of course my mentor, Helen Creed. I also want to thank Kosmos and Kareem at the ALP state office, who provided great assistance during my campaign, even though they did not have to.

I want to sincerely thank my campaign team and members of the Geelong West branch and the Belmont branch of the ALP for their hard work and commitment. These dedicated volunteers ran a great campaign with very little resources. Headed up by campaign manager Michael Tate, our campaign was focused on talking to the community about the issues most affecting them. I want to thank Michael for his tireless work and energy to ensure the campaign met its objectives. Michael was extraordinary as campaign manager and I cannot thank him enough. I also want to thank Justin Mills, who has supported me for the past 15 years and provided valuable assistance to me during the campaign, and Jeannette Johanson, a great friend who was also a significant volunteer during the election and provided assistance whenever I needed it — even though neither of them had to do so.

I want to thank my campaign team for their tireless work — there are hundreds of names and I do not have time to name them all — but also the ALP members and supporters who worked hard on election day and throughout the campaign. I know I will have forgotten someone out of all the great people who helped me over a long campaign — my apologies. I thank you all.

I also want to acknowledge my dear friends Phil and Noelene Flaherty. They have worked on every Labor campaign in Geelong for the past 50 years. Due to Phil's ill health they missed this one and cannot be here today.

I thank my family for their great effort on election day: my sister, Beth Macpherson, and her husband, Macca; my brother, George O'Dwyer, and his partner, Amanda Pugh; my children, my daughter, Leah, and her partner, Garry, and my grandchildren, Acacia, Djilyan, Eli and Rhanni; my son, Andrew, and his partner, Shannon, and my grandchildren, Jayde, Aarion and Kodah; my son, Mark, and his wife, Lisa, and my grandchildren, Sarah, Matilda, Jude and Rue; and my son, PJ, and his partner, Vicki, and my grandchildren, Pauly, Isla and Ava.

I acknowledge the hard work that was done in the South Barwon campaign and the candidate, Andy Richards. Andy was not successful, but we thank him for his hard work for the ALP and we all wish him well. I want to thank Richard Marles, the federal member for Corio, and his partner, Rachel Schutze, for their amazing support and assistance throughout my campaign. I am grateful for their support and have appreciated the time and effort they gave to me personally and to the campaign. I want to thank the member for Lara, John Eren, and Geraldine Eren for their support and assistance throughout my journey. They always made sure I was front and centre.

I also want to thank the member for Bellarine and a member for Western Victoria. I appreciated their support and guidance. I thank federal members Tanya Plibersek and Kate Ellis, and former Victorian premiers

John Cain, Jr, and Steve Bracks for their support during my campaign. I want to thank Marsha Thomson, the member for Footscray, and Janice Munt for their spit and polish. I also wish to thank our leader, now the Premier, for his support and his commitment to the people of Geelong.

Running a campaign on limited resources is a difficult task. We made it through thanks to the many individual donations from ALP members and supporters, and I thank them all very much. I want to acknowledge the support of a number of unions. Firstly, I want to thank Dallas Gill, the United Firefighters Union of Australia representative in Geelong, and his comrades for their support and assistance. We will now see our firefighters treated with respect and dealt with in a fair and reasonable environment. I wish to thank Jake and Glenn from the plumbers union; the Textile Clothing & Footwear Union of Australia; and the Australian Services Union Victorian and Tasmanian authorities and services branch — and a special thanks to Lisa Darmanin. I want to thank the Maritime Union of Australia, and Ray and Cindy from the postal workers.

I want to acknowledge the many local groups who have helped me in my journey here — in particular, Diversitat, the Women in Community Life Advisory Committee, the Geelong residents action groups, the Geelong Sustainability Group and the many sporting groups in Geelong.

As politicians we must provide opportunities, real opportunities that mean something to the lives of those we represent. It is our responsibility to give hope and to care about the health and wellbeing of our constituents. This is why I am so pleased that we will begin to address Geelong's unemployment rate. The urgency in Geelong to create jobs quickly was acknowledged and supported by our Labor leader and our election commitments focused on jobs and education. Labor's commitment to jobs in Geelong is unprecedented. We have also committed to rebuild Whittington Primary School and Geelong High School. I particularly want to mention the work being done by the principal, teachers and parents at Whittington Primary School.

Geelong is a great place in which to live, but I definitely do see that with the right priorities and vision for our city it can become an even greater place to call home. I believe that to be a politician you have to listen and you have to care about those who have no power, because it is our responsibility to represent all people, in particular those most vulnerable in our community.

I have not come from a privileged background but I am privileged to have had opportunities either offered or that I have taken to be able to stand in this place today. I sit in this place and think, 'Who would have thought?'.

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) — I am delighted to rise to deliver my address-in-reply. Before I begin, I congratulate you, Speaker, on your appointment. It is a terrific appointment for you and one that you must be very proud of.

Here begins the next phase of the journey of the MP. My first four years were in government; the next four will be in opposition. I take this opportunity to point out to the former member for Murray Valley, who would constantly remind me that he was the longest serving member for Murray Valley, that currently I am the longest serving member for Ovens Valley.

I am very proud of the achievements of the government during my first four years in this place. One that I want to touch on is the Numurkah hospital, which was a special achievement after it was wiped out by floods. But for the support of the then coalition government, including Wendy Lovell, a member for Northern Victoria Region in the other place, David Davis as the then Minister for Health and myself, the hospital would be nothing more than a parking lot now. It is really important that the Numurkah hospital is restored. We got $18 million-plus for that hospital to go ahead. That is a great commitment to that community. People in other governments would have said, 'Shepparton is close enough for people to go to and you can just do without a hospital', so Numurkah was a terrific win.

It is certainly sad to have lost Numurkah, Katunga, Strathmerton, Rutherglen and Wahgunyah from the electorate, but before that we got a shiny new kindergarten at Rutherglen, which was well funded and supported.

I want to comment quickly about Wahgunyah. The coalition had made a commitment to redoing the football clubrooms at Wahgunyah. As it turned out, that was three days after last year's AFL Grand Final. Without dwelling on that grand final, in the late stages of the game a young fellow by the name of Taylor Duryea came on for Hawthorn, played on the big stage and won a premiership medal. It was fitting and important that that commitment was made then, as Taylor Duryea grew up in Wahgunyah and made his name playing junior football and started his senior career there. Three days after the AFL Grand Final, we announced more funds for an upgrade of the Wahgunyah football clubrooms. It just shows that people who play on the big stage can start in small communities like Wahgunyah. We on this side are proud that we supported that funding for Wahgunyah

from the Regional Growth Fund. Other places such as Katamatite, Greta and Whorouly were also successful in getting upgrades through the Regional Growth Fund.

Of course, larger communities did not go without, either. Bruck Textiles in Wangaratta was a beneficiary of many of the projects that the coalition government delivered, as was the Ovens Riverside precinct, which turned the whole perspective of Wangaratta around. Now that end of town is a focal point, with the Ovens River being a feature of the town rather than being basically a creek running through the middle of town. The coalition also supported the jazz festival, and I hope that continues under this government. As well as that, $4.7 million went to the second stage of Wangaratta High School. There is more to be done there and I will certainly be lobbying to ensure that we get funding for the third stage of Wangaratta High School.

Many other projects were achieved. I am very proud that the high school at Yarrawonga got the first stage of its building going. The school had been in very poor repair and we fought hard and got $7.6 million for that project. We also provided copious quantities of Country Fire Authority trucks, big fills, new fire sheds and extensions to existing fire sheds. Our communities were truly blessed by the support they got, and I hope that support continues under the Andrews government.

I have picked up the King Valley; it has come into the Ovens Valley electorate. I have overcome my emotions at losing the great wine industry of Rutherglen in knowing we have the King Valley in the electorate. That has made up for that loss, although I will miss the people of Rutherglen. Up in the King Valley there is Whitfield, Moyhu, Myrrhee and Edi, which are very small but wholesome communities. They are basically farming communities I have picked up there, with very down-to-earth country people.

Further up the Ovens Valley are Myrtleford, Bright, Porepunkah, Harrietville and Mount Hotham, which is one of the bookends of the electorate, as are Cobram and the Murray River at the other end. Myrtleford is rich in Italian culture. It still faces challenges in the changes involved in the transition from having been a tobacco growing region. Bright, of course, is the tourism mecca of north-east Victoria or, as some say, of all of Victoria. Bright is a very exciting town, and I get excited every time I get the opportunity to go up there. I am not the only one who gets up there, however, because obviously tourists from Melbourne go up there just about every weekend. That is particularly so with the splash park that we committed to, which has really put a major feature in the main part of town. The aged-care facility is still a high priority in Bright. I will be fighting hard to make sure that we will continue to get the benefits for that community.

Porepunkah and Harrietville are two very vibrant communities that are proactive. You can feel their enthusiasm when you are amongst the people of those very exciting communities, which are also, as I say, proactive. Not a lot needs to be said about Mount Hotham. We know it is a very important part of our winter culture, and in relation to summertime things have come a long way. That area is a hive of activity right throughout the year. Right from Mount Hotham across to Craig's Hut and across to, as I said, the electorate's other bookend up at the Murray River, the electorate has a lot to offer. It has plenty of resources, initiative and progressive people and that can-do attitude.

The true heroes of our region are the carers, the nurses, the small business people, the farmers, the teachers and the mums and dads. They are the movers and shakers. They are the can-do people in the Ovens Valley, and they are the people I look to represent. There are the reliable community members, the ones who attend every Carols by Candlelight, every Remembrance Day ceremony and every Australian Day celebration; they continue to turn up and to make their communities vibrant and active. This is exemplified by the Milawa amphitheatre, which brings a small town together, and the King River Cafe in Oxley, which is a great meeting place for people to come together and which has great coffee and food.

I was at the Peechelba community centre just prior to Christmas when nearly 150 people squeezed in for a fire briefing as the fires were moving through Lake Rowan and Boweya. The people needed an update, and the centre was bulging at the sides. There is no doubt about that. It is just terrific to have those community centres. We see how important they are in good times and in bad and tough times too. It was great to have that community centre — and that community, whose members all banded together.

In the last term of government we had floods, we had fires and we even had a tornado, so who knows what is next in the seat of Ovens Valley. I do know, however, that the resilience and teamwork of our community equal success. This community will tackle head-on anything that comes.

High priorities for me, certainly over the next four years, are education and health. The education provided in our country schools really represents the heartbeat of our community. Whether it is kindergarten, primary,

secondary or tertiary education or vocational training, it is important that our regional communities not be the bridesmaids of metropolitan education. We need to make sure that our communities get the same offerings as do communities in metropolitan Melbourne.

In many situations — not all, but many — we lose some of our most gifted people to the cities. Maybe those people have a higher Australian tertiary admission rank score and they want to become doctors or lawyers or whatever they might want to be, but we lose a certain percentage of those gifted people to metropolitan Melbourne and beyond, and some of them will never return. It is therefore vital that those who remain and stay within our communities have that great opportunity of education and the future prospects it brings and that they do not end up with that poor cousin syndrome but have the same opportunities everyone else has. I will therefore continue to stay on the government's case to make sure we get those opportunities. My communities tell me that funding cuts made by this government will certainly not be tolerated. If it is going to be the education state, it needs to be so in the regions as well, not just in metropolitan Melbourne.

Health is another priority for me and for all of regional Victoria. Sometimes for those living on the Victoria-New South Wales border there is a grey area affecting the community's needs, which are put second behind cross-border squabbles about where best you can get health services from. Whether you live in New South Wales but have access to Victorian hospitals or the situation is vice versa, it is really important that we do not let those cross-border anomalies get in the way of being able to provide suitable facilities for our community.

The Yarrawonga bridge is a perfect example. The new Minister for Roads and Road Safety has an opportunity to support both the Yarrawonga and the Mulwala communities, whose members clearly have said the green route is the way they want to go. That was a discussion held during the term of the last government, and we certainly hope the minister facilitates that over the next few weeks or months. The Corowa Shire Council has defied ratepayers in suggesting the grey route. We all know the green route is about getting traffic out of Belmore Street in Yarrawonga and making a 50-year plan for the bridge rather than a 5-year or 10-year short-term fix. The Ovens Valley and particularly Yarrawonga will find our early whether this new government cares and considers communities' opinions or whether the 10 000 signatures are just irrelevant. I hope the community opinion is a priority. This decision is not about dollars; it is about what the community wants.

I want to take the opportunity to thank my family for their ongoing support — my wife, Glenys, and our four kids, Danielle, Tom, Brooke and Malcolm — for their support over the four years I have been the local member. Without that support you really cannot do this job effectively. It is a team effort, and I certainly thank them for that.

My mum and dad are probably my greatest supporters, and I thank them for what they do as well. We all know that as local MPs we sometimes become a rock for many individuals within the communities we work with, and every once in a while we need our own rocks, and my immediate family members do that very well.

Thanks to my staff at the Wangaratta office. Jacinta is very professional and efficient and, most of all, is happy and pleasant and makes the workplace a great place to be, as does Martine, who juggles two beautiful young children with her work commitments. She brings excellent feedback and value to our office and is also a very happy and energetic face, which I am grateful for. Marty Corboy has been a shining light, an inspiration and a great friend to me as a campaign manager and supporter over the last few years, and I hope that continues. Other significant supporters know who they are, and I thank them for their support and guidance.

In closing, it is of paramount importance that our communities are not forgotten. When regional Victoria does well, everybody does well. I am proud of our achievements as a coalition government, and I hope we have similar achievements in the next four years. SPC is a first-class example of a Liberal-Nationals coalition achievement. We gave $22 million to Shepparton, when the federal government refused to give money. It was well out of reach of local government, but the coalition state government came through with $22 million. Great credit is due to Peter Ryan, the now member for Murray Plains and the then local member for Shepparton, Jeanette Powell. They masterminded and delivered that for the community of Shepparton, and the benefits will flow for decades to come. The people of Shepparton have chosen an Independent to be their saviour, and I will be interested to see how that transpires over the next three or four years with regard to the Shepparton bypass and the train network. We will see whether the government of the day will support Shepparton as the coalition did.

We must not be forgotten. Regional Victoria supports a strong, vibrant, livable city in Melbourne, and we need the same to happen in return — that Melbourne

supports regional Victoria to the same degree. We put our faith in Premier Andrews to make sure that regional Victoria is well looked after.

Ovens Valley has a rich blend of people, land and water. It is a dynamic, energetic community of people who are all community minded. I will continue to push for stage 3 of the Wangaratta High School, which is important to that community. The school services a large area, and I will be pushing hard for that. The Bright hospital redevelopment has swapped between the frontburner and the backburner for many years, and I was up there again last week to continue to push for a successful outcome for Bright. A flood study for Myrtleford, which is a community that sees its fair share of rain, is something I will push for during this term of government, along with a fair go for all of my community. I look forward to representing all of those within the new electorate of Ovens Valley.

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) — Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations to both you and the Deputy Speaker for your roles in this 58th Parliament of Victoria.

I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the people of the Kulin nation, and I pay respect to elders past and present. I also acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional owners of the land in the district of Yuroke, the Gunung-Willam-Balluk people.

Most importantly I would like to thank the people of Yuroke, who have given me the great privilege of representing our community in this Parliament.

To my family — my husband, Kosmos; my son, Adam; my parents, Nola and David; my sister, Veronica; and my good friend Lorena — thank you for your ongoing support, for putting up with my far too often absences and for encouraging me to pursue my goals.

To my Labor family and friends, in particular the members of the Gladstone Meadows and the Craigieburn ALP branches, thank you for all the support and assistance you have given to me over many years, culminating in handing out how-to-vote material on 29 November and, in many cases, getting the first dose of sunburn for the season.

The number of people who spent hours at pre-poll places, assisted at street stalls, hosted pictures on their properties and helped out on election day is very humbling, and I greatly appreciate every minute they each put into my campaign.

I would like to acknowledge the ALP state secretary, Noah Carroll, and all the staff at ALP state office. They are a great team at Docklands, who have all worked to achieve this election victory, and I thank them for all that they do.

As a proud unionist I acknowledge and thank the union movement and the team at Victorian Trades Hall for their outstanding campaign efforts.

And of course a heartfelt thankyou to those who worked closest on my campaign. To my campaign manager, Paul Caruso, and to Jamie Byron and Casey Nunn, thank you also for your ongoing friendship and support.

Those who were involved in my campaign will also know that there are two others that must be acknowledged — the stars of the show — Marvin and Minx, my two black cats. These two taught me more about social media than you will find in any article or book — that is, no matter how witty or profound you may think your last post was, a picture of a cat in a box or, better still, two cats in a box will always get more likes.

To the new member for Sunbury, my friend and quiz buddy, thank you for making me laugh along the way. I am glad that we have shared this journey together, and I am so proud of you.

I am particularly pleased that of the 14 new government members in this Legislative Assembly, eight are women, bringing the number of female members of the government in this place to over 44 per cent. I am also thrilled to see the appointment of nine great women to the cabinet. This is a terrific outcome, and I acknowledge the important role that EMILY's List has played in promoting, supporting and encouraging more women to participate in our political processes.

I also congratulate all the members who have been re-elected. You set the standard for those of us who have been elected for the first time, and I know that we will be looking to you for guidance and support and to learn from you so that we can do our best in our new roles.

For me, one person who has given me much guidance and support is my predecessor, Liz Beattie, who I thank very much. Liz was the first member for Yuroke and served as a member of this place from 1999. Liz has been a great source of support for me both prior to and throughout the election campaign, and she continues to be my sounding board and a great source of knowledge, and I appreciate her sound advice.

During her valedictory statement Liz very generously said that the now member for Sunbury, Cr Casey Nunn,

and I were her greatest achievements. As her former staff, we are all aware of the many, many achievements that Liz is too modest to mention, and we know how well respected Liz is both in this place and in our communities.

I know that we consider Liz our valued mentor and friend and someone who has encouraged us to pursue our goals. I also know that we will all strive to build on the work that she has done over the past 15 years, and for me personally I am acutely aware of how high she has set the bar.

To all the newly elected members, I congratulate all of you, and no doubt we all share the same mix of excitement, anxiousness and a burning desire to do our best for our wonderful state. Whilst as new members we will all embark on this journey together, we differ greatly as individuals as to the path that led us to this place. And it is not always a straightforward path that we have taken.

For me, like the Leader of the Opposition, I grew up in an average suburban home in Montmorency, but I am sure that our life events leading here are strikingly different. Growing up in Montmorency was great. We lived in a court surrounded by other families and where the sound of a basketball being bounced outside signalled that all the kids should head out for a game or to muck around until dinner at six. I was very fortunate. We lived in a modest three-bedroom house, where Dad made sure that we did not go without.

I went to a terrific school in Eltham High School, where I was encouraged to learn as an individual. I know that this school is in good hands with my friend the new member for Eltham. I thank and acknowledge my year 12 politics teacher, Brendan Monigatti, who no doubt planted the seeds for a lifelong interest in politics and in the importance of participating in our political processes.

But like so many, I also know what it is like to struggle with adversity. As a single parent I faced the daily struggle of being a low-income earner, and I understand the pressures that many families experience constantly. I know too well about the flow-on effects to the household when all the utility bills arrive within days of each other and there is simply no way to pay them all by the due dates. I know too well about the struggle to provide a school uniform and the effect that the loss of a jumper can have on an already strained budget. And I know too well about the frustration of wanting to provide every opportunity for my child but living a reality where simply providing the basics is a constant challenge.

I also knew that the best way to improve my future prospects was through education, so what started as an arts degree quickly became a law degree. With that came a whole range of additional pressures, and so many times I questioned if I would be able to see it through.

During this time, through my experiences and the experiences of others whom I came to meet, the extent of disadvantage in society became apparent. Be it our youth, unemployed, homeless, disabled, aged or members of the LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) community, the barriers faced by far too many became a motivating factor for me to achieve change. It became obvious to me that the provision of access does not necessarily provide equality or equity. For instance, an issue I constantly faced was that although I could access a university degree, I could not afford the books, and although there was a great range of subjects that were on offer there was no child care available at corresponding times. And although rental assistance was provided, affordable housing was simply not available in many areas. The list of such examples is far too long, and we should be mindful of this and always make decisions which seek to provide equitable outcomes.

During these years I was immensely grateful for the support given to me from my family and friends, and I was very fortunate in that I had both. However, many people in similar circumstances do not, and in those cases there is a great network of volunteers at a variety of organisations that do what they can to assist people in need. I have seen firsthand the difference these volunteers make to people's lives, and they should never be taken for granted.

It was through my experiences and struggles that a desire within me grew to provide a helping hand and a voice to those in need and to do what I could to provide a fair go to those who were doing it tough. That is what I have sought to do. I found that working as an electorate officer was a great way to be of practical assistance to those in need. I thank all those MPs who gave me the opportunity to work for them and to learn from them, including Sue Mackay, Graeme Sturges and Michelle O'Byrne in Tasmania, and later, Maria Vamvakinou, Steve Herbert and of course Liz Beattie. Working for these members of Parliament reinforced to me the value of standing up for those in need and seeking change in society whereby people's lives are improved and those who need our assistance are not left behind.

When I was finally admitted as a lawyer in the Supreme Court I signed up as a volunteer solicitor at the

Broadmeadows Community Legal Service so I could provide my time to help those who could not otherwise access legal advice. As any volunteer will tell you, this was extremely rewarding. I was then elected in 2008 as a councillor with Hume City Council, representing the Aitken ward, which had very similar boundaries to the electorate of Yuroke. During this term on council I served as deputy mayor and then as mayor. I was proud to be elected to represent my community in local government, and I am now honoured to represent my community in state Parliament.

I am so proud to be a member of a Labor government whose values first and foremost are to provide a fair go to all and to represent and provide opportunities for all, regardless of their income level, their age or their place of birth. It is with this great pride that I acknowledge and congratulate the Premier on his historic victory, and I look forward to working with him to fulfil the Andrews Labor government's vision for the future of Victoria. I am particularly thrilled and excited about the education initiatives of this government. For these I thank and congratulate the Minister for Education, both because of my personal passion for education and because, based on my personal experience, I know that these initiatives will greatly benefit the residents of Yuroke.

Yuroke is a very young community, with the second-highest proportion of children aged 5 to 14. The schools are currently under pressure, with very high enrolment numbers for prep classes. I am very pleased that this Labor government has committed to an additional school in north-west Craigieburn to alleviate some of this pressure, and I look forward to the full suite of education initiatives being rolled out. I know that these initiatives will provide a welcome relief for many families — the establishment of breakfast clubs so that students do not have to get by on an empty stomach; health care for secondary school students; assistance with the costs of camps, sports and excursions; funding of scholarships for mentors for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds; assistance with uniforms and glasses; and, of course, rescuing TAFE so students of all ages have options for further education.

I know that many families in Yuroke will appreciate assistance with the cost of education, and I am proud to be a member of a Labor government that is committed to providing the kind of support that seeks to achieve equity for students to be able to participate fully rather than just providing access to an education where you are then left on your own to try and get by.

I look forward to working with the community to implement the vision of this government, as well as fulfilling my vision for the future of Yuroke. As it is a growth area, I want to see Yuroke continue to develop as a community where, no matter where you come from or what you come with, there is a place for you — a community where there are housing choices, be it for first-home buyers, second or third-home buyers, renters, retirees or those who need emergency or ongoing housing assistance; a community where families have a choice of quality education, be it government or private, with pathways to university or TAFE; and a community where employment opportunities are real and not a rarity.

I want Yuroke to continue to be a community of choice for new families, for them to identify our community as a preferred place to live. There is no doubt that this is already true for many of our longstanding and newly arrived community members. Yuroke is home to over 63 000 people from over 160 countries speaking over 120 languages. Regardless of where these families have come from or what they came with, they were welcomed, and for those whose journey here has been one of trauma, they are supported in a place they can now call home.

The path that led me here has provided me with inspiration, resilience, knowledge, empathy, courage and determination. These traits I will use to improve people's lives across our great state, in particular the people of Yuroke. I am very happy to be backed up in that role by the very capable Ryan Moore and Justin Barbour as my electorate officers and by Shannon Farley as the whip's assistant. As I said earlier, I am acutely aware of how high the first member for Yuroke has set the bar by which I will be judged. I look forward to the challenges ahead and to serving as the second member for Yuroke.

Debate interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER — Order! Before calling the member for Gembrook I wish to acknowledge in the gallery Lee Tarlamis, a former member of the Legislative Council.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed.

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) — I start by congratulating you, Speaker, on the wonderful honour of attaining the high office of Speaker of this house. It was amazing to sit here on your first day in the role and hear about the history of where you have come from and where you are now. I congratulate you wholeheartedly. You thoroughly deserve it. I also congratulate our Deputy Speaker, the member for Melton, although I will greatly miss some of our banter across the table and his famous use of the word 'wrong' every time we spoke! But I wish him well. He is another person for whom I have a lot of respect outside the chamber as well as inside it.

I pass on my regards to the other candidates who ran for the seat of Gembrook: Colin Ross of the Labor Party — and I wish him all the best in his role on the local council in the area — and Michael Schilling, who was the Greens candidate for Gembrook. I probably would not say this too often, particularly in relation to the Greens — and I did not give him a big wrap-up during the campaign — but Michael is a wonderful young man with a big and bright future ahead of him. That future is probably not in politics — and we have had a good chat about that — but whatever he does, I wish him all the best because he is a person who genuinely cares about his community.

I have the greatest pleasure in working alongside some fantastic people in this Parliament, particularly the Leader of the Opposition. To work alongside him and to watch someone of his calibre stand up and talk about the history of politics with the passion he has for his community leads me to believe well and truly that he is the right person to lead the Liberal Party over the next four years. I hope we can hold the government to account as we go forward, but more importantly we want to try to put ourselves forward as genuine contestants leading up to the 2018 state election.

The people of Gembrook have given me the greatest privilege in allowing me to represent them for a second term. To have a small swing to the Liberals in Gembrook as we did in the last election, during trying times, is something of which we are very proud in our area. It does not happen because of one person; therefore I will thank all of those in the Gembrook electorate who gave me the privilege of standing up for them. I assure them I will do my best for them again in the next four years.

The Gembrook community comprises people who are very passionate about standing up for the Liberal Party. One of those people is my chairman, Phil Macreadie. Phil and his wife, Lorraine, did an amazing job during the last campaign, and I thank them both. In addition, Joy Bishop and her husband, George, continue to do an amazing job along with Andrew and Deb McNabb, who do an awesome job. I would also like to thank the federal member for Latrobe, Jason Wood, and his wife, Judy, along with Garry and Sue Runge, who have given me five years of support — not just during the current campaign. I also thank Julie Hughes, who has done a wonderful job, along with the entire committee.

More importantly, in the upper house I thank Edward O'Donohue, who, along with his wife, Jen, has been a great support. Not only did they support my campaign but a fantastic friendship with them has developed over the last five years. I also wish another upper house member, Andrew Ronalds, all the best. I am sad not to see him back in the upper house on this occasion because he is another gentleman with a fantastic background, and we would like to see him back on board in the future. I also thank Neil and Margaret Lucas, who have always been fantastic, as well as Brian Paynter, our new member for Bass, and his wife, Liz, who have done a wonderful job so far. They have been very supportive of me over the last few years.

I also thank the Berwick Ranges 500 Club and all of my branch presidents. I particularly thank Brian and Pauline Hetherton, who have at all times been honest with me. That is something we do not always get in politics, particularly in terms of feedback. They tell me when I do things right and wrong, and that is very important. Finally I thank the Clematis Country Fire Authority and its captain, Jarryd Miller. They did a wonderful job in the electorate. I would like him to pass on my thanks to his brigade, which I have become involved in, because their involvement and the concerns they have raised are something the whole of Victoria should be aware of.

Finally, I thank my staff, including Jade Glen and her husband, Jamie. They have a newborn baby, Lucy, so Jade could not help us through the election as she was on maternity leave, but I thank her very much. I also thank Sid Wynen; Di Sumner and her husband, Darren; Sam and Darren; and Monica, who worked with me for the first couple of years. I also thank my family: my sister, my mother and my father, along with my mother-in-law and father-in-law — acknowledging that people do not say that too often — because they have been a fantastic support to me. Most importantly, I thank Jo and our kids, Mikaela and Chloe.

I have made a point of the thankyous this time because I forgot someone last time and that got me into a lot of trouble in my electorate, so I wanted to make sure that that was all done. However, I will say that to stand up for your electorate is to stand up for everybody in your electorate. It is not just to stand up for the groups that have supported you in getting here or for people who have financially supported you; it is to stand up for people who cannot speak up for themselves. I have had the absolute greatest privilege in being able to do that for the last four years for Gembrook.

One of the things we delivered in the last four years which I will never forget and of which I will be forever proud is the Officer Specialist School. That school is exactly what our government was all about. When we were in government we looked at projects and ensured that the ones we supported were chosen on a needs basis, and the Officer Specialist School was definitely supported on that basis.

Prior to the last election there was a big call from the local community to get a special school in Officer. Children were travelling for up to 2 hours one way — 4 hours a day — to get to and from school. Children with special needs do not need to sit on a bus for 4 hours every day just to get the education they thoroughly deserve. Building the Officer Specialist School is something I will forever be proud of. If you go down and look at the school you will see that it is a state-of-the-art, leading school in Victoria. I think people around the world will look at the school and say, 'This is how we should build special schools for the future'. I have spoken to the Minister for Education and invited him down. He needs to come through and understand exactly what the school does and what it delivers. Under the guidance of Sue, its principal, the structure of the staff and the ability of the parents association to be involved in bringing in the whole community is outstanding.

To add to that, the former government built the Officer Secondary College, which opened in January this year. The first lot of year 7 students are coming through. This is an opportunity to have a mainstream school and a special needs school co-located so there can be a crossover of students going from one to the other. As important as students with special needs integrating into the community and going into and looking at a mainstream school is students in a mainstream school totally understanding what is happening in the special school next door, and understanding that there are people in the community of all abilities who need assistance but who just want to be part of a community. Like you and me, they just want to get out there and be individuals and understand exactly how they can be involved and give back to their community. So many of them can give back to the community in many ways.

We have Outlook down our way. Outlook does an amazing job in working with people with special needs. Currently people with special needs down there work in facilities, whether it is for gardening or recycling. There are some wonderful recycling plants. I was proud when the member for Warrandyte, while he was the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, put $500 000 towards the upgrade of a facility down there so 20 to 30 people with special needs, increasing to 120 people with special needs in the future, could be employed in a recycling plant. It provides an opportunity for these people not only to receive assistance for their individual needs but also for them to give back to the community, which is exactly what they are after, so they can be involved in the community as best they can.

Another issue in the Gembrook electorate is public transport, and the coalition members campaigned hard on it. After the 2010 election we delivered many changes. There are 1000-plus new services across the entire network. We also committed to a $2 billion to $2.5 billion upgrade of the Pakenham railway line, which included parking for more cars, grade separations, and an improvement in the signalling. I am sad to say that it is a shame the new government has not taken that initiative on board. It has not come forward and said it is willing to sign up for that $2 billion to $2.5 billion program that would affect people in my electorate who travel on the Pakenham and Cranbourne line, where 10 per cent of the entire rail network travel from. They have to travel to the city on trains that in the past have been supercrowded. That situation has got better over the last few years, but it needs to be improved as the growth happens.

In Officer there will be 30 000 more people and 10 000 new houses in the next 15 years. The station there is already starting to fill up with people, even with the new services. It needs the upgrade so that extra services can come through. It is a shame that this government has not taken that on board so that the services can be delivered there.

I refer to other areas down there, particularly around our emergency services. I spoke before about the Clematis Country Fire Authority station. A new station and a new truck are needed there. The coalition committed to that project before the election, and I am sad to say that the current government has not come forward with that commitment. It has not looked at the station and does not understand the impact out there, as it is a high fire danger area. The station needs rebuilding, and the officers cannot be given new trucks

until they have a new station. It is very important the government gets on board. The coalition government delivered the station with a new light tanker, which hopefully it should get very shortly. That funding is already there for them. However, they need a new station and a new tanker to better protect the community in the Dandenong Ranges.

Anyone who has lived in the Dandenong Ranges will understand 100 per cent that in 1983 some of the worst fires in history went through there — through Cockatoo, Emerald, all the way through Nangana and Gembrook. The fires were devastating. They had devastating effects in our community. Now we need to make sure we have the equipment there to protect the community. I call on the government to ensure that that equipment is made available.

Talking about that, we need to understand that these stations are manned by volunteers and they have had the ability to provide a mass response to the campaign fires we have seen in the past. We want to thank those volunteers for the work they do for our community. It is amazing how many times they get called out.

Another station is the Emerald State Emergency Service (SES) station. The coalition government committed to get a rebuild of that station. Speaker, you will not believe that last year Emerald SES had more than 1000 callouts. I am talking about a group up there of 35 to 40 volunteers who go out and protect my electorate and the electorate of Monbulk as well. They cover the area all the way down through Monbulk and the shire of Yarra Ranges.

Mr Merlino interjected.

Mr BATTIN — The Emerald SES. They cover that whole area. I know the member for Monbulk has gone and met with them and had a good discussion. I hope that in the future there is a commitment to ensure that they get the new station going forward. That is something they thoroughly deserve because of the extra work they have down there.

Another area down there — —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BATTIN — I might take back some of the comments I made earlier in my speech.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BATTIN — I will change the tone on this a bit. The other area I will talk about is youth suicide. There is nobody in this house on any side who would ever want to talk about youth suicide from a negative point of view. Tragically during the last four years in the Gembrook, Narre Warren North and Bass electorates we had some of the highest rates of youth suicide in the state. They were close to the highest rates of youth suicide in the country. There was a community effort to deal with that situation. There was some government input there. I will not take all the credit on that one.

There was effort by the government, the council, the local community and the school community. *Four Corners* ran a program. I am not sure if anyone has seen it. If you have not, please go out of your way to see it. It is called *There is No 3G in Heaven*. That comes from a very simple message after one of the young girls down there took her life. Her friends kept texting her and saying, 'We wish you all the best. You have gone to the other side'. Eventually her mum replied to all of the friends with a very simple message: 'There is no 3G in heaven'. Once you have crossed that line, you are not coming back. You cannot get a text message. That was a change to the way we spoke out in the Gembrook electorate and through the schools there. All of a sudden there was a message to the young people out there, 'Hey, when you eventually make this decision, it is a final decision. You are not making a decision you can change tomorrow. After you make that decision it is the end of the road and you cannot go any further'.

I am very proud of the work we did down there. I am very proud of the community. It was one of those times during my time in Parliament when I was exceptionally excited to work with my community. We saw young people come out and do the walk against suicide. We had groups down there who started campaigning and counselling. There were so many offers of help from the community. You could not be any more attached to a particular issue than we saw out there.

Coming up to the election we came forward with another commitment. I am not going to say that it should have been implemented before then or anything like that. For the first time we had a genuine discussion around this issue and about positive change going forward, and I will bring it up with the Minister for Education. It was in relation to Berwick Secondary College, which is looking to build its first health and wellbeing centre for mental health. It will aim to help not just students currently attending the school but also ex-students, who will be able to come back in their first 12 months after leaving. It might not give them a full counselling service, but it will give them a referral service. Kids in their first year after leaving school are most at risk, and they will have an opportunity to come back into the education facility — a place where they

are comfortable and where they know people — for help. While this is already done at Berwick Secondary College, this would increase its scale. All politics aside, whether it starts at Berwick — which is obviously my goal — or elsewhere, I will work to see the Department of Education and Training implement something along those lines to give young people the chance to speak to somebody as they move from school life into the future.

With the redistribution I lost a fair bit of my electorate — around 1600 of 2000 square kilometres. The member for Monbulk got some of that, as did the then member for Seymour, now the member for Eildon. I am sad to lose those parts of my electorate, particularly the areas up through the Yarra Ranges. They are not traditionally the strongest Liberal areas of my electorate, but they were some of the best communities to work in and get involved with. Places such as Yarra Junction and Warburton are communities with that real community feel. I wish them all the best with their new members. With that I say thank you very much, and I wish you all the best in the future.

Mr J. BULL (Sunbury) — First may I join with other members of the house in congratulating you on your election to Speaker of the house, and in doing so acknowledge what an incredible feat you have achieved. In your opening remarks to the house in December 2014 you spoke of being passionate about this Parliament. You spoke of your passion for democracy, for the rule of law and for human rights — things that we all value highly but that you yourself hold in especially high regard after experiencing the loss of them in Uruguay in 1973. Speaker, your appointment is an achievement to be proud of after many years of dedication and hard work. In addition to this, I believe it also sends a powerful message — to the wider community, across the state and beyond our shores — that Victoria and Australia are places of opportunity, hope and fairness.

Just 237 years ago Captain James Cook arrived on the shores of Botany Bay, beginning the first European settlement. However, not until 1851, when gold was first discovered in Victoria, did our state suddenly boom in one of the largest gold rushes the world has ever seen. The gold rush, whilst bringing prosperity to many, also led to cramped fields, terrible working conditions and an outbreak of disease. In 1854 tempers flared with the rebellion of goldminers at Ballarat, and the battle of the Eureka Stockade took place between miners and colonial forces. Although the miners were defeated, there was mass public support for them and widespread criticism of the handling of the situation by colonial forces, giving rise to the Electoral Act 1856. The act gave white males the vote in elections to the lower house of this place, the Victorian Parliament, and here the seeds of democracy were sown.

However, as we all know, the Australian story is much longer and greater than this short period of time. Australia is home to one of the longest continuous cultures in the world. It is the land of the Indigenous Aborigines, who have inhabited this place for 50 000 years. They have a deep and diverse culture, rich with art, tradition and language. I wish to pay my respects to the traditional owners of the land, both past and present, and acknowledge that rich culture which has existed for so long across this great country.

It is a great honour to speak today for the first time as the inaugural member for Sunbury. The electorate of Sunbury is made up of a number of diverse communities, and today I wish to thank and acknowledge the great people of Gladstone Park, Gowanbrae, Tullamarine, Westmeadows, Bulla, Diggers Rest and Sunbury for electing me as their first member for Sunbury and for electing an Andrews Labor government. We will not let you down.

Sunbury is my home town. It is a place very close to my heart and an area steeped in history. Three pioneers — George Evans and brothers Samuel and William Jackson — founded the town of Sunbury in 1836, after setting out from Melbourne, 40 kilometres away. It is thought by most that the Jackson brothers named the township after Sunbury on the Thames in England. For sporting fans, Sunbury is a special place indeed — it is the birthplace of the Ashes, following a social game of cricket between Australia and England at Rupertswood mansion.

The electorate of Sunbury is also home to Melbourne's gateway, and one of the largest employers in the state — Melbourne Airport. I am thrilled to have Melbourne Airport in my electorate, and I look forward to working closely with the CEO, the stakeholders and of course the many residents who work at Tulla every day, putting in the hard yards.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all members in the house, and those in the other place, for being part of the 58th Victorian Parliament. In doing so I acknowledge the family, friends and great support networks we all have and that helped to get us here. To my parliamentary colleagues on this side of the house, I would like to congratulate you for an outstanding campaign that showed true discipline, determination and a real vision. In particular, I would like to congratulate my great friend, and the Government Whip, the member for Yuroke. She will make a great

whip and be a tremendous representative for her local area.

I would like to acknowledge the outstanding effort by the Premier and reiterate the sentiments of many members on this side of the house who have reflected on his efforts not only in 2014 but over the course of opposition since 2010. The Premier has already shown that his vision, determination and commitment to put people first will once again make Victoria the place to be.

Being the first member for Sunbury is a great honour; however, the area has been extremely well represented by my predecessors, Liz Beattie and Jo Duncan. Indeed, it was Liz and her late husband, Chris, who 15 years ago invited me along to a meeting of the Sunbury branch of the Labor Party. The invitation came about after I had decided that doing work experience with my local member of Parliament would be a great opportunity. I had no idea what it was going to be about. Little did I know where it would lead me and that one day I would have the opportunity to represent the area that I love so much. In so many ways though this is the story of the Labor Party: the opportunity to go from work experience kid to MP. I thank Liz for her contribution to this great state and for her hand in developing this young man's passion for fairness, equality and democracy.

In politics very little is achieved by an individual. You need great friends and a strong support network behind you to make it happen. I wish to thank the outstanding team at Victorian Labor headquarters who assisted my campaign in every way possible and did an outstanding job throughout 2014. These dedicated and passionate staff worked hard to ensure that a great Labor victory was possible. In particular I wish to thank state secretary Noah Carroll and assistant state secretaries Stephen Donnelly and Kosmos Samaras for their tireless work. Kosmos has been a great friend for many years and his political guidance and wisdom is unmatched.

I also wish to thank former mayor of Hume, Casey Nunn, and close mate Paul Caruso. They have been there for me since day one, and I would like to acknowledge their great friendship and terrific contribution to my campaign and to the Labor movement in the north. I would also like to thank my colleague and federal member for McEwen, Rob Mitchell, MP, for his strong representation in the area.

In truth, I wish I could be standing here alongside my extraordinary campaign team who have given me so much support. To my campaign manager, Peter Hendrickson, a former school principal at Melton, Viewbank and Sunbury colleges. whom I pulled out of a peaceful retirement, I say thank you for your experience, wisdom and friendship. I would also like to thank my campaign field organiser, Renee Pope-Munro, whom the member for Macedon recently described as 'a wrangler of volunteers'. I thank Renee for her outstanding work. Her passion and dedication are unmatched. I also wish to thank Jarrod, Michaela and Adam in the electorate office for their outstanding efforts. Thank you to the Sunbury and Gladstone Meadows branch members and countless volunteers. Each phone call, doorknock and chat on a street corner took us one step closer to winning the seat of Sunbury.

I would like to thank my parents, Ian and Lesley Bull, my brother David, sister Kirstin and extended family. From an early age my parents taught us the value of hard work, of being involved in your community and the importance of a fair go. They worked hard to provide us with the best opportunities and always reminded us of how fortunate we were to live in such a great country.

Finally, I would like to thank my best friend, and as of last Sunday my fiancée, Jasmine. She came into my life three years ago and has been an inspiration and given me strength ever since. I cannot thank Jasmine enough for everything she has done for me. Thanks also to Jasmine's grandfather, William, who taught her from the moment that she could think about the Labor cause, instilling in her an unshakable sense of fairness and equality.

Before entering Parliament I began my working life at 14 as a grocery boy, a duty manager at Woolworths and then an environmental educator at the Gould League, before going on finish my studies and become a science and maths teacher. I chose a career in teaching because I believe education to be paramount in providing opportunity. There is no reason why each and every child in Victoria should not have high aspirations, regardless of their back story or perceived future. We as a community are charged with helping our youth to be the best they can be, and we need to be the hand-up they need when they fall, because this is the Labor way. It was the great Nelson Mandela who once said, 'Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.'

Throughout my life, I have developed a strong passion for the improvement of disability services. My mother worked as an integration aide for over 12 years, and I have some very clever and wonderful friends who also have a serious disability. I am committed to seeing disability services improved for all Victorians, and I

urge the federal government to fully fund the national disability insurance scheme. As is so often said, the mark of a good government is how it treats its most vulnerable citizens.

I look forward to delivering on Labor's commitments in Sunbury, and it was great to join the Premier in August last year at my former high school, Sunbury College, to announce $3 million dollars to build a much-needed new science wing. I also look forward to working with the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to build noise barriers for Gowanbrae as part of our $10 million commitment, and with the Minister for Public Transport on improving bus services across the electorate. Sunbury residents will also greatly benefit from the Melbourne Metro rail plan. This vital project will revolutionise our train network and ensure that our world-class city has a world-class public transport system.

One thing in particular that I am determined to work on in Sunbury is youth mental health. Our community has recently been tragically touched by a number of youth suicides. An Andrews Labor government is already addressing the issue, and we are building a world-class mental health research facility in Parkville. As the local member I will be doing everything I can to support and assist the young people in our community, from establishing a youth advisory council to working alongside mental health professionals and investigating the rising use of ice.

In closing, I look forward to working closely with all members of the house over many years for the betterment of Sunbury and for the betterment of Victoria. I commit myself to representing the views of my constituency to the best of my ability, and I am humbled, honoured and above all privileged to be serving as part of an Andrews Labor government.

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — I would like to begin by congratulating you, Speaker, on your election as Speaker. I know the background you came from; my parents left war-torn Greece back in the late 1940s and 1950s to seek a better place in Australia. I also congratulate the member for Melton on his election as Deputy Speaker — well done. You are both well-respected members of this house.

I certainly thank the 44 738 electors of the South Barwon electorate for putting their faith in me to be their representative. I particularly thank my wife, Vicki. We have four sons — Zachary, Evann, Christian and Jack, ranging in age from 11 to 4 — so Vicki has her hands full. Today Christian was elected as a junior school council representative at Belmont Primary School, and I am very proud of him for achieving that.

I also thank my electorate staff: Yogi, Stephen and Ellana. I thank the other Liberal candidates in the Geelong region, Paula Kontelj, Ron Nelson and Tony McManus. They put up a good fight. I thank my electorate chairman, Angelo Kakouros, along with Stretch Kontelj and Dot Lea, who was the secretary of the South Barwon electorate conference. I particularly thank Jeremy Underwood and Ray Page, who were my two main helpers when we doorknocked over 10 000 homes in the South Barwon electorate. We were not faceless people sitting behind desks pretending to be someone we were not; it was face-to-face contact with real people, and I thank them for their assistance.

South Barwon is a growing electorate, with high-growth areas in Highton and Torquay. It also has the state's second-largest growth area in Armstrong Creek, and this is a suburb I now proudly call home. Given the pace of the growth occurring in South Barwon, I will take a quick look at what Labor committed to my electorate over its term in office, what we committed to do and what we did for the electorate in the past four years. In the South Barwon electorate the net election commitments from the Andrews Labor government total $10.35 million over four years. That figure is in complete contrast to what was delivered by the coalition in the last four years and what we had committed to deliver over the next four years.

With regard to transport and roads, there were no commitments whatsoever from Labor for any transport or road projects in the South Barwon electorate. We committed to fund the intersection of Surf Coast Highway and Beach Road in Torquay. It is a very accident-prone intersection. If you live in Torquay, it is probably the intersection you dread the most because it is so hard to get across the highway, but it is a very strategic point that connects areas of the township.

Consider what the coalition did for transport and roads in South Barwon over four years: the new Waurn Ponds railway station, complete repavement works and safety upgrades on the Surf Coast Highway and stage 1 of Pioneer Road. In the 2014–15 state budget $12.9 million was promised to complete the second stage of Pioneer Road and to provide signals for the intersection at Meadowvale Drive, Grovedale. If you live in the Grovedale and Waurn Ponds area, you would know that people pull their hair out each morning trying to get in and out of that intersection. We also put in $3 million to build noise barriers on the Geelong Ring Road at Wandana Heights. That was something the previous Labor government failed to do,

and indeed the previous member got into some very interesting arguments with the residents of Wandana Heights with regard to the absence of noise barriers.

I will move on to education, something I hold dear to my heart. I am the product of public education. Those on the other side of the house probably think of a stereotype of a Liberal member: someone with a silver spoon in their mouth who went through a grammar school or college and was privately educated at a cost of tens of thousands of dollars. I am not like that. I went to Belmont Primary School and Belmont High School and then onto Deakin University, so my education was entirely in the public system.

The commitments we made to the South Barwon electorate were more fulsome than the commitments Labor made: $3 million for the upgrade of Moriac Primary School, which is at least $1.1 million short of what is required; $6.25 million to acquire land in Armstrong Creek West for a primary school; and $1.6 million for a children's services hub in Highton. They are all good commitments, and I thank the government for making them. However, when we were in government, our election commitments included $6.3 million to upgrade Belmont High School. Although that school is in the Geelong electorate, half of its students come from Highton in the South Barwon electorate. It is in need of an urgent upgrade. The next commitment was to Grovedale College.

It is interesting to note that Labor has committed to buying land in Armstrong Creek which will be needed in the future. However, at the moment no-one is living there. Anyone who is coming into Armstrong Creek — and I know this; I live there and I see it — with a child of secondary school age has only one option, and that is Grovedale College. It is the only zoned public school the child can attend. My understanding is that Grovedale College has record enrolments at the moment; it is bursting at the seams, so it is in desperate need of an upgrade. We committed $6.4 million to upgrade the college. Although the land in Armstrong Creek will be needed in the future, it makes sense to upgrade the college first, because the pressure is on that school.

We committed just under $4 million to upgrade Bellaire Primary School in Highton, which is in desperate need of an upgrade. It is the only school in Highton that can accommodate any growth. All the other schools are full. We committed $1.135 million to upgrade Highton Primary School, which again is bursting at the seams and in need of urgent works. We also committed $600 000 to relocate the Grovedale East Kindergarten following the closure of that site at the Grovedale Uniting Church due to the sale by the church of some property. With the closure of that kindergarten there is now no kindergarten on the east side of the Surf Coast Highway in Grovedale, so that community is in real need of a kindergarten.

Probably one of my proudest achievements while we were in office, from an education perspective, was the Surf Coast Secondary College, which opened at the start of last year — $37.5 million for full secondary education in Torquay. Incidentally, Labor opposed that school; it did not want to build a secondary college in Torquay. But it is a fantastic, state-of-the-art school and is going very nicely.

We also spent $4.8 million in this year's budget to upgrade Montpellier Primary School, again in Highton. Highton has grown enormously and has also gone through a generational change, which has seen families with primary school-age children coming in.

When in government the coalition acquired land for a primary school, a special school and a secondary college in Armstrong Creek. In that $223 million public-private partnership package, which the Minister for Education has been very quick to take up as his own, there was a primary school, a special school for Armstrong Creek and a primary school for Torquay North, which is desperately needed. I want to ensure that that package is followed through and those schools are built. That was land that was purchased by a coalition government which funded those brand-new schools.

As far as kindergartens go, a grant of $1.6 million was given to the Surf Coast Shire for the Torquay children's services hub. The shire now needs to get on with the job of building the hub. It cannot sit and wait for a federal commitment through the election cycle. The need is now and the shire must build that children's services hub. The shire has the $1.6 million, and it needs to get on with the job. The coalition government also funded the extension of the Torquay and Jan Juc kindergartens, and committed $2 million to the newly opened Grovedale children's services hub, which opened this year.

In regard to emergency services, we have a brand-new police station in Waurn Ponds. It is a fantastic station, which has 24-hour police coverage. It is open for 16 hours a day, and for the remaining 8 hours the police are out on patrol from that station. It also incorporates the South Barwon State Emergency Service (SES) office, which was in Belmont. The Belmont office was too small and it was becoming difficult for the brigade to keep up its response times, so it was a good move to

put it in there. There was also a $300 000 upgrade of the Torquay Surf Life Saving Club, a new Torquay SES base and a new Bellbrae Country Fire Authority station built by the former coalition government.

Interestingly, Labor has made no commitments as far as law and order or emergency services go in the South Barwon electorate. We committed $1 million for a new Jan Juc Surf Life Saving Club house. That club is in desperate need of new clubrooms. It has one of the most dangerous beaches in this state, and it needs those new clubrooms. We made a commitment of $1 million to that project, and I urge the government to follow suit and put money into that very worthy project.

In terms of sport and recreation, Labor's commitment to the Bob Petitt Reserve in Jan Juc has cost the council money. It was public open space for 30 years and was owned by the education department. Labor has made a commitment to rezone it to public park and recreation and sell it to the Surf Coast shire for $500 000. We had a different approach. We were going to convert the title from a freehold title to Crown land and appoint the Surf Coast shire as the committee of management, which effectively meant that the shire got control of that land at no cost to ratepayers. It was to have been the shire's in perpetuity and for it to preserve it as public open space.

Not one sporting club in the South Barwon electorate was given a commitment by the Labor Party. There was nothing whatsoever. The coalition government made commitments to the Torquay Football Netball Club for a new pavilion, the Grovedale Football Netball Club for further upgrades, the Barwon Soccer Club for further upgrades, and an upgrade to the Grovedale Tennis Club, which is in desperate need of extension, as it is one of the biggest clubs in Geelong.

Although it is not in sport and recreation, we did make a commitment of $30 000 for a new metalwork room at the Torquay men's shed. But this is on top of the other commitments we made when in government. For example, we made commitments to the South Barwon Football Club for a pavilion upgrade, to the Grovedale Football Club for a pavilion upgrade, to the Highton Tennis Club for a new pavilion, and $400 000 to the Barwon Soccer Club for a new pavilion. We also committed $1.5 million for the redevelopment of the Torquay Bowls Club, and $650 000 for the Mount Moriac Reserve for the Modewarre Football and Netball Club for a major redevelopment of the pavilion. We were very active in this space with regard to upgrading local sporting clubs and getting people out there in the community. I know what it is like to have a young family and how important the local sporting clubs are to young families and communities.

I will just touch on a couple of other things. Planning is a policy-free zone for Labor. I do not think the government has a planning policy. There is a curious commitment around the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT), where if enough people complain their voice will be heard. A developer, and they do not need to be a big-time developer, can follow the state policy framework, do everything by the book and have everything correct, yet if enough people complain the Labor government is saying it will overturn the state policy framework — 'That is the law of the land, but if we get enough people whingeing about it or complaining about it, even though the developer has done everything right, we will overturn the decision'. That is a crazy situation to have.

With that, I am very pleased to have been re-elected as the member for South Barwon. I look forward to representing the people of South Barwon to the best of my ability. I will ensure that the infrastructure the community needs is committed to and built by the Andrews Labor government.

Ms WARD (Eltham) — I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we stand, the Wurundjeri, and I pay my respects to elders past and present. Speaker, I congratulate you on your elevation. My next-door neighbour, Alex, also left Uruguay in similar circumstances to you and he could not be prouder of you, as we all are.

Politics is important to my family. We come from a working-class background, and issues around fairness, policy rights and wrongs, the importance of unions and the rights of workers dominate many kitchen table discussions. I come from a long line of Labor voters. This is not to say I joined, supported and worked for this party blindly; I have joined, and now represent, this party because of what it stands for.

Like my family and my party, I believe in fairness, I believe in equality and I believe in opportunity. I believe government has a vital role to play in working to achieve fairness in our country and in our state. I believe that governments should work to achieve true equality and ensure that opportunity is available to all who live here. I believe that people have the right to make choices about their lives. As a feminist, the right to choose the course of one's life is central to my beliefs. Where there is inequality, there is a lack of choice, a lack of opportunity and potential is not fulfilled. Inequality — whether in relation to access to work, education or marriage — should not be tolerated.

Sometimes when walking down the front steps of this building I am reminded of my family and where we came from: I only have to look over to the Hotel Windsor. My great-grandfather met my great-grandmother while working at the Windsor. He was a porter and doorman; she was a chambermaid. I am sure my great-grandfather opened doors for many politicians from this place, and I thank the Labor Party and the Premier for opening this door for me.

My great-grandfather was a strong Catholic, Labor man who resisted the split in 1955 and raged with fury against the Democratic Labor Party and Bob Santamaria for weakening the political voice of working men and women. We know this history — this history of men fighting, of men arguing, of men writing our laws. History has traditionally been written by men, for men. In modern times we see history of women slowly emerging. There is still much of women's history, however, which remains unwritten and sadly may never be fully acknowledged.

Only a few weeks ago, my much-loved Nanna passed away after a long fight with Parkinson's disease and associated dementia. I will use this opportunity today to record the history of my nan, June Prendergast, the daughter of the doorman and the chambermaid, for her story is entwined with my own, and her story puts a fire in my belly and forms part of the journey that brought me to the Labor Party. June's story is also one of the reasons I stand here today as the Labor member for Eltham.

A shy girl, my nan met my pop at a servicemen's dance organised by my great-grandfather, who regularly hosted such events. My pop was a charming man, with a lovely singing voice, great dance moves and sparkly blue eyes. June fell in love with Vincent and married a man who would turn out to be a dreamer who could never make his dreams reality. Before many years passed, they found themselves with three girls under five and no permanent income or home. In Jane Austen's words, my grandfather had 'no prospects'. With what I regard as considerable courage, June gave Vincent an ultimatum: sort yourself out or leave. He left.

With heartbreaking determination, June enrolled her two eldest daughters, three and five, into boarding school. The baby lived with June's parents, and June set off to work, her family broken into pieces. Once June learnt that as a deserted wife she was eligible for the widows pension and public housing, she was able to bring her girls home. Through the safety net created by the state, June was reunited permanently with her girls and could raise them together in safety in her care, not the care of strangers. Without the support of the government, my mum and her sisters could have spent years without the direct care of their mother. As you would expect, money was tight with only a pension and supplementary income from casual jobs on a woman's wage. My nan was poor, but not because she was a leaner; she was poor because she was a woman bringing up children on her own.

My mum and her sisters were born too early to benefit from the reforms of the Whitlam government and could not afford to finish high school or go to university. John Howard has said that Whitlam was not the first Prime Minister to provide free university education, using the example of Howard's own commonwealth scholarship, which provided him with access to a free university degree. It is misguided for this former Prime Minister to make that claim. On the outskirts of Melbourne, in places like Fawkner where my mum grew up, very few people knew how to find the money to finish high school, let alone knew that university scholarships even existed.

Thanks to Whitlam, all Australians were given the opportunity to go to university if they had the desire and the ability. What adds to the fire in my belly are the attempts to erode this legacy by the unfair policies proposed by the Abbott government. Like the Labor Party, my mum and dad value education and training and the opportunities they bring. They worked very hard to give these opportunities to my brother and me. Thanks to the reforms of the Whitlam, Hawke and Keating governments, I have benefited from affordable higher education and health care, and my parents' hard work has been rewarded through their participation in superannuation — benefits that many of the hardworking, working-class people before them were never able to enjoy.

In the Labor Party we know that life is not an equal playing field. We know the state needs to assist in creating equality of choice and opportunity. Your ethnicity, gender, religion, sexuality, income and identity should not be used to deny you opportunity. I believe we do not have the right to be bigots. We cannot encourage the haters; we must aspire to be better than that. We do not have the right to hurt people. As citizens, as law-makers, as humans we have the responsibility to promote respect, tolerance and acceptance. We have the responsibility to ensure that people do not get left behind.

The Liberal Party has lionised Robert Menzies, our longest serving Prime Minister, who nurtured and embraced his forgotten people, the middle class. For Menzies, the rich had their money, the working class

had their unions. He believed it was the middle class who were forgotten and ignored by government; these were the people he looked to represent. With the Abbott government reducing educational opportunities, the state Liberal Party decimation of TAFE, the proposed increased costs to health care and the cuts to family support and the aged pension, it would seem that most of us have been forgotten. I will not forget the people I represent — the hardworking people of the seat of Eltham, who care about community, who want a fair choice when it comes to education and training opportunities and who want support for small business. They are people who want a sound economy that does not leave anyone behind. Having lived in the seat of Eltham for most of my life, I understand what is important to those I am fortunate enough to represent.

The Eltham electorate is filled with amazing people: those who have written our history in books, illustrated it in paintings, built the buildings that have become our history and even created history through the invention of the bionic ear. This electorate has blessed this state with some remarkable politicians. David McKenzie, who served under the Whitlam government and who helped remove the stigma from abortion; the remarkable Pauline Toner, who was our first state female minister; and Sherryl Garbutt, another fantastic minister. Wayne Phillips's passion for basketball has been felt throughout the area.

Of course we have also been represented by the exceptional Steve Herbert, who achieved a great deal for our community over the last 12 years — not a school, sportsground or major road has remained untouched by improvement thanks to Steve's hard work. Steve's dedication has created new bushlands, a new bridge across our Yarra, modernised our train line and rehoused Eltham's Country Fire Authority. He has given me large shoes to fill, which I plan to, as he has taught me well. I know unreservedly that as the Minister for Training and Skills, Steve will do an exceptional job in restoring our decimated TAFE system.

We have Jenny Macklin, who has given us the national disability insurance scheme, who co-created the apology to the stolen generations and who gave our forgotten children the recognition they deserved. With her determination, vision, compassion and hard work, Jenny has well shown how good policy can transform lives for the better. It does not stop there. Here in this place, my friends the member for Yuroke, the member for Ivanhoe, the member for Williamstown and the member for Bulleen all spent some, if not all, of their childhood in this community. It is truly a special electorate to represent.

I understand this community, and I know it well. I understand their aspirations and I understand their challenges: the small business owners who are doing their best but struggle with paperwork and red tape; the teenager living with his nan who has found a safe haven at the Diamond Valley Learning Centre; and the family confronting the challenges of an adult son now confined to a wheelchair. These are just a few examples of the stories I heard last year, just a few of the challenges that people in my community face — challenges that we as lawmakers have to rise to meet. Not all of the things that happen in our lives happen through our choices or actions. Poverty took away some choices from my grandmother. Accidents can take away some of the choices available to people, such as this young man in a wheelchair. When things go wrong, we must step up and help people. We must lean in and support, not step aside and let people fall over.

I am proud to say that in my community we do step up. This can be seen in so many ways. It can be seen in those who donate to and help out at the Diamond Valley Food Share; those who give so much to CAVE — Community and Volunteers of Eltham; the terrific volunteers at our RSLs and the DViets, who always look out for their mates; those in our local Amnesty International group, who care about the plight of refugees and political prisoners; those who stand up for reconciliation with the Nillumbik Reconciliation Group; those who offer assistance through Diamond Valley Community Support; and those who help out at Nillumbik Community Health Service and at Banyule Community Health. It can be seen in our vibrant sports clubs and in our hardworking service clubs, like Eltham Rotary with its fantastic Eltham festival. We see it with the exceptional volunteers and staff at Araluen and in the magic that happens at Eltham Little Theatre. It can be seen in all of our community groups that focus on protecting our environment.

In my electorate we live among gum trees, foliaged hills, copper butterflies, creeks, wallabies and the Yarra River. Our people are passionate about protecting our green wedge — something Victorian Labor well understands, which is why it will legislate to protect these extraordinarily important natural assets. I thank Rupert Hamer for his decision in recognising early the importance of these breathing, living lungs that radiate out of our city.

I understand how important access to education and training is to my community, which is why so many locals were bitterly disappointed, in fact shocked, at the closure of Greensborough TAFE. Thanks to the strong campaign by many MPs, including the members for Bundoora, Ivanhoe and Yan Yean, the former member

for Eltham and myself, Labor will reopen Greensborough TAFE and expand the opportunities for local kids and those needing retraining. I thank the Premier for responding to our concerns. It is why Labor will rebuild Montmorency Secondary College and begin the process of rebuilding Greensborough Secondary College. It is why we will build a sporting precinct across the Eltham North Reserve and St Helena Secondary College. I understand local residents' frustration with transport, which is why Labor will increase peak-hour services on the Hurstbridge line and upgrade Bolton Street.

My community wants to feel safe, which is why we will rebuild the Country Fire Authority station at Plenty and issue the CFA at Research with a new pumper tanker. It is why the Andrews government will hold the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

My community understands that we need to work together as a community if we are to succeed. I will quote US Democrat Senator Elizabeth Warren, who said:

> There is nobody in this country who got rich on their own … You built a factory out there — good for you … You moved your goods to market on roads the rest of us paid for. You hired workers the rest of us paid to educate. You were safe in your factory because of police forces and fire forces that the rest of us paid for … You built a factory and it turned into something terrific or a great idea — God bless! But part of the underlying social contract is you take a hunk of that and pay forward for the next kid who comes along.

Like Elizabeth Warren, I believe in paying it forward; so does the Labor Party, through investing in the future by building the things that matter. We build roads and train lines, we build schools and hospitals, we build fairer communities. You get fairer communities through investing in people, regardless of where they come from or who they are. You get fairness by continuing to pay it forward. You work to cut greenhouse gas emissions, you work to help kids access education and training opportunities and you work to ensure a fair and affordable access to health care.

I stand here now, ready to pay it forward, and in the process of paying it forward I need to acknowledge all those who have supported me. I want to thank my parents, Sue and Bruce, who have been an amazing support to me, for which I am more than grateful. I thank my grandmothers for all that they gave me, which I could never pay back. I thank my brother for his love and companionship, and I thank him and his wife, Bianca, for the amazing work they put in raising my beautiful nephew, Cooper Jess, who faces his own challenges of living with Fragile X syndrome and autism. I thank my friend and mentor Steve Herbert, who has always shown such faith in me; my friend and mentor Jenny Macklin, who has shown me what hard work and patience can achieve. I want to thank our local branch members, who have worked so hard over so many years. I am grateful for all the work local ambos and fireys have put into protecting our community, and I thank them for the new friendships I made last year and for the ongoing kindness and good humour they displayed throughout the campaign.

I want to thank my union, the Community and Public Sector Union, for its support. My parents have always been members of a union, and I happily follow their example, for my parents, like ambos and fireys, are not thugs.

I thank my friend Kosmos and all at the state office for their fantastic campaign. I thank Trades Hall and union members who fought street by street to give our state a better deal and a better government. I want to thank all the volunteers for their hours and hours of work last year. I thank Nicole for her courage in stepping up and absorbing a huge workload with good humour, determination and exceptional organisation. I thank Clare for her perseverance, enthusiasm and fierce commitment. I thank the La Trobe Labor Club for its support of Clare and myself and their exceptional work ethic. I thank Jennie Juchnevicius for decades of hard work and her loyal and long-lasting friendship and support. I thank Joe Battanta for being able to do pretty much everything. I thank my friends Adele, Caz, Dani, Geoff, Greg, Jenny, Olaf and Paul for all they have done for me and my family.

I thank Ann, Antony, Lachlan and Emily for their amazing friendship, loyalty and belief in me. I thank Jason, Janine, Alistair and Catherine for their great support. I thank my neighbouring MPs for their support over the last 12 months as well.

I am blessed to have a wonderful family. I have a family who recognises that, with support, women and mothers can achieve amazing things. I thank my loyal, loving and patient partner, Mark, and our gorgeous and clever girls, Ella and Molly. I love the three of them with all my heart.

I stand here grateful for all that these people have given me, and I promise I will keep paying it forward. Thank you.

Debate interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER — Order! I would like to acknowledge and welcome to the Parliament of Victoria Mr Upul Pushpakumara, the Consul General for Sri Lanka; Captain Angelo Mathews; world-renowned veteran cricketers who I understand will be retiring after this world cup, Kumar Sangakkara and Mahela Jayawardene; veteran cricketers Tillakarathne Dilshan and Lasith Malinga; and the entire Sri Lankan cricket team.

I welcome also my good friend Liz Beattie, who has contributed tremendously to the Sri Lankan community in Victoria and the relationship between Victoria and Sri Lanka. Welcome to Melbourne as we host the International Cricket Council Cricket World Cup 2015.

Consul-General, I am happy to see the team and the community here as we celebrate the achievement of the Sri Lankan cricket team, to cheer them on and wish them good luck.

The Minister for Sport and Minister for Tourism and Major Events is fully aware of the inappropriateness of wearing a cap in the chamber. It is unparliamentary, and therefore I will confiscate his cap. It will become part of the Speaker's memorabilia collection and later will be presented to the cricket team. Further, the member for Footscray's cap will be confiscated and later will be presented to the Sri Lankan cricket team.

Again, we welcome you to the Parliament.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed.

Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater) — I acknowledge the Sri Lankan cricket team and wish them all the best of luck — unless they are playing the Australian team.

In commencing my address-in-reply, I wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet and pay my respects to their elders both past and present. I also pay my respects to you in your elevation to your high office, Speaker, and to the Deputy Speaker. I also congratulate the new ministers and shadow ministers and welcome all the newly elected members.

I am very humbled to have been re-elected to my position as the member for Bayswater district for a third term, and I look forward to working hard to guarantee that my constituents and all Victorians are provided for by the current government. My commitment to the people of Bayswater district is that I will gladly be their voice within these walls once again and will fight to ensure that the current government keeps its word on all its election commitments. In the past four years the coalition government achieved a great deal for this wonderful state, and I urge the current government to stay true to its word and to continue to grow and develop Victoria for future generations.

Over the past four years in Bayswater district we have celebrated many achievements, from the widening and duplication of Stud Road at a cost of more than $12.7 million to the establishment of the Birch Street Children and Family Centre at Bayswater Primary School. We put protective services officers at the Ringwood, Bayswater and Boronia railway stations. They were a welcome advancement on commuter safety, and their presence was the primary driver of dramatically lower crime rates. Significant infrastructure improvements included $1.3 million for a signalised intersection at Tormore Road, a right-turn arrow at Coleman Road, a signalised pedestrian crossing near Waldreas Retirement Village and a major upgrade of signal work at Canterbury and Colchester roads.

Education is the key to future generations, and the $16 million for the combined Boronia K–12 College, $2.34 million for upgrades at Bayswater North Primary School and $849 000 for stage 1 of the redevelopment of Boronia Heights Primary School were milestone achievements. There were also significant contributions to major local projects, including $66 million towards the Ringwood railway station upgrade; $3 million towards Aquanation, which will be a great asset within our community; and $1.5 million for a new ambulance station in Wantirna. Add to all of these the local community grants which helped fund everything from kindergarten equipment, computers, festivals, sports club hall and grounds upgrades, arts and languages in schools programs and so much more, and you realise that the Bayswater electorate's needs have been heard and also acted upon.

The past few years have been an especially great privilege for me, firstly, in the role of Parliamentary Secretary for the Arts and then as Minister for the Arts, a role I cherished and loved. I would like to thank the former Premier, the member for South-West Coast, for his trust in my knowledge and love of this sector by appointing me as the Minister for the Arts, where I was fortunate to have met so many wonderful arts practitioners, professionals and administrators.

In Victoria, the arts contribute over $11.4 billion each year to our gross state product and deliver the equivalent of 110 000 full-time jobs across the state. This can only occur in an environment where the economy is strong and Victorians have the means to experience and support the arts. In the last Parliament, the coalition government created nearly 79 000 new jobs and delivered economic security to people across the state. When people are employed, they have higher discretionary spending and have greater choices as to how those funds are spent. This provides new prospects and new audiences for Victorian artists, whether they perform and create in our world-renowned buildings, regional theatres, warehouses or laneways.

Some of our finest achievements in the arts portfolio over the past four years have been the $24 million given to the Victorian College of the Arts to secure its future; a very substantial $4 million investment in the creation of a contemporary arts precinct in Collingwood; educational programs at Museum Victoria for kindergarten-age students to high school students and of course the wonderful new exhibits there; more than half a million attendees at White Night Melbourne last year, about 300 000 the year before and of course this year it was also a booming success — a legacy of the Baillieu and Napthine governments; and $4.5 million given to the National Gallery of Victoria to introduce a new summer season of major exhibitions and programs, with a focus on contemporary art and design, including the amazing Melbourne Now exhibition, which attracted some 758 000 people and of course the very beautiful Jean Paul Gaultier exhibition, which has just ended. Some quarter of a million people attended that.

Arts Victoria's new Organisations Investment Program provides multiyear operational support to non-profit, non-government arts organisations, providing many artists and arts organisations right across the state access to funding for the very first time in their history.

There is also the Small Town Transformations program, which supported large-scale creative projects that would inspire, transform and create a lasting legacy in Victorian towns with populations of 1500 people or fewer. There have been an abundance of Broadway musicals and other theatre productions, including many new local works, which has ensured that there have been opportunities for our amazing local talent to practise their craft professionally.

Victoria is and will remain the cultural capital of Australia. It is home to the strongest and most prolific artistic community in the country as well as to Australia's pre-eminent collecting, creating and performing arts institutions. There is never a day or night when those wishing to participate in or observe an arts event could be disappointed. From world-class theatrical performances and visiting art exhibitions to hundreds upon hundreds of opera, jazz, blues, classical and contemporary performances, there is always something to see and do, cementing Victoria's place on the world's cultural and artistic map. I wish to place on the record my thanks to all at Arts Victoria and those in the industry who worked alongside me to create opportunities and growth in this important sector.

In the women's affairs portfolio, we provided countless opportunities for women to grow, become employed, be inspired and excel.

In consumer affairs so much work was done in protecting Victorians against unscrupulous operators by educating them and, most importantly, running proactive prevention programs. To the staff of both departments, I acknowledge your hard work and say thank you.

I also thank my outstanding team of ministerial staff — Judy, CJ, Clementine, Will, Suzie, Melina, Catherine and Alex, who were unwavering in their dedication, support and wisdom. You were my collective rock, and I miss you all dreadfully. I also want to thank my driver, Dennis Kalokathis, for his good humour and for sharing our parallel love of such a diverse variety of music. No matter how tired I was, he could always find a Bee Gees song for us to have blaring in the car to sing along to.

Now we need to look to the present and future. There are many local issues to rectify for the people of Bayswater district over the next four years — issues I am passionate about. The removal of level crossings at Mountain Highway and Scoresby Road is a high priority to ensure safety for motorists and pedestrians. Although the ALP candidate made much noise about the Labor Party's promises to remove them, the crossings do not appear on the Andrews government's priority list. This is despite the millions of dollars already spent under the coalition government on the undertaking of community consultation, design works and preparation of the sites. At every opportunity I will push for the early fulfilment of this promise.

We need a new scout hall for the 1st Bayswater scouts. The present facility, which is crumbling and dangerous, must be replaced. A new and modern Country Fire Authority station for Bayswater is also an urgent requirement for community and occupational health and safety to ensure that our dedicated volunteers can carry out the work asked of them. They are dedicated,

they are hardworking, they are tireless and we need to respect the work they do.

Upgrades to Boronia Heights Primary School and The Basin Primary School were promised during the election campaign, and these will ensure that students of the Bayswater district can access a high standard of education in appropriate surroundings. Pedestrian crossings, road improvements and funding for health services, including the cancer centre at Maroondah Hospital, are also all high priorities for my electorate, and I will pursue these vigorously to ensure that they are delivered.

I thank all those who have given me the opportunity to serve the electorate of Bayswater for a third term. My sincerest gratitude goes to those who had enough faith in my capabilities to vote for me. I am truly humbled by this honour and once again commit to working diligently to bring about positive change in our area.

In my shadow ministerial roles, there is much to pursue. In the arts it is imperative that the contemporary arts precinct I spoke about before, the project in Johnston Street, Collingwood, go ahead. This will provide a solid and secure base for contemporary artists and organisations, regardless of medium, and ensure that they are given every chance to establish themselves in a sustainable way. Part of this will be the provision of unique opportunities for collaboration which will be available in this incubator-like environment. There is also the furthering of projects in the Southbank arts precinct. The blueprint commissioned by the former coalition government gives us the opportunity to progress this area following on from initiatives we began, such as the handing over of the old police horse stables to the Victorian College of the Arts for creative spaces — a feat that had been attempted for some 40 years and that was achieved under the coalition government.

In tourism there are many areas where further development is possible, and I will work with the industry to better understand its priorities. Melbourne is the major events capital of Australia, and I will continue to push the government to ensure that we do not lose that title.

In Aboriginal affairs the community members I have already met with have given me ideas as to the direction in which some of their issues need to head, so I will be working with them to ensure that they have a strong voice in the Victorian parliament.

To finish up, I thank my colleagues, the administrative arm of the Victorian Liberal Party and some of my strongest supporters: Alan and Val Jenkins, Charles and Bernice Hogarth, Max and Janet Williams, Aldo Gianchino, Michael Gilmour, Andrew Murphy, John Croft, my entire campaign team and the 100-plus tireless volunteers who believe as passionately as I do in the Liberal Party philosophy and its ability to govern in an economically and socially responsible way. To my electorate staff, Heather Uebergang and Elisa Miller, who keep the home fires burning and show compassion and patience on a daily basis: thanks, ladies!

Lastly, I want to take the time to thank my family. I thank my beautiful daughter, Charlotte, for tolerating the hours I spend at work and loving me unconditionally anyway, for making me laugh and for always having a huge hug and endless kisses available. I love you, sweetheart. And to my supportive and loving partner, Angelo: without you, this campaign would have been so very different. Your positive attitude, marketing advice and steady, gentle nature helped me more than you will ever know. You are amazing, and I love you very much. To everybody else who helped out and made this possible, I say thank you.

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) — In the Speaker's absence, I take the opportunity to congratulate him on his appointment to the high office of Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. His journey in coming to that role as a former asylum seeker and refugee from Uruguay is inspiring, but it also demonstrates the opportunities and possibilities that are available in this country and shows us the benefits of a multicultural society.

I congratulate the Premier, the Honourable Daniel Andrews, on forming government.

And I congratulate each and every member in this house and in the other place on their election to the 58th Parliament.

As this is my first speech in Parliament, I wish to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land where Parliament now stands, the Kulin nation. I pay my respects to their elders past and present. Australia's first peoples have looked after this land for thousands of years. I hope that we can learn what they have known for so long — that we must live with and respect our natural environment.

Being elected to represent Carrum is a great honour. I thank the people of Carrum for electing me. I acknowledge the trust they have placed in me, and I embrace the responsibilities that come with this new role. I undertake to all my constituents to represent

them equally and impartially and to advocate strongly on their behalf.

I acknowledge the former member for Carrum, Donna Bauer, for her contribution to the electorate of Carrum. And I acknowledge another former member for Carrum and my friend Jenny Lindell, who so ably served the people of Carrum for three terms, from 1999 to 2010.

I am here because of the hard work and support of so many others. I am humbled by the sheer dedication, commitment and selflessness shown by the team of volunteers who worked so tirelessly on the Carrum campaign to help elect me and an Andrews Labor government, some of whom are in the gallery today. I make special mention of Jackson Hitchcock and my youngest volunteers, Brendan Price and Caitlyn Wright.

I express my sincere gratitude to Lee Tarlamis, a former member for South Eastern Metropolitan Region in the Council, for his support, encouragement and friendship — he will be back — and to Alan Griffin, the federal member for Bruce, and Jude Perera, the member for Cranbourne, for their support in my preselection. Thanks also to Mark Dreyfus, the federal member for Isaacs, and to many of my current parliamentary colleagues, including Jill Hennessy, the member for Altona, and Natalie Hutchins, the member for Sydenham.

I thank the Victorian branch of the Australian Labor Party and members of the Frankston and Chelsea branches of the ALP.

I acknowledge the committed and focused women at EMILY's List, in particular my mentor Hutch Hussein and, of course, Joan Kirner, an incredible role model for so many Victorian women.

And there are the people I have been privileged to work with over the years, including my team at ANZ and my former colleagues at Freehills.

I thank those close to me — my good friend Jane Anstee-Wedderburn; my parents, Rae and John; and my two rocks, Judd and Raff — for their patience and good humour but also their strategic and philosophical advice.

I also pay tribute to our extraordinary firefighters, paramedics, teachers, emergency services personnel and police. These men and women are selfless, dedicated and caring members of our community. I am grateful for the outstanding contributions they make every day.

And thanks to Luke Hilakari and the Trades Hall We Are Union movement.

Finally, please allow me to express my enormous delight in being surrounded by so many Labor women in this chamber and the record number of women in the Victorian cabinet. This movement towards more women in Parliament is a cause for celebration. I hope it inspires many younger women to seek out preselection and run as candidates, not just in the Labor Party but in all parties.

I too wish to see a similar shift in the representation of women on corporate boards and in senior management positions. If any incentive is needed, one need only look at studies in America which found that, as a group, Fortune 500 companies with women CEOs outperformed the overall market and that companies with the greatest number of women on their boards performed significantly better financially than companies with fewer female board members.

As we near International Women's Day, on 8 March, it is worth reflecting on recent statistics which show that the pay gap between men and women in Australia has widened to a 10-year high. Women are now earning 18.2 per cent less than their male counterparts for the same work, and women are falling behind in superannuation and retirement savings.

In the 1960s and 1970s my mother and others of her generation fought hard for equal rights for women. Nearly half a century later it seems we are still facing the same issues and the same discrimination. We must continue to fight for equal rights for women.

We must also acknowledge the epidemic which is family violence. Whilst our Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty, is an inspiration, the circumstances of her appointment are just so utterly tragic and awful. That she is able to transform some of that grief into a crusade to end family violence is remarkable, but she cannot do it alone. Our communities, including our men, also need to stand up and take responsibility for this social problem.

I am proud that an Andrews Labor government has established Australia's first Royal Commission into Family Violence to consider ways to prevent family violence and to support survivors of it. I spoke recently with a woman who lived through family violence, and she explained to me that she is a survivor of family violence, not a victim. Not only will I advocate for the rights of women; I also believe there are many others who need a voice in Parliament.

I was on the board of a unique and very talented theatre group, Back to Back Theatre. This contemporary theatre company is created by actors, each one of whom has an intellectual disability. Their work is confronting. It challenged me to think again about the value of individual lives and of the need to recognise potential in everyone, particularly those who are marginalised.

I was certainly proud to see a federal Labor government introduce legislation for the establishment of a national disability insurance scheme.

I will also be a strong advocate for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people.

I was proud to march alongside our Premier in this year's Pride March, and I pay tribute to the first appointment by any Australian Parliament of a minister with responsibility for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex issues.

I would like to turn now to my electorate of Carrum. 'Look at moy'! Kath and Kim, that infamous mother-daughter duo, live not in Fountain Lakes but in Patterson Lakes. This iconic and extremely successful Australian television series was filmed right in the heart of the Carrum electorate. I should add, having worked with the Australian Children's Television Foundation and Screenrights, that I believe Australian film and television programs are crucial in helping us recognise and celebrate our own cultural and national identity.

Perhaps someone could make a film about the Carrum Cowboys, a tag given by police to a group of teenagers who, in the 1950s and 1960s, rode their horses too fast along the footpaths and foreshore of Carrum. These Carrum Cowboys on horseback were often chased through the streets by local police on foot. The local football team is now named after them.

The electorate of Carrum is virtually a new electorate following the recent redistribution. It falls within the two federal electorates of Dunkley and Isaacs and stretches across three local government areas: Frankston, Kingston and Dandenong. It takes in the seaside suburbs of Bonbeach, Carrum and Seaford and extends east to Patterson Lakes, Carrum Downs, Bangholme, Sandhurst, Skye and parts of Dandenong South.

It boasts 15 kilometres of the best and most pristine white sandy beaches in Melbourne, patrolled in summer by our dedicated volunteer lifeguards from Life Saving Victoria at surf clubs at Seaford, Carrum and Bonbeach and by the Carrum Coast Guard, who are also all volunteers. One of the busiest and most popular boat launching facilities is located on Patterson River.

And we have the Ramsar listed Edithvale-Seaford wetlands, a site of significance up there with Kakadu. It is a resting place for over 100 different species of birds, including migratory birds, most of which are protected by international treaties.

We also have such exquisitely named natural features as Boggy Creek, Carrum Carrum Swamp and Eel Race Drain.

Carrum is a diverse area of residential development, a number of small rural holdings as well as small business and some large areas of commercial and light industry and manufacturing.

A number of businesses are likely to be affected by the withdrawal of the automotive industry. I will work with them to seek to minimise that impact. In the same way, I will work with small business across Carrum to boost local employment opportunities, particularly for our young people.

Whilst generally the electorate caters to a range of housing choices and income levels, demand for affordable and low-income housing is on the rise. This need is being met to some extent by caravan and cabin parks and a number of boarding houses, and there is the beach. However, as rental affordability decreases, new and improved models of housing solutions will be needed. I will be working hard in this area.

There is the Frankston railway line, with four stations in the electorate and nine level crossings, four of which are slated for removal. Away from the coast the area is serviced by a network of buses. Cross-connections — for example, linking Carrum Downs and Sandhurst to train stations in the electorate — are an area to be examined. There are 14 primary schools and 2 secondary schools in my electorate. Education will be a major focus of my work.

In preparing this speech I have reflected on two aspects of my life that have shaped my values and underpin what I want to achieve during my time in Parliament. The first is my family and growing up overseas. The second is my work as a lawyer. My mother, Rae, is a strong feminist and someone whose drive for social justice and equitable outcomes often saw no boundaries. By school age my sister and I had attended many public meetings on homelessness, education, women's rights and child care. We campaigned for Gough Whitlam. Campaigning continued when my family and I moved to America in the 1980s, hosting Democrat meetings at our home and campaigning for Walter Mondale and Geraldine Ferraro. I should add that even back then I was filled with a strong sense of

pride, knowing I was helping the campaign of America's first female vice-presidential candidate.

My father, John, has always recognised the value of education and the opportunities that come with it. With his work my family and I relocated to different parts of the world. For my sister and me this meant growing up in Sydney, Boston, Hong Kong and Indonesia. Through our moves I learnt about difference and tolerance. I saw how education could open up opportunities for the children of low-income families, and I saw how families became trapped in cycles of intergenerational poverty where their governments and society did not value education.

I also witnessed inequality — where the wealthy always seemed to have greater rights and greater access to services, information, education, jobs and opportunities. All of this seemed so inherently unfair to me and was part of the reason I chose to study law. I have worked as a lawyer for nearly 20 years. For a large part of that time I have worked in commercial litigation and in corporate legal roles; however, for a few years I worked at the Kimberley Land Council in Broome.

On a visit to Fitzroy Crossing, a town 400 kilometres east of Broome, I met an Aboriginal elder during a native title claim hearing. This woman taught me about her people's Dreaming and songlines, and she also told me that until a Japanese warplane flew overhead during World War II she did not know that Europeans had settled in Australia. She had literally walked out of the desert. Seventy years later she was a lead claimant in a native title claim, having to prove her connection to the land.

It is now just over 7 years since the national apology and 50 years since the Freedom Ride, yet the latest *Closing the Gap* report finds only small gains in Indigenous life expectancy, no progress in halving the gap in Indigenous employment and a failure to meet early childhood school enrolment targets. We must renew our focus on and commitment to closing the gap.

Whilst I may not have worked in government before, as a lawyer I understand the rule of law, the value of democracy and the need for public institutions to uphold the highest standards of integrity, discipline, accountability and transparency. People in public office are in positions of trust. It is incumbent upon each and every elected representative in this Parliament to put the public interest of Victorians above all else — even politics.

As a lawyer I know that laws should reflect our community values. For me, this means there is no place for laws that make bigotry or racial intolerance acceptable. There is no place for laws that deny basic health care to people who cannot afford it or laws that deny a person the opportunity to lead a decent and fulfilling life, and there is no place for laws that take away a woman's right to choose.

However, there is a place for laws that permit anyone, no matter their sexual preference, to marry the person they love. There is a place for laws that recognise the urgent and pressing need to protect our environment, and there is a place for laws that protect workers rights. There is a place for laws that understand the role of education in helping give our young people the ability to lead fulfilling lives, and I believe there is a place for laws that give someone the ability to end their life peacefully at a time of their choosing.

I stand here today as a proud member of the Australian Labor Party in an Andrews Labor government — a government with a policy agenda that is progressive, inclusive and fair, one that will help individuals realise their full potential and one that will make Victoria's economy strong.

My great-aunt Mary passed away just before the election. She would have been proud today. She used to say to me, 'Always remember your Labor values, and exercise humility'. She also used to say that the Irish in me helps make me strong, loyal, passionate, witty, bright and optimistic in the face of devastating reality — and I think it was Voltaire who said, 'A witty saying proves nothing'.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Colac police station

Mr MULDER (Polwarth) — I call on the Minister for Police to commit to a new police station in Colac. The coalition government committed to providing Colac police officers and the community with a new station should the coalition be re-elected. Colac is one of the few remaining stations in the region that has not been fully rebuilt, and the situation is becoming dire for the officers who use the facilities.

The station had a modest upgrade in the 1970s, which did not include the criminal investigation or highway

patrol sections. Detectives and highway patrol officers are still working out of the old section of the building. Portables dot the fence line, the old bluestone cells are being used as storage and officers are crammed into other sections of the building. With an estimated 65 officers expected to be working out of the building in the not-too-distant future, it is important for the morale of members of the existing workforce that they see some light at the end of the tunnel and get a commitment to a new station.

The conditions at Colac are so bad that the cells are incapable of holding prisoners overnight, resulting in prisoners being transferred to either Warrnambool or Geelong and then being transferred back to Colac for court appearances. This practice is both time consuming and expensive. There are significant operational and security issues that I am not prepared to air due to the fact that such admissions could compromise the safety of officers at Colac and potentially impact on police officers being able to discharge their duties in the best interests of the public.

Modern facilities would enable Colac police to better protect families from crime and antisocial behaviour and would enhance emergency response capabilities for our region. The current site is restrictive, with limited parking, and it was the intention of the coalition to identify a new site for the building. I acknowledge that the new station was a coalition commitment not matched by the incoming Labor government; however, the morale of our police force should not be governed by electoral boundaries. Police move in and out of Colac from around the state, and it is widely recognised that these facilities are substandard. I am also advised that the Police Association supports the Colac officers in their quest for modern, state-of-the-art policing facilities.

I suggest that perhaps the minister could ask his department to start to identify where the new police station could be built in Colac. There are several parcels of land — some held by local government and some held by state government — which could be suitable for a new police station, and as an interim measure the minister could identify a site and at least give the local police some encouragement that the current government is interested in the morale of local police and interested in providing good facilities for the community. Then when funding becomes available, the government will be in a position to commit to a new station.

Glen Eira College

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education. The action I seek is confirmation of the government's commitment to Glen Eira College to provide $9.5 million to build new library, art, science, sport and technology classrooms. I also ask that the minister visit Glen Eira College at his earliest convenience to discuss with staff, students and parents the future needs of this terrific school. Philip Dalidakis, a member for Southern Metropolitan Region in the other place, would also be happy to join us on that occasion, as he has expressed extraordinary support for the school, as would the member for Bentleigh.

Glen Eira College is a growing school just outside the borders of the Oakleigh electorate. It is home to more than 600 students from over 50 ethnic groups, providing wonderful cultural diversity. Glen Eira College has become a true success story in recent years. Over 90 per cent of student graduates progress to the university or TAFE course of their choice. The college provides a fantastic language program, including Hebrew and French as well as extensive classes in English as a second language. There are vocational education and training programs for senior students, strong extracurricular activities and, I am told, a keen debating program that in the past has seen Glen Eira College students taking part in debates in this very chamber.

Glen Eira College makes active contributions to the community as well as raising funds for charity. It is a school that genuinely gives back. An example is its involvement in the Mother's Day Classic and the local Relay for Life, where last October in Murrumbeena I saw firsthand the many students, staff and parents walking late into the night to support cancer research.

Last year I had the privilege of paying a visit to the school to discuss its future with the principal, Sheereen Kindler. I was very pleased to talk about Labor's commitment to the redevelopment of this wonderful school. I was also very impressed with the enthusiasm, energy and great community spirit that was clearly evident at the college. I know that a commitment of funds to this school will provide the state-of-the-art facilities required by the school and its community. I look forward to the opportunity to work with the minister and Glen Eira College teachers, the principal and the school community to create an even brighter future for this wonderful school.

Gaming licences

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation. I request that the minister engage with the Tatts Group with regard to increasing flexibility in its franchise agreements. The Victorian government has awarded Tattersall's with the licence to sell lottery products in Victoria. In doing so, it is important that the government stand up for the newsagents and lottery product sellers in our communities. Franchise agreements stipulate designated areas for lottery products to be sold. These are often not in ideal places in the stores, in the context of ensuring that service areas provide good access for customers and that entrances remain clear.

Retailers claim they will do their best to comply with these agreement conditions. Of course they do — they are in the business of ensuring that they make as many sales as they can. In many instances, however, the layout of the store will not accommodate the stringent conditions set out by Tatts, who should recognise that a franchisee will know their customer movements and requirements much better than Tatts itself. In the broader scheme of things, Labor's record in the gaming space has been fraught with disaster. Delays in issuing gaming licences in 2006 by then Minister for Gaming, the member for Mulgrave and current Premier, meant Tattersall's faced uncertainty as its then current licences were due to expire.

In 2007 the same gaming minister, the member for Mulgrave, made a complete debacle of the dual licensing agreement as he brought Intralot into the Victorian gaming market. Small businesses and newsagents right across the state were left in limbo as they were left without computer systems, software training or even scratchie tickets due to the bungling of the member for Mulgrave. In October last year the *Herald Sun* reported:

> The Intralot contract was a disaster and a disaster of Labor's making …
>
> It is a skeleton that is emerging out of Mr Andrews' closet.

With the loss of $63 million following the disastrous deal, Intralot has launched a multimillion-dollar law suit against the state to reclaim those losses. It seems that, once again, the Victorian taxpayer will have to cough up for the Premier's mistake. It is, however, a paltry amount compared to the $540 million payout that the state was forced to make to Tattersall's because of a compensation claim that was made due to the Premier's ill-informed decision to rip up their licensing agreements, a decision which he said would not incur compensation claims. Does that sound familiar?

It is within the power of this gaming minister to take one small step forward after the bungled and expensive record of her predecessor, the member for Mulgrave. In doing so, she will be supporting small business owners and the heart of many of our communities, which is the local newsagent. I again ask the minister to ask Tattersall's to show some leniency and common sense to its franchisees and engage in more meaningful discussions around the location of dedicated areas and lottery terminals.

Mernda rail extension

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. I seek further advice regarding the timing of construction of the rail extension to Mernda. Over the last four years on many occasions I have spoken about the need for a rail line extension to Mernda. Those on the other side might listen, because in 2011 the postcode area of Mernda and Doreen had 19 000 people, and by 2014 that had doubled — under the watch of those across there — but there was no appearance, no understanding and no compassion from them for the needs of Mernda and Doreen. The many times I raised the issue of the rail extension for Mernda — or roads, or buses, or anything — in this chamber, my pleas on behalf of that community, which included petitions bearing over 5000 signatures, were regularly greeted with laughter and derision by the then Minister for Public Transport.

I was then compelled to raise these matters for the attention of the former Minister for Planning, who was then in the other place and is now the member for Bulleen in this chamber, asking him — particularly as he represented the Northern Metropolitan Region — but he was too busy talking about casino link. He talked about the need for a train at Fishermans Bend, but I think it was somewhere near the casino, because he said that in 15 years the population there would be the size of that of Shepparton. 'Earth to the now member for Bulleen', who has done a bit of a safari around electorates and chambers.

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order!

Ms GREEN — I am pleased to say I defeated him in 2002; the Yan Yean electorate escaped him then. He was not interested at all in the public transport and roads needs of my community. It is now incumbent on

Labor, which delivered the South Morang rail extension and made sure that the design of that project was definitely ready for extension to Mernda in the future to deliver an extension. The previous government's timetable was 2032, but when Yan Yean became notionally a Liberal seat, on the eve of the election it discovered it and miraculously threw money at the show. But the community did not believe the previous government. After all, it went to the last election promising four rail lines but delivered none. I ask the Minister for Public Transport to assist my community — —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Swifts Creek Recreation Reserve

Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Sport, and the action I seek is for the upgrading of the facilities at the Swifts Creek Recreation Reserve to be funded. I am advised by members of the community that the East Gippsland Shire Council currently has an application lodged with the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure under the country football and netball funding program for this very worthwhile project.

Swifts Creek is a small community in my electorate which has a very active football and netball club. As we see with a lot of country communities like Swifts Creek, the football and netball club has become very much the backbone of the local community. The more kids from these rural townships that we can get into playing sport, certainly the better for their lifestyle and their growth as individuals. These facilities are extremely important.

The Swifts Creek Recreation Reserve committee of management and the East Gippsland Shire Council have both identified that the current playing surface of the netball courts in particular is in need of significant repair. The project proposes major drainage works to reduce the impact of water on the courts as well as patching and resurfacing and line marking. The existing surface is currently problematic for netballers, especially in wet weather, so this upgrade will bring significant benefits to players of all ages.

Prior to the November 2014 election the then coalition government committed to this very project for the Swifts Creek community. The then Minister for Sport and Recreation came to Swifts Creek and looked at the facilities and made a significant commitment to funding this worthwhile project. The club now has $14 500 to contribute to the project, which is a significant contribution from a small rural and regional community. The shire and the Swifts Creek Recreation Reserve committee of management would appreciate this project being given strong consideration — and I see the Minister for Sport coming into the chamber — under the country football and netball program. Now that he has come into the chamber, the minister should also be aware that I would be more than happy to host a visit up there by him to come to look at the facility. I might even buy the minister one of the famous Swifts Creek pies if he is prepared to come and look to make sure the project is funded.

The facility upgrade would mean a great deal to the people of Swifts Creek, and the wider community benefits would be absolutely enormous. I call on the minister to ensure these important works are funded.

Thomastown electorate schools

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) — I raise a matter with the Minister for Education. The action I seek is for the minister to visit a number of previously neglected schools attended by many children in the electorate of Thomastown. I request that the Minister for Education attend a Thomastown education day involving a visit to the William Ruthven Secondary College and the Thomastown West and Lalor Gardens primary schools with me and other local MPs to look at the great work these schools have done in the face of extreme adversity.

During the four miserable years of the state Liberal-Nationals government, schools attended by children in the Thomastown electorate were neglected and ignored. There has been no money spent on infrastructure or facilities in four years.

The minister knows these schools well. He visited them when in opposition and saw firsthand the woeful state they are in. The two primary schools had beautiful new buildings built by the Brumby Labor government, but they were left unfinished and half done when the Liberal government was elected. In the case of Lalor Gardens Primary School, students were forced to wear gumboots to school because outside areas were left as abandoned building sites, as no money was provided for remediation or landscaping.

The school was forced to cut educational programs in order to be able to purchase crushed rock so that it could at least make safe what should have been play spaces. Some puddles were so deep that they were deemed drowning hazards. There were no outside play facilities — an aspect of schooling that is so important in this age of concern around child inactivity and

obesity. The minister attended this school and met with parents, teachers and the principal to help them as well as he could.

In the case of Thomastown West Primary School, no money was allocated to fund the second building of classrooms, and it was left as a concrete slab and exposed girders. It took a lot of argument and bad publicity to get the job finished. There was no money to make play equipment safe or for outside areas.

Then there is William Ruthven Secondary College, left to languish and fall apart before our very eyes, with leaky roofs, broken walls and spaces difficult enough to teach in, let alone learn. But that school has done amazing things. Data shows that 80 per cent of students achieved Victorian certificate of education scores that allowed them to go on to university studies. The Minister for Education knows all this because he has visited this school as well. He pledged during our very successful exhibition in Queen's Hall to rebuild it if Labor were elected.

I ask the minister to revisit these schools so he can see the impressive work they have done in these tough times — during the four difficult years of a cold and heartless Liberal government.

Ferntree Gully–Henderson roads, Knoxfield

Mr WELLS (Rowville) — I would like to raise a matter of concern for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek is an upgrade of the intersection of Ferntree Gully Road and Henderson Road in Knoxfield. This intersection has a significant amount of traffic turning right from Ferntree Gully Road into Henderson Road — particularly large truck traffic, including a large number of B-doubles involved in food distribution.

Whilst this intersection was appropriate for the 1990s, larger trucks, the area having become more built up, more businesses moving to the area and a greater population around Knoxfield mean that this intersection is now chaotic. The main problem is that the right-hand turning lane is too narrow and much too short. At peak times trucks line up in the turning lane, but because there are so many of them they spread out down the main road. This means traffic banks up behind the trucks that are trying to turn right. On Ferntree Gully Road traffic comes to a standstill until the trucks can turn right and free up the lane, which sometimes takes a significant amount of time.

VicRoads is aware of this problem. It has been raised by Knox City Council and I have raised it directly with VicRoads on a number of occasions, so VicRoads understands that this problem has to be fixed. The right-hand lane needs to be extended and widened to allow large trucks to turn safely into Henderson Road. The right-hand signal needs to be adjusted to ensure that the line of trucks can turn. At the same time, a left-hand signal needs to be adjusted for trucks and cars coming out of Henderson Road into Ferntree Gully Road.

When we made inquiries about this early last year, VicRoads assured us it was in the capital works program for the 2015–16 financial year. I ask the minister to investigate this issue and ensure that action is taken to upgrade this intersection.

Coburg North Primary School

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) — I appreciate the opportunity to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education. The action I seek is that the minister meet with the principal of Coburg North Primary School and representatives from the community to discuss the ever-increasing demand for places at the school and to consider sustainable solutions to accommodate growth. The need for this discussion has arisen as a result of the unforeseen and unprecedented growth in enrolments that is occurring at Coburg North Primary School. Since 2007 the school's student population has increased by a staggering 147 per cent. In addition, the school council forecasts that the rapid surge in enrolments will continue well into the future as the population of the school's neighbouring suburbs is projected to rise.

The growth in the student population over recent years has placed increasing strain on Coburg North Primary School's facilities. To date the school has accommodated the increase in enrolment numbers by arranging for three double portable classrooms to be placed on the site. However, the continued placement of portable classrooms to meet the demand is not a feasible solution in the long term as further portable classrooms will encroach on the students' valuable outdoor space — namely, the school oval and the playground.

Coburg North primary is a vibrant school with an active and dedicated parent community that is consistently implementing innovative ideas and generating funds to upgrade the school's facilities. A great example of this has been the school's decision to allow the Coburg farmers market to operate from the premises. This beneficial collaboration raises much-needed revenue, which has allowed for improvements to the school kitchen and playground.

It has been pleasing to see that the students have also been included in the process of planning for the future needs of the school. Recently some students were assigned the task of creating designs for the school's future layout. They took to this task with great gusto and enthusiasm, and it is wonderful to see that the school is cultivating such creative and imaginative minds. This was evidenced by one design that included a swimming pool. Although admittedly ambitious at this stage, it is nevertheless a worthy dream for the future.

The school was forgotten by the coalition government in the previous four years. It would be greatly appreciated if the Minister for Education could tour this school and meet with the wonderful Coburg North Primary School community, to hear their ideas and to discuss sustainable and enduring solutions to address the rapid increase in student enrolments at Coburg North.

Wonthaggi education precinct

Mr PAYNTER (Bass) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education. I ask that the minister commit funds to build the new education precinct at Wonthaggi in the upcoming budget. During the 2014 election campaign the coalition government committed $21 million for the new education precinct, which would be the home of Wonthaggi Secondary College. In 2010 the school was included in cycle 5, stage 2 of the Building Futures program under the then Labor government, with a physical presentation to take place a week after the election. With the change of government, the meeting did not proceed — hence the renewed commitment by the coalition in November 2014. You can understand the school's frustration when a further change in government again put the project in jeopardy.

The development of the education precinct is not just about the construction of modern buildings to match the quality of education that is currently provided at the school. It is about lifting the hopes and aspirations of current and future students and those seeking post-compulsory education in the region. The new precinct will have the potential to house not only the new secondary school but also a university and TAFE, providing a level of education not previously available in the area. Currently attendance and retention rates are well below the state average and university entrance rates are less than half the level that should be expected.

The new education precinct will address all of these issues. The Shire of Bass Coast stated:

> Our vision is to co-locate a number of education services and facilities to a common site and with our partners on board to help with the planning I'm sure we can make this vision a reality.

The Department of Education and Training said:

> The Bass Coast community is in the enviable position of having a fantastic opportunity at their disposal.

I am asking the Minister for Education to deliver on the Labor government's election promise to make Victoria the education state, starting with an immediate commitment to commence the Wonthaggi education precinct. I invite the minister to visit the existing school site with me to meet with the principal of Wonthaggi Secondary School, Mr Garry Dennis, and his team. I thank the Minister for Education for agreeing to meet with me tomorrow to discuss this very important issue.

Southland railway station

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Public Transport and concerns the planned Southland railway station. The action I seek is for the minister to ensure that community consultation begins on the draft design. It is fair to say that Southland station has a long history. Since the Southland shopping centre was constructed in the late 1960s the community and indeed the owners of the shopping centre have been talking about one day having a new train station at Southland, given that the shopping centre is located right on the Frankston line. After the former Brumby Labor government committed to build the station in 2010, the Baillieu opposition announced that it would build a premium station for $13 million. This promise turned out to be undercosted by more than $30 million, and like many other things, Southland station fell victim to the inertia that the Baillieu and Napthine governments were famous for.

The former member for Bentleigh, who in 2010 promised a premium station with all of the bells and whistles one would expect with such a station, ended up very late in the term of the previous government announcing, in her words, a 'no frills' station. What was announced was a station without the usual amenities that the community would expect of a new station — not even toilets. Community members I have spoken to say that it is not a big ask for a new station at a major hub of activity like Southland shopping centre to include toilets. While the former government dithered on building the station, the Andrews government will get on with the job and build it.

I know as much as anyone just how important it is that Southland shopping centre has its own station. I worked at Southland for a number of years while I was at

university and remember taking the train from university in the city to get to work at Southland. My train would just zip by Southland and drop me off at Cheltenham station. The building of the station will make life easier for many people, including the thousands of young workers at Southland. Southland station will service a major hub for business, employment and consumers. It will improve access to public transport for the community and provide an alternative to Highett and Cheltenham stations. It will be one of the busiest stations on the Frankston line with an estimated 4400 passengers each day, many of whom currently travel by car on the already congested Nepean Highway.

Consultation on the draft design needs to begin, given the plans to commence construction later this year. We need to obtain feedback from local residents and key stakeholders on the design and I ask that — —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member's time has expired.

Responses

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — The members for Oakleigh, Thomastown, Pascoe Vale and Bass all raised matters regarding their local schools, and I thank them for raising those matters with me tonight. To begin with, I thank the member for Oakleigh for being such a great advocate for his community, especially in education. In the five inaugural speeches today and in previous inaugural speeches we have heard about the value members on this side of the house collectively place on education, and our commitment to our local schools is fantastic to witness.

As the member for Oakleigh outlined in his contribution, Labor made a commitment of $9.5 million to build a new library and art, science, sport and technology classrooms to ensure that the students of Glen Eira College get the world-class school they deserve. I want to take this opportunity to reconfirm that commitment. We are committed to delivering in full on all of the promises we made in the lead-up to the last election. Furthermore, we would be very pleased to go back to the school, along with not only the member for Oakleigh but also with the member for Bentleigh and Philip Dalidakis, a member for Southern Metropolitan Region in the Council. This is a fantastic school which is delivering great outcomes, and I look forward to delivering for Glen Eira College on the important commitment we have made.

I also want to thank the member for Thomastown for raising not only the important project at William Ruthven Secondary College but also the needs of many other schools in her electorate, including Thomastown West Primary School and Lalor Gardens Primary School. I remember going to Lalor Gardens Primary School and seeing the work site. The poor kids were in their beautiful brand-new facilities but they had to get to their classrooms by walking over planks or wearing gumboots because there were not enough funds to complete that important project at the school.

William Ruthven Secondary College is close to my heart, not only because of a visit I made with the member for Thomastown but also because of a very special occasion here at Queen's Hall, when we had a wonderful presentation, a celebration of the educational opportunities at William Ruthven. The member for Thomastown and I took the opportunity at that event to commit Labor to delivering $10 million for a new year 7–9 building, a year 10–12 building and administration facilities at the college. This is a very important project for our community. The college is one of the schools I highlighted in my time as shadow Minister for Education as an example of the neglect of the former government. We have to get in and repair that damage, and I look forward to doing that. I also look forward very much to visiting the schools in the electorate of the member for Thomastown. Going back to those schools would be a great opportunity.

I thank the member for Pascoe Vale for her hard work in her community and thank her again for her focus on education in her electorate. I enjoyed engaging with the Westbreen Primary School community with the new member for Pascoe Vale and the former member for Pascoe Vale, and I note the commitment we made to that great school community. I thank the member for raising with me the issue of the needs at Coburg North Primary School. It sounds as if the school community at Coburg North is dedicated to ensuring that the students get the best outcomes and the infrastructure they need. Years of neglect mean our government schools are bursting at the seams, and we will be working hard to rectify this. I would be delighted to visit the school with the member for Pascoe Vale and see firsthand the dedication of the principal, the teachers and the school community.

Finally, the member for Bass raised with me the needs of the Wonthaggi community, and specifically the education precinct proposal, which includes a new secondary school — a $21 million project. I do not want to spend too much time talking about the past, but when we talk about education capital, we need to spend a moment clarifying the issue. My response is similar to the comments I made to the member for Benambra during the last adjournment debate. This is not a

criticism of the current member for Bass. The member for Bass talked about Wonthaggi Secondary College being part of the Building Futures program in 2010 and about having a hard look at the education needs of the students and the needs of the community and working on what that means in terms of capital improvement.

Here we are in 2015, so a question has to be asked about the four-year period between 2010 and 2014. The current member for Bass should speak to the former member for Bass, a former Speaker, and ask him what happened to the needs of Wonthaggi following the 2010 election. If the former member for Bass is honest, he will inform the current member that the capital programs in the 2011–12, 2012–13 and 2013–14 budgets were cut by more than half. The capital program dived from an average of $467 million per year to just over $200 million per year. That meant many school communities that had done the hard work in 2009 and 2010 to deliver on the needs of those school communities found that their work was put on the shelf. The needs of Wonthaggi were put on the shelf for four years. I acknowledge a commitment was made in the lead-up to the election, but there was a four-year period when nothing happened, and that is because the former Liberal government cut the capital program in half.

I am with the new member for Bass: we need to think about the future and what we are going to do. I note the comments from the Bass Coast Shire Council about the benefits of co-locating facilities, whether they are educational facilities or other services such as maternal and child health services and other council services. Co-location provides great opportunities when we talk about a major redevelopment of a precinct. I am more than happy to discuss these issues further with the member for Bass, and we will be catching up tomorrow. I am happy to visit the school and engage with the school community about its needs into the future.

Mr NOONAN (Minister for Police) — I thank the member for Polwarth for raising a matter with me. I appreciate feedback from members, regardless of where they sit in this place, about matters concerning Victoria Police, and in particular community safety aspects in their electorates. The member for Polwarth raised with me the prospect of rebuilding the Colac police station, and in doing that he acknowledged it was not an election commitment made by Labor. In fact Labor did make a commitment to build a police station in the rapidly growing Mernda-Doreen area, and it committed $15 million.

Ms Green — Hear, hear!

Mr NOONAN — I note the presence of the member for Yan Yean in the chamber and her enthusiasm for that project. That is an important project and it sits very firmly within Labor's election commitments. It is a matter of priority not just for the member for Yan Yean but for the government. As such, that is where Labor's priorities will be in terms of capital funding for police stations. It would be of value to the member for Polwarth and to police in his area to understand another commitment Labor made in the lead-up to the election last year, which I think will have a significant impact on police safety, and that is a commitment to move the police radio network from an analogue to a digital network. I note that the former Minister for Police and Emergency Services, now the member for Rowville, is in the chamber. He would appreciate the importance of that project for police generally, and based on the feedback I have had from police in country Victoria I am sure that that commitment will be well received when Labor implements it as part of its election commitments.

There are 329 police stations across the state, and they play a significant role in the work done by police. There has been some commentary about the future of police stations, so I am pleased to place on the record that Labor has a clear commitment not to see any of those stations forcibly closed. That is important. That being said, we do not have a commitment to build a police station in Colac, but I am happy to receive feedback from Victoria Police and the department about their future priorities for station upgrades, and within that context, that will include Colac. I provide that advice to the member for Polwarth, and no doubt he will pass it on to those hardworking men and women based in Colac and within that police service area. I thank him for raising that matter with me this evening.

Ms RICHARDSON (Minister for Women) — I will refer the remaining matters to the relevant ministers and they will respond accordingly.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The house is now adjourned until 9.30 a.m. tomorrow.

House adjourned 7.37 p.m.

Wednesday, 25 February 2015

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

RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

Constituency questions

The SPEAKER — Order! I wish to make a ruling regarding constituency questions. As members are aware, yesterday was the first time the house dealt with constituency questions under sessional orders. I have reviewed the transcript of the questions and wish to make some observations in order to guide members in asking constituency questions today.

There are general guidelines for questions set out in chapter 22 of *Rulings from the Chair* applying to questions on notice and questions without notice. These apply equally to constituency questions. Members should remember that the primary objective of a question is to seek information relating to government administration. In the case of constituency questions, they also need to be capable of being responded to meaningfully in writing, given that the responses are to be published in *Hansard* and the questions database.

A constituency question, therefore, is not an opportunity to ask for action, which is the purpose of the adjournment debate. I remind all members that their constituency questions must seek information and not ask for an action or an opinion or seek solutions to hypothetical situations.

Speaking time

The SPEAKER — I draw the attention of the house to standing order 131, which provides additional speaking time for the lead speaker of any other party. This provision was adopted by the house in 2004 following a recommendation from the Standing Orders Committee. In accordance with this provision, the lead speaker from the Greens party will be entitled to speak for up to 20 minutes on the second-reading motion of normal bills and up to 1 hour on appropriation bills.

I would like to remind members that today is Teal Ribbon Day. The Minister for Health is co-hosting an event with Ovarian Council Australia at 10.00 a.m. in the Parliament House gardens to raise awareness of the disease and support those affected by it.

DOCUMENTS

Tabled by Clerk:

Auditor-General:

Efficiency and Effectiveness of Hospital Services: High-value Equipment — Ordered to be published

Public Hospitals: Results of the 2013–14 Audits — Ordered to be published

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency — Report 2013–14

Legal Profession Act 2004 — Practitioner Remuneration Order under s 3.4.24

Ombudsman — Councils and complaints — A report on current practice and issues and A good practice guide — Ordered to be published

Statutory Rule under the *Road Safety Act 1986* — SR 9

Surveillance Devices Act 1999 — Report of the Victorian Inspectorate under s 30Q.

The following proclamations fixing operative dates were tabled by the Clerk in accordance with an order of the house dated 24 February 2015:

Assisted Reproductive Treatment Further Amendment Act 2014 — Part 1, Part 2 (except ss 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21 and 22) and Part 3 — 30 October 2014 *(Gazette S400, 29 October 2014)*

Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Permanent Care and Other Matters) Act 2014 — Part 6 and Part 7 (except Division 3 and s 151) — 21 January 2015 *(Gazette S10, 20 January 2015)*

Courts Legislation Miscellaneous Amendments Act 2014 — Division 2 of Part 3 — 15 October 2014; Parts 2, 4 (except ss 68, 69(2), 70, 71 and 73) and 6 — 10 November 2014; Part 5 — 1 April 2015 *(Gazette S364, 14 October 2014)*; ss 68, 69(2), 70 and 71 — 1 January 2015 *(Gazette S376, 21 October 2014)*

Crime Statistics Act 2014 — Whole Act (other than Division 3 of Part 4) — 1 January 2015 *(Gazette S364, 14 October 2014)*

Crimes Amendment (Sexual Offences and Other Matters) Act 2014 — Sections 8 and 9, Part 6 and Divisions 1 and 8 of Part 7 — 3 November 2014 *(Gazette S400, 29 October 2014)*

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Further Amendment Act 2014 — Whole Act — 30 October 2014 *(Gazette S400, 29 October 2014)*

Family Violence Protection Amendment Act 2014 — Whole Act (except ss 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 21) — 2 November 2014 *(Gazette S400, 29 October 2014)*

Gambling and Liquor Further Amendment Act 2014 — Sections 4, 6, 7, 9, 13, 14, 22, 23, 24, 32, 34, 37, 38, 39, 40, 43, 44, 45 and 46 and Part 4 — 15 October 2014 *(Gazette S364, 14 October 2014)*

Gambling and Liquor Legislation Amendment (Modernisation) Act 2014 — Part 1, ss 53, 54 and Part 3 — 15 October 2014 *(Gazette S364, 14 October 2014)*

Inquiries Act 2014 — Whole Act (except s 148) — 15 October 2014 *(Gazette S364, 14 October 2014)*

Justice Legislation Amendment (Confiscation and Other Matters) Act 2014 — Divisions 1 and 3 of Part 2 and Parts 6, 8 and 9 (other than s 60) — 2 November 2014 *(Gazette S400, 29 October 2014)*

Justice Legislation Amendment (Succession and Surrogacy) Act 2014 — Parts 1 and 6 — 30 October 2014; remaining provisions — 1 January 2015 *(Gazette S400, 29 October 2014)*

Road Legislation Amendment Act 2013 — Sections 10, 12, 18(1) and (2) and 19 — 1 November 2014; s 13 — 1 March 2015 *(Gazette S400, 29 October 2014)*

Wills Amendment (International Wills) Act 2012 — Whole Act — 10 March 2015 *(Gazette S376, 21 October 2014).*

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Country Fire Authority Fiskville facility

Mr WELLS (Rowville) — This statement is in response to the ill-informed and inaccurate comments made during question time on 12 February by the Minister for Emergency Services in relation to the Fiskville Country Fire Authority (CFA) training facility. The minister alleged that the previous coalition government had done nothing in relation to concerns about contamination at Fiskville. These comments are simply untrue. The coalition ensured that a comprehensive process of review and action was undertaken by the CFA and across the whole of government to address the issues at Fiskville, which is in stark contrast to the complete lack of action and interest shown by Labor in its previous 11 years in government. It took a coalition government to investigate and take action.

In December 2011 the CFA commissioned Professor Robert Joy to conduct an inquiry into past hot fire training practices and the potential for contamination at Fiskville. Support services were also immediately established for anyone who believed they may have been affected by historical practices. In June 2012 the CFA, as a precaution, switched to town mains water for practical firefighting training. In June 2012 the Joy report was delivered. In July 2012 the CFA accepted all 10 of Professor Joy's recommendations and committed to 11 additional management initiatives. In addition, Cardno Lane Piper commenced implementation of all the recommendations.

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

Homelessness funding

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing) — The issue of the federal government's failure to commit to the national partnership agreement on homelessness (NPAH) is a matter of some concern. Members will recall that this house has been advised that I raised with the Honourable Scott Morrison, the federal Minister for Social Services, his failure to respond to the state's reasonable claim that he match the three-year commitment that the Victorian government has made to continue the national partnership. It is with some pleasure that I can inform the house that the Honourable Scott Morrison has now responded, but in a cryptic manner. In recent correspondence to me he said:

> I understand the need for certainty for the homelessness sector beyond the expiration of the NPAH on 30 June …

He went on to say that the white paper on the reform of federation process is the primary vehicle through which the federal government will be considering homelessness in the longer term.

I point out that this arrangement is several months overdue, and there is a need to commit to the national partnership. The federal government will be aware it has committed to no increase in the GST and that any changes to the NPAH should occur beyond 2017. We hope this is still the case.

Croydon electorate roads

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) — I rise to draw two very important matters in my electorate to the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Local roads and traffic safety have always been high priorities for residents in my electorate of Croydon. Two intersections require urgent upgrades. Recently singled out in the 2014 RACV Redspot survey, and identified as longstanding traffic nightmares, were the intersection of Maroondah Highway and Oban Road, Ringwood, and the intersection of Dorset Road, Maroondah Highway and Bellara Drive, Croydon. The intersection of Maroondah Highway and Oban Road experiences significant levels of congestion during peak periods due to very high volumes of traffic on Maroondah Highway. It was ranked no. 1 in 2012 on the Redspot survey for the city of Maroondah. During the morning and afternoon peak periods traffic builds up and extends for over a kilometre, significantly delaying motorists waiting to turn into Oban Road. The traffic congestion at this intersection cascades out to other local roads as motorists have difficulty trying to enter this intersection from any direction.

An enormous headache for local residents is the intersection of Dorset Road, Maroondah Highway and Bellara Drive, Croydon, which you could say is two intersections operating as one. It has a very complex configuration and consists of Maroondah Highway, Dorset Road and Exeter Road acting as one intersection and Dorset Road and Bellara Drive as the other. There is a high number of movements at this intersection at any time of the day, and with limited signal time this intersection also sees traffic queuing for up to 1 kilometre during peak periods, causing extreme frustration to local residents and motorists. I regularly travel through both of these intersections and experience firsthand what local residents face on a daily basis. I call on the government to prioritise both these intersections for upgrades to ease traffic congestion and improve safety.

Lunar New Year

Mr SCOTT (Minister for Finance) — The Lunar New Year was on 19 February this year. It is a particularly important celebration, which I am sure members across the chamber participated in with Chinese and Vietnamese communities and other growing communities, such as the Korean community in Victoria. With the indulgence of the Speaker I will say a few words in Mandarin:

議長好。

我是多元文化部長。

過年了，祝議長

新年快樂、恭喜發財、身體健康、萬事如意。

It is also an important celebration for the Vietnamese community, who celebrate it as the Tet festival. I was lucky enough to attend a celebration at Sandown Racecourse organised by the Vietnamese Community in Australia, Victorian chapter. A particularly important and impressive program is the Vietnamese Dual Identity Leadership Program, which supports young leaders in the Vietnamese community.

The Victorian government is proud to support this program with $100 000 in funding over two years. The Vietnamese community is also dedicated to remembering the great sacrifices and triumphs of the Vietnamese community, which I am sure are an inspiration to members of this house, considering the very difficult circumstances of their migration and settlement. The Victorian government is also committed to providing $100 000 in funding for a feasibility study for the first stage of the Victorian community museum. The Vietnamese and Chinese communities in Victoria, and other communities who celebrate the Lunar New Year, are an integral part of the rich multicultural society we live in.

Echuca and Swan Hill events

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — I would like to encourage members on both sides of the chamber to consider a trip to northern Victoria to visit any of the great calendar events that are happening up there in the autumn season. Two weekends ago I had the opportunity to visit the Riverboats Music Festival in Echuca. It was a fantastic event, with Greg Champion from the Coodabeens as the master of ceremonies. It attracted a huge crowd. I encourage people who want to come north for the long weekend to come to the Swan Hill Region Food and Wine Festival. It will be a great weekend not only for enjoying the hospitality of Swan Hill but also for enjoying the fine wines and foods of that area.

I congratulate the Echuca and Swan Hill communities and their associated local councils for the events calendar they have put together. The two cities thrive on and survive by having people from outside come to visit. I assure people that once they cross the north of the divide they will find the weather is always better and they will enjoy a good time up there, with the hospitality of the locals. I ask those members of Parliament from Melbourne to think about coming to northern Victoria sometime in the next few weeks and to think about coming to Swan Hill in particular over the long weekend for the food and wine festival. They can have a ride on the PS *Pyap* paddle-steamer, particularly on the Friday night, when the welcome function will be held on the paddle-steamer with a jazz band. I ask members to come north to enjoy a great part of Victoria.

Diggers Rest Primary School

Mr J. BULL (Sunbury) — On Wednesday, 17 December 2014, I had the great pleasure of attending carols by candlelight at Diggers Rest Primary School. It was not the first time I had been to the Diggers Rest carols, as many years ago I attended as a child when my mum, Lesley, worked at the school as an integration aide. The event was extremely well attended, and despite the unseasonal chilly December weather everyone was in fine spirits and had their best singing voices on.

The current enrolment at Diggers Rest Primary School is around 90 students, which makes it a relatively small school for the area. But the talent pool at Diggers Rest Primary School was certainly not small that night, with

carols sung by students from prep all the way up to grade 6. The performances were outstanding. It was great to see the look on the faces of parents and friends as students belted out the carols and celebrated what had been a great year of work at Diggers Rest Primary School.

I would like to thank all the staff, the parents and especially the students for having me along to the carols. I congratulate them on their wonderful effort. The motto of Diggers Rest Primary School is 'Where individuals matter', and it is clear that the staff and the school leadership worked very hard to encourage students to do their best. I particularly acknowledge the school principal, Rachelle Hedger, for all her work at the school and within the small but very close-knit community of Diggers Rest. Well done, Diggers Rest Primary School. I look forward to visiting you again soon.

Brighter Days Festival

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) — I am pleased to support the Brighter Days Festival, which will be held in Bright on the Labour Day long weekend to raise funds for two children's charities. Bright resident Jason Reid and others do a great job running this event for car, bike and music lovers, which raises money for the Dystrophic Epidermolysis Bullosa Research Association Australia and the Sudden Unexplained Death in Childhood Foundation. To support the cause I will be riding a Harley-Davidson to Bright to attend the start of the festival on Friday, 6 March, departing from Yarrawonga on a day ride. I encourage motorbike and custom car enthusiasts to join me. The Brighter Days Foundation has raised more than $200 000 through donations, auctions and events.

Shirley Wilson

Mr McCURDY — Congratulations to Shirley Wilson, who received Hamilton Park's Local Achiever of the Year award as part of local Australia Day celebrations. Shirley and her husband, Mike, will leave Hamilton Park next month for Geelong after almost 40 years as residents there. Shirley and Mike were instrumental in starting the Hamilton Park Social Club in the 1980s, which has put on some fabulous community events over the years. The Wilsons have supported countless community activities, the Glenrowan Football and Netball Club and Meals on Wheels during their time at Hamilton Park.

Anzac centenary

Mr McCURDY — I am honoured to be attending the Anzac Centenary — Victoria's Journey of Remembrance program at Wangaratta High School on Friday as part of the Anzac centenary commemorations. The Victoria's Journey of Remembrance program encourages and supports Victorians across the state to learn more about World War I history, research their own personal connections and work within their local communities to commemorate the Anzac centenary. I am sure that school students will get a lot out of the program and that it will encourage further research into World War I and involvement in Anzac centenary commemorations.

Fuel prices

Mr McCURDY — I requested the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to include Wangaratta and its surrounds in the investigation into the increasing variance in country and city fuel prices. I will continue to take action to address these circumstances.

Broadmeadows electorate infrastructure

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) — A GP super-clinic and a sports and aquatic centre have been opened in Broadmeadows following funding from the Victorian and Australian Labor governments.

Decades ago families in Broadmeadows raised millions of dollars for a local hospital. Instead of building the hospital in one of the state's highest growth areas and an area of greatest health need, the then Victorian Liberal government built it in the then marginal seat of Essendon. This triumph of politics over rational decision-making led to the hospital being known as the *Yes Minister* hospital, because when it was opened the plastic was still wrapped around the equipment but there were no patients.

The money raised by the Broadmeadows community went to Dianella Community Health, and I am delighted that extra funding from the former Australian Labor government has resulted in the GP super-clinic, which I had the privilege of opening in Broadmeadows with the federal member for Calwell, Maria Vamvakinou.

The Broadmeadows Aquatic and Leisure Centre was similarly funded by Victorian Labor and the City of Hume. I had the privilege of opening it on behalf of the Minister for Planning, and I thank him for his long-running support of the Broadmeadows

community, stretching back to his landmark vision for social, community and private housing. The infrastructure is vital, but so are education and skills for jobs to help build this community. I look forward to working with the Treasurer on Labor's *Back to Work* plan and other projects for economic development. I have also called on the Australian government to become a partner in this whole-of-community approach to try to resolve these issues.

Graffiti

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) — Recently it was brought to my attention by a constituent that a graffiti mural existed along the vibrant retail strip in Carlisle Street, Balaclava. This uncommissioned mural depicted a demon smoking ice and getting rich, raising concerns for many locals and questions over the appropriateness of such a message. I am all for freedom of expression. However, given Victoria is facing an ice epidemic we must do all we can to combat the glorification of this drug, which ruins thousands of lives. I want to commend Mark Lewis from Golds retail outlet and a number of other shop owners who approached me to see what we could do to remove this mural. I also congratulate the City of Port Phillip, which has now agreed to take this mural down.

I would also like to congratulate Igor Vainer of Vainer Optical who has put in a positive mural around his shop, using the work of students from Caulfield Park Community School to create a graffiti mural at the back of his store with the fitting theme of eyes. I believe Mr Vainer's idea is a great model going forward and could be adopted by many local councils which are looking for ways to encourage creativity while stopping tagging and vandalism.

Australian Jewish News

Mr SOUTHWICK — I would like to congratulate *Australian Jewish News* on its 120th birthday celebration, and I would particularly like to thank the Magid family for their great work. Zeddy Lawrence is the editor. Congratulations to the team at the newspaper for providing an important news outlet for the Melbourne Jewish community.

C Care

Mr SOUTHWICK — I was pleased to join my friend and colleague in the other place, Margaret Fitzherbert, a member for Southern Metropolitan Region, on Sunday, 15 February, at C Care for a great cook-off for the needy.

Child and Family Services Ballarat

Mr HOWARD (Buninyong) — Child and Family Services Ballarat, known as CAFS, is a community service organisation based in Ballarat. It provides a range of programs and services to children, young people and families who are vulnerable or in need of support. This year it celebrates 150 years since it first began, and I was pleased to join many CAFS staff, volunteers and clients at a celebration last week. CAFS dates back to 1865, when its founders established the Ballarat Orphanage. After the closure of the orphanage it became the Ballarat Children's Home and more recently took its current name. Today CAFS provides programs and services which not only support children and young people but also support families, men and communities. These programs and services cover a wide range of family and early childhood services, family counselling, out-of-home care and support services, foster care, homelessness assistance, family violence intervention and men's behavioural changes programs.

The goal of CAFS is to give every individual the optimal opportunity to live in a safe and nurturing family. CAFS now has more than 185 staff and 200 volunteers in offices in Ballarat, Ararat, Bacchus Marsh and Daylesford and provides help and support to more than 5000 individuals and families each year across the Victorian Central Highlands region. I commend CEO Allan Joy and board chair Shane Strachan, along with all staff and board members present and past and the many volunteers who have supported so many young people and families across our region.

Central Reserve, Colac

Mr MULDER (Polwarth) — The matter I wish to raise concerns the redevelopment of Central Reserve in Colac. The Colac district has produced many successful sportspeople over the years, including AFL premiership captain Luke Hodge and, more recently, Aaron Finch, who made a century for Australia in the first game of the current Cricket World Cup. The Colac Otway Shire Council is undertaking the redevelopment of Central Reserve in order to provide the people of Colac with a premium sporting venue which reflects this success and which will inspire others to follow in their footsteps. The council is currently refining its designs and calling for tenders for the project.

The federal government has shown its support of this vision and has committed $2.5 million to kickstart the project. Further funding will be required to bring the project to fruition, and the coalition government had

committed funding to the project. I call on the Minister for Sport to work with the Colac Otway Shire Council and to support it in providing a premier sporting venue for the people of Colac and the surrounding district.

Victorian Rural Health Awards

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — Last Friday I had the pleasure of representing the Minister for Health at the 10th annual Victorian Rural Health Awards held at the magnificent Bendigo Art Gallery. It was a great pleasure to present 55 awards to men and women working as doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, practice managers and Aboriginal health workers across rural and regional Victoria. Congratulations to the Rural Workforce Agency of Victoria for presenting these awards.

There is no question that working in a rural setting is different in many ways from working in a metropolitan area. For starters, the opportunities to connect with patients as real people, through shared involvement in sport, school and community groups, even bumping into one another at the supermarket, mean that regional and rural health practitioners have great insight into their patients and the health needs of their communities. In return, health practitioners in regional Victoria are highly respected and admired in the communities they serve.

There are obviously many challenges too. The number of ways you can be injured by farm animals are too numerous to mention, but they include being kicked, rammed, bitten or infected with giardia or ringworm, and of course the work can be long and arduous.

Of special significance were the awards recognising length of service. Today I would like to acknowledge the fantastic contribution of three GPs, who between them have served the people of Macedon for an awe-inspiring 106 years. Dr Christopher Priest of Kyneton has served our community for 39 years and is still going strong; Dr Rodney Guy of Gisborne Medical Centre is celebrating 36 years of service; and Dr David Conron, who attended to the medical needs of the people of Gisborne for 41 years, is now working part-time in Winchelsea and this year celebrates 50 years of general practice.

East–west link

Ms RYALL (Ringwood) — The anger in my local community towards the stop work order applied by the Premier to the east–west link and his determination to cancel that project is palpable. It makes no difference where I am — be it shops, sporting clubs or community events — locals feel compelled to voice their disgust at the rug of hope being pulled out from under their feet and their despair at the job opportunities that will fall by the wayside and the prospect of no future work to sustain them and their families. Businesses, tradies and independent contractors feel outright anger when they regard a future of being weighed down by further loss of productivity on top of what they already deal with — the missing link to the west and north-west.

The Andrews government can try to fill the media with the appearance of activity in other areas, spending mega-millions on new bureaucracies to make it look like it is doing something, but this issue will not go away for my electorate of Ringwood. The output of business is what determines our standard of living. The sooner the Premier and his government start to understand this, the sooner they will start doing things to make it easier for existing businesses, tradies and others to do business and for entrepreneurs to consider start-ups that will flourish — because businesses will have the opportunity to move freely around this state. It is not an either/or; it is not public transport or roads; it is both.

Education funding

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) — The Victorian Auditor-General's report *Additional School Costs for Families* demonstrates the level of neglect of our schools by the former government and how little the coalition values public education. Parent payments skyrocketed under the former government in the wake of mass cuts to our schools. In the same period of time, during which those opposite ripped out $1 billion from education, parent payments increased by nearly 30 per cent.

McKinnon Secondary College in my electorate already has to raise more than $400 000 to deliver a quality education to students, and the coalition's abolition of the education maintenance allowance (EMA) has now added an additional burden. A total of 203 McKinnon Secondary students in 2013 and 176 in 2014 accessed the EMA. These numbers are far greater in areas of Melbourne with significantly more disadvantage than McKinnon, but the former government decided to put these costs back on the schools. The EMA funded items essential to a quality education, but it was also about making sure that students felt that they fitted in.

As the report states:

> Welfare agencies have in recent years publicly expressed concerns about the effect of exclusion on a child's wellbeing — reporting that such exclusion can lead to low

self-esteem, behavioural issues, refusal to attend school and poor academic performance.

While the coalition has slashed and burnt, I am proud that the Andrews government will provide funding so that struggling families will have access to school uniforms, camps and excursions, and breakfast clubs, as well as eye testing and glasses.

Australia Day

Mr T. SMITH (Kew) — I am a firm believer that Australia Day is a day when we can come together as a community and celebrate what makes us a great nation. Like all postcolonial societies we have, in certain circumstances, treated our Indigenous people shamefully, but this does not diminish the great story that is Australia.

I am appalled that any member of this house would think to diminish our role as community leaders by cynically attending the Invasion Day rally held in the CBD on 26 January. This rally only seeks to promote division and discord in our society. However, I am not shocked that the Greens member for Melbourne would attend such an event. Preachers of hate and division, such as those who promote Invasion Day, do not advance the cause of reconciliation — quite the opposite.

The fact that the member for Melbourne thinks it is acceptable to attend such an event demonstrates that the Greens are committed to divisive identity politics and do not serve Australia's national interest. I say this to the member for Melbourne and all members of the Greens: you are now elected members of Parliament — no longer, one would hope, some university Trot. Please try to remember this.

Ken Lay

Mr NOONAN (Minister for Police) — I rise to acknowledge the outstanding contribution of Victoria's 21st Chief Commissioner of Police, Ken Lay, who retired on 31 January after a stellar 41-year career at Victoria Police. Referred to by media figures as 'Whispering Ken', his quiet style often masked his sharp focus and determined leadership. He was appointed to the top job three years ago at a time of great challenge for Victoria Police, and he quickly set a course to stabilise his organisation before outlining plans to adapt Victoria Police's operating model to fight modern-day crime.

Ken's willingness to place himself at the centre of our community's quest to prevent family violence and violence against women will be his most enduring legacy. He called men to account for inappropriate behaviour towards women, and his advocacy led to Labor's commitment to establish Australia's first Royal Commission into Family Violence. His leadership has also seen substantial improvements in how Victoria Police responds to the challenge of family violence. Ken's sense of decency and humanity were most evident in his response to the tragic death of Luke Batty and his unwavering support for Luke's mother, Rosie Batty.

He has done much and achieved much. We are better for his service and poorer for his departure. I thank him for his personal support. He leaves Victoria Police in very good shape. I am sure I speak on behalf of all members in this house in wishing him, Christine and all his family the very best for his future.

Tolmie Sports Day

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) — I was delighted to be part of the opening of the l29th Tolmie Sports Day on Valentine's Day. Nestled in the high country about half an hour north-east of Mansfield, Tolmie puts on an annual sports day that needs to be experienced. It offers the best of country sports and has a remarkable history. Tolmie certainly sticks to the traditions. Some events such as the woodchop and particular equestrian events have been part of the program every year for 129 years. Other events have undergone some modification but remain fairly loyal to their origins. Events such as egg tossing, gumboot throwing, sheaf tossing, crosscut saw and sack racing provide a great day's entertainment. I got to judge the Miss Junior Tolmie Sports and Tolmie Sports Tiny Tot categories; that was the only stress in what was a wonderful day out.

I was most impressed by the level of community support. So many volunteers were on hand, helping out in so many different ways to ensure that the day was a success. The level of community sponsorship was also noteworthy. There are too many people to thank for their efforts, but I do want to mention the president, Meg Allan, and Cr Marg Attley.

Warburton Up and Running

Ms McLEISH — I actively participated in the 12th Warburton Up and Running event on Sunday, partaking in the 5-kilometre walk in perfect conditions in idyllic surrounds. The success of this community event was evident. There were 850 entrants, 150 up on last year, which was fabulous. The day was supported by the Warburton Advancement League, the members of which in its 60th year continue to do great things for the community. The community banks at Yarra Junction

and Warburton plus local businesses managed to put up $5000 in prize money. The Warburton Country Fire Authority and State Emergency Service are beneficiaries of this great day, and they would not have been disappointed.

Ivanhoe electorate

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) — I would like to comment on progress in relation to a range of election commitments in the Ivanhoe electorate. In particular, I note that the people of the Ivanhoe electorate voted Labor because they want to ban the trucks on Rosanna Road, which is a commitment that has been made by the Labor government. They voted Labor because they want to see the duplication of the Chandler Highway bridge, which was ignored by the previous government. They voted Labor for a 40-kilometre-per-hour speed zone in the East Ivanhoe shopping village. They voted Labor in the election because they want extra bus services on the 517 route through the black hole that is the Viewbank area when it comes to public transport. They voted Labor for extra La Trobe University bus services — another initiative and one that will be half funded by La Trobe University but that was ignored by the previous government.

The people in Ivanhoe voted Labor because they want three extra services at peak times on the Hurstbridge line. They voted Labor in Ivanhoe to scrap zones 1 and 2 in transport services and cut their transport bills. They voted Labor in Ivanhoe because they want grade separation at Rosanna station at Lower Plenty Road. They voted Labor for the $11.5 million commitment to Viewbank College. They voted Labor because despite the previous government promising more than $5 million for Rosanna Golf Links Primary School, one year after the budget in which a quarter of the funding was announced not one shovelful of dirt has been turned. Members of the previous government put the shovels away.

The people of Ivanhoe voted Labor to see action at Rosanna Primary School and St Martin of Tours Primary School and a new tech school for Banyule.

Mary Dundon

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) — I rise today to acknowledge the remarkable milestone celebrated by Mary Laura Dundon, a constituent in the Pascoe Vale electorate. On 19 February Mrs Dundon celebrated her 100th birthday in the company of 200 of her closest family and friends — in itself a warm and fitting acknowledgement of her extraordinary achievements. Mrs Dundon is the treasured mother of Cathy and the dear friend of Monica Gould, a former minister and a former President in the other place. Mrs Dundon was born and raised on a farm in the Western District of Victoria, an area renowned for its rich agricultural resources. From the early age of 10 Mrs Dundon assumed a great deal of responsibility, being charged with the task of looking after her three siblings and her invalid grandmother whilst her parents worked the land. Despite this she still managed to attend school on a regular basis. Her grandchildren continue to be enthralled to this day by her stories, especially as she recalls her days riding to and from school on a horse.

At the age of 22 Mrs Dundon married John Dundon, an event that she described as marking the start of her ‘good life’. Together they raised four wonderful children. Those who know Mrs Dundon attest to her altruistic nature and her kindness and empathy for those less fortunate than herself. In 1987 Mrs Dundon retired to her daughter’s house in Pascoe Vale and has kept herself busy and engaged through her active involvement in the local community. Nowadays Mrs Dundon spends her mornings pottering around the garden before retiring for a well-deserved nap in the afternoon. I congratulate Mrs Dundon on reaching this remarkable milestone and wish her all the best for the years ahead.

Swinburne University of Technology

Mr PESUTTO (Hawthorn) — Today I congratulate Swinburne University of Technology, which is in Hawthorn, on the launch of Victoria’s newest law school. I was very honoured to attend the launch at Swinburne University on Monday evening, and I want to place on the record — I think on behalf of everybody in this chamber — our congratulations to Chancellor Graham Goldsmith, Vice-chancellor Linda Kristjanson and law school dean Dan Hunter. I also want to place on the record recognition of the fine speech given by Her Honour the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, who spoke in large measure directly to the students, encouraging them not only to enjoy their studies but also to engage with the higher ethical questions. It was a very fascinating and insightful address.

I also place on the record the fine remarks extemporaneously given by His Honour Alan Goldberg, who, despite battling a severe health condition, gave a remarkable address that inspired everybody. The take-out from his remarks is that we can spend a lifetime building a reputation and in a moment of madness squander that fine reputation. It was a fine address. The Swinburne law school has around 70 students and will have a focus on commercialisation.

Teal Ribbon Day

Mr WATT (Burwood) — Today is Teal Ribbon Day, and I want to pay tribute to all those women who are affected by ovarian cancer. Speaking personally, I note that people in my life are affected by this disease, and I want to pay tribute to all those women who are going through a tough time. People can visit ovariancancer.net.au if they want more information.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING REFORM AMENDMENT (CHILD SAFE SCHOOLS) BILL 2015

Statement of compatibility

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) tabled following statement in accordance with Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006:

In accordance with section 28 of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (the charter act), I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Child Safe Schools) Bill 2015.

In my opinion, the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Child Safe Schools) Bill 2015 (the bill), as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with the human rights protected by the charter act. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview of bill

The bill proposes amendments to the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (ETR act) to add a minimum standard for registration of government and non-government schools about managing child safety and responding to allegations of child abuse within Victorian schools. The amendment is the first step to implementing the government's response to recommendations 12.1 and 16.1 of the report of the Family and Community Development Committee of the Parliament: *Betrayal of Trust — Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and other Non-Government Organisations* (*Betrayal of Trust* report).

Recommendation 16.1 of the *Betrayal of Trust* report recommended that the government review procedures for responding to allegations of criminal child abuse within Victorian schools and identify a benchmark to apply to non-government schools. Recommendation 12.1 of the *Betrayal of Trust* report recommended that government implement minimum standards for maintaining 'child-safe environments' for all organisations with direct and regular contact with children.

The bill will amend the ETR act to require registered schools to satisfy the schools regulator, the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (the VRQA), that they have taken actions, in accordance with a ministerial order, to manage the risk of child abuse, including responses to allegations of child abuse.

The bill would empower the minister to make a ministerial order to prescribe (in a manner consistent with the government's approach to implementing related *Betrayal of Trust* recommendations) the actions that schools are required to take to achieve a child-safe environment.

The bill also enhances the VRQA's powers to monitor and review school compliance with the minimum standards of registration, including the new standard concerning the protection of children from child abuse within schools. The VRQA's powers to collect and disclose information will be widened.

Human rights issues

Human rights protected by the charter that are relevant to the bill

The following charter act rights are relevant:

- the right to privacy and reputation, set out in section 13 of the charter act; and
- the right to protection of families and children, set out in section 17 of the charter act.

Are the relevant charter rights actually limited by the bill?

Privacy and reputation

Section 13 of the charter act is relevant to clause 12 of the bill. Section 13 of the charter provides that a person has the right not to have his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with.

Clause 12 of the bill would broaden the VRQA's ability to share information that it has obtained during the performance of its functions with a prescribed group of persons or bodies.

Currently the VRQA has limited information disclosure powers under section 4.9.4 of the ETR act concerning the kinds of information that can be shared, and the entities with which it can be shared. The VRQA may only disclose to the secretary of the department, a department of the commonwealth government or to another registering body, and only with respect to information about or arising from:

- the registration or approval of a person or body including the application for that registration or approval;
- a compliance audit conducted about a person or body;
- any action the VRQA takes in relation to a registered or approved person or body;
- the performance of a function or the exercise of a power by a person at the request of another registering body; and
- the breach of, or failure to comply with, a government training contract by a registered training organisation (which provides vocational education and training).

The bill proposes to extend the class of prescribed persons or bodies the VRQA is authorised to disclose information to under section 4.9.4 of the ETR act. The amended class includes the secretary of another department of the Victorian government, a public sector body, a municipal council, a registering body, a school registering body, a department of the commonwealth, state or territory government, and an agency of the commonwealth.

The bill also proposes a less prescriptive approach to identifying the circumstances in which the VRQA may disclose information. Instead, the bill will authorise the VRQA to disclose information to a prescribed person or body if that information relates to the recipient's performance of a function.

Most information the VRQA obtains relates to the registration of a school. However, the VRQA may also incidentally collect information of a personal nature. For instance, the VRQA may collect personal information about individual students, and school staff who work with those students.

The bill authorises the VRQA to disclose information about a school's registration to another Victorian government department (such as the Department of Health and Human Services), or a government agency or regulator in another jurisdiction where the school has interstate campuses or operations. The amendments also authorise the VRQA to disclose information about, for example, safety issues to the appropriate government entity, such as the Victorian WorkCover Authority. In any of these circumstances, the VRQA may disclose personal information.

I consider that such information disclosure is not unlawful, nor arbitrary. The proposed law authorises information sharing by the VRQA for purposes related to the functions and powers of the recipient. The sharing of such information is lawful. The sharing of information is not arbitrary since it is always connected to the performance of a lawful function. This sharing of information is necessary to ensure that regulatory bodies and government agencies are able to efficiently access necessary and relevant information.

In my opinion, the provisions are compatible with the right to privacy in section 13 of the charter act.

Protection of families and children

Section 17(2) of the charter act provides that every child has the right, without discrimination, to protection that is in his or her best interests and is needed by reason of being a child. Section 17(2) recognises that children are vulnerable because of their age and entitled to special protection.

Clause 5 of the bill creates a new condition of registration for all schools. The condition will be implemented through a regulatory framework that will require schools to take actions to manage the risks of child abuse, and to achieve a child-safe environment. The actions required of schools will be in accordance with a ministerial order made under the ETR act.

Actions that might be prescribed in the ministerial order include developing and implementing recruitment policies for school staff who work with children, revising procedures for responding to allegations of child abuse, or providing guidance or training to decision-makers and other school staff about managing the risk of child abuse. The intention is to improve the capabilities of schools to manage and mitigate the risk of child abuse and respond appropriately to allegations of child abuse. This is important since any abuse that occurs would infringe the rights of the child.

I consider the proposed framework for schools upholds and promotes the rights of children to be protected from abuse.

The Hon. James Merlino, MP
Minister for Education

Second reading

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Speech as follows incorporated into *Hansard* under sessional orders:

This bill proposes amendments to the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (ETR act) to enable the implementation in Victorian schools of the government's response to certain recommendations made by the Family and Community Development Committee (the committee) to the previous Parliament.

On 13 November 2013 the committee tabled in the other place its report entitled *Betrayal of Trust — Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and other Non-Government Organisations* (the *Betrayal of Trust* report). The committee made a number of findings and recommendations about monitoring organisations' responses to child abuse, and preventing child abuse occurring in organisations.

This bill will take the first steps toward implementing recommendations 12.1 and 16.1 of the *Betrayal of Trust* report in Victoria's schools.

Recommendation 12.1 of the *Betrayal of Trust* report recommended that the government implement minimum standards for maintaining 'child-safe environments' for all organisations with direct and regular contact with children. The government has a policy agenda regarding the development of minimum standards for a child-safe environment for organisations that work closely with children. This bill would give effect to that policy with respect to schools.

Recommendation 16.1 of the *Betrayal of Trust* report recommended that the government review the procedures used by Victorian government schools for reporting and responding to allegations of criminal child abuse, and identify a benchmark to apply to non-government schools.

While the government has further work to do to fully respond to recommendations 12.1 and 16.1 of the *Betrayal of Trust* report, and to implement in full the remaining recommendations in the *Betrayal of Trust* report, this bill will ensure that in future all Victorian schools are required to take action to better manage and reduce the risk of child abuse, including through their responses to allegations of child abuse. This bill will make this requirement one of the minimum standards for school registration.

This bill will establish a framework that empowers the Minister for Education to make a ministerial order under the ETR act that specifies the actions that schools must take to create a child-safe environment in order to meet the newly proposed minimum standard for school registration.

Although further deliberation and consultation with schools is needed before the particular content of the ministerial order can be determined, the government anticipates that the ministerial order may require schools to have in place appropriate recruitment and staff management policies, guidance for people occupying positions of trust, or complaint management and resolution procedures.

The bill also enhances the range of compliance and enforcement actions the schools' regulator — the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (the VRQA) — can take to uphold the minimum standards for registration, including the new minimum standard for managing the risk of child abuse in the schools context.

The ETR act provides that the VRQA must not register a school unless the school complies with the minimum standards for registration. The VRQA may suspend or cancel school registration if it finds after a review of operations that the school has failed to comply with a minimum standard for registration.

The bill grants the VRQA greater flexibility and discretion when conducting a review into a school's compliance with one or more of the minimum standards for registration.

The bill will restore the VRQA's power to issue binding guidelines to registered schools.

The guidelines may relate to one or more of the minimum standards for registration, including the new child-safe schools standard.

The bill will empower the VRQA to register and enforce an undertaking that is given voluntarily by a school that is the subject of a review. An enforceable undertaking can secure a school's future compliance with a minimum standard for registration, and can be a practical alternative to the VRQA's other compliance and enforcement options — such as suspension or cancellation of registration.

The bill will clarify the types of conditions on registration that the VRQA may impose on a school. A condition on registration may be expressed to operate for a limited period of time, rather than throughout the registration period. In addition, the bill clarifies that the VRQA may impose a condition on registration in connection with a review of a school's operations. Usually these conditions are imposed after the completion of the review; however, the bill will also permit the VRQA to impose an interim condition on registration during the course of conducting a review but only in urgent or exceptional circumstances — for example, to ensure student safety. The bill includes clear procedural protections for the school when the VRQA proposes to take such action.

The bill will also authorise the VRQA to relevantly collect and share information with a wider class of Victorian government agencies, and regulators in other jurisdictions. Currently the VRQA is not authorised to disclose information about school safety issues to the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, or the Victorian WorkCover Authority. The amendments would allow such information to be shared more widely within government.

Lastly, the bill will make several statute law revision amendments to correct typographical errors and outdated references.

In conclusion, the bill will amend the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 to put in place the necessary arrangements to ensure that registered schools better manage the risk of child abuse, including responding to allegations of child abuse.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully).

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 11 March.

LIMITATION OF ACTIONS AMENDMENT (CHILD ABUSE) BILL 2015

Statement of compatibility

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) tabled following statement in accordance with Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006:

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 Limitation of Actions Amendment (Child Abuse) Bill 2015.

In my opinion, the Limitation of Actions Amendment (Child Abuse) Bill 2015, as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with human rights as set out in the charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview

The bill amends the Limitation of Action Act 1958 (Vic.) by removing all limitation periods for actions for damages founded on the death of or personal injury to a person resulting from child abuse, and by removing the 12-year long stop limitation period for actions under part III of the Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic.) in cases where the wrongful death was caused by child abuse.

The amendments extend to instances of child abuse that occurred at any time, regardless of whether or not those claims were previously barred by a limitation period.

The bill expressly provides that the removal of limitation periods will not affect the court's inherent jurisdiction/powers to control or dismiss proceedings that could undermine the administration of justice.

Human rights issues

Human rights protected by the charter that are relevant to the bill

The following charter act rights are relevant to the bill:

the right of children to protection as in his or her best interests — section 17(2);
the right to a fair trial — section 24.

Protection of children (s 17)

Section 17(2) of the charter act provides that every child has the right, without discrimination, to such protection as is in his or her best interests and is needed by him or her by reason of the vulnerability of their age.

The bill supports the right of a child to protection under the charter act by removing all limitation periods with respect to actions for child abuse. The reforms remove a significant barrier currently faced by victims in issuing civil proceedings before the expiry of the relevant civil limitation period, and

provides victims with an 'as of right' opportunity to seek a remedy for the devastating harms they have suffered.

The bill recognises the deep long-term effects of child abuse, such as the extended amount of time (often several decades) it takes for victims of child abuse to understand the abuse they have suffered and issue proceedings in respect of this abuse.

Furthermore, by extending broadly to both physical and sexual child abuse, regardless of the setting in which the abuse occurred, the reforms acknowledge harmful effects that both forms of abuse, occurring in any context, can have on a child's physical and psychological wellbeing.

Right to a fair trial (s 24)

Section 24 of the charter act provides that a party to a civil proceeding has the right to have the proceeding decided by a competent, independent, impartial court or tribunal after a fair and public hearing. The purpose of the right to a fair hearing is to ensure the proper administration of justice, and applies to all stages in proceedings and in relation to any Victorian court or tribunal.

The removal of limitation periods with respect to child abuse is relevant to the right to a fair hearing that may be called into question due to a lack of evidence arising from the passage of time. The bill supports this right by providing an express evidentiary protection that the removal of limitation periods does not in any way affect the courts' inherent power to control the exercise of their jurisdiction, including by dismissing or ordering a permanent stay to proceedings where the administration of justice may be compromised. This would include where the lapse of time has a burdensome effect on a defendant that is so serious that a fair trial is not possible. In addition, a court will still be bound to provide a fair hearing of the issues by applying the normal rules of evidence.

Are the relevant charter rights actually limited by the bill?

The rights identified above are not limited.

Is any limit on relevant rights by the bill reasonable and justified under section 7(2)?

N/A

Guidance re use of jurisprudence and previous SOC practice

N/A

The Hon. Martin Pakula, MP
Attorney-General

Second reading

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Speech as follows incorporated into *Hansard* under sessional orders:

The Family and Community Development Committee tabled its landmark report *Betrayal of Trust* on 13 November 2013. The report highlighted, among other things, the difficulties that survivors of child abuse face in recovering compensation for the devastating effects of their abuse.

In particular, a major obstacle for survivors is the existence of statutory time limits created by the Limitation of Actions Act 1958. The Limitation of Actions Act establishes time periods within which proceedings for different civil actions must be commenced. If proceedings are brought outside a limitation period, a claimant can be barred from obtaining a remedy.

Betrayal of Trust examined civil limitation periods, and concluded that they were inappropriate for survivors of child abuse, who, due to the injury inflicted upon them by their abusers, often take decades to fully understand and act upon the harm arising from their abuse. Many of the courageous survivors of abuse that spoke to the Family and Community Development Committee explained the debilitating and confusing effects that child abuse can have on a young child's physical and mental wellbeing, including feelings of shame, embarrassment, and guilt, which continue into adulthood and often result in victims suppressing and concealing their abuse from others for many years.

The ongoing work of the national Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse mirrors the findings of *Betrayal of Trust*. The chair of the royal commission, Justice Peter McClellan, has remarked of multiple instances where elderly survivors speaking to the royal commission are revealing their past abuse for the very first time in their lives.

Many survivors therefore find themselves faced with an expired limitation period by the time they are ready to commence legal proceedings, and must place themselves at the mercy of courts even to have their claim heard. In settlement negotiations, too, survivors have told how the prospect of an expired limitation period has been used against them to reduce the settlement amount that is offered.

Betrayal of Trust therefore recommended that child abuse be excluded from the operation of the Limitation of Actions Act. This government has pledged to implement all outstanding recommendations from *Betrayal of Trust*, and the introduction of this bill is an important step in the process of allowing access to justice for survivors of child abuse. It gives effect to the relevant recommendation from *Betrayal of Trust* by completely removing all limitation periods that apply to civil actions for damages founded on child abuse.

In removing limitation periods, the bill draws no distinctions between where or when the abuse occurred. While the current Limitation of Actions Act prescribes a complex and confusing array of limitation periods in relation to child abuse, with different limitation periods applying depending upon the identity of the alleged perpetrator and the time and context of the abuse, the bill is uniform in its operation and treats all child abuse claimants equally and fairly.

Furthermore, the bill will apply to past, as well as future claims of abuse, regardless of whether or not past claims were previously subject to a limitation period. While the bill will not reopen cases that have previously settled or been subject to final judgement, it will allow historical victims of abuse — such as many of those who spoke to the Family and Community Development Committee — the opportunity to have their civil claims heard in court. This will be the case even if those people were previously dissuaded from bringing their claims by the existence of limitation periods.

The definition of 'child abuse' used by the bill is broad, encompassing both the physical and sexual abuse of children, as well as psychological abuse that arises out of instances of physical or sexual abuse. By including physical abuse, as well as sexual abuse, within the scope of the bill, the bill recognises that different forms of abuse do not always occur in isolation, and — as the Family and Community Development Committee and the royal commission have recognised — the short and long-term effects of child physical abuse can be equally devastating as those of child sexual abuse. To avoid doubt, it is also important that the bill recognises psychological abuse that is connected to physical or sexual abuse — such as when a child is 'groomed', is made to feel erroneously complicit in abuse that has occurred, or is coerced or shamed into covering up abuse. This psychological abuse can cause harms that are often inseparable from the harms caused by physical or sexual abuse.

The bill does not seek to define the exact boundaries of what constitutes 'abuse' — a task that is fraught with difficulty and may inadvertently exclude valid claims. Instead, the bill will allow courts to determine whether or not abuse has occurred in accordance with the ordinary meaning and common understanding of the term, informed by sources such as the work of the Family and Community Development Committee and the royal commission.

For example, the royal commission's working definition of child sexual abuse includes 'any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards', while *Betrayal of Trust* found that children in institutional care were subjected to physical abuse that included beatings, canings, being locked inside a room without a blanket, or having their heads forced into their dirty linen if they wet the bed.

The bill also recognises that the effects of child abuse are not always confined to the primary victim of the abuse, but can also extend to the dependants of a victim, who may be unaware for many years that childhood abuse was the cause of the victim's suffering and death. Accordingly, the bill removes the 12-year 'long stop' limitation period where a dependant of a deceased victim of child abuse wishes to bring an action for wrongful death.

In recognising that survivors of child abuse face unique and challenging circumstances, the bill is careful to safeguard the fundamental rights of parties before a court, including the right to a fair and balanced trial. The bill expressly notes that it does not affect any existing powers the courts have to control or dismiss proceedings, which might include circumstances where a court determines that a fair hearing of a matter is impossible due to a lack of evidence caused by the passage of time. However, any such decision would be a matter for the court to apply at their discretion to protect the proper administration of justice, and not through any exercise of right by a defendant.

The work of the Family and Community Development Committee, and the courage of survivors who have spoken and continue to speak about their past abuse has been invaluable. We have seen how the debilitating effects of child abuse often entirely prevent survivors from bringing claims before the expiry of civil limitation periods, and we have therefore removed these time barriers to give survivors of child abuse the opportunity 'as of right' to bring their claims before a court, making Victoria a leader in this area across Australia and the world.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr PESUTTO (Hawthorn).

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 11 March.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELLBEING AMENDMENT (HAIRDRESSING REGISTRATION) BILL 2015

Statement of compatibility

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) tabled following statement in accordance with Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006:

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 Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Hairdressing Registration) Bill 2015.

In my opinion, the bill, as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with the human rights protected by the charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview

The bill amends the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 to provide for the registration, on an ongoing rather than periodic basis, of premises in which certain businesses are conducted.

1. Human rights protected by the charter act that are relevant to the bill

The bill does not engage any human rights protected by the charter.

2. Consideration of reasonable limitations — section 7(2)

As the bill does not engage any of the human rights protected by the charter it is unnecessary to consider the application of section 7(2) of the charter.

Conclusion

I consider the bill is compatible with the charter as it does not raise any human rights issues.

Hon. Jill Hennessy, MP
Minister for Health

Second reading

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Speech as follows incorporated into *Hansard* under sessional orders:

The purpose of this bill is to reduce the burden and cost of regulation for many hairdressing and make-up businesses, while maintaining the capacity for local government to deal with any public health risks arising out of the operation of these businesses.

This is a common-sense change that will benefit over 4000 small businesses whose activities have been assessed as posing negligible public health risks. It gives effect to the government's election commitment to reduce business regulation wherever possible, while preserving the integrity of systems designed to protect public health and safety.

The vast majority of hairdressing and beauty salons are small businesses. The government recognises that small businesses face many day to day challenges, and have less capacity to absorb the costs of regulation than medium-sized or larger businesses.

Some regulation is an inescapable part of doing business in today's world. The community rightly expects governments to regulate where necessary to protect public health and safety.

However, it is also incumbent on governments to ensure that regulation is well designed, proportionate to risk and does not impose inefficiencies or unjustifiable costs on businesses and community organisations.

Honourable members will be aware that the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 requires certain business premises to be registered with local councils. This requirement aims to ensure that the regulated businesses comply with standards set out in the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009. Those regulations require business operators to ensure their premises, equipment and work systems are clean and hygienic.

Along with premises within which services such as tattooing or body piercings occur, hairdressing and beauty therapy premises are required to be registered, and to pay a registration fee. These businesses are required to renew their registration periodically — usually annually — and to pay a fee each time they renew their registration.

The registration fee is set by councils. The average annual fee paid by hairdressers to councils is about $170 per year.

To ensure business operators are complying with health and hygiene standards, council enforcement officers generally inspect the premises when they first open, and then annually when registrations are renewed.

This bill provides for a new, streamlined registration system for businesses that only provide hairdressing and/or make-up services which do not involve intentional skin penetration.

These businesses will no longer need to keep renewing their premises registration annually, or to pay a fee for renewal of their registration. Instead, from 1 March 2016, these businesses can apply to their local council for a 'one-off', or permanent, registration.

Alternatively, these businesses can wait until councils forward the normal registration renewal forms to them, usually towards the end of the year, in this case 2016, to apply for the new 'one-off' registration.

Registration will be ongoing unless the business is sold or moves to a different business address.

In practice, the amendments will mean that councils will inspect businesses when they first register, rather than on an annual basis.

The changes will save each of these businesses about $170 per year. They will also be spared the time and effort of submitting annual renewal forms to councils, and the time taken to undergo annual inspections with council enforcement officers, which entail opportunity costs.

This bill represents a risk-based approach to public health regulation. It is based on the principle that regulatory burden and the resources of regulators — in this case councils — should be targeted to address real risks to public health.

Under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act, councils have an important duty to protect, promote and improve public health within their municipalities. Councils have a trained workforce of environmental health officers who handle many diverse public health issues responsively at the local level.

These changes will free up council officers to focus on genuine public health risks, and assist councils to manage their limited regulatory resources effectively.

Businesses solely providing hairdressing services and those applying temporary make-up pose a low public health risk, as these services do not involve intentional penetration of the skin. An analysis of council enforcement data about hairdressing businesses undertaken by the Department of Health and Human Services has confirmed that this is a low-risk industry sector. Councils report that they receive very few complaints from the public about hairdressing and make-up businesses.

Councils also report they are required to investigate very few alleged incidents. And these incidents do not relate to conditions that generally pose risks to public health.

Hairdressing and make-up businesses that also perform other services that pose higher risks to health, such as tattooing and body piercing, will continue to be regulated under the current arrangements — that is, they will continue to be required to renew their registration periodically, and be subject to minimum health and hygiene standards and regular inspections.

Councils will still keep a register of hairdressing and make-up businesses. This will mean they can keep track of these businesses, and can properly monitor and respond to any complaints from the community that may arise about a particular business.

Hairdressing and make-up businesses will still be required to comply with minimum standards of cleanliness and hygiene under the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009.

Council officers will retain all of their existing powers to inspect these businesses, and to monitor and enforce compliance with cleanliness and hygiene laws. They will also retain their current powers to cancel or suspend the registration of a business, as a last resort, if the business does not comply with public health laws.

I am pleased to note that, during consultations, the hair and beauty industry has indicated widespread support for the changes, which will particularly benefit very small businesses with limited liquidity. Local government is also supportive of this initiative.

The government looks forward to working collaboratively with industry and local government to make sure the changes are communicated to key stakeholders in a clear and timely manner.

This will enable business and local government to plan for the changes, to ensure a smooth transition to the new arrangements.

The bill strikes a sensible balance between reducing the burden of business regulation while retaining safeguards for public health, and the department will continue to monitor the adequacy and balance of the regulatory environment following its passage.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully).

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 11 March.

LEGAL PROFESSION UNIFORM LAW APPLICATION AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Statement of compatibility

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) tabled following statement in accordance with Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006:

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 Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Amendment Bill 2015.

In my opinion, the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Amendment Bill 2015, 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.

Human rights issues

Section 6 of the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014 overrides the charter in respect of the Legal Profession Uniform Law (uniform law), and bodies performing functions or exercising powers under the uniform law. However, statements of compatibility are still required for any bills that amend the uniform law.

At section 13, the charter provides that a person has the right not to have his or her privacy 'unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with'. This is relevant to clause 26 of the bill, which inserts a new section into the Legal Profession Uniform Law (uniform law) to provide that a 'relevant person' may disclose information obtained in the administration of the Legal Profession Uniform Law or the Legal Profession Uniform Rules to a person or body in a non-participating jurisdiction (that is, a state or territory that has not applied the Legal Profession Uniform Law) in relation to a function of that person or body under a law which corresponds to the Legal Profession Uniform Law.

A 'relevant person' is defined to mean a range of persons and bodies performing functions under the Legal Profession Uniform Law. In Victoria, it includes the Victorian Legal Services Board and commissioner (and their delegates) and the Victorian Legal Admissions Board.

The kind of information disclosed under the new provision could include personal information — for example, information relating to a disciplinary investigation into a particular legal practitioner.

The disclosure of information as contemplated by clause 26 of the bill would not be unlawful as it would be authorised by legislation. It would also not be arbitrary, as it would need to occur in connection with the respective roles of the person or body performing functions under the Legal Profession Uniform Law, and the person or body performing functions under a corresponding law — that is, it would need to be connected with their mutual responsibilities for regulation of the Australian legal profession.

Also, the additional power to disclose information conferred by clause 26 extends only to persons or bodies in Australian states and territories other than NSW (disclosure to NSW is already authorised by the uniform law). Each Australian state or territory has a regime, either legislative or administrative, for protecting personal information, to which the relevant persons or bodies would be subject.

The Hon. Martin Pakula, MP
Attorney-General

Second reading

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Speech as follows incorporated into *Hansard* under sessional orders:

The bill will make a number of minor and technical amendments to the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014, in preparation for the full commencement of that act, which is currently planned for 1 July this year.

When it commences, the act, together with corresponding legislation in NSW, will create a harmonised system for the regulation of the legal profession in Victoria and NSW. The system has scope to be expanded to all other states and territories, ultimately creating a national scheme for the regulation of the Australian legal profession. This has the potential to deliver significant benefits to the legal profession through the elimination of red tape, but also, importantly, to consumers of legal services through the creation of nationwide best practice standards and regulatory

frameworks. New statutory authorities, including the Legal Services Council and the Commissioner for Uniform Legal Services Regulation, have already been established under the scheme, and are currently preparing for its full commencement.

The bill will make an important technical amendment to the provisions of the act dealing with the requirement for a law practice to disclose to its clients its expected costs in each matter. The amendment will clarify the use of the term 'total legal costs' so that these provisions, which are a critical consumer protection element of the act, are clear on their face and can be readily interpreted by legal practitioners and their clients.

Specifically, the amendment will make it clear when the term 'total legal costs' is intended to exclude GST and disbursements. This will help to resolve an inconsistency with the term 'legal costs', which is defined to always be inclusive of disbursements. The amendment will also clarify that a new uniform standard disclosure form which may be used for inexpensive matters may require the disclosure of GST and disbursements. The form is currently under development by the Legal Services Council and is planned to apply to matters under $3000.

The bill will also provide regulatory authorities operating under the uniform scheme with power to share information with interstate regulatory authorities, including with those in jurisdictions that have not applied the uniform law, such as may occur currently under the existing legal profession regulatory regimes in Victoria and NSW. This will ensure that regulatory authorities operating under the uniform scheme are able to collaborate appropriately with their interstate counterparts to help them anticipate and respond to regulatory risks.

The bill will correct an anomaly in the drafting of the act to ensure the continued jurisdiction of the Victorian Costs Court in respect of matters initiated under previous legal profession legislation, and will make other minor, technical and statute law revision amendments.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr PESUTTO (Hawthorn).

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 11 March.

VETERANS AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Statement of compatibility

Ms GARRETT (Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation) tabled following statement in accordance with Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006:

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 Veterans and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2015 (the bill).

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

Overview

The bill makes a number of amendments to various consumer acts to clarify and improve their operation and to correct a number of minor and technical errors.

Human rights issues

Human rights protected by the charter that are relevant to the bill

No human rights protected by the charter are relevant to the bill.

Consideration of reasonable and justified limitations under section 7(2)

As no rights protected under the charter are relevant to the bill, it is not necessary to consider section 7(2) of the charter.

Jane Garrett, MP
Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation

Second reading

Ms GARRETT (Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Speech as follows incorporated into *Hansard* under sessional orders:

In the year that we commemorate the centenary of the Gallipoli landings, it is important that we continue to focus on the wellbeing of the Victorian ex-service community. This bill will make a number of amendments to the Veterans Act 2005 that will make it easier for the trustees of patriotic funds to provide support to veterans and their dependants.

Firstly, the bill will simplify the process for transferring patriotic fund assets to a charity located in another state by enabling the director to approve interstate transfers of up to $1000 in any six-month period, and the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation to approve interstate transfers of up to $5000 in any six-month period.

Currently, it is necessary to seek the approval of the Governor in Council for all interstate transfers of patriotic fund assets, regardless of the value of the assets being transferred. This requirement is unnecessarily burdensome, and can cause problems where financial assistance is sought as a matter of urgency.

As a related amendment, the bill will also amend the Veterans Act to clarify that the director, minister or Governor in Council, as appropriate, can validate transfers of patriotic fund assets that were inadvertently made without necessary prior approval.

Secondly, the bill will amend the Veterans Act to give the director, on the written application of a patriotic fund trustee,

a limited power to consent to amendments to the trust deed of that patriotic fund. Many older patriotic fund trust deeds do not contain a power of amendment. However, over time, trustees have changed, or new deeds that use modern language have been adopted, even though there was no power to make these changes. The trustees of these deeds have sought to regularise this situation, but due to the lack of an appropriate facility in the Veterans Act, have been unable to do so.

This amendment will enable patriotic fund trustees to remedy defects in the trust deeds of their funds.

Lastly, the bill will insert a process into the Veterans Act that will enable two or more patriotic funds to amalgamate.

In order to ensure ongoing financial viability, a recent trend has been for adjacent RSL sub-branches (which are incorporated associations, and which administer a patriotic fund or funds) to seek to amalgamate. However, at present, there is no facility under the Veterans Act to enable two or more patriotic funds to amalgamate. This means that these amalgamated sub-branches have been forced to maintain accounts for two separate patriotic funds. This is placing an increased and unnecessary burden on these sub-branches.

The bill will also enhance the powers of the director of Consumer Affairs Victoria ('the director') to take investigation, compliance and enforcement action following breaches of consumer affairs legislation and will generally improve the operation of other acts within the consumer affairs portfolio.

Part 3 of the bill will amend the definition of terms contract in the Sale of Land Act 1962. This act offers specific protections to people who buy and sell property via a 'terms contract'. However, at present, the definition of 'terms contract' does not accurately capture when a terms contract does, and does not, exist.

The amendments in this bill will correct the deficiencies in this definition, which will ensure that the Sale of Land Act provides appropriate protection to those buying and selling property via a terms contract.

Part 4 of the bill makes two amendments to the Australian Consumer Law and Fair Trading Act 2012.

Firstly, the bill will amend the debt collection provisions of this act to ensure that actions taken by a credit provider to comply with the National Credit Code will not breach restrictions on prohibited debt collection practices.

Secondly, the bill will amend the director's delegation powers to enable the director's powers under section 126 to obtain information, documents and other evidence to be delegated to either an executive within the meaning of the Public Administration Act 2004 or a public servant with a classification of grade 6 or above. This amendment will enable Consumer Affairs Victoria to continue to undertake compliance and enforcement activities when the director is on leave.

As a related amendment, the bill will also clarify that the director is able to take compliance and enforcement action in relation to breaches of both acts within the consumer affairs portfolio, and also the regulations made under those acts.

Part 5 of the bill will amend the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 to enable Consumer Affairs Victoria to take action against rooming house owners that fail to comply with record keeping obligations regarding safety checks required to be conducted for rooming houses.

Part 6 of the bill makes a series of technical amendments to the Motor Car Traders Act 1986.

Specifically, the bill will enable a deputy chair of the Motor Car Traders Claims Committee to be appointed. The deputy chair will automatically assume the functions of the chair when the office of the chair is vacant, or the chair is absent. This will replace the current onerous process of requiring the Governor in Council to appoint an acting chair in these circumstances.

The bill will also close a loophole that enables licensed motor car traders to avoid being subject to disciplinary action by cancelling or suspending their licence.

Part 7 of the bill will amend the Co-operatives National Law Application Act 2013 to enable co-operatives to resolve disputes via the Magistrates Court instead of the Supreme Court.

Finally, part 8 of the bill will amend the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 to enable the secretary of an incorporated association to apply for an exemption from the requirement to permit members of the association to inspect that association's register of members. Incorporated associations will be required to show that there are special circumstances as to why the exemption should be granted. Such special circumstances may include where the personal safety of members of the incorporated association is put at risk by having their name and address accessible to other members of the association.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr CLARK (Box Hill).

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 11 March.

CEMETERIES AND CREMATORIA AMENDMENT (VETERANS REFORM) BILL 2015

Second reading

Debate resumed from 11 February; motion of Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health).

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — It gives me great pleasure to speak on the Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment (Veterans Reform) Bill 2015. The coalition supports this important bill, which builds on the work done by the previous government, and in particular the previous health minister, the Honourable David Davis. It is largely reflective of a bill he introduced into the previous Parliament. That bill was not passed, and we now have a revised bill before us today.

The bill provides due recognition for those in our community who served our nation with pride in the various theatres of war, with specific reference to World War I and World War II. It provides the opportunity in relation to veterans whose cremated remains are located throughout Victoria to have those cremated remains kept in perpetuity when it is clear that they are those of a veteran.

Under the current law the remains of people who are buried are kept in perpetuity, so effectively they remain in their grave indefinitely. However, changes were made with respect to people who were cremated, providing for a 25-year period during which the cremated remains would be retained by a cemetery, after which the cemetery would allow a family member to pay a fee to provide for those remains to be kept in perpetuity. In other words, under the current law, if contact is not made with a family member, or if a family member is contacted but chooses not to take up the offer, the cemetery has the capacity to remove the cremated remains and dispose of them accordingly.

However, under this bill, for people who fall within the 25-year period and are identified as a veteran, the cemetery will be required to retain the ashes in perpetuity. We believe this is fitting for our veteran community. I thank those who work for our cemeteries, and in particular I acknowledge the work of the Cemeteries and Crematorium Association Victoria, an organisation I had the pleasure of dealing with in my previous capacity as the Parliamentary Secretary for Health. Certainly it does great work in the community.

This year marks the Anzac centenary, and I congratulate the government for continuing with the initiative of the previous government in introducing the bill in a timely manner before the centenary. Many Australians will pay due recognition to those in the veteran community who served our nation with pride. The Anzac centenary is also an opportunity for all of us to reflect on those who have served in all theatres of war, whether before or after the Anzac battle. I place on the record my congratulations to David McLachlan and the Victoria RSL, who do a fantastic job in continuing to educate the community and provide for our veterans. In my community I have organisations such as the Boronia RSL and the outer eastern sub-branch of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia. These organisations not only provide enormous support for their membership but they also provide an important educational role in imparting their knowledge to the broader community. All members of this house can undoubtedly think of their local RSLs and the work they do in their local communities and various other organisations that are continuing that great work. This is also an opportunity for us to educate young people about the spirit of Anzac and the significance of paying due recognition, and I believe in a small way this bill will go towards providing that recognition.

In my region the Springvale Botanical Cemetery is a major facility and repository for cremations and burials throughout the eastern and south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne. I would like to place on the record the important work undertaken by the Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust and Jonathan Tribe and the team at the Springvale cemetery in recognising our veteran community. The buried or cremated remains of many veterans are located in Springvale. On one of the niche walls are the cremated remains of Brigadier Sir George Knox. Brigadier Knox served with the 23rd Battalion in Gallipoli. He resided in the local community of Scoresby and was the member for Upper Yarra and Scoresby in the Assembly for more than 30 years. He served this place with distinction, and during the period of World War II served a period of time as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. Upon his death the City of Knox was named in honour of his service to that community.

All of us can probably think of our family situations. In that cemetery are my grandfather's cremated remains. He served with the 6th Battalion and landed at Gallipoli on Anzac Day. Also in that cemetery are the cremated remains of my Uncle Bill Fullwood, who served on HMAS *Australia* in the famous Battle of Guadalcanal in World War II. There are many family stories and there are many veterans whose cremated remains are in various cemeteries throughout Victoria. It is essential that we provide an opportunity for their remains to be retained, given their significance.

Anyone who has visited the Springvale cemetery will have seen outside cremated remains orange stickers that are placed by the cemetery trust. They are to alert family members that the interment period for the cremated remains will be expiring and they will be removed in due course. This situation currently applies to veterans remains, and obviously some veterans remains have already been removed. The measures in the bill will go a long way in providing an opportunity for our veterans to be duly remembered and for their remains to be kept in perpetuity. In future there will be an opportunity for more work to be done at the graves of our veteran community, whether by specific markers, insignia or other forms of recognition that the grave or interred remains are that of a veteran.

I am pleased the coalition will be supporting this bill. Given that we are launching into the centenary of Anzac, the bill provides due recognition. At this

juncture I put on the record my congratulations and thanks to a former Premier, Ted Baillieu, for his work as chair of the Victorian Anzac Centenary Committee and to all the committee members, including I believe the member for Wendouree. The committee has had bipartisan support. It is ensuring that all Victorians will have an opportunity to be part of the celebration of the centenary of Anzac. The bill in a small way plays a role in duly recognising the great work of our veteran community. I trust the bill will have a speedy passage through this house, and I am pleased to support it.

Mr EREN (Minister for Veterans) — I am privileged to be standing here today as Minister for Veterans in this state. I am a person of Turkish background, and this year is very special for me on two counts — both as an Australian and as an MP of Turkish descent. It is very moving to think that 100 years ago a war took place that would define both nations going forward. Turkey broke away from the Ottoman Empire through Kemal Atatürk, the father of Turkey as we know it today, and Australians made a mark on history's pages with their courage. I am proud to be an Australian of Turkish background and to be able to stand here and speak in the debate on this very important bill, the Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment (Veterans Reform) Bill 2015.

This bill is very special to all Victorians. It should be called the Respect Bill because it is all about respect. It is about recognising the contributions made by all those who sacrificed their lives back then, those who have sacrificed them since and those who continue to sacrifice their lives. It is with great pride that I stand here today speaking on this bill. I think most of us in this place attend our local services on Anzac Day. We put our hands on our hearts and we say, 'Lest we forget'. That is what this bill is about — making sure that we do not forget. It should remind us of the tragedy of war and the sacrifices veterans have made for our nation through their service.

There are over 84 000 official war graves or memorials established in Victoria across at least 484 cemeteries, the majority located in the Springvale memorial garden. As we commemorate the centenary of World War I, it is sobering to remember all of the Australian veterans who have served in conflicts and peacekeeping missions around the world. Many of those veterans are interred or memorialised in Victorian cemeteries. One of the most visited military graves in Victoria is that of Captain Albert Jacka, the first Australian to be awarded the Victoria Cross in World War I for his actions on 19 November 1915, three weeks after landing at Gallipoli. After the war Captain Jacka went on to serve his local community with distinction as a councillor and mayor of the City of St Kilda. Tragically, he died suddenly in 1932 of illness resulting from his war service. He was buried with full military honours at St Kilda Cemetery, which is now governed by the Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust.

In the preceding contribution an opposition member said that this bill was started by the previous government. Unfortunately, however, it was not completed, and that is what we are doing today. This bill is about making sure we put veterans — those who have given so much to this nation — first. It will ensure that the cremated remains of veterans are treated with due dignity and respect. As Minister for Veterans, I believe it is vital that we recognise the service and sacrifice of all Australians who have served in war or in peacekeeping operations throughout the world.

This bill is particularly significant given that 25 April marks the 100th anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli, a campaign which saw thousands of Australians die, go missing or be wounded. However, we must not forget the Australians who have served in conflicts from the 19th century through to the present day. It is therefore fitting in this year of commemoration and reflection to ensure that the cremated remains of veterans are treated with due respect, in accordance with community expectations.

The Andrews Labor government respects our veterans, and this bill is delivering important reforms where the previous government could not. This bill will ensure service and sacrifice are acknowledged in the way cremated remains are managed in Victorian cemeteries. Currently under the Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003 the interment of bodies in Victorian cemeteries is in perpetuity. There is no legal requirement to inter cremated remains in a public cemetery; however, people who want the cremated remains of their loved ones to be interred in a public cemetery have that choice. They can either purchase a right to perpetual interment for the cremated remains or a limited tenure right of interment, which endures for 25 years, at a lesser cost.

Public cemeteries are governed by cemetery trusts, which have a statutory obligation to ensure perpetual maintenance of their cemeteries. Where a person's remains are interred for 25 years, the responsible cemetery trust has a statutory obligation to notify the holder of the right of interment at least 12 months before the limited tenure period expires. Currently the holder of the right of interment may then extend the tenure for a further 25 years or convert to perpetual tenure. They may also decide to move the cremated remains to a different location, or may alternatively

want to collect the remains, together with the memorial, to allow the family time to consider how they wish to care for those remains in the future. However, under the act, if the holder of the right of interment cannot be located, or does not give instructions to the cemetery trust after the expiry of the limited tenure interment, the trust may remove the remains from their place of interment and dispose of any memorial and the remains — for instance, by scattering the ashes on the cemetery grounds. It is not current practice for cemetery trusts to scatter the cremated remains of a deceased veteran unless this is requested by the veteran's family. However, trusts do not currently have a clear power to leave cremated remains in place at the expiry of a limited tenure interment.

The current process is inhumane; veterans' cremated remains need to be treated with respect. The objectives of this bill are very clear. It will address the fact that cemetery trusts do not currently have a legal framework that assists them to appropriately manage veterans' cremated remains at the end of limited tenure interment. It will seek to provide trusts with increased powers to enable them to appropriately manage the cremated remains of veterans at the expiry of a limited tenure interment if no holder of a right of interment is available to make decisions about the management of the remains.

In particular, these powers will allow the trusts to convert the tenure of identified veterans' cremated remains from limited to perpetual tenure; relocate the remains to another appropriate location where necessary — for example, where the physical condition of the existing location has deteriorated to a state unsuitable for perpetual interment; and avoid separating a veteran's remains from the remains of family members, or other people's remains with which the veteran's remains were interred, when the veteran's remains are relocated, by moving such remains with the veteran's remains when it is necessary to move a veteran's remains.

These new powers will allow the establishment of a memorial at the new place of interment if a veteran's cremated remains are moved. This will allow the trust to ensure that the remains are memorialised appropriately if any existing memorial on the original place of interment cannot be successfully relocated.

This bill is intended to ensure flexibility to cater for different scenarios, provided that the outcome in each case is respectful treatment of veterans' cremated remains. The amendments are intended to reflect community expectations of respect for war veterans, past and present. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms KEALY (Lowan) — It is a great pleasure for me to stand before the house today to represent The Nationals and speak on the Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment (Veterans Reform) Bill 2015. This is a very important bill, and as the shadow Minister for Education, the member for Ferntree Gully, noted in his speech, the bones of this bill were established under the coalition government. I commend the work of the previous government on ensuring that veterans' remains are respected, as they should be, and I commend the current government on pursuing the ambition of amending this bill.

This bill creates a legal framework to provide for the conversion of a right of interment for interring cremated human remains of deceased identified veterans for 25 years to a perpetual right of interment. It will also provide for the reinterment of cremated human remains of deceased identified veterans, and their family members in specified circumstances. Importantly, this bill also clarifies the role of the ongoing management of the reinterred remains of veterans and associated memorials, which will assist in ensuring that the service and sacrifice of our veterans is never forgotten.

In rural Victoria the respect we hold for the dignity of our veterans and our service men and women during their lives continues after their death. As you travel through many rural areas of regional Victoria you see war memorials dotted throughout those communities. They provide a very important local community meeting point at times like Anzac Day, but they are also a continual reminder for us that the people who have represented this fair country in times of war and conflict and in the performance of peacekeeping duties are highly regarded, and we will never forget the importance of their work in protecting our rights and freedoms and the democratic system we enjoy today.

I would also like to note the important work of the coalition government on maintaining war memorials in our rural communities. There has been a lot of work done in getting those memorials up to standard in preparation for the upcoming Anzac centenary celebrations. In the Lowan electorate we have had upgrades to memorials in Branxholme, Digby, Casterton, Jung, Nhill and Tarrington. Notably, I attended the Remembrance Day service in Rupanyup last year, where a lovely new and modern plaque was unveiled. It contains a reference to the Avenue of Honour, and the community spirit, the support and the recognition of the service of men and women who have returned from service overseas, been involved in local activities or made the ultimate sacrifice are well recorded there. That is something of which the community in Rupanyup is very proud.

As I said earlier, this year marks the centenary of the Anzac campaign and our nation's involvement in the First World War. This is a very important time because the First World War helped to define us as people and as a nation. The centenary is also an important moment in Australia's history because not only do we remember the Anzacs who served at Gallipoli and on the Western Front but we also commemorate more than a century of service by Australian service men and women. The centenary will encompass all wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations in which Australians have been involved.

It will be a special time for me because my great-grandfather fought in the First World War. He was involved in the 8th Light Horse regiment. Many people from regional Victoria were involved in the light horse regiments because of their very good horsemanship skills. I note that the 8th Light Horse regiment was involved in the infamous charge at the Nek. I am not sure whether other members are aware of this conflict, but of the 522 members of the 8th Light Horse regiment, 234 men were casualties, which included 154 fatalities. It was a devastating time, and those men who returned to this soil, including my great-grandfather, would be very proud of the bill that is before us today and be supportive of it passing without too much concern.

I would like to honour the Returned and Services League of Australia because it does a lot of work in ensuring that we have appropriate Anzac Day ceremonies every year. The RSL is one of the oldest and most respected local organisations and has a presence in most rural communities. There are 17 RSL branches in the Lowan electorate, from Natimuk, Kaniva and Murtoa through to Lake Bolac and Apsley, and of course our larger centres of Horsham and Hamilton.

The Horsham RSL has recently been doing a lot of work around the Anzac Day centenary. It has been working with the Horsham Historical Society. John and Gillian Francis, members of that group, have done extensive research into the Horsham cemetery and located 27 unmarked graves containing the remains of World War I veterans. Should those remains be cremated, and I assume they will not be, this bill gives a cemetery trust the opportunity to re-inter those ashes in a memorial. That is exactly what Horsham RSL is seeking to do. It is working to memorialise these graves so that future generations are aware of the service these individuals gave to our country. John Brondsema, president of the Horsham RSL, was briefed on the bill, and he was very supportive of the changes proposed by these reforms. He was particularly impressed by the section in the bill that ensures that every memorial will be respected and maintained well into the future.

I must refer to another community group impacted on by this bill, and that is the local cemetery trusts responsible for the maintenance of the place of interment where perpetual interment is granted or where the cremated remains of veterans are reinterred. On a positive note, the bill will provide for ongoing maintenance of the final resting place of our veterans, ensuring that those places are maintained in a safe and proper condition so that the veterans are offered the dignity and respect they deserve.

On a negative note, the bill places additional responsibilities on our cemetery trusts. If we consider the pressures on local communities and how we maintain volunteer numbers when looking after our sporting clubs or for roles such as board members at hospitals or even councillors in local government, finding people who are young, active and willing to assist with volunteering on a cemetery trust is quite challenging. I note that even some of our smaller communities in the Lowan electorate have cemetery trusts, including Byaduk North, Tatyoon, Dergholm and Chetwynd. I hope support is provided to these cemetery trusts to ensure not only that we have a legislative framework that allows trusts to maintain the cremated remains of veterans into the future but also that we support cemetery trusts which may be struggling to find volunteers so that the cremated remains of veterans are never neglected into the future.

In summary, the bill is an excellent reform. It offers a dignified recognition of the service and sacrifice of our veterans. It ensures that the cremated remains of veterans are treated with respect and that the final resting place of our veterans and any memorial at that place of interment is managed appropriately into the future. I am pleased to support this bill today.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — It gives me great pleasure to rise and contribute to the debate on this bill. The bill is important because it treats equally in death those who died in war and those who made it home. For many veterans, coming home prolonged the pain and trauma of war.

As the member for Essendon, it would be remiss of me not to mention the Essendon Rifles, formed from the 60th company, a unit that had been created when the Defence Act 1904 formed an Australian militia. All eight companies within the Rifles were headed by Harold Edward 'Pompey' Elliott, and they comprised men from the Essendon area, including Moonee Ponds, Ascot Vale and Newmarket.

Much has been written about Elliot. He participated in the war, and after he came back he was elected to the Victorian Senate for the National Party. He was diagnosed by his doctor as having a 'definite form of nervous disorder', which would now be regarded as post-traumatic stress disorder, and at the age of 52, on 23 March 1931, Elliot took his own life. Before he was buried, there was a short service at his home and thousands of people lined the route to his gravesite to pay homage to his contribution to the Australian Imperial Force (AIF). A major figure such as 'Pompey' Elliot will always be remembered, but that is not always the case for ordinary soldiers who serve their country in war.

I will tell the house the story of a husband and wife who sat down with their four children in late 1916. Their son was 18 years old, and the conversation around the table was that someone needed to volunteer for the war lest the family be thought of as cowards. The son said he would go because if his father were killed, four dependants would need to be looked after.

Fred Bennett enlisted in the AIF on 19 October 1916 with his friend and neighbour George Anderson. They trained in Melbourne and departed for England in 1916. They arrived in England in 1917 for further training, and in June 1917 they arrived in France. The friends served together. After some time they were sent to fight in the Third Battle of Ypres, where soldiers sought to advance 2000 yards to capture the Broodseinde Ridge. On 3 October they were sent to the line and participated in the battle that is now commonly known as the Battle of Passchendaele. The 21st battalion suffered extreme causalities: 10 officers were killed, 10 officers were wounded, 3 officers were missing, 62 enlisted men were killed, 330 men were wounded and a further 24 men were missing. On 4 October 1917 Fred was killed. His body was never identified or found. He is remembered at the Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing in Belgium.

Five days later George was severely wounded with a gunshot wound to the hip. He was one of the many casualties suffered by the 21st battalion. He never returned to the front and spent the rest of the war in hospital before being discharged from the army in late 1918. He came home in December 1918. George never worked again — he received a pension — and walked with a severe limp for the rest of his life. George died in 1974 aged 77. I am not sure whether George was buried or cremated, but the reality is that if he had have been cremated, then potentially his ashes and the contribution he made serving our country would have been forgotten, whereas Fred will always be remembered at the Menin Gate. This bill makes sure that people who serve their country and are cremated have that opportunity to be remembered in perpetuity.

In more recent times, I remember one night being at a party at the house of a friend from university. Her brother, Matthew, was there. He was a bit older than me. He was a big, strong, confident man who had left school to join the army.

He was getting ready to go on a peacekeeping operation. He served overseas on that peacekeeping operation, and he came back traumatised. He was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and heavily medicated. I saw him subsequently, and he was nothing like the person who went away. It is difficult to think about the notion that at the age of 24 or 25 years of age you will never work again. His life was shattered. In some respects it was as if he had died, as if he had been killed on the battlefield. However, if he had been killed in a war, then clearly he would be remembered in perpetuity. His name would be on the honour roll at the Australian War Memorial. Instead, he is a broken man. This bill is incredibly important, because when Matthew dies, and if he is cremated, his remains will be interred in perpetuity. It ensures the dignity not only of those veterans who have died in a conflict but also of those who have returned broken men.

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) — The Greens are also pleased to support this bill. As we know, veterans memorials play an important part in our shared history, collective memory and consciousness as a nation. They conjure up different feelings for each of us. For some, it is a reminder of the heavy toll of war and that such things should not be entered into lightly. For others, it is a reminder of the courage and sacrifice of those young people fighting for our democratic freedom against the horrors of totalitarian regimes. But whatever veterans memorials mean to each of us, it is undeniable that they hold a special place in our cemeteries and crematoria and should be treated with special consideration.

The Greens welcome clarification of the law in regard to veterans' remains. We support the protection of the remains in the case of limited tenures and believe the options provided for managing those remains, in the circumstances where family members cannot be contacted, are appropriate and reasonable. Therefore we are happy to support the bill.

Ms KNIGHT (Wendouree) — I am very honoured to speak in the debate on the Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment (Veterans Reform) Bill 2015 for the reason that to me this bill is about two important things. It is about respect and it is about dignity. I

acknowledge that the coalition is supporting this bill, and I thank those opposite for their support.

This is an incredibly important year for us. It is the centenary of Anzac, as previous speakers have mentioned. I acknowledge the work that is currently being done not only in Melbourne but also in regional areas to commemorate this very important occasion. I also have the great honour of being a member of the Victorian Anzac Centenary Committee. I thank all the members of that committee for the work they do. I acknowledge the work of former Premier Ted Baillieu as the chair of the committee and thank him for his passion in that role. All the members of the committee are incredibly passionate about marking this important occasion.

It is so important that we do not forget the ultimate sacrifices that people made for our country, and that we do not forget that we are talking about people who were very young when they went off to war. Some were as young as 14, and lied about their age. They were young people in the prime of their lives and all too often those lives were cut short in the most horrific and traumatic way. We should not forget about the people who were left behind. We should not forget about the women who kept the country going while their husbands and sons were overseas fighting for us. We should not forget the anguish that they went through not knowing whether their loved ones were alive or dead. This bill is about respect and integrity.

I acknowledge the work done by cemeteries and crematoria. I make particular mention of my local cemetery, the Ballarat Cemetery, and the work of David Beames, the CEO, and the staff and members of the Ballaraat General Cemeteries Trust. To mark the centenary of Anzac the trust is publishing a book about people from the district who served during the First World War and who are buried or named on memorials in Ballarat's two cemeteries. The book's title is *They Answered Their Country's Call*.

I return for a moment to the Victorian Anzac Centenary Committee to state that the committee's work finding the day-to-day stories of those who went off to the First World War, not only from the city but also from the regions. There was a huge regional contingent, which made such an impact on the towns. There were some towns where most of the men were gone and most of them did not come back, which was absolutely devastating for those regional communities. I also acknowledge the RSL block at the Ballarat Cemetery, which is an incredibly beautiful place to go to spend a little time thinking about the sacrifices that were made. We will have some terrific events in Ballarat to commemorate the centenary. Ballarat does events such as this so well. They are being organised by the Ballarat RSL and I also want to make mention of the Sebastopol RSL, led so well by Doug Higgins, and of course Ballarat RSL led by Ms Alex Tascas. If anyone ever gets a chance to go to the Sebastopol RSL smoke night, they will find it is a great night. There are a lot of laughs, and Doug Higgins is pretty good at telling some pretty bad dad jokes. It is a great thing to do. I commend this bill to the house. This is a very important bill, particularly in this year, the centenary of Anzac.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Photographing of proceedings

The SPEAKER — Order! I advise the house that I have given approval for still photographs to be taken from the public galleries during question time today. No additional lighting will be used. The photographs will be used by the Parliament for educational and promotional purposes.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Employment

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Minister for Industry. I refer to the Premier's pledge that his government would fight for every job in Victoria, and I ask: what fighting did the minister do to save 215 retail industry jobs lost last week at Coles?

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Industry) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Let me be absolutely clear: this government's no. 1 commitment is to grow jobs. We went to the last election with a clear commitment and a clear agenda to grow 100 000 jobs in the first two years. This is what we will do. We have a Premier who had a very clear vision, delivered it to the community in Victoria and won an election on the back of doing some very important work in terms of growing jobs, investing $500 million through the Premier's jobs and investment plan, which will activate and stimulate our economy to grow jobs at a time — —

Ms Ryall — On a point of order, Speaker, the question specifically related to fighting for jobs, and I ask you to bring the minister back to making the answer relevant to the question.

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

Ms D'AMBROSIO — The opposition may not know what it is like to fight for jobs, but members on this side of the house know what it is like to fight for jobs. We have a $500 million Premier's jobs and investment plan; we have a *Back to Work* plan — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I insist that the Chair be able to hear the answer that is given in response to the question. I would appreciate some semblance of calm.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — We are absolutely clear. We are not losing one single day — —

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Speaker, the sessional orders, particularly sessional order 11(1), say that all answers to questions must be 'direct, factual, succinct and relevant'. The minister has been speaking for well over a minute and a half, and I have not heard her mention Coles once. I have not heard her mention what she has done to fight to save those jobs. She is clearly not being relevant to the question that was asked.

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order. The minister will continue and come back to answering the question.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — In the work that we do we have not lost one single day. We have the *Back to Work* plan in a bill which is now in the upper house. We are expecting the opposition to pass that bill, and I challenge the opposition to do just that so we can get Victorians back to work. We have a $500 million investment plan to grow jobs. We have a $200 million plan for industries of the future — something the opposition knows absolutely nothing about. Our commitment is quite clear. We have a $200 million Regional Jobs Fund that will grow jobs in the regions of Victoria so that we can — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is clearly debating the question, and the minister is clearly not being relevant to the question as sessional order 11(1) says she must be. She has 30 seconds to go and she still has not mentioned Coles. She is mentioning a supposed Back to Work program. We want to know how she is going to keep people in work, not get them back to work. We want to know if she is going to fight for the jobs, and what she has done to fight for the jobs.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the minister to come back to answering the question.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — I am very happy to do that. When we came to government we faced an unemployment level of 6.9 per cent, up from 5 — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Answers will be heard in silence. The opposition should cooperate with the minister and allow the minister to answer the question. I remind all members that it is not only the Chair but also members of the public who are interested in being able to hear the answer from the minister.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — We are very clear: we know that the job ahead is very hard. We know that the previous government has left the state in a very precarious position. I have been very pleased to be able to visit many — —

Mr Guy interjected.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — BAE Systems in Williamstown. Do you want to hear about jobs and saving jobs?

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

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — The Minister for Industry was either unwilling or unable to save 215 jobs at Coles in Victoria. Is she simply incompetent, or was the government's promise another Labor lie?

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Industry) — We as a government are very interested in making sure that Victorians can stay in jobs. We are offering the Coles workers assistance through the Business in Transition support program. That is what we are doing, but we are not going to rest on that. Every single day we will champion the job of every single Victorian in this state, and we are doing that by advocating federally for the sheer abject negligence of the federal government — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The opposition will come to order, and so will the government. The Chair is interested in the answer the minister is providing and, I repeat, so is the public. Members will allow the minister to continue to answer the question.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — We were elected with a clear vision and a clear plan to grow jobs and support jobs in this state. We will get on with it. We have the $500 million Premier's jobs and investment package, the $200 million for the Future Industries Fund, and we — —

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Speaker, the supplementary question was a very clear question: is the minister incompetent or is the Premier a liar? She should answer that question.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — Our commitment is clear: every single day will be a day on the job fighting for every job for Victorians, and we will not let them down.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, I submit that, in accordance with sessional order 11(2), neither the minister's answer to the substantive question nor answer to the supplementary question was responsive to the question, in that the subject of jobs at Coles was not mentioned in either response. I ask you to exercise your powers accordingly.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, the manager of opposition business is now cuddling up to the sessional orders he opposed. Notwithstanding that, the minister was asked — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the House will come to the point of order.

Ms Allan — The minister was asked about advocacy on job losses, and she made a very powerful case for the actions of the Andrews Labor government, and I would suggest that you rule the point of order out of order.

The SPEAKER — Order! I have heard sufficient. I have ruled on the points of order on both the first question and the supplementary question: the minister was being relevant.

Mr Clark — On a further point of order, Speaker, in relation to your ruling I submit that the application of sessional order 11(2) is a different matter to your rulings during the course of an answer as to whether or not an answer is relevant or is debating or whatever. I submit that you need to separately determine whether or not the answer has been responsive to the question rather than basing your ruling on the points of order during the course of the answer.

The SPEAKER — Order! I have accepted the point of order raised by the manager of opposition business on the basis that it is a different point of order. I further indicate to the opposition that I have made a ruling that the minister was being responsive.

Ministers statements: trade missions

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I am very pleased to make a statement to update the house on this government's program of inbound trade missions. As you know, Speaker, and as perhaps all members know — certainly all those on this side of the house know — trade missions are not just about transactions or occasional visits — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Speaker, I seek your guidance as to whether or not an update is actually a new initiative, project or achievement. The Premier has clearly stated that he is updating the house, and I would submit to you that that is not new, it is simply an update, and I seek your guidance as to whether he is being relevant.

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order; the Premier had hardly begun.

Mr ANDREWS — The inbound trade mission has not happened yet, so it would be new to provide the house with details of it. We on this side of the house know that this program of inbound trade missions will create opportunities, jobs and prosperity, and it is in full deliverance of our commitment before the election.

I can inform the member for Burwood and all honourable members that the first of these inbound trade missions will occur between 11 and 18 March, that it will be across a number of different sectors and that it will see more than 200 senior buyers and investors from right around the world visiting our great city and our great state. They will come from China, the USA, Canada, the United Kingdom, Bahrain, India, Brazil, Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan and Thailand.

The delegation represents industries from many different parts of our economy. The trade mission represents great opportunities for the future in areas not limited to but of course including food and fibre, international education, health and medical technology, and professional services. These inbound trade missions will be an opportunity — hopefully with bipartisan support — to showcase all that we do so well as an economy and a community.

I cannot think of a better way to showcase all those sectors and so many more than to bring those senior buyers, senior investment decision-makers, to our great state to see what amazing opportunities there are for investment in Victoria.

Employment

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — My question is to the Minister for Industry. I refer to the Premier's pledge that he would fight for every job in Victoria, and I ask the minister: what discussions did she have with ANZ before they withdrew 130 Victorian financial services industry jobs?

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Industry) — When we came to government unemployment right here in Victoria was the highest in mainland Australia — 6.8 per cent. We are very clear, we are absolutely clear, about what our agenda is: we will advocate for every single job in this state. We will advocate up hill and down dale; that is what we will do. We have a very clear agenda, a very clear plan, to keep people in work and to grow the jobs. We have a $500 million Premier's investment and jobs plan, a strategy — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair needs to be able to hear the answer in order to be able to make proper rulings should they be required. I ask members of the government and the opposition to allow the minister to continue to answer the question in silence.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — We stand ready as a government to have dialogue and to engage with any industry, any business leaders in this state — and we are doing it. We are not wasting any time. We have a commitment to invest $200 million in the Future Industries Fund, and we are now developing strategies for each of those six key industry sectors that have the potential for growth and a future here in this state. We will invest — —

Ms Ryall — On a point of order, Speaker, the question was a very specific to discussions with ANZ over job losses, and I ask you to draw the minister to actually answering the question rather than giving a diatribe about what they think — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Ringwood knows not to enter into debate or into repeat the question. The minister was being relevant. The question asked was in relation to jobs in Victoria. That becomes part of the question. There is no point of order.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — I want to be very clear about this: not every single business comes to government before they actually put people off work. That is the reality of it, but we are out there. I am out there every single day talking with every single business that wants to engage with government, and I am keen to make sure that the door is always open for this government. This government is open for business — every single door of every single minister on the front bench is open for every business. We want to work collaboratively and engage, with a plan to — —

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, as per some of your previous rulings from last week when you said that answers need to have a semblance of response to the question that had been asked, the member for Warrandyte's question was very specifically around jobs lost at ANZ in Melbourne, and the minister has not mentioned ANZ once. Half her time is gone, and I ask you to bring her back — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition knows that he should not enter into repeating the question or debating the answer.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, you have already ruled on the point of order. It is similar to previous points of order. The question did refer to fighting for jobs and jobs and investment in the state of Victoria, and the minister is being entirely relevant to the question that was asked.

Mr Guy interjected.

Ms Allan — The Leader of the Opposition can stamp his feet all he likes. He may wish to do that in his questions in question time.

Mr Watt — On the point of order, Speaker, the question was very specific to ANZ, and I would think that the minister should have to at least mention ANZ in her answer for it to be relevant. I support the point of order raised by the Leader of the Opposition.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — We will stand by every single worker, and we will stand by every single business that wants to engage with this government. We have a plan, we have commitments that we took to the last election, and we will grow jobs in this state. We will not stand by idly and watch the passing parade of jobs that leave this state.

When we came into government we had unemployment that was the highest in mainland Australia — 6.8 per cent. We will be very clear. We are now wasting no time on rolling out a $500 million package for the Premier's jobs and investment plan, the *Back to Work* plan, that is now stuck in the upper house. I urge those opposite to move quickly and not lose time but to actually pass that legislation. Our plan is clear. It is sitting in the upper house. That is part of our plan. I urge the opposition to pass that and not waste one more minute.

Supplementary question

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — With the Premier also promising to stop the offshoring of financial services industry jobs, can the minister guarantee that from today there will be no more job losses in this crucial industry — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask government members to allow the shadow minister, on behalf of the opposition, to ask the question, which I need to be able to hear. The member for Warrandyte will ask the question again.

Mr R. SMITH — With the Premier also promising to stop the offshoring of financial services industry jobs, can the minister guarantee that from today there will be no more job losses in this crucial industry, or is that promise of the Premier also another Labor lie?

Ms Allan — On a point of order, Speaker, I seek your guidance in directing the minister to answer this question, because it appears to introduce substantially new material that does not directly relate to the original question that was asked or to the answer provided by the minister. If the shadow minister wants to explore a different policy area of government to the one he asked about in his original question, he can ask another question at a later point during question time. I would suggest this is not a matter for a supplementary question, because it substantially differs from the original question that was asked.

Mr Clark — On the point of order, Speaker, the substantive question related, as you have already ruled, to jobs in Victoria, in particular jobs with ANZ, and the supplementary question relates to financial services industry jobs, obviously including those at ANZ and those at other businesses in the financial services sector, so in that respect the supplementary is fully in accordance with the substantive question.

The SPEAKER — Order! The question is in order, and I ask the minister to respond it.

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Industry) — We will implement every single election commitment — every single promise — and we will not let anyone down on that front. Every single commitment will be implemented. That includes local content, and it includes the financial services industry.

Ministers statements: Office of Living Victoria

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water) — I want today to inform the house that I have announced that I have appointed a former Auditor-General, Des Pearson, to undertake an independent audit and inquiry into the operation of the Office of Living Victoria (OLV). This review will look at all aspects of the business of OLV, particularly following the money and looking at how every contract was awarded, how grants were determined and how that money was spent. Basically, did Victorian taxpayers get value for the millions of dollars that were invested in the organisation and its grant programs?

We are doing this because, firstly, the Ombudsman in her report recommended that more work was absolutely required. Secondly, when I had a look at the grants and the projects that were awarded and at some of the internal reports it was clear to me that there were some serious issues that we needed to investigate further and to investigate independently. The Ombudsman tabled in this house a scathing report on the OLV, identifying serious breaches of governance and issues such as millions of dollars having been spent on consultants and agency staff who had a conflict of interest, and a persistent failure to comply with Victorian government procurement policies. In fact the Ombudsman identified this as one of the worst examples her office had come across. This is why one of our first acts in government was to abolish the Office of Living Victoria.

This is not a witch-hunt. This is a genuine attempt to get to the bottom of what happened at OLV, and I am very confident that Mr Pearson will ensure that he will have the confidence of all of us in his review, that the matter will be fully investigated and that the investigation will be fully independent.

Rail manufacturing industry

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) — My question is to the Minister for Industry. I refer to the fact that last year Labor promised an immediate pipeline of work for the Victorian rail manufacturing industry, and I ask: given that the so-called immediate pipeline has dried up, and

with Alstom now considering the future of its Ballarat operations, when will the government get around to providing this desperately needed work, or was this promise just another Labor lie?

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Industry) — I thank the member for his question. I want to say that one thing is for sure: when the government had the option last year of throwing out a lifeline to Alstom, the government was nowhere to be seen. That is the reality of it. It had the option in 2014 to purchase more trains from Alstom. That is what it had. We will — —

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Speaker, which I think you can anticipate, the minister is clearly straying into debate by attacking the opposition. I ask you to bring her back to the question that was asked.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister was referring to a previous government administration. The minister is in order.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — This is what we were faced with after we won the election. We had nothing happening from the other side. What we have said is very clear: we will work to support businesses such as Alstom. We have plans in place that will be referred to very soon. But let us be very clear about this. We have an absolute commitment, and we have already made very clear our policies of minimum local content — 50 per cent — on future rolling stock. We have made a very clear commitment for 100 per cent sourcing of steel from Australia for our 50 level crossings.

I have actually had meetings with Alstom, and that might come as a surprise to the opposition, but the reality is that we are very clear as the government about the situation that the previous government left Alstom in. We will not stand by and let Alstom slip away, unlike the previous government, which did nothing and stood on the sidelines while we had marches of people walking out the door and businesses leaving.

We now have a *Back to Work* plan in the upper house, which we want the opposition to vote for so that we can pass it and get people back to work. But let us be very clear that it is only the Andrews Labor government that supports every single worker, and we will not let any single worker down. We will not let Alstom down.

Supplementary question

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) — With the Premier boasting in October last year, 'We will get involved in this and waste not even one day', I ask: with 87 days already wasted after coming to government, will the minister apologise to the people of Ballarat for yet another broken Labor promise?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has shown that he has the best lungs in this chamber. Great lungs!

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Industry) — I am very pleased to receive the supplementary question, as I am with every question that comes from the opposition. Let us be very clear about what we are faced with right now in this term of government with Alstom. A minister in the previous government said with respect to rolling stock:

> We did that. We ordered the rolling stock, and the rolling stock will be here when it will be here. I don't know when. I don't know whether we ordered it too late.

That was a former minister, Damian Drum, a member for Northern Victoria Region in the other house. This is what we are dealing with when it comes to Alstom.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is now debating the question. I ask you to bring her back to answering the question that was asked.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the minister to come back to answering the question.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — The answer to the question of course lies with the opposition's frontbench — the former minister. Let us be clear that we are not wasting one single day. We have a plan, and we will have more to say on Alstom in time. That is what we will do, and we will not stand by and let Alstom and other businesses wither on the vine. That is what they were faced with when those on the opposite benches were in government.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ministers statements: roads and bridges

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — It is a pleasure to update the house on two significant commitments of the Andrews government relating to road upgrades in outer suburban — —

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Speaker, I seek your guidance. I would like it if you could make a ruling based on whether or not an update — and I understand that it has only been 8 seconds — —

The SPEAKER — Order! What is the member's point of order? The member will come directly to making a point of order.

Mr Watt — I simply seek your guidance as to whether an update is a new initiative, project or achievement. The minister has quite clearly stated that he is updating the house, and any layperson — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The member was doing well but not now. The member will resume his seat. There is no point of order.

Mr DONNELLAN — It is a pleasure to update the house with new information on our marvellous — —

Mr Watt — On a further point of order, Speaker, given your ruling, I simply renew my question, which is — —

The SPEAKER — Order! I have ruled on the point of order.

Mr DONNELLAN — The member for Burwood is a goose. Seriously!

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the member for Hawthorn that when the Chair is on his feet the member will remain silent. I will be seeking advice from the Clerk on a particular matter, and the house will pause for a few seconds.

The minister will withdraw his remark and continue with answering the question.

Mr DONNELLAN — I happily withdraw the remark, and I will get back to our Stronger Country Bridges program, which is a great program. There is $35.8 million to strengthen a total of 48 regional bridges along regional freight routes. This will substantially reduce costs and improve productivity for the industry. The work is expected to start later this year. Of the 48 bridges, 31 are along freight routes such as the Hume Highway, the Goulburn Valley Highway, the Western Highway and the Monash Freeway.

The second commitment we made, in regard to outer suburban roads, was to bring forth work on the Drysdale bypass, Thompsons Road, Yan Yean Road, Plenty Road and Napier Street, Bendigo. Above all else, it was very positive to see the former employer of both the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of The Nationals, the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF), saying:

> It's good to see the Labor government are wasting no time in upgrading country Victoria's regional freight and level crossings.

Mr Tuohey said:

> Investing in transport and infrastructure projects holds the key to unlocking rural Victoria's economic potential.

We have been given a big tick and a seal of approval by the VFF.

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

Employment

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — My question is to the Minister for Industry. I again refer to the Premier's pledge that his government would fight for every job, and I ask: with Labor's reckless decision to scrap the east–west link now costing jobs at companies like William Adams CAT, what has the minister done to fight for the jobs of these workers, or are these jobs expendable just to save inner city Labor seats from the Greens?

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Industry) — I thank the member for his question but certainly not for delivering a 6.8 per cent unemployment rate, the highest in mainland Australia, when those opposite left government. That is what we got from the opposition. What absolute gall from the opposition! We have been very clear about what our agenda is. It is to grow jobs — —

Ms Ryall — On a point of order, Speaker, the answer should not be related to what the opposition says, thinks or does. There is a specific question here, and I ask you to draw the minister back to it.

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

Ms D'AMBROSIO — When we came into government we faced an unemployment level of 6.8 per cent, the highest in mainland Australia. We faced a situation where we had nothing happening under the previous government, and this is the context that is important for us to understand. The types of questions we are being thrown by the opposition here today say that we have a feigned interest in every single worker in this state and a feigned interest in every single business in the Victorian economy when in fact we have had nothing but grandstanding today from members of the opposition because they did nothing for four years in government — nothing to help our economy, nothing to drive jobs, no pipeline of investment — —

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is now debating the question. I ask you to bring her back to answering it.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the minister to come back to answering the question.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — I want to be very clear about this: Victoria used to be the powerhouse of Australia's economy. The Andrews Labor government has a plan to get Victoria back to that status because every single worker deserves that. Every single business deserves that. What we will do is very clear. We have been very clear about the removal of 50 level crossings, which will inject significant amounts of money and investment into businesses in Victoria, with 50 per cent local content and also of course the jobs that go with that. We will do that, and we are not wasting a single day, unlike those on the other side.

Supplementary question

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — With William Adams CAT now openly discussing redundancies, nine-day fortnights and annual leave reductions due to Labor's reckless decision to scrap the east–west link, I ask the minister: when is she scheduled to meet William Adams CAT, or has she not even bothered to contact the company?

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Industry) — I am interested in meeting with every single business, and I will do that. I will fight for every single job. My department is now already engaged in discussions with William Adams CAT, and we are not wasting time. We do not have to wait for members of the opposition to tell us what to do, because the fact is that if we were waiting for them we would stand here doing nothing.

We have a very clear commitment. We will fight every single day with the jobs plan we have that is now stuck in the upper house. We urge the opposition to stop playing silly political games — because it has learnt nothing from the last election — and to get on with business and to pass that legislation in the upper house.

Ministers statements: emergency services report

Ms GARRETT (Minister for Emergency Services) — Today the Andrews Labor government is publicly releasing a comprehensive and detailed report which contains both great news and shocking news for Victorians. The report is about a life-saving pilot program that was run by the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and Ambulance Victoria in 2012, right at the height of the ambulance crisis that gripped this state. The pilot involved five CFA brigades where training and equipment were provided so that there could be response to the top emergency cases, such as cardiac arrest, in an effort to make sure that sick people were reached as quickly as possible.

The report shows that the results were outstanding and that lives were saved. Instead of an average 15.1-minute response time for Ambulance Victoria cases alone, when both agencies were dispatched response times were cut to an average of 12.6 minutes. We know that in life-and-death situations every second counts. In almost 40 per cent of the 600 cases the report looked at the CFA got there first, and when its officers dealt with people in cardiac arrest on the scene, survival rates for those people improved dramatically. That is the great news.

The shocking news is what was done by the previous government about this report in 2012. We understand — —

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, I draw your attention to sessional order 7, which provides that statements by ministers need to be in relation to new government initiatives, projects and achievements. While the minister, as you ruled yesterday, is entitled to make passing reference to the context, I submit that with barely 37 seconds to go the minister has made more than passing reference and needs to come to the point of the new government initiative to which her statement relates.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, the member's point of order should be ruled out of order because in informing the house of any information about this report that has been released today it is entirely appropriate to explain the context in which this report has sat within government over recent times. The minister's statement is entirely in order, and the member's point of order should be ruled out of order.

Mr Watt — On the point of order, Speaker, the Leader of the House has just belled the cat — she just said it is new information. Sessional orders do not say anything about new information; they talk about new initiatives, projects and achievements.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not need advice from government members. The member will make his point of order or resume his seat.

Mr Watt — As the Leader of the House said, the minister is clearly discussing new information, and that

is not within the sessional orders, so I support the manager of opposition business in his point of order.

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

Ms GARRETT — It is new information because the mob opposite sat on this report for two years, and what we are doing is releasing the report. Not only are we releasing this report, which contains life-saving information, we are going to deliver this program to all 33 integrated stations. We are going to save lives, unlike you.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister will speak through the Chair.

Ms GARRETT — Unlike this mob — we know the tennis was very good for the last few years! — we are not sitting on this report. We are acting, and this government will save lives.

Employment

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Minister for Industry. This Friday, Dairy Bell is scheduled to close its factory, followed by five of its retail outlets, after 44 years in Victoria. On top of job losses under Labor at ANZ, Coles, Telstra, Ernest Hillier, IBM and Better Foods, I ask the minister: does this not show that Labor's so-called jobs plan, promising 100 000 new jobs, is simply another Labor lie?

Ms Thomson — On a point of order, Speaker, I submit that the question as asked by the Leader of the Opposition and by other members opposite in regard to Labor lies is not in fact accurate, and questions should be factual. This question is not factual, and I ask that that language not be allowed in asking the question and that the Leader of the Opposition be asked to rephrase his question.

Mr GUY — On the member's point of order, if she would like me and the opposition to provide some factual information about the job — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The Premier will come to order and government members will come to order. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to rephrase his question.

Mr GUY — On a point of clarification, Speaker, which part would you like me to rephrase?

The SPEAKER — Order! I am very sure that the Leader of the Opposition is fully aware that the part to be rephrased is the latter part of his question that relates to Labor lies. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to rephrase that part of the question.

Mr GUY — Speaker, in deference to you, of course I will do that. Noting that this question has been asked four times and noting that this Friday Dairy Bell is scheduled to close its factory, followed by five retail outlets, after 44 years of operation in Victoria, and noting that this is on top of job losses under this government at ANZ, Coles, Telstra, Ernest Hillier, IBM and Better Foods, I ask: does this not show that the minister's so-called jobs plan promising 100 000 new jobs is simply and utterly not working?

The SPEAKER — Order! The question is totally in order. The minister will answer the question.

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Industry) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. The only thing that is not working is the opposition, because if it had the interests of Victorian jobs at heart it would be passing that legislation in the upper house and not wasting its breath grandstanding as it is here today. Let us be very clear that we are getting on with the projects that the Victorian people voted for: 4500 jobs in removing 50 level crossings; 3500 jobs in Melbourne Metro; $200 million for the Future Industries Fund, including food and fibre — something the opposition knew nothing about and cared nothing about when it was in government. It had four years of doing absolutely nothing.

We have a plan, and we are getting on with it. It is now incumbent on the opposition to do the right thing and match its words to even a 5 per cent degree and pass that legislation in the upper house. Then we will get on with it. Let us start rolling. We will not be wasting any time. We have the funding, we have the plans and we have the vision. We have a commitment, and we will meet every single commitment that we made to the Victorian people for their jobs and their businesses.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — Noting that the minister seemed not to mention once the words 'Dairy Bell' in her answer, nor 'Coles', nor any of the others, I simply ask: will the minister join me this Friday at Dairy Bell to explain to staff why Labor's jobs plan has utterly failed them — yes or no?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition has asked the question. He will allow the minister to respond to his question.

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Industry) — I thank the opposition leader for his supplementary question. This is from an opposition that in government sacked 4000 people, and here its members are today feigning interest in every single — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, it was a very succinct and direct question. The minister is debating the question, and I ask you to bring her back to answering it.

Mr Pakula — On the point of order, Speaker, you ruled earlier today, with regard to constituency questions, that questions had to be seeking information rather than an action. It strikes me as very — —

Mr Guy interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition will allow the member to continue.

Mr Pakula — It is a question. With regard to the point of order raised by the member for Box Hill, in which he said the minister was debating the question, I put it to you that when an action is sought rather than information it is very difficult for the minister to do anything but debate the question. On that point, Speaker, you may want to rule on whether or not seeking an action rather than information is in fact allowable.

The SPEAKER — Order! I uphold the point of order.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — I meet every single day with businesses, and I will continue to do that. I will continue to work alongside businesses and consult with them about how our plans — the plans of the Andrews Labor government — can assist them in keeping their businesses open and people employed. We will not waste any single day by doing just that.

Ministers statements: rural and regional schools

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — The Andrews Labor government will address the neglect that regional and rural schools have suffered over the last four years. Support structures for our regional schools crumbled, dwindling from one senior officer supporting 25 schools to one officer supporting up to over 60 schools. Somehow regional offices were miraculously supposed to be able to provide meaningful support to schools stretched across half the state, covering distances from Mallacoota to Mentone or from Footscray to Portland.

We will not continue this legacy of abandonment. We have wasted no time. Proposals for reform are being developed, and over the coming months I will be working with stakeholders across rural and regional Victoria, engaging with principals associations, regional networks and school communities as we collectively repair the damage of the last four years.

After four years of the school capital program being halved, our regions will also see the impact of our initial commitment of $530 million. I will name just a few. At Beaufort Secondary College — ignored for four years — we will upgrade facilities and finish the job Labor started; at Castlemaine Secondary College there will be a vital upgrade, including a high-tech engineering, chemistry and physics precinct; and at Kurnai College in Morwell the school urgently needs to be rebuilt as it is filled with asbestos and has rotting walls and serious problems with its plumbing and electrics. That was stalled under the previous government.

We are going to give back to the students of Morwell the school they deserve. There is also Drysdale Primary School; Warrnambool Special Developmental School — a school abandoned by the former Premier; Bendigo Senior Secondary College; and Phoenix P–12 College. Our schools have been abandoned for long enough. Only an Andrews government will make Victoria the education state.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Ferntree Gully electorate

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — (Question 72) I raise my question for the Minister for Public Transport. It relates to constituent queries that have been raised with me regarding the Ferntree Gully railway station. Last year there was an announcement that the railway station would be upgraded with the provision of 110 additional car parking spaces to be constructed at the station at a total cost of $1.1 million. That was certainly well received by all the commuters who use that station as well as the broader Knox community, as they knew it would improve the amenity of this important facility. The works were to commence this year. I raise the question with the minister and seek information and confirmation that the works will be commencing in this current calendar year.

Thomastown electorate

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) — (Question 73) I have a question for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Over the last four years residents of the Thomastown electorate have had to endure some of the worst traffic congestion I have ever experienced, yet they live at least 30 kilometres from the CBD. Over the last four years of the state Liberal-Nationals government, there has been no action to address this ever-worsening traffic crisis. Will the Labor Andrews government fulfil its election commitment to the O'Herns Road–Hume Freeway project to fix some of this traffic nightmare?

Ripon electorate

Ms STALEY (Ripon) — (Question 74) My question is to the Minister for Planning. I refer to the fact that on 23 January Somma Sourivong, Planning and Development Manager at the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, wrote on the minister's behalf to Mrs Diane Raeburn, a constituent of mine, about the Big Hill Enhanced Development Project (BHEDP) — a proposed open-cut mine in the middle of Stawell — and said:

> The former Minister for Planning's decision of the EES for the BHEDP project is final and cannot be reviewed or overturned.

I also refer to the fact that on 7 February 2015 the apparently confused Minister for Energy and Resources wrote to the same constituent and said:

> … I have asked the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources to identify an appropriate assessment pathway for a revised project proposal.

Given that the environment effects statement is either final or not, how does the minister reconcile this direct contradiction?

Macedon electorate

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — (Question 75) My question is directed to the Minister for Education. Daylesford Secondary College is one of three government secondary schools in my electorate and the only secondary college in the Shire of Hepburn. It is a fantastic school, but one that was wilfully neglected by the previous government. Labor completed stage 1 of the rebuild of Daylesford Secondary College in 2009, and in 2014 both the now Minister for Education and the now Premier visited the school and saw the state of the facilities. They were quite shocked. The community was thrilled when the now Minister for Education and Premier made a pre-election commitment of $10 million to complete the rebuild. The school is ready to go; the master plan has been dusted off, and the community is celebrating the end of four long years of neglect under the previous government. This commitment is about ensuring that young people in my community have the education facilities they deserve. I ask the minister to reaffirm this $10 million commitment and provide me with advice on time lines for the delivery of this project.

Benambra electorate

Mr TILLEY (Benambra) — (Question 76) My question is to the Minister for Education. In the 2014 state budget the coalition committed $3.8 million to upgrade the facilities at Wodonga West Primary School. An additional $650 000 was announced in October 2014 for an early learning centre as part of the development. It is becoming clear that the new government is seeking to delay demolition works until the end of this year. The school community is also concerned about the curious new demands being placed on the school to justify the need to replace these dilapidated buildings. Accordingly I ask: can the minister advise the current status of these upgrade works and provide an assurance that bureaucratic hurdles will not further delay these much-needed works?

Bendigo West electorate

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) — (Question 77) My constituency question is for the attention of the Minister for Training and Skills. Can the minister provide an update on the forced merger of Bendigo TAFE and the Kangan Institute instigated by the former government? This process was shrouded in secrecy at the time. There was a lack of transparency, and it was announced without any consultation with the Bendigo community. It is important for the Bendigo community and the future students of TAFE in regional Victoria to have a clearer understanding of the process surrounding the forced merger, an update on where the merger plan is at and what the future will deliver for students and staff at both campuses.

Eildon electorate

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) — (Question 78) My question is to the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water. During the last sitting week the minister stated:

> The first report that was ever done on cattle in Australia's high country and national parks dates back to the 1860s. That

report very clearly showed that cattle do an enormous amount of damage in our national parks and in our high country areas but make little impact on the prevention of burns.

Given Australia's first national park was established near Sydney in 1879 and did not have cattle, can the minister advise how cattle grazing is linked to fuel reduction in that report and extend her answer to detail how many subsequent trials and reports have actually addressed the impact of grazing on fuel reduction?

Dandenong electorate

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) — (Question 79) My constituency question is to the Minister for Public Transport. I ask that the minister provide some information about processes of community consultation in the removal of level crossings across the state, in particular the Abbotts Road level crossing in Dandenong South, one of my electorate's industrial hubs. Abbotts Road is a particularly dangerous level crossing, with two deaths at the site in recent years. In addition to these serious safety issues, the congestion caused by this crossing has been responsible for productivity losses for local businesses due to transport delays. Local businesses and their representatives have some thoughts on how this project may be carried forward with greatest benefit to local industry and community safety, and they are keen to share their ideas with government.

Caulfield electorate

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) — (Question 80) My question is to the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water. In September 2014 the Victorian Auditor-General's Office released a report titled *Management and Oversight of the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve*. The report highlighted that the significant trustees have not been effective in their overall management of the reserve, and that there is a need to improve arrangements to effectively guide the management of the reserve. The report also highlighted that the trustees have not established a strategic plan for land use and development. Consequently, conflicts of interest have not been adequately managed, and preference has been afforded to racing interests, with insufficient attention given to use of the reserve for recreational pursuits of the public.

A key issue in my electorate is the lack of open space and the pressure to find sporting facilities for football, cricket, soccer and even basketball. As I have stated publicly, the racecourse reserve could ideally be used for these sporting activities, which would complement its racing activities. I therefore ask: will the government action the recommendations of the Victorian Auditor-General's report, and encourage greater public use of the land and more transparency of the trust?

Oakleigh electorate

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) — (Question 81) My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Public Transport. The minister would be acutely aware of the congestion and safety issues at level crossings across Melbourne. In the electorate of Oakleigh there are level crossings which are desperately in need of removal and which I believe should be priorities — two in Murrumbeena, at Murrumbeena Road and Poath Road, and two in Carnegie, at Koornang Road and Grange Road. This arrangement of four level crossings in a row is unique in Melbourne. They choke traffic, north and south, morning and night.

Many of the crossings in the Oakleigh electorate are ranked by the RACV as amongst the worst in Melbourne, and previous consultation with the community has confirmed their significance. I note the urgency of the approach this government has adopted in setting up the Level Crossings Removal Authority. I seek advice and an update from the minister on this government's commitment to the much-needed removal of level crossings in the Oakleigh electorate and along the Dandenong corridor.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Infrastructure projects

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Mr Angus**) — Order! The Speaker has accepted a statement from the member for Warrandyte proposing the following matter of public importance for discussion:

That this house expresses concern on behalf of Victorians at the Andrews government's broken promises of shovel-ready projects and the consequences for jobs, investment and confidence in our state.

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — It gives me pleasure to rise on this matter of public importance. It is incredibly disappointing to have to rise today to highlight the growing list of promises made by this government to the people of Victoria that it has subsequently broken. Moreover, it is disappointing that these promises have been broken with such speed. It has only been a couple of months since the then opposition leader, now Premier, went to Victorians with a grand vision for Victoria — a pipeline of projects that would support jobs right across this state. In just a few short months we have seen the reality. We have seen the Premier for the person he is, and the promises for what they are — completely out of touch with reality.

The Premier told Victorians he would not waste one day in getting these projects going and that he would fight for every job. The reality is many projects have been slowed, and other projects that were apparently shovel-ready will not be started for months or years. They may not be started at all if the funding does not come through, and funding is another issue that has shocked Victorians.

On the Thursday before the election the then opposition leader did not stand in front of Victorians and say, 'We have got this great signature project, the West Gate distributor'. He did not say, 'It's only going to happen if we get funding'. The now Premier did not stand up and talk about the level crossing removals and say, 'Well, if we sell the port of Melbourne, then we will get these level crossings out'. He did not stand up with his signature Metro rail project and say, 'If we don't get federal funding, this is never going to happen'. He got up two days before the election and said, 'All our projects are fully costed and fully funded'. That is what he said and now we see, just a few short months later, that all of these projects are in question. The reality is that these projects were never fully costed; these projects were never fully funded. The reality is that there were disclaimers on each and every one of them, and he treated the Victorian public like fools in saying that they were ready.

Let us begin to talk about the government's 'shovel-ready' project. I use inverted commas around that term because the project is far from shovel ready. We have heard the Minister for Roads and Road Safety get up in this place on many occasions, and I think it is fair to say that not only members on this side of the house but those on the other side all agree that the minister has been appalling during question time. When we have asked the minister questions about this supposedly shovel-ready project we discover that he has absolutely no idea about the project. Moreover, this so-called shovel-ready project is far from that.

We have asked the Minister for Roads and Road Safety how many properties will be acquired as a result of the project. His answer was simply that people in the inner west support the project. I wonder how supportive those people who live in the inner west and who one day are going to get told that their houses will be acquired are going to be. We have asked the minister about the Aboriginal cultural heritage study, and he just tells us there will be some consultation. The reality is that those sorts of studies take some time. We have asked about a range of environmental issues, and we have asked him when soil survey results will be published. He just says that they are getting on with the job. The government needs to get on with the job and show us how shovel ready this project actually is!

We have also asked the minister about the cost blow-out on this project, which has jumped from $500 million to $680 million. The Minister for Roads and Road Safety got up in this house and said that this will definitely be a $500 million project. I ask the minister: why is it that the government has asked Infrastructure Australia for $680 million if the project is only going to cost $500 million? It is certainly a fact that it is a half a billion-dollar bottleneck.

I refer to the expression of interest (EOI) that was supposed to come out. Again, Victorians were led to believe that the expression of interest for this entire project would be out by Australia Day this year. Instead, we see an EOI for a fraction of this project. It is an EOI that amounts to nothing more than simply a set of traffic lights at an intersection. The fact is that there are many issues on this project that go to proving that it is not shovel ready. The government does not have a business case, it does not know where ramps and sound barriers are going to be, it has not done the design, it has not done an environment effects study, and it has not done a cultural heritage study.

This week we asked about who was going to be the planning authority. We asked whether it was going to be the City of Maribyrnong or the City of Hobsons Bay. The minister did not even know what council area the project was in. He did not even know what municipality this supposedly shovel-ready project was in. He told us that the City of Hobsons Bay had nothing to do with the project.

Ms Allan interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Mr Angus**) — Order! The Minister for Public Transport will have her turn in a minute.

Mr R. SMITH — It is absolutely appalling that the minister does not know anything about this supposedly shovel-ready project. We have proven it time and again. The media gallery knows, Victorians know and certainly the house knows that this shovel-ready project is anything but shovel ready.

Let me talk about the level crossings project. The government a few weeks ago was very excited about its level crossings project. Its media release is headed 'Work begins: removing our 50 worst level crossings'. This is one of the government's signature projects. The media release says it is going to remove level crossings at:

> Main Road in St Albans, Blackburn Road in Blackburn, Burke Road in Glen Iris and North Road in Ormond.

To show how little the government has to announce in reality, all you have to do is to look back at the *2014–15 Budget Overview*, which states:

> The 2014–15 budget invests $685 million to remove four level crossings … These level crossings are at:
>
> Main Road, St Albans …
>
> Blackburn Road, Blackburn;
>
> North Road, Ormond; and
>
> Burke Road, Glen Iris.

These projects were already planned and funded by the previous government. They were more than just planned and funded. In August last year the government of the day issued a media release entitled 'Napthine government releases tender to remove four notorious level crossings', which states:

> The Napthine government is providing $457 million to remove the level crossings at Burke Road, Glen Iris; North Road, Ormond; and Blackburn Road, Blackburn —

while $202 million is allocated for Main Road, St Albans.

We will not just leave it there. This project has been well and truly on track for a long time. Not only did the previous government fund it, plan it and put it out to tender, but also in October the coalition government put out a media release entitled 'Short-listed bidders to deliver metro level crossing blitz', which states:

> Following a competitive expressions of interest process, four stand-out bidders have been short-listed …

They were for — you guessed it — Main Road, St Albans; Blackburn Road, Blackburn; Burke Road, Glen Iris; and North Road, Ormond. If the only announcement this government can make on its signature project is about level crossings that have already been planned, funded and put out to tender with the tenderers short-listed, then it really does not have very much to offer this state. It is certainly spin over substance, and it seems now that every media release this government puts out will say that projects are either shovel-ready or fast-tracked. That is what we are seeing now. We see it, members of the media see it and Victorians see it. There is certainly no evidence from the government that it has anything new whatsoever to offer Victorians.

I turn to the east–west link. As an aside, I worry about the Minister for Roads and Road Safety's conflict, given that he lives in inner city Melbourne and not in Narre Warren North, which is the area he represents. I wonder whether his vehement opposition to this project is because he is worried about the area in which he lives. I think that is something we should look at.

The Premier on many occasions has said that the contracts for the east–west link are not worth the paper they are written on. The government has certainly been tying itself up in knots and scaring investors away from this state, given the fact that yesterday the Treasurer could not rule out drafting legislation to annul the compensation claims that will come as a result of the tearing up of contracts. It is interesting that the Premier's view on ripping up contracts has changed. In 2005 when talking about sovereign risk the now Premier, as recorded in *Hansard*, thought that ripping up contracts would lead to:

> … making some of the most savage cutbacks this state has ever seen. It will cut right into the heart of basic services …

He went on to say that this was:

> … vandalism and reckless approach that would mean country services would have to be cut in order to pay for this strategy of short-term political gain.

More recently, he said in a letter sent to then Premier, the member for South-West Coast:

> Labor has always said we will honour valid, legally binding contracts on any Victorian government project and we remain committed to this position.

The reality is he has not committed to that position, and the fall in business confidence that we have seen as a result of this reckless decision is something that is going to take a very long time to rebuild. Investors are going to be very gun-shy about coming to this state again and getting ready for major projects that the government might talk about. The fact that this Premier has been so reckless is absolutely appalling.

I could talk about jobs, and we talked about jobs in question time today. The Premier has said he will fight for every single job, but the reality is that while jobs are haemorrhaging in this state this government does not care about jobs at all. The fact that we are losing so many jobs is a real indictment of this government because many of those job losses are of the Premier's own making. We only have to look at the 3700 jobs that will no longer be there as a result of the east–west link contract being scrapped.

We could look at the Linking Melbourne Authority (LMA) jobs. If I remember rightly, before Christmas the Minister for Roads and Road Safety was quoted in the *Age* as saying that the Linking Melbourne Authority is a great organisation and that it obviously will not do

the east–west link but there are projects it can do. Not one month later the Treasurer was out there saying that the LMA was going to be abolished but that it would place the public servants from the LMA in the department. Not a month after that announcement people at the LMA were already receiving redundancy letters. The word of this government is worth pretty much nothing, and it is certainly not worth the paper it is written on.

There are other job losses resulting from the east–west link contract debacle, as far as ripping up the contract is concerned, and I will quote from the *Australian Financial Review*, which states:

> As many as 350 people have already lost work as a result of the halting of the $6.8 billion east–west link, after the main East West Connect consortium and a separate engineering consultancy suspended staff this week on the road-and-tunnel project.
>
> The Lend Lease-led East West Connect consortium has sent home 250 people from the St Kilda Road office it had established and it is believed about 100 staff from the Hyder-Parsons Brinckerhoff joint venture have also been suspended.

The reality is we are seeing job losses everywhere. We are seeing job losses at the Port of Hastings Development Authority, with 70 jobs gone — but hang on, sorry, they are not jobs. The Minister for Ports told us that contractors are not actually people who work, they are not workers at all, so those job losses do not mean anything to this government — they do not count at all. It is just appalling. We saw in question time today an absolutely appalling contribution from the Minister for Industry, who repeatedly said, 'This government has a plan. We're going to fight for every job. I will meet with businesses. I stand ready to have dialogue' — that is going to help! — and 'We're growing jobs, we're not wasting a day'.

How can a government say it is growing jobs when we have had job losses at the ANZ, at Coles, at Dairy Bell, at Betta Foods and at Ernest Hillier? These job losses are mounting up day by day, and the argument we are getting from the government is simply, 'Our Back to Work bill is held up in the upper house'. I am sure Alstom is not waiting for the bill to go through the house; it is waiting for an order from this government, whose Premier said he would not waste one day — not one day — making sure Alstom was looked after. Now we see, 87 days later, that Alstom is seriously worried about whether it can continue its operations in Ballarat.

I look at the government's *Project 10 000* document, and I have to laugh at every single item bullet-pointed on its front page. The first bullet point says the government will 'Remove our 50 worst level crossings' — starting with the 8 that have been funded, planned, put out to tender and short-listed by the government. The second bullet point says, 'Build Melbourne Metro rail' — only if it gets the funding of course. The third bullet point says, 'Get 5000 trucks a day off the West Gate Bridge'. The RACV says that getting 5000 trucks off is an absolute joke and a fanciful idea at best. Is this particular project going to cost us half a billion dollars or $680 million? Is it going to be more? Who knows? The fourth bullet point says, '$2 billion for roads' — but of course none for local government, because the government is cutting the $160 million country roads and bridges program. It is cutting that program, so there will be no jobs at the shires. The shires will not be able to keep people on to do that job.

The fifth bullet point on this document says, 'Create 10 000 construction jobs' — starting with cutting 3700 jobs that were already in the pipeline for construction. I have to say that we are starting a little bit behind, and I am sure Victorians know that too.

No-one has said it better than the Treasurer of this state. In an *Age* article of 10 December he gave this message to all Victorians:

> If you are asking me if the government is locked and loaded for the next four years, it is not.

That is from the guy who is running the finances of this state. The words of the Treasurer pretty well cover off on the whole direction this government is taking. It is not locked and it is not loaded. Every so-called shovel-ready project is not ready and every project that was on foot has been delayed, and Victorians are very disappointed with the pup they were sold by the Premier.

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — What a lame, sad attempt that was from the shadow minister for roads and infrastructure in an attempt to gloss over the fact that when we came to government this state had the highest unemployment rate on mainland Australia. The legacy of the former minister and his cronies on the other side was that they left this state with skyrocketing levels of unemployment. They wasted four years. Those opposite want to talk about shovel-ready projects, but for four long years the community of Victoria was pleading with the former government to get on with it and to have some projects to support, but it absolutely failed to do that. It did deliver some projects, but they were all projects started and funded by the former Labor government.

Mr Mulder interjected.

Ms ALLAN — In the transport portfolio that was so true. The signature project, the $4 billion regional rail link project, was started and funded by the former Labor government. We set up the balls in the cue rack, and the former government could not even put them away. That is how hopeless the former government was. We have seen in the house today, whether it was during question time or just now during the matter of public importance debate, the crocodile tears from those opposite shedding tears for workers. We did not see too many tears when they were in government. We did not see them putting their shoulder to the wheel and having a jobs plan for this state — no, they were not interested when they were in government. They were interested in workers when they were in government only if they wanted to bag the life out of them because they dared to be a member of a union and stand up for their rights.

Other than that, they were not interested in the workers. Their own workforce was slashed by 4500 jobs. That was one of their very first acts on coming to government. The crocodile tears from those opposite long after the horse has bolted can be seen for what they are — a pathetic attempt to block the government's agenda of delivering jobs and infrastructure projects for the state of Victoria. We have a very strong program for jobs and infrastructure in the state of Victoria.

Instead of writing sad, lame notes for a speech in this sort of debate, I suggest to those opposite that they should be rushing into the Legislative Council right now and demanding that their colleagues pass the government's Back to Work Bill 2014. At the moment there is uncertainty around the bill, which is designed to create jobs and support employers to employ more people. One would have thought that the Liberal Party might have supported that bill. This is about supporting employers. One would have thought that might be something members of the Liberal Party would support — but no. They are in opposition now, so it is: 'Why would we want to support an initiative that might create jobs? Goodness knows we didn't when we were in government, so why would we bother now?'. The very first act of this opposition should be to assist the passage of the government's Back to Work Bill in the upper house. That will be its choice tomorrow. The opposition can make sure it is passed this week and it can make sure it is in operation as soon as possible rather than blocking this critical piece of legislation which makes sure we can get on and create jobs in Victoria.

I want to talk now about a few of the projects that the Andrews Labor government is getting on with delivering, and we have a very strong program. I will start with the 50 level crossings removal project. We made a commitment to remove 50 of the most dangerous and congested level crossings across metropolitan Melbourne. If we want to talk about the support of the Victorian community, I think it spoke strongly and loudly at last November's state election about which projects it supports. The community got in behind our 50 level crossings removal project because it understood that the project will make a difference in local communities, improve safety at so many places across our rail network and enable us to deliver more rail services as well. Critically, this project is also going to create 4500 much-needed jobs during its construction.

We have already started work on this project. We did not want to wait, as the former government did; we saw that government waste four long years. We have already kickstarted this project. We have set up the Level Crossings Removal Authority, which is getting on with planning the 50 level crossings removal project, and we are going to push on with how we will fund the project. This is an important point. The shadow minister for roads and infrastructure, the member for Warrandyte, may regret raising the issue of how the level crossings removal project is going to be funded.

We have already communicated to the Victorian community that we want to fund the level crossings removal project through the sale of a long-term lease for the port of Melbourne. If there is any question about this, it will come from those blockers opposite. Our proposal to sell a long-term lease for the port of Melbourne is identical to the proposal that those opposite put forward last year and were well down the path of advancing. If they oppose the level crossings removal project, does that mean they have now turned their back on the sale of a long-term lease for the port of Melbourne? Not only do they want to be train vandals; they want to be economic vandals as well by stopping the level crossings removal project and stopping the government's agenda when it comes to the sale of a lease for the port of Melbourne.

The shadow minister tried to be a bit clever in talking about four of the level crossings that are out to market. Project 10 000, which listed the 50 most dangerous level crossings to be removed, was released in October 2013 — —

Mr Mulder interjected.

Ms ALLAN — That is the most action the former Minister for Public Transport has engaged in for a very long time.

We released our Project 10 000 list in October 2013. Initially it was opposed and talked down by those opposite, then lo and behold, what popped up in last year's budget? Some funding for the four level crossings that were already on the Labor Party's list for removal. They were happy to be copycats after we had released the list. They included four of the level crossings that were on Labor's list. The shadow minister made something of this. The shadow minister might want to know how much of the $600 million in funding that was allocated in last year's budget has been spent. How much do members think might have been spent by the end of last year? All that was spent on that project was $1 million. Those opposite were so committed to it happening straightaway that they spent all of $1 million. That is exactly the sort of lazy, slow response that we reject.

We are already pushing on with the removal of the 50 most dangerous level crossings — —

Ms Ryall — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I bring to the attention of the house that preliminary works go on prior to that, and there has been no reference made to that. I suggest — —

Ms ALLAN interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Mr Angus**) — Order! That is not a point of order. I do not need the assistance of the minister in ruling on the point of order. I have ruled it out of order.

Ms ALLAN — It is pretty clear to the house today that the opposition opposes our 50 level crossings removal project. It opposed it last November during the state election. The Victorian community has spoken and is clearly behind the removal of 50 of our most dangerous level crossings.

I turn now to the Melbourne Metro project. Goodness me! What a disgrace it is for those opposite to even want to talk about this project, because if they were fair dinkum about seeing the Melbourne Metro project realised, they would have supported it. There is a business case for the Melbourne Metro project — a project that is going to create 3500 jobs during construction. We could have had that project underway by now. The business case was largely complete, but it was left sitting on the shelf for four long years under those opposite. Despite the former minister telling the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee in 2013 that this was the no. 1 project, despite the community pleading for it and despite the rail system desperately needing it for extra capacity on our rail network, this no. 1 rated Infrastructure Australia project for Victoria sat on the shelf for four long years.

The Andrews Labor government breathed new life into this project last week, and we have committed significant funds to get the Melbourne Metro project moving again. We have put in $40 million this current financial year to set up the authority and get the detailed planning work done so that we can get an expression of interest out to market next year and see significant construction start in 2018. It is what our construction industry needs, it is what our rail system needs and it is what Infrastructure Australia says our state needs as well.

What we need in Victoria is for those opposite to pick up the phone to their Liberal mates in Canberra and say, 'Get behind this project'. We have seen the federal government support urban rail projects right around the country, including the regional rail link. There is no reason other than pure politics — petty politics — for the federal government not to get behind and support the Melbourne Metro project. Infrastructure Australia thinks it should. The community certainly thinks it should. Organisations like the Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the RACV think we should do this, and the Lord Mayor of the City of Melbourne thinks we should do this.

I would love it if we could have a bipartisan ticket on this issue and be able to say to Prime Minister Tony Abbott and the federal government, 'Get behind this project, it makes sense, it will create jobs and it will create a significant economic boost through the improved transport infrastructure that we can provide as a result of it'. I just hope that those opposite drop their opposition to this vitally important project. I am always an optimist, and I will always be pleased to see the views of those opposite change on these matters.

I turn now to a couple of other important projects. Last week we announced that we are fast-tracking the Murray Basin rail freight project. It is interesting to note that in relation to rail freight, it is only ever Labor governments that invest in regional Victoria's rail freight network. Those of us who remember know it was the former Labor government that had to buy back the rail freight network after a failed privatisation attempt by the former Liberal-Nationals government of the 1990s.

We got Tim Fischer to do a review and oversaw a significant investment in upgrading the lines, and now it will only be a Labor government that will deliver the Murray Basin rail freight project. We are injecting significant funds to see this important project

supported. The Victorian Farmers Federation loves it — its members think it is great — as does the Mildura Development Corporation. A chap by the name of Chris Crewther is well known to those opposite; he is not so much liked by The Nationals, but he is known well by those in the Liberal Party. He said on behalf of the Mildura Development Corporation:

> We are very excited about this project going ahead and thank the Victorian government for their funding commitment today.

That takes me to the other project that we talked about last week — a new project on the agenda — which is going to make a great difference to public transport commuters and the city of Melbourne: the upgrade of Flinders Street station. This is going to be an important piece of work. It is going to upgrade and restore the heritage facade of this building; it is going to make the upstairs space usable. It is a disgrace that those opposite wasted four years dancing around this issue. They could have got on with these works straightaway. We are doing it.

I think the Lord Mayor put it pretty well last week. He said on 3AW:

> I would rather have something done than the world's most ambitious plan.

He said it right. He is dead right. He knows that the former government's plans around Flinders Street station were pie in the sky. They were not funded. There was not a dollar in the state budget for any of the plans that were submitted as part of the design competition — not a dollar. We rejected that go slow, do nothing approach, and we want to see Flinders Street station respected. This is a fantastic, grand old building that deserves respect. We are upgrading the facade and improving the public transport passenger facilities, because it is the busiest station in the Melbourne transport system. It is what this grand old building deserves.

There are so many other projects we are getting on with — whether it be the roads, bridges or level crossings in country Victoria — that there will be action on this year. We have had a lot of work to get through over the last 12 weeks. We have had 12 weeks to kick this state into action again. We have had to get projects moving, we have had to bring money forward in the budget and we have had to shake things up, because for four long years the state was on cruise control with the driver asleep at the wheel. That is not good enough.

We want to see this state once again be the state that creates jobs, drives economic activity and supports local infrastructure projects. We are already getting on with it. This year's budget will get on with it even further, and we look forward to delivering on each and every one of our commitments to the Victorian community.

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — Listening to that speech is like listening to the kind of delusion on display when Khrushchev told Nixon that Soviet TV was better quality than American TV. It is the kind of delusion that you would only get from the Labor Party, whose members force themselves to believe the view of the world that what comes out of their mouths is somehow law and gospel and absolutely right. It is the kind of view of the world that the north–south pipeline was good policy, and that everyone in regional Victoria wanted it. It is the kind of delusion that said that a desalination plant — the biggest in the world — was going to be necessary immediately for Victoria and that we should sign away contracts, whatever it took, to build it and build it immediately. It is the kind of delusion that says that Cain and Kirner were good economic managers, but of course we have the sons and daughters of Cain and Kirner now back here in government, trying to spin the same kind of wanton delusion to this house.

I note the shovel-ready projects this government has talked about. It is a great term, 'shovel ready'. I do not know if the Minister for Roads and Road Safety knows that you can get a shovel for $9.50 at Bunnings — a shovel for only $9.50! I wish he did know that, because $9.50 per shovel for the West Gate distributor, which I note the previous speaker did not talk about, would in fact be the biggest spend from the government for the West Gate distributor up to date. Let us have a look at this West Gate distributor, because as it has been put out by the roads minister, it is the biggest road project in Victoria. That is what he would have us all believe. It has come out of nowhere, perhaps out of Luke Donnellan's mind when he was in the cafe up in Fitzroy that he likes to go to all the time on the weekend.

Mr Scott — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, members should be referred to by their correct titles.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Mr Angus**) — Order! I uphold the point of order.

Mr GUY — That is quite right, Acting Speaker, though I thought his accurate title was withdrawn sometime in question time! He mentioned it himself. I am referring to the member for Narre Warren North.

Let us go through things again in relation to this West Gate distributor, because we are told it is the biggest

road project in Victoria — bigger than the necessity for a second river crossing for the West Gate Bridge, bigger than the east–west link, bigger than the north–east link and bigger than the Thompson Road upgrade. This is apparently the biggest. Let us have a look — is it shovel ready? The Labor government says, 'This is shovel ready'. That is what telling — —

Mr Richardson interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Mr Angus**) — Order! The member for Mordialloc will cease interjecting in that manner!

Mr GUY — Here we go; it is the little kid from *Hey Dad.!* Let me use the Premier's own words, 'If there was a fourth row, mate, you'd be in it'! Those are the Premier's words, not mine.

Let us get back to shovel ready, because we are getting $9.50 shovels! Compulsory acquisitions are going to be very important when you are building the biggest, shovel-ready road in the state. If it is the biggest, you are going to have compulsory acquisitions; they have to be done. But of course the government has not talked to anyone — no-one, not even the council. In fact the minister came into this chamber this week and declared confidently that the Hobsons Bay City Council does not have any planning changes, because the road does not go through the Hobsons Bay city. That is funny, because the Hobsons Bay City Council itself is talking about the West Gate distributor and the work it is going to have to do, given that road goes through the city of Hobsons Bay.

I tell you what, if the roads minister does not know where the biggest road project according to the Labor government is going to go, then we have some problems. He does not know if there has been any compulsory acquisitions of property, he does not know if Aboriginal cultural heritage studies have been done and he does not know if any soil testing has been done. Apparently that is important, even though you are just putting tarmac down. The minister scratches his head. He probably gets out his *Melway*. Sitting in a cafe in Fitzroy, he wonders if it is near the seat of Narre Warren North and then says, 'Well it goes through this boundary and this boundary. I can't find it, but it doesn't matter, we'll send it off to Infrastructure Australia, despite it costing another $180 million. We'll just ask for that, sign the brief and send it off'. It is the biggest road project in the state. It is apparently shovel ready, and he has no idea where it is going to go.

The member for Warrandyte accurately told this chamber about the government's plans for level crossing removal. These are big plans. I saw the announcement by the Minister for Public Transport. She does not know the difference between a coupling, a pantograph and a bogie on a train. I will have to get her to talk to my six-year-old son, because he could probably give her more information on what these trains parts are than she knows. I saw her on the news over the weekend, and she said that the government was going to eliminate all these level crossings, as Labor apparently promised.

Of course, as the member for Warrandyte accurately said, she believes that removing the level crossings at Main Road, St Albans; Blackburn Road, Blackburn; Burke Road, Glen Iris; and North Road, Ormond, is apparently a concept of Labor. It was apparently thought of by the former Bracks government and maybe the former Cain government, and possibly the government of John Cain, Sr, might have thought of this too.

Apparently it is all Labor's idea, irrespective of the fact that it was funded, costed and set underway by the former Treasurer, the member for Malvern, and the former Minister for Public Transport, the member for Polwarth. These are the people who did the work to eliminate these level crossings, not the people who are under a delusion like the Soviets were back in the 1950s. It is quite astounding.

Mr Richardson interjected.

Mr GUY — I can take interjections from the member for Essendon — he is not bad. The member for Mordialloc — he is on the fourth row.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Mr Angus**) — Order! The Leader of the Opposition will continue through the Chair, and members of the government backbench will cease their interjections. The Leader of the Opposition to continue.

Mr Pearson interjected.

Mr GUY — I am trying to give you a compliment, member for Essendon.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Mr Angus**) — Order! The Leader of the Opposition!

Mr GUY — Through you, Acting Speaker, I was trying to say I did not think the member for Essendon was too bad. I see the member for Melton has come into the chamber, and I am sure he will add to it. We are going to talk about delusion — and indeed dangerous delusion. What the matter of public importance said, as was moved by the member for

Warrandyte, was actually quite frightening. The Minister for Industry has effectively admitted to doing absolutely nothing for the best part of three months when it comes to job losses. But members should not take my word. The Premier said, 'I will not waste a single day' — that is what he said. That does not mean 87 days; it means not one.

This is the word of the man who now leads the state, and his word means nothing to the people of Dairy Bell Ice Cream, dozens of whom will lose their jobs as Dairybell closes after 44 years in Victoria. It means nothing to the 215 people who are going to lose their jobs at Coles. I think all of us on this side were shocked, and indeed insulted, on behalf of the people from Coles that the industry minister could not even utter the name of the company where the people are losing their jobs. Such is the disgraceful arrogance of this minister that she comes into this chamber and deludes herself that sitting around and meeting a union has got something to do with saving 215 jobs at Coles, when her Premier said, 'We will not waste a single day'. Frankly, that is complete and utter rubbish.

In Ballarat 600 jobs at VicRoads are forgone. Of course the member for Bendigo East talked about $30 million for a ballroom in Melbourne — $30 million for a ballroom in Melbourne compared to 600 jobs for Ballarat. Our side of the Parliament believes that 600 jobs in Ballarat is more important. That is our priority. We will stack our priorities against any ballroom that the member for Bendigo East wants to dance around. If she wants to go to her $30 million ballroom and announce that as a priority for Ballarat, that is a reflection upon her government, but on this side of the house we believe 600 jobs in Ballarat is of essential importance.

Let us look at financial sector in this state. We heard the Premier again ensuring that none of these jobs would be offshored. Those were his words. What on earth did the Premier do to save those 130 ANZ jobs? He gave not a single guarantee to any people working in the financial sector in Victoria that this government will even bother to stand up for further financial industry jobs, on which this Premier will stand back and watch go offshore, because that is the guarantee we have from Labor.

In conclusion, we have seen spin, double standards and lies in what this government said before the election and how it is reacting after the election. Every single day we on this side of the house will do the right thing. We will always stand up for jobs and the way we live.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — While I was listening to the Leader of the Opposition's contribution, I got an email from my electorate office, saying, 'Has someone forgotten to tell the Leader of the Opposition that they lost?'.

The Andrews government is getting on with the job, but before I talk about that I want to talk about what we have seen over the last four years. The former government would have to have been the laziest government of the modern age. If you were to write a book about the Baillieu-Napthine government, it could be called *While Victoria Slept*, and, if you were going to make it into a movie, it could be called *Weekend at Bernie's*. Over the last four years the only industry that grew in Victoria was the Stilnox industry, the sleeping tablet industry.

After four years we had an extraordinary trifecta. We had an increase in the unemployment rate to now be the highest of any mainland state, we had sluggish economic growth, and public sector debt ballooned. In 2010, when Labor left office the net debt of the state government was $8 billion. It was $21.2 billion when we returned. It was clear economic mismanagement of the highest order.

I recall that at the time of the former Brumby government's defeat I started talking to people in the business community to try to get a sense of how the new government was tracking. I remember some of those preliminary conversations taking place around early December. People said, 'Look, they didn't expect to win. You've got to give them a bit of time — give them til Christmas and you'll see'. That is fine. I came back early in January to do the report card again. I asked, 'How are they going? How are they settling in? What's your sense on how they're travelling?'. They said, 'Oh, look, not much is happening at this stage. Just wait until Australia Day. The Premier — he's trying to find his feet. He just needs a bit of time. Give him until Australia Day. He'll be right'. Fair enough. I went back to get the report card again. I asked, 'How are they tracking?'. They said, 'Oh, look, just wait until March. They didn't expect to win. They just need a little bit of time to find their feet and they'll be right'. March became Easter, Easter became the budget and then it became 30 June. After that, everyone just gave up.

The economy was weak, and that was compounded by cuts to the public sector when the private sector was not strong enough to take up the slack. The reality is that the cuts the coalition government made, particularly in the early days, compounded that weakness. In one sense, if the economy is white hot and going strongly, you do not necessarily want the public sector going in there and bidding on major projects. You do not want it

to drive up the costs of bidding for work or construction costs, because that is basically inefficient and more of a charge on the private sector. Equally, though, you need the public sector to plug the gaps when there are weaknesses.

A case in point would be what happened to quarrying companies that produce aggregate. Melbourne is extremely fortunate in that it has a large number of quarries around its suburban fringe which can supply aggregate to major projects close to market, unlike what happens in Sydney, where often quarries are 200 kilometres away from the destination of the aggregate. Over the course of the past four years even the quarrying companies have been complaining. There was no pipeline; there were no projects. As a consequence of the indecision and dithering of the former government, the weakness in the economy was compounded.

When in opposition members of political parties can use the time to develop good public policies that they can deliver when in government to be a good government. I had the great privilege and honour of working in the 1990s for John Brumby, the then Leader of the Opposition, and then for Steve Bracks. I spent a lot of time with the member for Melton when he was a member of the other place, and he taught me many things. We used that time well, and we had some very good policies which we took to the 1999 election. Those policies were costed and ordered, and we had a plan and a vision for the state that we implemented. It was not the razzle-dazzle we got during the Kennett years — all that sizzle that seemed to dominate the 1990s. It was substantive, it was detailed, it was methodical and it was thought out. Those policies were costed and ordered, and they were outstanding.

I had the privilege also of getting to know some of my successors, those who worked tirelessly in the opposition rooms from 2010 to 2014. They are outstanding individuals who I hope will be in this place in 15 years time to continue the legacy of a good, competent and able Labor administration. The quality of the work that was produced by the former opposition in the period 2010 to 2014 was better than anything we produced in my time. It was absolutely outstanding — much better than anything we produced. That is how we have developed a pipeline of activities or projects.

What does it mean to develop a pipeline? It means you go out to the market and start to plan the things you will do progressively when in government. In doing that work you need to make sure that for the private sector consortiums, the teams that start to bid on major projects, there is a constant stream of work. We want the best and brightest of the private sector here in Melbourne bidding on major projects so that we can get innovation and new thinking with really detailed thoughts and ideas and so we can get policies that can be rolled out over the course of the government.

That is what we had in the first decade of this century: a government that got on with the job of delivering. We had the Spencer Street station redevelopment, and we had EastLink. We also had the desalination plant, which will ultimately be a fantastic project for this state. Anyone who thinks that we will not have a drought again is delusional. I seem to recall that a former Leader of the Opposition, Ted Baillieu, plucked out a date for when he said we would run out of water. One of the great attributes of the former Labor government was that its members supported population growth and growing Melbourne. If we are going to grow Melbourne and if we are going to drive population growth, we need to have essential services and resources in place, and so we need to make sure that we have an adequate water supply. That is what the former Labor government did.

By having a pipeline of activities, the former Labor government got the best and brightest in Melbourne. What happened? The then Labor government lost the election in 2010, which was the verdict of the people. All the brains, all the great people who had been residing in Melbourne during the previous 10 years, went to Sydney. They went to Sydney because they saw a government there that understood what it needed to do and got on with the job. That is exactly what the government is doing today in Victoria: getting on with the job of rolling out a pipeline of projects which will build this state. The government will make sure that Victorians continue to have the livability we all aspire to having.

To say that members of the former government were asleep at the wheel is to defame drowsy drivers. Its members just showed incompetence. The political axiom used to be that the Victorian public were quick to criticise but slow to punish. It speaks volumes that a government was turfed out after one term. It was a completely wasted opportunity. The government was asleep for four years. Now it is the task of this government to get on and deliver.

Members of this government have done the work. The Premier spent a lot of time going around and talking and working closely and tirelessly with the community to develop outstanding policies. Government members have the vision for the state, we have the drive and we have the ability to get on and deliver the things that count.

I am pleased to see members of The Nationals in the chamber. That is terrific because I am sure they will be supporting the Murray Basin rail project. It is vitally important because it will ensure that we can get goods produced in the western districts of Victoria to market quickly and efficiently, without them being on the roads. Mineral sands are pretty heavy. If they are put on trains there is less wear and tear on the roads, and that is what the government will be doing.

The government will spend $50 million on removing rail level crossings, which again is really important. It will spend $35.8 million on strengthening 48 bridges in regional Victoria. You would think that The Nationals would be endorsing these plans and rushing towards the government, asking, 'How can we help? How can we try to use our numbers to deliver these great outcomes for regional Victoria?'. Sadly, they are more interested in doing the bidding of the Liberal Party. That means that unfortunately regional communities get left behind.

Government members have done the work. We have a plan and a pipeline. We have a terrific four years in front of us, getting on with and delivering these projects. It may well be that some of the projects will not be delivered in the life of this Labor government. There may be oak tree infrastructure that, like the Melbourne rail loop, takes 10 years to be delivered. It is really important that opposition members start thinking about the position they will take on some of these projects and that they get behind and support them, because to do so is in the interests of the state. Both sides of the house agree on the need for population growth, and both major parties want to see a strong, vibrant and dynamic economy. The work that has been done to date by the Andrews government will show that it is getting on with it.

Ms RYAN (Euroa) — What an enlightening contribution from the member for Essendon. I welcome the opportunity to contribute to this debate, which examines the broken promises of the Andrews government with respect to shovel-ready projects for our state. Specifically I would like to address how these broken promises impact on regional Victoria — how they impact on jobs, investment and confidence in regional Victoria.

It seems that when it comes to shovel-ready projects, the Andrews government has never even had regional Victoria on its radar. When it comes to the important projects for the people who live in regional Victoria, the Andrews government does not want to listen to their needs. History tells us that when it comes to major projects — these shovel-ready projects that support jobs, encourage investment and build confidence — Labor governments in Victoria overpromise and underdeliver. How could we forget the regional rail link? The cost of that project blew out unbelievably when it was revealed that Labor forgot signals, forgot level crossings and even forgot the rolling stock. It took a Liberal-Nationals coalition government to not just put the project back on track but also bring it in under budget and ahead of schedule.

It was a similar story with the Bracks government's fast rail project, which was promised at $80 million and blew out to a staggering $750 million. History also tells us that Labor governments in Victoria have a track record of mismanaging projects. The food bowl modernisation project was in tatters until a coalition government took charge. The north–south pipeline — what an unmitigated disaster that was! The desalination plant — $24 billion dollars for 27 years at $1.8 million dollars a day. It is an absolute millstone around Victorians' necks. Myki. Ultranet. The Melbourne wholesale market. The list of Labor's mismanaged projects goes on and on.

Sadly we now have fresh experiences of Labor governments failing to listen to communities and failing to invest in the projects and services that matter to the people of regional Victoria. And when Labor governments fail to deliver for regional Victoria, they undermine jobs, they undermine investment and they undermine confidence in regional Victoria. The failure of the current Andrews Labor government and these broken promises are a tremendous blow to regional Victoria.

It is a great shame, because in the four years up until 29 November 2014 regional Victoria was receiving unprecedented levels of funding and support from the Victorian coalition government. Under the leadership of the Liberal-Nationals coalition government there was investment in country roads and highways and in regional rail services. Local hospitals and family health centres were supported along with schools and training colleges. The previous government listened closely to the needs of regional communities and delivered for them. For example, there was co-investment with farmers in irrigation schemes and marketing co-ops — I am sure the member for Gippsland East knows all about that — and there was work done with local councils on projects that improved the main streets and recreation facilities that mean so much to small communities.

At this point it would be remiss of me not to mention the $1 billion Regional Growth Fund, an initiative that delivered tremendous opportunities to country communities, an initiative that delivered jobs,

investment and confidence to regional Victoria, and a fund that supported shovel-ready projects, which reflected the priorities of local industries and local communities. The Regional Growth Fund was additional funding, not re-prioritised and reallocated funding, like the programs now being spruiked by the Andrews Labor government. It was a dedicated fund that was making regional Victorian communities better places to work and live in.

The Regional Growth Fund invested $500 million in support of some 1800 projects and in turn leveraged an additional $2 billion of investment for regional Victoria. It supported and created jobs in regional towns and centres. Importantly, it funded local priorities: projects that were identified by, and important to, local communities. These were not projects decided by a bureaucrat in a Melbourne-based department. Under the Andrews Labor government, however, there will be no more Regional Growth Fund. A successful program set up specifically to support projects and investment in Regional Victoria has been sent to the scrap heap by this city-centric government.

It seems that under the Andrews Labor government if you live in regional Victoria, you are on your own. Less than 100 days in the job, and this Premier is finding every excuse he can not to invest in the infrastructure projects that matter to the people of regional Victoria. Labor's promise of shovel-ready projects has gone AWOL. From the Mallee all the way down to southern Gippsland, the Premier is ignoring the infrastructure needs of the people and the industries that underpin our regional communities.

The true tragedy of this is that if the Andrews government genuinely engaged with regional Victoria, it could get behind a number of very worthy projects. The Murray Basin rail project is ready and waiting, but it has taken nearly 100 days of government for the Premier to admit there is significant merit in this project. This is a project that those in the freight and agriculture industries describe as a lay-down misère. There is $220 million already in the budget for this critical project, yet last week all the Premier could do was reannounce $30 million for works which are already underway. Here is a shovel-ready project that would create jobs, investment and confidence in regional Victoria and in this state's $12 billion agriculture industry, yet the government is still refusing to commit. The people of regional Victoria are starting to wonder how much of the $220 million that is sitting in the state budget after having been allocated to this project will be spent as intended.

In Gippsland, the Macalister irrigation district modernisation project is another ideal investment prospect. Gippsland is a powerhouse of dairy production, not just in Victorian terms but on a national scale. That is why in 2012 the coalition government joined with Southern Rural Water to invest $32 million in stage 1 of a modernisation project for the Macalister irrigation district. The planning has been done, and the business case has been prepared.

It is estimated that the irrigation district footprint makes an annual contribution of around $500 million to Victoria's economy, and the modernisation project has the potential to boost that by a further $45 million. What have we had, however, from the Andrews government? Nothing. It is not serious. The Minister for Agriculture this week and last week told Gippsland media that the irrigation district modernisation is not a priority. Here is another project ready to go. Here is a project where the Andrews government has the opportunity to leverage additional funding from the commonwealth government, yet government members sit on their hands and ignore the needs of regional Victoria.

The list goes on. If the Andrews government would commit $15 million to Sale Specialist School, it could be completed. Regional hospitals are being let down by the Andrews government. The Ballarat Base Hospital needs to expand to meet the needs of the growing region, so the Liberal-Nationals coalition pledged $83 million to start a major upgrade and redevelopment. It is a similar story in Shepparton. Goulburn Valley Health needs to expand to better meet patient needs, but again there is no commitment from the Andrews government in relation to this important project. In my own electorate, the Rushworth hospital is ready and waiting to go. Just $7 million is needed from this government for the co-location of aged-care facilities — —

An honourable member — Is that shovel ready?

Ms RYAN — It is shovel ready, but what has Labor promised? Absolutely nothing.

In Echuca the biggest priority in terms of infrastructure projects is a second bridge connecting Echuca and Moama. Every local in Echuca knows that a second bridge crossing must be built. A $96 million commitment was on the table and in the budget for this important local priority. This project would fix congestion and traffic safety issues, and it would support local jobs during its construction phase. It was even funded in the state budget; the money is there. What is missing is a commitment from the Andrews

government to invest in shovel-ready projects. What does the Premier say about this project? I quote from a report by Fiona Parker on the ABC:

> Last week, new Premier Daniel Andrews poured cold water on the project being a priority.
>
> …
>
> 'We didn't make commitments in relation to that particular project'.

On the topic of bridges, it is also bitterly disappointing that this government has cut the successful $160 million country roads and bridges program.

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) — I am happy to rise and discuss shovel-ready projects.

An honourable member — This could go anywhere.

Mr EDBROOKE — This could go anywhere. I would first like to say that the Andrews Labor government is getting on with it. The previous government squandered the opportunities of this state for four years — four years of nothing — and nothing shows that more than going for a drive through Frankston. There was $13.8 million worth of planning, but nothing happened.

The government has brought forward investment to get Victoria's economy on track. There is $100 million for early work on level crossings, which affect pedestrians, cars and public transport. There is $30 million for the Murray Basin and $35.8 million to strengthen 48 bridges in regional Victoria — and the member for Euroa can note that. There is $50 million for regional level crossings and $3 million for planning for suburban roads. We heard the other day about $100 million being committed to the crumbling Flinders Street station, which is an icon of Melbourne, and there is $40 million to establish the Melbourne Metro Rail Authority to oversee the biggest transport project since the city loop. All these things are required and take time to plan.

Over four years we saw the Liberal Party recipe for government. Public infrastructure spending was cut by 5 per cent. The number of construction jobs is lower now than when the Liberal government took office.

Ms Ryall interjected.

Mr Staikos — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member for Ringwood is out of her seat and interjecting, and that is unparliamentary.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Mr Crisp**) — Order! I uphold the point of order. The member for Ringwood will take her seat.

Mr EDBROOKE — Unemployment rose to 6.8 per cent, and in Frankston we are looking at percentages in the high teens for youth unemployment. We are stretched to the limit. Consumer confidence is down, and business confidence is down as well. Private capital investment collapsed the year after the Liberal government came to office, and it has still not recovered. As the business community said at the time, we cannot bleed skilled workers to other states. After only three months in office we are giving the Victorian economy the adrenaline shot it needs, creating jobs and building the vital infrastructure the state needs without delay. We are getting on with it. Let us have a look at the coalition's legacy. Regarding employment — —

Mr Richardson — Oh no!

Mr EDBROOKE — Oh no, indeed. The coalition failed to release a jobs plan for Victoria until just before the 2014 election. After four years there was no jobs plan. It might be hidden behind the business case for the east–west link; we do not know. The number of unemployed people grew by 68 000 under the coalition government, and the unemployment rate increased from 4.9 per cent in December 2010 to 6.8 per cent in November 2014. These are facts. Youth unemployment hit a 15-year high and it now sits at 21.1 per cent for 15 to 19-year-olds — people who need to be getting on with their lives. It was worst in the former Premier's electorate, averaging 18 per cent in the 12 months prior to July 2014. These are not figures to be laughed about.

The previous government abandoned Ford, Holden and Toyota, putting at risk up to 100 000 direct and indirect jobs in Victoria. In the last coalition budget regional Victoria got only 4 per cent of the funding for major projects, despite being home to 25 per cent of the state's population. It is an absolute shame.

An honourable member — Rubbish!

Mr EDBROOKE — It is rubbish, is it? The coalition promised not to sack any public sector workers, and then it sacked 4100 public sector workers. The previous government oversaw the exit of thousands of skilled jobs in Geelong, with closures and cuts at major employers Ford, Alcoa, Qantas, Boral, Target and Shell. Members must forgive me, but I do respect the guts opposition members have to be talking about employment and what has been happening in the last three months, given the last four years of nothing. The coalition also refused to apply local content

requirements for Australian steel on the $1.6 billion Webb Dock expansion project.

That is not all; let us look at public transport and roads. Was there even 1 inch of rail put down in four years? No, there was not. The previous government cut the V/Line maintenance fund, forcing a blowout in backlog maintenance. Nine out of 11 V/Line train lines missed punctuality targets between October 2013 and October 2014, and the people of Frankston were very surprised to see minutes added to timetables and trains skipping stations. The previous government promised to deliver 40 new trains over eight years. How many of those trains were delivered? Seven, with eight more on order.

The previous government promised to deliver but failed on the Avalon Airport rail link. It promised to deliver but failed on Doncaster rail. It failed to deliver on Rowville rail, and it failed to deliver on Southland station. How is Southland station going? The previous government shelved the Infrastructure Australia-approved Melbourne Metro rail tunnel in favour of the last-minute, unplanned Melbourne rail link.

An honourable member — On a napkin.

Mr EDBROOKE — On a napkin, indeed. There were $525 million and 175 jobs cut from the transport department. It is amazing that members of the opposition are getting up and talking about fighting for jobs. There were 450 jobs lost at VicRoads. The previous government cut $17.694 million from the premium station program. Trains were running late frequently during that period, skipping stations and becoming express so as to avoid punctuality fines. That is a fact. The previous government cut maintenance, and capital funding for roads fell across all VicRoads regions. It cut $95 million, or 56 per cent, in rail maintenance spending, from $169 million to $73.3 million.

We have heard a lot of talk about the east–west link. The previous government signed the contracts just weeks before the state election, despite the fact that the cost-benefit ratio was just 45 cents in the dollar. All the polls showed there might be a change of government. New and increased tolls have been applied on several roads, including CityLink, EastLink, the West Gate Bridge and the Tullamarine Freeway, to help plug the $2.1 billion black hole.

Traffic modelling predicted that the tunnel would have been used by a minority of inbound motorists on the Eastern Freeway in the morning peak during which only 13 per cent of vehicles are bound for Melbourne Airport or the western suburbs. Do members know how many people in Frankston would have used the tunnel? Just 0.1 per cent. Congestion would have increased on the Eastern and Tullamarine freeways and on Hoddle Street. These are not opinions; these are the Liberal government's facts, which it tried to keep secret. The consultants used by the Napthine government to help sell the east–west link were not even qualified to provide traffic forecasts.

The business case revealed that the Napthine government opted not to submit an initial version of the business case because it feared that a lower range cost-benefit ratio could be used to dismiss the project. By doing this, the previous government told us it was a dud. It has also been revealed through freedom of information that the Napthine government's most senior transport planners detailed the superior economic return a rail tunnel under the city would bring to Melbourne compared to the east–west link.

The issue we have is that we need to have these people come down to Frankston to hear what are matters of public importance to people in Frankston. The people in Frankston want to know that they can actually get on a train and go to Flinders Street. They want to know that they have a transport precinct where work is ready to go and starting. They want to know that ambulances will arrive on time because the ambulance paramedics are not being attacked by their own government. They want to see investment in TAFE, and that is what the Labor government is doing. We are getting on with the job, not talking in semantics.

Mr MULDER (Polwarth) — I join the debate on this matter of public importance in that it relates to shovel-ready projects and infrastructure projects in Victoria. I put on the record that there would be no-one more disappointed than me, along with those people who worked in my ministerial office or the statutory authorities, including the Department of Treasury and Finance, and all of those great people we brought on board to work on the east–west link project, to work on the WestLink project, to work on the Melbourne rail link and to work on the airport rail link project. What a golden era it was going to be for Victoria, in particular for the construction industry and the workers who were going to gain full and long-term employment out of these projects. What a great deal of disappointment there is out there amongst the construction industry, amongst the finance industry and amongst planners and engineers to see these particular projects shelved and these contracts torn up by the Labor government.

It was interesting to listen to the Premier talk about delegations from overseas coming to Victoria under the

Labor government. They will be eyeballing the Premier and eyeballing the ministers today, looking at them and thinking, 'They can't be trusted. Their word is worth nothing, and the contracts you sign with this government are going to be worth even less. They can't be trusted'. It is ironic that during this period of time the government started an advertising campaign on television, warning us to be wary of shonky travelling salesmen. What a pack of absolute hypocrites. The construction industry, the finance industry and the engineering industry all know very well that these people cannot be trusted. That is going to come at an enormous cost of this state going forward.

Any company that comes to do business with this government is going to factor in a risk in terms of dollars, and taxpayers are going to have to foot the bill for that because the government simply cannot be trusted. The Premier used to say all the time, 'Let me be very clear about this: we will honour any contract that has been signed by the former government'. Now he walks through the door and says, 'Let me be very clear about this: we will rip up contracts that have been signed by the former government'.

It is interesting when you consider the government's talk about its shovel-ready projects. The Melbourne Metro project involves $40 million to establish an authority that will not strike a blow on a project until 2018. That authority is what was going to be called the Melbourne rail link authority. Under the department it is fully funded, with no additional $40 million. What is the government going to do with $40 million with an authority going forward when it is not going to strike a blow until 2018? This is in relation to the rail industry of course. That $40 million could fund 80 level crossings in regional Victoria, where you could put boom barriers and flashing lights. That is where we put our money — not into these shonky processes the Labor government today is talking about, but into real bricks and mortar and into real infrastructure.

There is the level crossing authority — $100 million on its establishment and $300 million for works. As we know — we have heard it all before — all the projects the government is talking about are projects with a fully funded plan, sent out to the market by the former coalition government. Do you know who was doing level crossings under the former coalition government? It was Public Transport Victoria (PTV), VicRoads, Metro, VicTrack and V/Line if they needed to come together. They were the ones who were delivering those crossings, quite often ahead of time and quite often under budget, so why does the government see the need to go out and spend $100 million of taxpayers money to set up another new authority when that expertise already exists within the government structures we have in place? That $100 million would get you about 200 regional level crossings with flashing lights and boom barriers as complete, finished projects. There could be $100 million for another project like that.

There is $3 million to go towards the Murray-Darling rail project for patch-up works. There is nothing about major rehabilitation and nothing about major infrastructure. The government spends $3 million and expects to get a pat on the back. There will be a lick of paint for Flinders Street station. It is interesting that we are bringing money forward for Flinders Street station. I went on a tour of the station with Metro Trains Melbourne and PTV through the course of last year, and they advised me that as part of the franchise agreement there was going to be a major upgrade of Flinders Street station. What I would like to know is exactly how much of this money is new money and how much has just been dragged out of that agreement. Once again, it is shonky smoke and mirrors. That is all it is.

What about our mate sitting opposite, the new Minister for Roads and Road Safety, the star of the frontbench, with his West Gate distributor? It is shovel ready and ready to go, with no environment effects statement, no cultural heritage study, no money for major works — a set of traffic lights and she is underway! So much for a shovel-ready project!

Of course it is all going to be funded by tolls. The whole project is going to be funded by tolling 5000 trucks. It is interesting that the work by the port of Melbourne indicates that the number is going to be closer to 2000 trucks, so I would like to know where the rest of the money is going to come from. Is it in the business case, which nobody has seen? The minister is not even sure whether a business case for his so-called West Gate distributor actually exists.

Those opposite are going to take all the trucks off the West Gate Bridge, but in order to do that they first have to get them onto the West Gate Freeway. One can imagine what will happen with people coming in from Ballarat, Geelong, Hoppers Crossing and Point Cook: it will get worse, and it will drag the minister under with it because it is a dog of a project and has been since day one. As that project goes to tender I wonder whether those who are putting forward a bid will go back through newspaper clippings and look at what the current Minister for Roads and Road Safety said about signing contracts, which was essentially, 'We will honour our contracts; any contracts signed will be honoured by an incoming government'. The minister will pay a premium for being dodgy and untrustworthy.

There is no way known that the projects being talked about today will come anywhere near the amount of job creation that was going to occur had the projects I mentioned earlier gone ahead. East–west link, WestLink, the Melbourne rail link, the airport rail link — a golden era for the state of Victoria has been trashed by the incoming Labor government and with it all the jobs associated with those projects.

The Minister for Industry talked during question time about job losses in Victoria. She should know that there is more to an ice-cream than just the cone; it needs to have some ice-cream with it as well. I suggest she take up the offer by the Leader of the Opposition to go out to the Dairy Bell factory, sit down and have a talk to the people there rather than letting her departmental staff do all the work for her. What has occurred in relation to the infrastructure projects going forward has been an absolute tragedy for the state of Victoria. In terms of the so-called West Gate distributor I would say that perhaps by the middle of next year we might see some serious work, but for construction jobs in the meantime and for the people who will be coming from the north of Australia out of the mining industry, this was going to be a honey pot of construction work. That is a lost opportunity.

As future generations look back at successive governments in Victoria, this government will be landed with the reputation of being the most reckless, irresponsible and untrustworthy that has ever served the state of Victoria. It has put itself first and the interests of Victorians last, and we know what will occur in the coming years. Our road network will grind to a halt, and congestion will worsen. There is no doubt about it; it has to occur. The freight task is going up, and investment is going down — and the Minister for Roads and Road Safety will be going down with it. He is hiding behind his department. You do not see him out on those country roads pointing at potholes and telling us what he will do about them. It is an absolutely disastrous scenario facing both public transport and roads in the state of Victoria, and it is a great disappointment for everybody who worked on those projects.

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) — I say from the outset that government members will not be lectured to by members of the Liberal Party and The Nationals when it comes to broken promises, shovel-ready projects, jobs, investment and confidence because for four years the state had none of those things. How inappropriate for the member for Euroa to state that The Nationals support regional Victoria when we know for a fact that The Nationals abandoned regional Victoria. They did not even stand candidates in the electorates of Bendigo East and Bendigo West, so desperate were they to win their seats where their Liberal mates were challenging them.

As for shovels, it is really nice to see that members of the Liberal Party and The Nationals have rediscovered shovels after watching them go rusty for four years, probably in the member for Polwarth's shed. Those shiny-handled shovels had not seen the light of day for four years. Four years ago I sat on the opposite side of the house, and I watched and waited for the Baillieu government to reveal its plans for projects, jobs, investment and growth in this state, particularly in regional Victoria. We waited for the government to let the people of Victoria know when it would grow Victoria. We waited and waited, but all we saw was stagnation, lack of energy, no direction and no plans to grow jobs or investment, let alone a pipeline of infrastructure. With the change of Premier during that period we saw chaos in this house, and Victorians wondered where the leadership of this state had disappeared to. There was still no jobs plan and still no plans to establish a pipeline of infrastructure.

If we fast-forward to last year and the lead-up to November's election, suddenly the Napthine government came up with a plan to build a road that would have cost too much and would have been a financial burden on the taxpayers of Victoria for decades to come. It was a project that did not stack up, a project that even the experts said would not relieve traffic congestion and would have made traffic worse and a project that was so shrouded in secrecy and lack of transparency that it was categorically rejected by the people of Victoria on 29 November 2014. The Liberal-Nationals coalition should never forget that.

The previous government sat back and did nothing while unemployment across regional Victoria rose and youth unemployment in regional Victoria reached levels not seen for decades. This was a government that failed to put in place any measure to support jobs growth and exacerbated the youth unemployment crisis by hacking into our TAFE sector and making it impossible for many young people, particularly those in regional Victoria, to get the skills and training they need to get a job. Savage funding cuts to the training system by the former Liberal government have short-changed the future of thousands of Victorians. This is not just a comment; it is a fact confirmed by the Productivity Commission's *Report on Government Services* released just this year.

In my electorate and in regional Victoria more broadly it is plain to see that the former government was not only slow to get moving as a government but also failed

to show leadership and direction. Across Bendigo there was a slowing down of infrastructure growth, with projects already established by the Labor government being the previous government's only projects, such as the Bendigo Hospital, planned and started by Labor; the Ulumbarra Theatre project, planned and started by Labor; and the expansion of the Bendigo Art Gallery, planned and started by Labor — to name just a few.

Public infrastructure spending under the Liberal-Nationals government was cut by more than 5 per cent, and construction jobs were lost. The 4100 public service job cuts impacted on every single department and every department's capability. Then in the former government's last budget the truth was revealed about what it really thought of regional Victoria — with just 4 per cent of the funding for major projects allocated to regional Victoria, where 25 per cent of the population live. It also became very clear not just to me but to the people in the Bendigo region that cuts to funding for rail and road maintenance were having a big impact. V/Line services on the Bendigo to Melbourne line became increasingly strained over the last four years, and the deterioration in the service was evident to commuters, who constantly contacted my office with complaints. Overcrowding, signal failures, track failures and delayed or replacement services became the norm. Cuts to V/Line maintenance funding created a backlog of maintenance. The failure to order new trains increased pressure on the system.

Roads across regional Victoria were left to deteriorate under the Liberal-Nationals coalition government, with $100 million being cut from roads maintenance in 2012 and 450 staff cut from VicRoads, including many experienced engineers. The government tried to play catch-up to maintain our regional roads, which had deteriorated thanks to its own neglect, but it still failed to provide enough funding for roads maintenance. Over 80 per cent of new roads funding in 2013 from the Napthine government was being spent in Melbourne, and regional road resurfacing targets remained lower than in previous years.

Let me contrast all of the above with the last three months. Since coming to office the Andrews Labor government has been getting on with it. A pipeline of infrastructure has been announced and is ready to go for Bendigo: the new tech school; the agricultural farm studies centre at Bendigo TAFE; the expansion of the Bendigo Stadium; the duplication of Napier Street; the construction of new schools; one I am particularly proud of, the planning for a new school at Kalianna; the expansion of Bendigo Senior Secondary College; the mountain bike path at Harcourt; the Aspire precinct project; improvements to our kindergartens; the funding commitment to the Passions and Pathways program and the Career Horizons program, which are both projects that will engage young people to enable their future employment; and of course the Bendigo metro rail — a project that will redefine how people move about our great city. The metro rail project in Bendigo will create an alternative public transport system for Bendigo — a city that is growing rapidly and that can develop this innovative transport network — that will build for this future growth.

Unlike the previous government Labor developed its plan for jobs early and in consultation with industry representatives, manufacturers and small business operators. Our $1 billion jobs fund will create 100 000 full-time jobs. The policy includes a $100 million fund to provide payroll tax relief to companies that hire young unemployed people, retrenched workers or the long-term unemployed. Labor will provide a $1000 payroll tax rebate to each eligible worker hired by a company.

Our Back to Work legislation providing for the tax incentive was our first priority in this new Parliament. It is disappointing, to say the least, that this legislation is being held up by the Liberals and The Nationals in the other place. Why is this legislation so important? Because this is about kickstarting the economy after four years of stagnation. This is exactly the right thing to do — rewarding and incentivising those companies that give a young worker their first start and that give a worker who has been retrenched or those who have been unemployed for a long time a second chance; something the Liberals and The Nationals have never understood. We will also establish a special jobs advisory panel, reporting directly to the Premier and made up of senior business and industry leaders.

Our plan has been endorsed by the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Mark Stone, the CEO, endorsed Labor's plan. ABC News online quotes the Premier as stating:

> These are new grants, new programs, new policies and a new culture.

It also reports:

> Mr Stone said the jobs policy had an important and timely focus on youth unemployment.
>
> 'It focuses on our international engagement, a very, very competitive strength in Victoria', he said.
>
> 'It focuses on some payroll tax relief and it talks about further investment in regional Victoria, and that's where we have the highest level of youth unemployment'.
>
> …

> 'We're growing by 100 000 people every year, so a million people every 10 years. So we've got to keep creating jobs'.

Every job is worth fighting for, and the future will not happen by accident. We need to make things happen in this state, and that is exactly what this Labor government is getting on with.

Mr BLACKWOOD (Narracan) — It is with great pleasure that I stand to make a contribution on this matter of public importance today. It is about things that are very close to my heart, as I come from regional Victoria, but also close to the hearts of all those on this side of the house. We are talking about jobs, investment and confidence. There is nothing more important in this state than investment and confidence, and the two things that underpin jobs are certainly investment and confidence.

If there is no confidence in the state government, then investment will not occur. If there is no investment in Victoria, then job creation will not occur and, worse still, job losses will occur. As I said, confidence and investment underpin job prospects in Victoria.

There are many factors, some outside the control of government, that can influence confidence. Things like the global financial crisis and the performance of the economies of our trading partners are generally outside the control of the Victorian government. However, there are many things the state government can do and many signals it can send which will have a direct impact on confidence and investment.

Breaking promises or misleading the people of Victoria by falsely claiming, prior to an election, that major projects are shovel ready has killed the confidence and willingness to invest in this state. Such statements will have a direct impact on confidence and investment. I would like to share with the house a quote from an article in today's *Herald Sun* that directly relates to the fact that confidence has been undermined since this government came to power. The article is about what has been touched on earlier in the house today — the job losses proposed at William Adams, which also has an outlet in Traralgon in Gippsland.

The headline is 'Victorian jobs in peril blamed on east–west link'. It goes on to say:

> A Victorian construction company has told staff it desperately needs the east–west link or its employees could lose their jobs.
>
> Earthmoving equipment maker William Adams CAT has told staff in an internal memo workers faced reduced hours, redundancies and the closure of regional offices.
>
> 'In Victoria, we desperately need state and federal infrastructure spending, in particular the proposed east–west link development', managing director Warren Young wrote to staff in a letter sent out last week.
>
> 'Unfortunately, with the change in government in Victoria and the lack of support for previous planning, it is still unclear what activities will proceed and when these are likely to occur'.

That is a direct contradiction of what those opposite are saying about shovel-ready projects. Companies in Victoria have no confidence in the government when it indicates shovel-ready projects are on the drawing board and ready to go. The article continues:

> The *Herald Sun* understands staff have been told up to 50 workers could be made redundant in the next week.
>
> The company's Docklands rental office will be closed, the Geelong branch will be reduced in size and four sites in Traralgon will be merged into two or three locations.
>
> In the memo, dated 20 February, Mr Young said a nine-day working fortnight would be introduced to 'minimise the number of redundancies'.
>
> The reduced working hours would save 30 jobs but despite this, Mr Young said redundancies would be needed …

This is concrete evidence that the spin and misinformation of the government are having a huge impact on the confidence of businesses in Victoria.

The creation of sovereign risk by threatening to tear up legitimate and legally binding contracts is one of the most irresponsible actions a government can take. Threatening to introduce legislation so as to avoid paying compensation, which is a normal condition in any legally binding contract, is an absolute disgrace. I would like to quote from an opinion piece written by the member for Hawthorn and published in the *Herald Sun* on Monday. It was a very good opinion piece.

Mr Pesutto interjected.

Mr BLACKWOOD — It was written by the member for Kew. I apologise to the member for Hawthorn; I should have realised the member for Hawthorn would not have had the intelligence to produce such a great article! The member for Kew wrote a fantastic opinion piece that ran in the *Herald Sun* on Monday. It reads:

> Andrews said on 3AW: 'I didn't sign these contracts'. True, Premier, you didn't, but any sensible First World government knows you ought to be bound by contractual obligations of your predecessors, in the same way the Napthine government was bound by the disastrous myki and desalination plant contracts of the previous Labor government.
>
> The popular thing to do was to walk away from the mess, but the coalition did the right thing and persevered with the

> projects in the interests of the state's finances and business confidence.

That indicates very clearly that the Napthine and Baillieu governments did the right thing by the state of Victoria in honouring contracts that were entered into by the Brumby government. It goes on to say:

> If the Andrews government tries to escape its contractual obligations by using legislation, it will have forever undermined the consistency and predictability which underpins the confidence private citizens and businesses require when dealing with the Victorian government.
>
> There is no way Andrews can escape paying substantial compensation to the east–west link consortium, despite his misleading statements to the contrary before the state election, without taking the extraordinary step of using the Parliament, like a Third World despot, to rescind Victoria's obligation.
>
> Legal advice, released by the shadow Treasurer, from Allan Myers, QC, shows the contract is binding and the previous government had full authority to enter into the contracts.
>
> Andrews is proving he has no understanding of our economy and how vital confidence, particularly from international investors, is to our future growth.
>
> If he goes down this path, then Victorians will experience the adverse ramifications for years to come.

The hypocrisy of the government knows no bounds. Labor's policy document *Platform 2014*, published prior to the recent state election, is a very good example of just that. It states:

> Our major projects should be governed by our priorities, not our politics.

But Labor played politics with the east–west link. That project was identified by Sir Rod Eddington in an assessment produced for the Labor government of the time as a major piece of infrastructure, critical for the economy and for the future livability of Melbourne. But Labor played politics and walked away from it. It is absolute hypocrisy.

Labor's policies across the board are having an unprecedented negative impact on jobs in my region. I have mentioned William Adams CAT at Traralgon, but there will also be job losses at the Shire of Baw Baw. The council has just announced a major restructure of its organisation that will lead to at least 35 redundancies and involve reducing four departments to three. There are two major reasons this action has been forced on the council. The first is the cap on municipal rates being enforced by the state government. This has stifled the shire's ability to control its own destiny and provide services that the community demands and is entitled to expect. The second is the failure of the government to maintain the country roads and bridges program, which was introduced by the Baillieu government. That program has provided $160 million over the last four years for the 40 smallest local government areas. The councils were each provided with $1 million per year over the last four years to spend on roads and bridges that they prioritise for the most urgent attention.

Labor says it is going to replace this program with a $1 billion country roads maintenance fund. Labor is also going to centralise the way these funds are spent and not allow councils to prioritise their own projects. This is a typical city-centric decision, for which Labor governments are renowned. Labor also fails to highlight that this is $1 billion over eight years — only $125 million per year. In the last budget the coalition allocated over $500 million to country road maintenance. Labor is going to cut country roads funding.

In conclusion, the actions of this hypocritical, irresponsible and reckless government are killing investment and confidence in this state, and this is leading to massive job losses. Labor's lies and deceit are unforgivable. The people of Victoria will not forgive, and they will definitely not forget.

Mr NARDELLA (Melton) — I oppose this matter of public importance placed before the house today by the opposition. What absolute gall this opposition has to talk about infrastructure. Members of the Captain Snooze of Australian jurisdictions come in here and tell us we are doing it but that it is after 87 days and we are too slow. They had four years in government and did nothing. They were the ones snoozing. We are the ones doing.

Let us have a look at what the dysfunctional Liberal-Nationals government did in the four long, dark, lost years under Baillieu, Napthine and Ryan. The previous government was so dysfunctional that it had a leader and then it got rid of that leader. It got another leader, and the people got rid of that leader. Now the opposition has a new leader. The coalition has leaders all over the place. The former government was so dysfunctional it could not even get its act together, so for four years the state of Victoria stopped — it stood still. There was no activity other than the activity when the ministers went out into the electorates and cut ribbons. They cut ribbons on 2010, 2011 and 2012 Labor projects; the tail end of Labor projects that they never initiated, that they opposed, that they never even thought in their wildest dreams could ever be done here in Victoria. They cut our ribbons.

But then it stopped. We will be in government over the next four years but how many ribbons of theirs are we

going to cut? Absolutely zero. None whatsoever. Not one!

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Speaker. I am sure it is not the intention of the member for Melton to mislead the house but I remember the Minister for Health cutting the ribbon on the Frankston — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Burwood knows that is not a point of order.

Mr NARDELLA — The Royal Children's Hospital was our project. The ribbon on the 12 dental chairs out at Melton that was cut by the previous Minister for Health was our project. When the Sunshine Hospital was opened by the previous Minister for Health, not one Labor member in a Labor area was invited. The regional rail link was a project of this government and the Gillard government. The list goes on.

Let us remember what the slogan and the mantra for the Liberal Party was before the 2010 election. What was it? Was it 'Fix the leadership. Sign the dodgy contract'? That is a no. Was it 'Fix the maverick MP. Save the government'? No. Was it 'Fix the Speaker. Save the ministerial driver'? — especially for The Nationals. Never get between a Nationals MP and a white car and its driver. But that was not the mantra. The mantra was — what was it, I ask honourable members on the other side of the house? Anything?

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr NARDELLA — You do not know. You are too ashamed. It was 'Fix the problems. Build the future'. What a future it was! Those opposite cannot say the slogan they went to the election on because they are so ashamed of that slogan. That is because they never put in place what it promised.

The coalition government never put in place the infrastructure we needed in Victoria. It could not even get it right in four years. We had members here today making things up. They get their briefing notes from their staffers. The Deputy Leader of The Nationals just went through their list. The food bowl modernisation project would never have been achieved under a Liberal-Nationals government. Two billion dollars worth of upgrades in the food bowl of Victoria would never have been done and has never been done by a Liberal government, and yet its members come in here and criticise us for doing the things that are needed for this state.

Then we have the regional rail link, a great Labor project. For two years those opposite said, 'It is over budget, it is going to take longer, the Labor Party has stuffed it up'. Then we had them saying that it was going to come in under budget, and it was going to take a shorter period of time. Yet what we now find is that they did not build enough rolling stock. We would have opened the regional rail link next month but we cannot because they were so incompetent. The Captain Snooze government of the century was so incompetent that it did not build enough rolling stock so we have to wait until June to open the regional rail link and assist the member for Geelong and her constituents to come into the city via a much faster route.

What is this government getting on with? In the 87 days we have been in office we have done more than that slothful, lazy opposition, when it was in government, had four years to do. We have established the Level Crossings Removal Authority and the metro rail authority. We are not going to build a railway tunnel to nowhere or a railway tunnel to Crown Casino to look after our mates. No, this is the real metro tunnel. We have allocated $30 million to the Murray Basin rail upgrade. They talk about it; The Nationals talk about it. They had four years to put it in place, but in our 87 days in government we have allocated the money to actually build it.

We do not talk about it; we build it. We have announced planning for suburban roads, we have announced the country roads and bridges program and we have outlined an unsolicited bids process and framework. We have established the Royal Commission into Family Violence, and the list goes on, but that list of announcements I outlined to the house were made just in the last seven days. Those announcements are to build the infrastructure of the future, not to build the mattress and bed of the future so that the Captain Snoozes on the other side of the house can go to bed and sleep. Our announcements are about building the infrastructure that Victorians need and deserve. The Labor Party culture is one of hard work, and everyone on this side of the house understands hard work. They are out there working every day of the week. The Premier and the ministers are out there working every day of the week to create jobs and build infrastructure for the future. We are not asleep at the wheel.

The departure lounge of ex-ministers is on the other side of the house. They could not even do one thing. Where is the Avalon rail line? It is not there. Was that a promise? It might have been a core promise; it might have been a non-core promise. They had four years and what did they do? There was a press release for the Avalon rail line. What did they do about Doncaster rail? They issued a press release. What did they do about Rowville rail? They delivered a press release.

What did they do about Southland station? I will tell the house what they did: they delivered a press release. They promised a $1 billion upgrade of Flinders Street station. What did they deliver? A press release. This was a hopeless government led by hopeless Premiers, and they have been put in the dustbin of history.

Ms RYALL (Ringwood) — I rise to support the matter of public importance. Clearly my focus is going to be on the shovel-ready east–west link given that the feeder road into that — EastLink — runs a certain way through my electorate, as does the Eastern Freeway. My community is directly affected by this attempt to cancel a shovel-ready project with the loss of 3700 jobs at the eastern end and the loss of 3000 jobs at the western end. It is extraordinary to hear from members of the government their warped interpretation of a shovel-ready project. The east–west link project had undergone the expressions of interest (EOI) stage, it had undergone geotechnical work, it had undergone the concept design and early planning required to prepare for a tender to be called, and indeed it had undergone the tender submission process, and a tender had been awarded. All these processes were in line with the schedule applied subsequent to the allocation of funding in the 2013–14 budget. For the education of those opposite, that is a shovel-ready project.

If we compare that project with the West Gate distributor project, we see that the EOI stage of the latter project is just starting. We then start to see how out of touch this government is and how embarrassing it is for it to announce something as shovel-ready when it does not have the slightest idea what shovel ready means. It does not have a basic understanding of design, planning or construction processes, and that explains why Labor stuffed up so many projects when it was last in government. It is absolutely embarrassing. Returning to the east–west link project, let us not forget that the no-tolls road — sorry, the toll road, is the feeder road into the Eastern Freeway and into what would have been the east–west link, which is why there is a subsequent need for it.

On the subject of broken promises, prior to the election the Premier said that ripping up contracts would be irresponsible. He even wrote to the then Premier and said that if elected Labor would 'honour valid, legally binding projects'. In 2005 — 10 years ago — he spoke in this very house about ripping up the EastLink contracts. He said it would be an act of 'fundamental vandalism', that it would be 'reckless'. He even used the words 'sovereign risk' in that context. We have a bloke who says one thing, and then attempts to do another. He changes his mind depending on which way the wind is blowing. He said those things in 2005, and now as Premier he is on the record as saying he will tear up the contract for a major road project when he knows that action is reckless, that it is an act of fundamental vandalism and is an issue of sovereign risk — but he will tear the contract up.

Did the risk disappear? Did the act of vandalism disappear? Did it suddenly become not reckless? Did the risk suddenly become lower just because he became Premier? We have a Premier who accepts that his behaviour, leadership and actions are in fact reckless, constitute vandalism and pose a risk to this state from a sovereign perspective. It is not every day that you see a Premier acknowledge that his actions are reckless, but that is essentially what he has done by stating one thing in this house in the past, then coming into government and stating the complete opposite. He is totally untrustworthy. If what he said back in 2005 with regard to the irresponsible tearing up of contracts were true, then we have a Premier who does not have the courage of his convictions. He was telling porkies to Victorians. It would have been safer for him if he had pleaded the Fifth Amendment, but he did not. He has totally contradicted himself, saying one thing earlier and another thing later.

A Treasurer worth his salt would put Victoria first and seek to assure financiers and investors in our state that we are a safe place to invest in and a safe place to do business. But no, we have a Treasurer and a Premier — in fact a whole government — who say, 'Don't trust Victoria. Don't trust that we will honour our contracts. Don't trust that we will honour our commitments'.

This relates to opportunity cost. When a financier or business considers what they will invest in, they look at the next best opportunity and they ask, 'What are we willing to forgo in order to make this investment?'. The financiers, contractors and subcontractors involved in bidding for work on the east–west link were considering the opportunity cost: considering the funding for the project in the 2013–14 state budget, considering the schedule of events for the tender process and the geotechnical work, and considering the commitments that were being given. They made a determination that they would take the risk to put funds into that project as opposed to the opportunity to put funds into an alternative project. That is how the issue of risk relates to this state: Victoria is now exposed to risk because who will trust a Premier who says one thing one day and says another thing the next day? He is trying to protect himself and his party from the rise of the Greens in inner city seats, and therefore he is willing to put Victoria at risk in order to save himself and his party. You cannot take him seriously. His word is not his bond. He says one thing and does another.

We need to look at the issue of jobs and economic output. Today's *Herald Sun* says it all: at William Adams CAT staff are facing redundancies, a reduction in hours and the closure of regional offices. Another company, which is in Ringwood in my electorate, has exactly the same problem. That is what it is facing. Instead of growing its business, growing employment and outsourcing the manufacturing of materials, trucks and the like, it is facing doing nothing. It is facing lost opportunity. It is wondering where its opportunity, its jobs and its future lies because of this project being scrapped.

Members opposite have no idea. We need only look at the last time the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), under Bob Hawke, tried to start a business. If you want to look that up, google 'ACTU Solo'. It was a debacle, and that is the problem. Those opposite do not have business experience, they have not employed people and they do not understand what is involved in any aspect of business.

In terms of the 3000 jobs on the east–west link, I know of tradies, independent contractors, small business and medium business operators who were looking forward to being able to employ more people, expand their business and grow opportunities for people. As somebody who began three entrepreneurial start-ups that have actually been successful, I know — —

Mr Pesutto interjected.

Ms RYALL — That is exactly right. I know what it is like to create the opportunity for employees to flourish and succeed and provide for their families. The unions are no longer even sticking up for their members. They put Labor first, their members second and Victoria last. We have a whole bunch of people — union members — who no longer have the opportunity for a job on the east–west link, which is a shovel-ready project.

Mr Pesutto — Deserting their own people.

Ms RYALL — Deserting their own people — absolutely. Where are they now? Where are the union leaders who helped elect this government but who have now deserted their members? Those members no longer have the opportunity to get the job that was going to take them forward. Those union leaders are silent, and I look opposite and see that the members there are absolutely silent as well. I am hearing from those union members that they have been deserted. They were looking forward to having job prospects and opportunities and they were looking forward to feeding their families. The rug has been pulled out from under them.

I recently saw a picture of a herd of cattle behind the Premier. I must admit that I thought it was a caucus meeting. Let me say that the only thing that is shovel ready for this government is the endless piles of male bovine manure. That is the only thing that is shovel ready for this government. It has no idea. It does not care, and it will put Victoria at risk for its own ends.

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — I rise to support the member for Warrandyte's matter of public importance and set right some of the history that has been rewritten during this debate, particularly in relation to my electorate. The Murray Basin rail project was developed under the previous government and was shovel ready — in fact the shovel had already been used. Of the $230 million that was budgeted for the project, $10 million had been spent during the term of the former government to upgrade the Hopetoun rail line. The $30 million announced by the current government was phase 2 of that project to do urgent pre-standardisation maintenance on the Mildura line. Those projects are shovel ready, and the government has moved the maintenance money on the Mildura line to the next financial year, which is pushing back urgent maintenance work. I dearly hope there are no derailments over the next few months while we wait for that money to be available in the next budget.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Mr McCurdy**) — Order! The time for the matter of public importance has expired.

CEMETERIES AND CREMATORIA AMENDMENT (VETERANS REFORM) BILL 2015

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater) — I rise in support of the Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment (Veterans Reform) Bill 2015. This is an incredibly important year for us to be not only discussing this bill but also acting on these types of important issues. Those members who have been watching the wonderful Channel 9 miniseries starring the brilliant young Australian actor, Kodi Smit-McPhee, will have noticed just how young these men were. I say 'men' because at that stage it was only men who were sent to the front. Kodi was 17 when this series was shot, the same age as the character he portrays. When we watch that series, it is a chilling reminder to us of the naive youth who loved their

country so much that they were willing to make the supreme sacrifice.

This bill ensures that there will be continued respect paid to the cremated remains of veterans who have served Australia in the armed forces through the ages. The important thing is that we care for them well after they are dead and buried, or cremated, and respect their wishes and those of their families, as well as acknowledging the wonderful service that they gave to this country. There is nothing more important to the families and friends of a loved one than to know where they are buried or cremated, but also how that site is maintained and how this will follow through in the generations to come.

It is important that we secure this part of our history for the future, particularly for those who served and died for our country — our veterans, who put their lives on the line and, as I said, made the supreme sacrifice. It would be remiss of us as a wider community not to give them their due respect. This issue flared up a few years ago, when orange stickers were being put on grave sites or on plaques saying that the 25-year tenure had expired. One of those stickers was put on my mother's plaque. The cemeteries trust had not been able to contact my father, who at that stage was in a nursing home. I turned up at my mother's grave one day and sure enough there was an orange sticker on it. I immediately paid the bill to convert it to a perpetuity tenure. I note we are talking about $400-odd for veterans, but I paid over $4000 at Springvale to have my mother's ashes and her rose bush put there in perpetuity.

One of the stories that came out at that time was that of Digger R. T. Jeffery. He was from the 13th Light Horse Regiment and died in 1957. Obviously he did not die of war wounds and lived a relatively lengthy life. I did some digging, pardon the pun, on Digger Jeffery and his is a very interesting story. The 13th Light Horse Regiment was formed at Broadmeadows in 1915. With a number like 13, it is easy to imagine that the regiment quickly became known as the 'Devil's Own' regiment. The regiment left Australia at the end of May 1915 and disembarked in Egypt at the end of June 1915. The regiment was to go to Gallipoli, but it was discovered that it was not an ideal place to take the horses so the soldiers were deployed without their horses.

That was in September 1915, so for most of its time the regiment manned the trenches at Lone Pine. They returned to Egypt and proceeded to France where they were sent to the Western Front. They did traffic control, they did rear area security and prisoner escort tasks and also the more traditional cavalry role of reconnaissance. They played an incredibly important part in the war, but one can only imagine — going back to the series if you have been watching *Gallipoli* — how young and how scared these men, boys in some circumstances, were. I think we owe it to people like Digger Jeffery to make sure their remains are treated with respect. I think we owe it to them to make sure that we never, ever forget where they have come from and the price that so many of them paid. We hope that those veterans who came back and led long and happy lives are also paid due respect.

This bill ensures that all the cremated remains, in this case those that have orange stickers, are treated with respect and that the cemeteries trust for that facility keep them where they are in perpetuity or move them and any nearby family members — again, out of respect to the family — to a more suitable place, but as a family unit. This is good legislation. It is something the former Minister for Health, David Davis, introduced during the last parliamentary term. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) — I am pleased to make some comments on the Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment (Veterans Reform) Bill 2015. I say at the outset that there are cemeteries which are multimillion-dollar businesses across Victoria as well as cemeteries in very small rural and regional areas that are run largely by volunteers, who maintain those places, particularly when burials or cremations are no longer occurring. As a past trustee of the Banyule Cemetery Trust, which was some time ago now in my days in local government, I know that many local councils play a role as trustee of cemeteries across Victoria.

I worked with the Premier in his role previously as the Parliamentary Secretary for Health on a complete rewrite and reform of the Cemeteries and Crematoria Act in the early 2000s, from around 2003 to 2005. A lot of that work was designed to bring modern practice to the way in which cemeteries and crematoria operated, to make sure that there was greater governance and accountability across the sector and to ensure cemeteries were far more responsive to community expectations, concerns and needs. We have seen, with the amalgamation of cemetery trusts and the way in which they are governed across Victoria, a better sense of accountability and also a better sense of how they are managed on behalf of the community.

Issues have now risen in relation to the veteran reforms that are included in this bill, and there is now a greater opportunity for them to be dealt with by the Parliament. We can also give greater direction to the cemetery

trusts, which had different governance arrangements introduced by the Bracks government, to provide a greater level of accountability and ensure that cemetery trusts are reflective of the community's expectations.

In relation to veterans, I want to touch on a personal example. A great uncle of mine, Barney Long, who was my grandmother's brother, served as a 15-year-old at Tobruk and also in New Guinea during World War II. His remains are interred in a cemetery for which the Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust is responsible. When we reflect on some clauses in the bill and what we are trying to do with them, we remember those who have gone before us and who made those sacrifices. In many cases they do not have family members to watch over their remains to make sure they are respected and to ascertain whether their right to interment in perpetuity has been determined in the past. The community is interested in there being longer term plans in place to respect the rights and the memory of veterans. With the changes proposed in these veterans reforms, which form part of the amendments made in this bill, we will provide opportunity and direction to give comfort to families and communities, but we will also give clear instruction and advice to cemetery trusts around Victoria.

The bill ensures that there is provision for the conversion of a right of interment of cremated human remains of deceased identified veterans from a 25-tenure to interment in perpetuity. There is also provision for the reinterment of the cremated human remains of deceased identified veterans and their family members in specified circumstances.

Having visited the Rats of Tobruk memorial in a cemetery in the southern metropolitan area, I know that these are great memorials that reflect a different time and different circumstances. They are places that to this day are revered and provide an opportunity for different generations to visit and pay their respects. In reflecting on the amendments proposed in the bill, I took the opportunity to pause and think about family members who have gone before, as I am sure we all have in this place. They may well have returned from overseas service in past conflicts, but their status as veterans and how that is respected and commemorated remains very important to us.

A lot of work has been done on the way in which cemeteries are managed and this is reflected in previous legislation on these matters. Considering the amendments in the bill has allowed us to reflect on the community's concerns that veterans remains be treated respectfully and that cemetery trustees act responsibly as custodians of those remains. Some speakers in the debate have commented on the practice of placing stickers on grave sites to warn of the impending expiry of a 25-year tenure. It can be difficult for cemetery trustees to locate family members of the deceased, particularly as they do not necessarily visit the cemeteries.

It is difficult for trustees, even with their best efforts, to try to find answers and advocates in the community who may not necessarily be family members but who will take the interests of veterans and others into account. It is a difficult task, but I think the Parliament is seeking to respond to the community's concerns in relation to these matters and to make sure there are provisions in place that give greater powers to trustees to manage these issues, as well as giving them greater direction.

One of the examples that has been cited in the media recently and that has been discussed going back to 2011 relates to ashes and plaques that can be removed and disposed of after 25 years. This raises concerns about who in the community is undertaking advocacy and taking on custodianship in relation to these matters. The bill seeks to address a number of those issues. I wish to also draw attention to the fact that, while there is a capacity and the provision of resources for larger cemetery trusts to manage these issues, there will need to be continued communication and support provided to very small and volunteer cemetery trustees, particularly in smaller rural communities, in relation to how they manage some of these issues.

I know from past work in which I dealt with a lot of the appointments around cemetery trustees that a lot of these people volunteer their time, and we are very fortunate that they do so. They are maintaining gardens and maintaining public places and spaces that for many people can often be forgotten. It is important for us to provide them with the support they need to maintain these sites in perpetuity to give families some level of comfort that these matters are respected by the Parliament.

There are different arrangements in place for some of our larger metropolitan cemeteries, and there are resources available to them to fulfil the wishes of the Parliament in relation to this legislation. I note that through the amendments being put forward we are seeking to make sure that we are responding to the community's concerns about veterans whose remains have a limited tenure. We wish to ensure that under the act such remains will stay in Victorian cemeteries in perpetuity.

There are no particular concerns about the way in which trustees seek to manage these issues in the public interest. Our concern has been about giving trustees greater direction about veterans remains and what the community's expectations are on how these issues should be managed. What is being put forward in these proposed legislative amendments builds on the work that the Bracks Labor government began when it reformed the cemeteries and crematoria sector by making sure there were stronger accountabilities and governance arrangements in place to manage not only our cemeteries but also the significant resources — financial and otherwise — that they have.

It is important in the amalgamation of a lot of our cemetery trusts to provide a greater critical mass in terms of the way in which they are governed and managed across Victoria, including the associated land management issues. We now have trustees who are not volunteers but who are remunerated by the Victorian taxpayer, and I think we now have a greater level of widespread skills and diversity in the appointment of cemetery trustees for some of these most significant places, including those where we have also had investment in memorials that relate to past conflicts in which people have served.

I commend the amendments in the bill, and I also note that the bill builds on the reforms of the Bracks government in this area.

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — I rise to make a brief contribution to the Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment (Veterans Reform) Bill 2015. The Nationals, in coalition, are supporting this legislation. The bill amends the Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003 to provide for the conversion of a right of interment for interring cremated human remains of deceased identified veterans for 25 years to a perpetual right of interment and to provide for the reinterment of cremated human remains of deceased identified veterans and their families in specific circumstances.

I think this is a worthy piece of legislation, and it has been supported and well discussed already during this debate. However, I think there is a need to be very clear about the guidelines for cemetery trusts in this legislation. In country areas cemetery trusts are voluntary, and although they may claim expenses in order to make their cemetery trust work, most do not. So there is some work required here, particularly in the scenario where the holder of a right of interment cannot be contacted, because appropriate decisions must be made about the veteran's cremated remains. In may be necessary to move them around or to reinter them and so on. I think there need to be clear guidelines for our cemetery trustees.

At this point I would like to pay tribute to the work that has been done by those in my electorate around unmarked war graves. In particular the RSL in my electorate has worked hard with the state and federal veterans affairs departments, and Ken Wright, a former member of the other place, has set about marking the graves of World War I and World War II soldiers that have remained unmarked for some time. This is a very worthy program and one that involves considerable expense. It has had a great deal of support. I would like to pay tribute to those who are doing that in my electorate as people in this centenary year of Gallipoli start to reconnect with their relations who may have been veterans and to locate their graves and pay tribute to their lives.

This is good legislation. It needs a little bit of clarity to avoid putting pressure on those willing people who give their time to run our country cemeteries. With those words, I wish the bill a speedy passage.

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) — It is a pleasure to speak on the Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment (Veterans Reform) Bill 2015. I would like to acknowledge the bipartisan support of this bill in the house and the reflections made by members who have contributed to the debate. I want to also note that this bill has significant support from stakeholders, including the Returned and Services League and many of the voluntary public cemeteries, which number some 490. Many of the cemeteries are supported by volunteers in our community who dedicate their time.

The original bill allows for either a perpetual tenure or a limited tenure of 25 years for cremated human remains. The 25-year tenure element of the bill has created the uncertainty which has led to where we are today. In a modern context where people are quite transient and live across the country and across the world, you can always get in touch with family members when a 25-year tenure comes to an end. The issue that arose was that an orange sticker, which effectively gives warning to families that there is a need to address that 25-year tenure, was placed on a site at the Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust in Springvale. It is quite an abrupt way of notifying families. It leads to uncertainty for families and could lead to a circumstance where the remains of servicemen and women will be basically scattered throughout the cemetery gardens and the memorial removed. It is a cause of great concern and heartache for families.

It is great that this bill will strengthen our commitment to preserving the memory and legacy of our servicemen and women, and it is fitting that this bill has been brought forward in the year of the Anzac centenary, which is such a significant event for our community. In Mordialloc the legacy of our servicemen and women is honoured not only by our RSLs but also by our schools. It is great to see our schools and our younger generations looking to support our communities.

This bill will address significant concerns by effectively tightening up those requirements to allow the perpetual tenure to continue. It will convert the interment tenure status from limited to permanent and will thus create a legacy for our families. I reflect on my own family. My grandfather, Noel Richardson, served during World War II in the United Kingdom as a gunner in Lancaster bombers. He has a memorial at the Springvale cemetery. I cannot get there very often, but it is something that I reflect on personally with fond memories. It is something that Nan and my family are very proud of. I am glad that for families like mine, and the others that have been referred to in the house, those legacies will be preserved.

It is also fitting when we commemorate the centenary of Anzac to consider that at the time the Australian federation was newly formed and the nation had a population of about 5 million. There were 420 000 enlistments. One in 11 people was caught up in the conflict, with significant casualties on all sides. During World War II, 62 000 lives were lost and 156 000 armed forces members wounded. That is a significant number of people who sacrificed their time and in many cases much more for our country.

I wish to reflect on the urgency of this bill and why it has come forward now. Digger R. T. Jeffrey of the 13th Light Horse Regiment passed away in 1957. It was an orange sticker placed on his memorial stating that the tenure of the memorial had expired that brought about the need for this change. Thankfully the cemetery trust and particularly the volunteers held off and did not take any action regarding his memorial. They waited for the government to bring forward legislation before they made a decision. I acknowledge and commend the work of our public cemeteries and, in particular, the volunteers.

It has taken some time to get the bill to where it is now, given that the issues surfaced in 2011. I am thankful for the assurance from the opposition that this bill will pass through the house and will create that much-needed certainty. It is important to reflect on the contributions of our servicemen and women. In my electorate of Mordialloc I was recently given the opportunity to reflect on *The Fallen* by Margaret Diggerson. The book's publication was supported by federal grants, and it focuses on the 59 servicemen from the Chelsea and Carrum region who served during World War II. At that time it had been only 25 years since the Frankston train line was extended from Mentone to Frankston. At that stage Chelsea was either a holiday town or a farming location. I wanted to reflect on her work in acknowledging and celebrating those servicemen and women.

We need to remember the sacrifices and contributions that were made in the two world wars. The work of this bill will complement the Anzac centenary grants programs and create a fantastic legacy. I offer my support and also pay tribute to the ongoing work of our RSLs in the lead-up to the centenary of Anzac, particularly the Chelsea RSL, which has attracted hundreds and hundreds of people to its dawn service over the last few years and is expecting to have to block off Station Street and possibly even extend across the train line onto the Nepean Highway this year. I am thankful to be able to take back to my RSLs the certainty that has been created for the preservation of veterans' cremated remains through this bill. I also acknowledge the Mentone RSL and the Cheltenham-Moorabbin RSL for their work. They will also will conduct marches and events this year. I commend the bill to the house and thank everyone involved.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — It gives me great pleasure to join the debate on the Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment (Veterans Reform) Bill 2015. I think all of us in this house were horrified in 2011 by the *Herald Sun* reports of the proposed treatment of the remains of a veteran at Springvale cemetery, leading to calls from one of the then trustees for legislative change. It is disappointing that because of the disarray of the legislative program in the last Parliament the bill did not proceed due to time constraints, despite being second-read in both houses. I am pleased that this government has reintroduced it.

Although it has been delayed, it is fitting that the bill be introduced in this the centenary of Anzac year when the community's consciousness of the contribution of our veterans has never been higher. It has never been higher in my lifetime or in the lifetime of this nation with the exception of the time of the two world wars. There are many commemorative ceremonies and activities taking place across the state, and I commend the member for Wendouree, in particular, for her work on the committee in ensuring that those important commemorations take place.

I am very privileged to represent an electorate that has some very active RSL sub-branches: Whittlesea, Hurstbridge and Diamond Creek-Doreen. Formerly my electorate included the Epping RSL, whose members I worked with very closely. I want to say a few words about the Epping RSL sub-branch and a former member for the federal seat of McEwen. Peter Cleland was a great mentor of mine, a national serviceman and a fantastic member of Parliament. Sadly, we lost Peter a few years ago to motor neurone disease. As well as being a mentor to me, he was an incredibly active community member following his retirement from Parliament. One of his community activities was that of vice-president of the Epping RSL sub-branch.

One of the first things that Peter raised with me was the importance of showing respect for our war dead and our veterans once they have passed. He told me a horrific story of something that can occur when proper record keeping, proper respect and proper legislative frameworks are not in place.

The commissioners who were running the City of Whittlesea in the 1990s and the council that followed them forced the RSL sub-branch to move from the Epping Memorial Hall to its new location in Harvest Home Road, which its members are very happy with. There was a beautiful rose garden by the Epping Memorial Hall. The families of many members of that RSL sub-branch had scattered in the rose garden the remains of their loved ones who were veterans. Although the bill before the house does not cover that matter, it shows the horror that people can feel when remains are not taken care of and not looked after. When the relocation occurred, the rose garden was dug up. There was no discussion or consultation with even members of the Epping RSL sub-branch, let alone the members of the families of the veterans. That was a great lesson that Peter Cleland taught me. The president of the Epping RSL sub-branch, Herb Mason, continues to be a great advocate for living returned servicemen and for those who have passed.

The RSL sub-branches at Whittlesea and Hurstbridge do a similarly great job. Despite being one of the newest sub-branches, Diamond Creek has altered its membership and coverage rules to become the Diamond Creek-Doreen sub-branch, in recognition of the growth to the north. On Remembrance Day last year at Laurimar Primary School I saw one of the best examples of a new and active community. It was the first school in the country to have its own memorial in partnership with an RSL sub-branch. The unveiling of the memorial was promoted only through the school newsletter and on Facebook. On that evening in November there were some 3000 people there. That sub-branch plans to have a dawn service this year, and I have no doubt that there will be many thousands of people at it. Given that there was just word of mouth and very little formal notification, it shows just how much members of that community want to pay respect to our fallen.

I note also that there are other historic war memorials in the Yan Yean electorate, at Plenty and Yarrambat. Last week I visited Yarrambat Primary School, and I was told that an avenue of honour is being established in the school grounds. Seedlings from the Gallipoli peninsula will be planted so that there is a tree in recognition of each local from the district who attended the school and was involved in that conflict. Those are examples of commemoration in my own electorate. The community greeted the information about the situation in 2011 with horror, given the fact that the cremated remains of our returned servicemen and women were not being taken care of adequately through legislation.

My grandfather, Eric Reginald Eugene Green, served in the Australian Imperial Force. He enlisted during World War I but fortunately was not deployed overseas because that conflict had ceased. Despite being a farmer and father of six, he enlisted again during World War II. His body is interred with that of my grandmother in the cemetery at Tarnagulla. His gravestone has that beautiful rising sun emblem on it so that people know that he was one who served our country. Not all returned servicepeople and their families make that choice, and I am pleased that the legislation provides an additional threshold of respect for the remains of our servicemen and women and how they are treated.

In short, the bill reflects a response to community concerns about the cremated remains of veterans. Previously there was limited tenure for those remains in public cemeteries. The bill ensures that cemetery trusts will not be able to have them scattered at the end of their tenure. As earlier speakers have said, the bill continues legislative reforms made previously under the Bracks government. It is really important that we pay respect to our veterans, as the bill does, and that we are forward looking in how we manage cemeteries and crematoria.

That is a particular difficulty with growing populations. I know that there has been a massive expansion of the Yan Yean cemetery due to the growth in that corridor. That cemetery, on the edge of the Whittlesea township, needs to be further expanded. Available land and burial and interment sites are an issue for cemetery trusts. It is important that as legislators we provide the appropriate legislation and regulations to advise those trustees and

give every member of the community certainty about the remains of their loved ones, in particular those who over many decades have served our country. We remember them particularly this year, in the centenary of Anzac.

I commend the Minister for Health for bringing this bill back speedily, given that the earlier bill was not dealt with in the previous Parliament. I commend the work of the departmental officers and the minister's staff in briefing us about the bill, and I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr WYNNE (Minister for Planning).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

INTERPRETATION OF LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Second reading

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

Mr PESUTTO (Hawthorn) — The coalition does not oppose this bill. The bill does a few things. It introduces stylistic changes which are not controversial, and as I said, we have no problem with those. It introduces new definitions into the standard definitions contained in the Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 — namely, for 'police officer' and 'registered medical practitioner'. That is sensible. It saves having to have specific definitions in specific acts, and the more that can be done the better and more efficient our system will be.

Importantly, the bill also addresses the question of immunities and indemnities when provisions of acts are repealed and clarifies that they persist despite repeal, amendment or other change to an existing provision. Again, we do not see any controversy around that.

The bill also deals with the power to delegate, providing that unless a contrary intention appears in an act, there is no power to delegate the power of delegation itself. We think that is sensible. The bill makes some other minor changes which I do not feel it necessary to address in my remarks today.

I say in conclusion, however, that although the coalition opposition does not oppose this bill, we query the government's priorities. Prior to the last election a lot of things were ready to go, and I would encourage the new government to embrace those. Two of them, in relation to which we had released exposure drafts, were disclosure of juvenile offending and criminal investigation powers. They were out for public comment. I am not sure of their status, but they were out, and we encourage the government to place a higher priority on those matters. There were other matters we had ready to go as well.

We had announced four-year statutory minimum jail terms for those who attack or cause serious injury to their victims in breach of family violence orders. That was an election commitment of the coalition, but I urge the new government to embrace it. There were also indefinite jail terms for repeat killers or serious sex offenders who go on to offend again after having been released from a jail term served for a previous offence. Those are just four suggestions I encourage the new government to embrace as it considers its legislative program, and I urge that the government pay more attention to bringing some more serious matters before this place.

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie) — I rise also to make a contribution on the Interpretation of Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. I welcome the member for Hawthorn's comments and support. I noted his priorities. I have read his comments in the *Herald Sun*, and it is good also that the member for Kew is putting his priorities into the *Herald Sun*. I look forward to continuing to watch the member for Hawthorn and the member for Kew battle for inches in the *Herald Sun*. I welcome that. I say to them: keep doing what you are doing.

It is very important that we make these changes to legislation. I will speak a little bit more about the importance of this legislation. I will not talk just about law and order matters. This is key government legislation that makes this place and the laws function a lot more appropriately, even if it is technical.

I also want to talk a bit about the Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel and pay some respect to our public servants, who we on this side of the house value to the very end. They are public servants — and we are not introducing a sustainable government initiative.

In relation to the Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel, I note that in a previous role under Premier Steve Bracks I got to know Eamonn Moran, a former chief parliamentary counsel, very well. He served the Bracks government superbly. The work he did in the Office of Chief Parliamentary Counsel with his staff was second to none. I pay tribute to him as well as to all the other important individuals who have had the same role. If you go back and look at the time of the Cain Labor government, you see that it appointed the first

female, Rowena Armstrong, who Eamonn succeeded. Rowena herself also did an excellent job. The current chief parliamentary counsel, Gemma Varley, was also appointed by a Labor government, that of John Brumby. Labor is therefore very supportive of the role of the crafters of legislation.

The Office of Chief Parliamentary Counsel website talks a little about the history of the office. Given that there are a few lawyers on the side of those opposite and a few on ours, I note also that before we had the Office of Chief Parliamentary Counsel we had barristers doing a lot of the work until the government worked out what sort of money we were spending on barristers and thought we should appoint our own public servants to do the role. There was so much concern about the standard of some of the drafting done by the barristers and the costs of engaging them that we appointed our own parliamentary professional assistants, who do the law of the Crown. One member of the Parliament once said:

> Large sums of money were annually spent by government in paying barristers, who might be called outsiders, for drafting bills which were only worth burning — they were not fit to see the light of day.

The office's website comments:

> Nonetheless the bar continued to be involved in the drafting process until 1879 when Edward Carlile was appointed parliamentary draftsman.

This legislation is important. It is important particularly for the Andrews Labor government, which has a strong legislative reform agenda and is a socially progressive government. This bill will be central to its work. It will help develop new acts and statutory rules. Although the amendments made by the bill are technical, they are important in clarifying particular aspects of legislative interpretation, and they promote consistency in definitions and style across the Victorian statute book.

The commencement date is 1 July 2015, which was chosen to coincide with the parliamentary winter recess so that there is minimal impact on bills that are before the Parliament at the same time as this bill. Labor is very proud of this legislation. The Attorney-General brought this through. Among the key issues will be additional powers to the chief parliamentary counsel in terms of stylistic changes to legislation and statutory rules. The bill also inserts two new definitions for use in Victorian legislation and subordinate instruments and includes several new interpretive provisions.

It is very important that we make these changes, which will help us going forward. Definitions of 'police officer' and 'registered medical practitioner' are being inserted into the Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 and will be used across all Victorian acts. The bill will make the activity of drafting legislation and subordinate instruments a lot more seamless and transparent, which is very important. The amendments made in relation to style, definitions and interpretation will simplify the drafting of legislation and subordinate instruments in Victoria and will ensure consistency in the appearance of existing and new laws.

Members on this side of the house are proud to support our hardworking public servants, including those in the Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel. They do a great job. I commend this bill to the house, I wish it a speedy passage and I welcome the support of the opposite side.

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) — I rise to make a brief contribution on the Interpretation of Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. Although I disagree with the member for Niddrie, who said this is a very important bill and a significant bill that is going through the house at the moment, this is one of these bills that needs to be dealt with to try to bring about a more efficient parliamentary system. The purpose of this bill is to include new definitions and interpretive provisions to improve the operation of the act and to provide for the updating of the acts and statutory rules to bring them into conformity with current drafting style.

Clause 4 refers to acts now being able to be cited using italics without bold text. That is not a game changer, but it serves a purpose. Clause 5 refers to repeals and amendments to provisions not affecting existing immunities or indemnities. Clause 7 provides that the definition of 'police officer' has the same meaning as in the Victoria Police Act 2013. Clause 8 provides that the definition of 'registered medical practitioner' will be added to the principal act via a new section. Finally, clause 9 inserts a new paragraph that provides that a power to delegate does not include the power to delegate that power of delegation.

As the member for Hawthorn stated earlier, the opposition will not be opposing the bill. It is important that we tidy up some of the acts and make it a more efficient system. With those brief words, I commend the bill to the house.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — It gives me great pleasure to contribute to the debate on the Interpretation of Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. As has been outlined, the bill is technical in nature. I will deal with two issues: language and format.

In relation to language, the bill inserts into the act, as has been discussed, definitions of 'police officer' and 'registered medical practitioner' for use in all Victorian acts and subordinate instruments. These definitions are already widely used in laws, and it is important that the inclusion of these definitions helps to simplify the drafting of other acts and subordinate instruments.

On that point, it is important that legislation reflects the language of our times. The Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein said, 'The limits of my language mean the limits of my world', and that theory was espoused in part by George Orwell in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, when Winston Smith worked at the Ministry of Truth and sought to limit language as a way of constraining the populace. It is important that our legislation moves with and reflects the language of the times.

The other point I will make relates to format. Giving the chief parliamentary counsel the right to authorise limited stylistic changes to legislation and statutory rules is a great thing. One thing I learnt with great interest when I read Walter Isaacson's biography of Steve Jobs was that after Steve Jobs graduated from high school in 1972 he enrolled at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, but dropped out after six months. He spent the next 18 months dropping in on creative classes, and he did a course on calligraphy. In 2005, when he spoke at Stanford University, he talked about sleeping on the floor of his friends' dorm rooms, returning Coke bottles for food money and getting weekly meals from the Hare Krishnas. He said that if he had never dropped in on that single calligraphy course in college, the Mac would never have had multiple typefaces or proportionally spaced fonts. Where would we be now if we did not have those things? This is creativity and innovation, and it is what we should do.

I understand that in the opposition rooms during the 1990s there was a great debate about whether we should focus on Times New Roman or Comic Sans, and there was a very strong rearguard action from many advisers who advocated the use and adoption of Comic Sans. It led to a vigorous debate in the opposition rooms and improved the quality of our work as a consequence. I yearn for a day — I probably will not be here, but other members may be — when members will go to the papers office and pick up an act of Parliament written in Comic Sans. That would be a good thing. It could be Arial Narrow or Calibri. We probably will not move to the funky stuff, like Galaga.

Anything we can do as a Parliament and as a government to encourage innovation, to encourage new forms of thinking and to embrace new styles is a good thing. I am really enthusiastic about this bill.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr PEARSON — I am being genuine. I think it is a good thing, and I want to see more of it. We should encourage the chief parliamentary counsel to push the envelope and embrace new forms, new fonts, new styles and new spacings. It is not just about embracing italics and thinking it stops there; we can do more than that. We are better than that as a Parliament, and that is what we should aspire to. On that note, I commend the bill to the house and wish it a speedy passage.

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran) — I acknowledge the thorough and well-researched contributions that members have made in this house to the debate on the Interpretation of Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. The Greens will support the bill, and I will speak briefly on it. The bill includes new definitions and adds a number of interpretive provisions to the Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984. It inserts definitions of 'police officer' and 'registered medical practitioner' into the act for use in all Victorian acts so that the definitions need not be repeated. It also includes several stylistic and formatting changes. As I said before, the Greens will support the bill.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Local Government).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

SUMMARY OFFENCES AMENDMENT (MOVE-ON LAWS) BILL 2015

Second reading

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

Mr PESUTTO (Hawthorn) — It all starts today. This is the first bill to come before the Parliament that is a real indication of what this new government is about. What have we seen so far? We have seen the Back to Work Bill 2014, which has nothing in it. It does not tell you what you will be paid if you qualify for a payment. It does not say what you have to do to qualify for a payment. It is a shell, if that. That is not an indication of what this government is about. We had the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Funding of Non-Government Schools) Bill 2014, which essentially adopts coalition policy with a few bits and pieces attached. That is not an indication of what this government is about.

During the last sitting week the Wrongs Amendment (Asbestos Related Claims) Bill 2014 passed this chamber with bipartisan support. It was something we would have done, and I pay tribute to my colleague the honourable member for Box Hill for what he did last year. That bill is not an indication of what this government is about, but the summary offences bill exposes the priorities of this government. None of the provisions of the Back to Work Bill, the education and training reform amendment bill or this bill will create one job. This bill will do nothing to promote the rule of law in this state; in fact it will undermine the rule of law in this state. This bill will do nothing to improve the reputation of this state; far from it, this bill will undermine the reputation of this state.

So why is it being done? I suspect it is being done to pay off benefactors, because it only seems to benefit those who are not prepared to put the democratic rights of others first. The bill does nothing to advance the cause of democracy. It caters to those who are prepared to put others in harm's way and damage property if they have to. The move-on laws the coalition government introduced in 2014 were all about the commission of abuses, not the exercise of legitimate democratic rights. Yes, everyone has the right to express their democratic views, and they have a right to do so peacefully, but they do not have a right to do so in any way that is violent, intimidatory, abusive or intrudes upon the rights and safety of others.

Why should it surprise us that this bill undermines the rule of law? After all, we have seen so much to indicate that this government does not put the rule of law first. Let us have a look at a few matters. Dictagate was an incident that involved members of the now Premier's office knowingly destroying property. It is on the record; it is beyond dispute.

Ms Hutchins — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member is straying from the bill. I ask that you bring him back to the bill.

Mr PESUTTO — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, as lead speaker my understanding is that traditionally you are given a bit of leeway on these things, and in this case the opposition's objection to this bill has everything to do with the rule of law in this state. I ask for some limited leeway. It will not take long, but I need to establish a context in which the opposition is opposed to this bill, and I ask for that leeway.

Mr Gidley — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, under standing orders it is a practice of this house to allow a lead speaker to have greater leniency than other speakers for the reasons the lead speaker has outlined, so I would urge you to continue the tradition of this house and allow for that to happen.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Mr Crisp**) — Order! I do not uphold the point of order, but lead speakers do get some leeway. I remind the speaker to make sure that he relates very succinctly the issues he is raising to the bill before the house.

Mr PESUTTO — I undertake to do just that, Speaker. Where the rule of law is concerned, let me talk about the east–west link contract, a matter on which the now Premier said that he would honour contracts last year. Then he said he would rip them up — something which has exposed the reputation of this state and something which has agitated sovereign risk around this state. The Premier has done more than that to undermine the rule of law in this state: he has dangled the prospect that he will legislate to extinguish legitimate and lawful contractual rights. How outrageous it is that he would do something like that.

I want to pay tribute to the member for Kew for a fine article this week where he articulated the case for why it would be outrageous to legislate to extinguish contractual rights in this state. I also want to refer to someone else — someone close to the government, someone it knows very well. It is a lawyer it has used recently, within the last 12 months. Why do we not defer to the very prominent constitutional lawyer Professor George Williams? What would he have to say about state governments extinguishing rights without just compensation? What do you think he would say about that?

Mr O'Brien — He was a Labor preselection candidate.

Mr PESUTTO — He was a Labor preselection candidate, as the honourable member for Malvern acknowledges. Let me quote what the professor of constitutional law says about state governments that acquire property without just compensation. He said it in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 2010 — —

Ms Hutchins — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the speaker is really straying from the bill. He has not referred to one clause in the bill as yet, and he has been speaking for 7 minutes.

Mr PESUTTO — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, as I undertook to the previous occupant in the chair, I am nearly concluding the contextual remarks I had. It will not take much longer.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Ms McLeish**) — Order! With regard to the point of order the Minister for Local Government has raised, I understand that 7 minutes into a 30-minute contribution is not far, and looking at the practice of the house in the previous Parliament I see that lead speakers had quite a wideranging scope within their opening remarks. The shadow Attorney-General has mentioned that he is close to finishing, so I ask him to complete those remarks as succinctly as possible and to continue with the rest of his contribution.

Mr PESUTTO — Where were we? I was about to give you the quote from Professor George Williams. In 2010 he said:

> It is offensive in a modern democracy like Australia that the states can acquire property without redress. This should be fixed.

He is Labor's own guy, and he is condemning the actions Labor is contemplating now.

That is not all that has happened to undermine the rule of law in this state. There is the abolition of the construction code compliance unit and the abolition of mandatory drug and alcohol testing on building sites, which we know are infested with criminal influences. These things are happening 87 days into this government, and it is a concern of the opposition that this bill, the first real indication of the policy preferences of this government, has come before this house. Maybe it is part of therapeutic justice that the government talks about — being soft on crime, some sort of Mickey Mouse approach to the rule of law — but we say that it is not good enough for Victorians. We say that we need to be held to a higher standard. This bill is a concession to the least deserving. It is justice for some, and it provokes a paradox that justice for some cannot be justice for all.

Why were move-on laws introduced in the first place? After all, they were introduced in 2009 under the then Brumby government — but it did it in name only. It introduced laws with limited grounds and an exemption that said, 'You must behave when you protest, except if it is a political protest and except if it is an industrial picket. Then all bets are off; you can do what you like. Police will not have the right to exercise their move-on powers'. The then government understood that there was a case for move-on laws, but it wanted to protect its mates, so it included an exemption. Not good enough.

When we were in office — again I acknowledge the fine work of the member for Box Hill, the former Attorney-General — we amended the Summary Offences Act 1966 to remove that exemption. Why? Let us look at what happened in the course of the last government. There was the Grocon blockade — the most outrageous contempt of court this state has ever seen. It was mob rule for about a week down at Myer Emporium. There were mounted police and defiant union leaders in the face of Supreme Court orders from no less than the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Victoria. Her orders were defied scornfully, ignorantly and brutally. Victorians watched in horror. Australians watched in horror. Investors watched in horror as the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) tried to take over a whole part of the city — and worse, it tried to prove it owned an industry. Not good enough.

As it turned out the police skilfully brought that blockade to an end — but not until there had been much agitation and distress caused to business owners, pedestrians, shoppers and commuters in the city of Melbourne. For all its proud work, the CFMEU was hit with what I believe was the largest fine for contempt in Victoria's history — $1.25 million. The CFMEU had the temerity to attempt to challenge it all the way to the High Court, but I am pleased to say that in the last fortnight the High Court has rejected leave to appeal.

Let us look at what Justice Cavanough, who heard the contempt proceedings against the CFMEU, recorded in his judgement. I will read a small excerpt about Mr Setka and a colleague at that blockade approaching some of the Grocon workers who just wanted to go to work:

> Shortly after the police horses had retreated, a group of about six persons broke away from the main crowd … They walked diagonally across Swanston Street to where most of the Grocon staff and employees were standing on the north-east corner. The CFMEU official, John Setka, was among them. So also was a Mr David Lythgow, who was known to McAdam —

a Grocon employee —

> as a CFMEU shop steward employed by Mirvac —

not even Grocon —

> another construction company. Both of these individuals are 'rather large'. The two of them got within a metre or so of the Grocon people. They started to finger-point and verbally abuse the Grocon people. Setka called the Grocon workers 'rats' and 'dogs'. He said: 'You —

f'ing —

> dogs. You should be over with us'. Some of the Grocon workers tried to enter into conversation with the Setka/Lythgow group. One got very close to Setka and said words to the effect: 'We just want to go to work John. This is not our blue'. Setka's response was 'You —

f'ing —

> dogs'.

And the Premier wants to stand by this man, this union! But that is not all.

Let us look at what another official of this esteemed union said, and I want to make it clear: some of the people I have most admired in my professional life are union people so I do not cast aspersions across other unions — but this one I will. Let us listen to what Mr Edwards, another CFMEU official, said at the time to the assembled mob. I am quoting from Justice Cavanough's judgement. This is Mr Edwards speaking directly to the mob:

> We are here to stay. We have laid siege, we have laid siege to this job and we're not going away … We're not here to have a brawl … We are disciplined, we are organised, and that's what got us the wages and conditions that this industry pays.

Mr Edwards is also recorded as having said:

> They want you come here for the next two days, for the next two weeks, for the next two months, for the next two years it's going to be a long job, right? They're behind now. Daniel Grollo's, well, he's up —

the proverbial creek.

Mr Edwards continued:

> He's behind now The government wants to have a brawl with the unions … They don't like unions that do what we do — produce good wages and conditions.
>
> We ain't going away … we ain't going nowhere … two days, two weeks, two months — here to stay. Right? If you've got a problem, don't bring it here because it's nothing to do with the unions. We're not going away. Whatever provocation occurs, laugh at 'em. Why? Because we should be happy. The police have shut down the city for us. Here to stay, right?

The Premier wants to stand by this man and this union — a union that has contempt for the law, for women and for the public. How long can the Premier stand by this union?

That is not all, and it does not involve only this union. The boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) blockade was a racist and appalling campaign against Max Brenner and the Jewish community. Just who ran this campaign? The Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid and the Socialist Alliance. What proud company to keep! These protests were conducted in 2011, culminating in a protest in July 2011, and that incident led to a Magistrates Court hearing where certain protesters were charged with trespass, besetting and resisting arrest under the Summary Offences Act 1966.

I will not deal with the resisting arrest charge. The besetting and trespass charges failed because of certain complexities that highlight why it is necessary to give the police more reasonable ways of dealing with these issues. In particular, the besetting charge failed because it was found by the magistrate in that case — and I make no comment on the magistrate — that the police line protecting Max Brenner and not the protest line had obstructed free movement at the shopping centre. If anything points to the need to reform the law, it is the technicality that meant that police trying to protect a lawful business from being attacked because of race could be held responsible for obstruction. That finding makes the case for why we need to bring in reasonable and practicable move-on powers.

We know that professional protesters and certain militant unions can exploit these difficulties. In the examples I have raised about the people who suffered and were in fear, I ask: did they have access to timely justice? Did Grocon have access to timely justice? It had Supreme Court orders — no less — from the Chief Justice, and it still faced a union prepared to ignore it. What these and other demonstrations show conclusively is that police officers need practical ways to control flashpoints and to deal with the uncertainties around problems in the heat of the moment. We are not worried about whether the arrest powers available under section 458 should be invoked or not, even though the circumstances may clearly demonstrate that they are. We are concerned about the hesitation that police officers have in imposing an action that will lead to somebody's arrest when all they want the protestors to do is to move 3 metres to the left and clear the driveway.

The delays I have spoken about — the ways to circumvent injunctions — are a particular problem. The government said in its press release of 10 February:

> Individuals and businesses can also take measures to prevent unlawful protest and seek compensation for illegal activity, including injunctions or the recovery of damages resulting from illegal activity through the courts.

However, how realistic is that for most people who suffer at the hands of these types of protesters? The protesters know these limitations and do not care about what message it sends for the status and stature of our legal institutions. I will quote from the *Australian* newspaper of 25 May 2013. It quotes Mr Setka. Let me read from the article:

> Mr Setka said the union didn't set out to break the laws, but 'sometimes we have to push the boundaries a little'.
>
> 'It's not the first time or the last time a union is found guilty of contempt', he said.

> 'It's not a deliberate attempt to snub our noses at the Supreme Court —

you think! —

> that's not our goal. We don't set out deliberately to break the law, but unfortunately sometimes it's going to happen'.
>
> With the CFMEU now expected to face stiff penalties, Mr Setka was unapologetic.
>
> 'Our members have been seasoned to expect that. They want us to maintain a militant union', he said.
>
> 'Unfortunately, the price of that is we will get fines. Our union has given us a mandate, they want us to remain a militant union'.

All of this demonstrates the case for bringing in stronger move-on laws, and that is just what we did in 2014. We added grounds to widen the scope under which police could take reasonable action to protect members of the public from protests that go too far — not protests that are legitimate, not protests that are peaceful, not protests that are democratic, but protests that go too far. We removed the untenable exemption that some people in our society can escape the operation of move-on laws because they happen to be in a political protest, because it happens to be a union picket.

In doing this, we had a lot of support. We had support from the Police Association for the laws we brought in. We have had support from the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which in recent days has said that it does not want to see a change in the laws that we introduced in 2014. Let me quote from that statement, which quotes VECCI chief executive Mark Stone:

> 'Laws must provide Victoria Police with adequate powers to keep the peace, protect the safety of individuals and their property and allow employers and employees to enter worksites and operate their businesses without risk or unnecessary disruption.'
>
> The 2014 laws expanded police powers to 'move-on' people engaging in illegal protest activities.
>
> 'The right to freely enter one's premises is a fundamental right. People should be able to go about their business and earn a living without others preventing them from doing so or making them fear for their safety …

The Master Builders Association agrees. An article in the *Australian Financial Review* of 11 February 2015 quotes Radley de Silva, the chief executive officer of the association:

> Master Builders Victoria chief executive Radley de Silva said the move-on laws have been a strong deterrent against unchecked, obstructive protests in the construction sector.
>
> He said the 2012 Grocon dispute brought the city to a 'grinding halt'.
>
> 'The current laws were designed to prevent protesters and picketers from unfairly blocking access to sites or intimidating other people going about their business of earning a living lawfully …

That is strong support. And from the Jewish community we have strong support, knowing that the Jewish community faced the despicable campaign back in 2011. Dr Colin Rubenstein, AM, had this to say in a public statement:

> While we appreciate the Victorian government's principled opposition to the BDS movement, we remain concerned that the repeal of the 'move on' laws will weaken the ability of the police to counter BDS blockades of businesses which, as the government says, have no place in our multicultural Victoria. We urge the government to closely monitor the situation and to ensure that if the proposed change to the legislation results in a revival of BDS blockades, the legislation is further adjusted to allow people to go about their lawful business free of the discriminatory harassment the BDS campaign represents.

They are worried, and they have put this government on notice that it will wear what happens if this bill goes through. The Jewish Community Council of Victoria also lends its support to our position. Why is the government doing this? Why would it do this? In the face of everything I have explained, why would it do this? It is because it is a cave-in — and worse, it misunderstands the law. Look at the Premier's press release, for starters. He said:

> Prior to the introduction of these excessive laws, Victoria Police already had the power to give a 'move-on' direction to a person to leave a public place. Such a direction could be given if a police officer suspected on reasonable grounds that a person is:
>
> > Breaching … the peace;
> >
> > Endangering … the safety of another person … or —

engaging in a way that is likely to cause injury:

> Under the bill to be introduced today, Victoria Police will retain those powers to respond to illegal protests.

That is wrong.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr PESUTTO — It is not right, it is wrong — wrong, wrong, wrong! Under the old move-on laws police had no power to stop a violent, aggressive, abusive, racist protest, if it was a picket or a political protest. Who among us can say that should be justified?

In the second-reading speech the Attorney-General says:

> The amendments had the effect of enabling police and PSOs to use move-on powers in relation to any protest.

That is wrong — it is not 'any protest'. It is a serious matter; under the Summary Offences Act 1966 they have to be satisfied that the circumstances exist to exercise a move-on power. The Attorney-General further said:

> Under the expanded powers, a police officer or PSO could potentially break up any protest, move someone on or arrest someone merely because, for example, they have a reasonable suspicion that a person is causing an unreasonable obstruction, is likely to do so, or is impeding or attempting to impede someone.

What the Attorney-General is saying is — Heaven forbid! — that a police officer might form a reasonable view that a protester was acting unreasonably. Members should think that through. It is wrong. He went on to say:

> It was also an attack on the rights of Victorian workers to engage in lawful industrial action.

That is wrong. Under the Fair Work Act 2009 no industrial action can be authorised if it is unlawful under state law. Further, the Attorney-General said:

> These new powers are unnecessary. Police officers and PSOs already have broad arrest powers under section 458 of the Crimes Act 1958 that are perfectly sufficient, and the new power in section 6A merely distinguished the offence of contravening a move-on direction from other summary offences.

This may be one of the best arguments for the changes we brought in. We already give police officers a discretion that they need. But if they exercise that discretion, they can only arrest people. What we thought — sensibly — was that in the same circumstances with the same police officer and the same protester the police officer has an option. The police officer does not have to just arrest; the police officer can say, 'Please move 3 metres to your left. Clear the driveway'. What is the police officer's only option at the moment? To arrest. Why do we want that? It does not have to be that way. We should be supporting the position the honourable member for Box Hill supported when we were in office.

We will oppose this bill, and we do so proudly. Protesters do not have some special democratic right that is denied to the rest of us. The militant CFMEU thugs who held the city to ransom in 2012 do not reflect the Victorian people. The racist and anti-Semitic activists who targeted Max Brenner and the Jewish community do not reflect the Victorian people. But this bill rewards those very activists. It rewards the least deserving, those who are interested not in the exercise of legitimate democratic rights but in the commission of abuses against the rights, safety and property of innocent Victorians. It is an abject and craven capitulation to those who know that most Victorians do not have the money or the time to go through the civil courts to try to vindicate their rights. It is a reward to those cunning enough to know that due to sufficient technical obstacles and uncertainty confronting our valuable and highly respected police officers, they can get away with threatening innocent people. This bill sends the worst possible message — that it is okay to break the law.

Who protects the law abiding in this state? Who protects the silent Victorians who believe in respecting others? Who protects those who place their faith in all of us in this house to enact the laws and properly resource our law enforcement agencies to keep our community safe and secure? Everything this government has done so far suggests that it will not do so. Violence is not acceptable in the name of democracy. Property damage is not acceptable in the name of democracy. Racial vilification is not acceptable in the name of democracy.

Let today's debate be a marker in time — a time when we warned of the dangerous signals that this bill would send. Let us be clear that the battlelines on this issue are drawn. We have warned the government of the consequences that may flow from this. Law and order is not a cheap quip or the playground of demagogues; it is a responsibility to protect the people we represent. We in the coalition want every Victorian to understand that as long as we sit in this chamber, as long as we represent people across this state and as long as we have a voice, we are going to fight for the law abiding, the silent, those who expect us to enact the laws and have the resources in place to protect our society. We will not put them last, but Labor will.

Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Local Government) — I am proud to rise to speak on the Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015. It was only a year and five days ago that I stood in this chamber to oppose the former government's amendments to the move-on powers under the Summary Offences and Sentencing Amendment Bill 2013. I am proud to stand here again and speak on the repeal of those amendments.

We saw a pretty animated performance from the previous speaker, the member for Hawthorn, but he failed to mention the right of Victorians to peaceful

protest, or Victoria's proud history as a democratic society where many historical protests have changed the face of history and given us amazing outcomes in public policy. If the move-on powers were to stay as they are in legislation, then a whole raft of policy changes that were hard-won by generations of Victorians — —

Ms Victoria — Generations of who?

Ms HUTCHINS — Generations of Victorians. The protests and movements in our history that could today be threatened by the move-on powers include anti-war protests and the suffragette protests. In more recent times they include the residents of Tecoma opposing the building of a McDonald's in their community; Lock the Gate and the antifracking protests, which were supported by many on that side of the house; and the Bust the Budget rallies, which have been so well attended here in Victoria, and another of which is coming up next week.

As I said, the previous government's laws were draconian, anti-democratic and unnecessary — —

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, if the minister is going to read her entire speech, we would be happy on this side to take it as read.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Ms McLeish**) — Order! I am sure that the minister is not going to read the entire speech.

Ms HUTCHINS — In fact I am referring to notes. Thank you, Acting Speaker.

The Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill makes four main amendments to return move-on powers to their original form. Firstly, the bill winds back the expansion of the grounds on which police and protective services officers (PSOs) may give move-on directions. Move-on powers will no longer be able to be used merely, for example, because a police officer suspects that a person is likely to cause an obstruction to another. Rather, the circumstances in which police officers and PSOs may direct a person to move on will be scaled back and limited to where officers suspect on reasonable grounds that the person is breaching or is likely to breach the peace, the person is endangering or likely to endanger the safety of another person or the behaviour of the person is likely to cause injury to a person.

Secondly, the bill provides that move-on powers will not apply in relation to a person picketing a workplace. We know from the previous speaker that the intent of the coalition government in introducing the Summary Offences and Sentencing Amendment Bill 2013 was to attack the rights of peaceful protesters and those out in the community protesting at their place of work.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms HUTCHINS — Well, it certainly looked that way in debates that took place in the house on that bill. The attack on workers was quite evident in many of the speeches that were given, and will no doubt be the focus of the other side today.

I would say that the Victorian people would not have foreseen how effective the implementation of the previous bill would be in their local communities. I have not had anyone raise the implementation of the previous bill and how effective it has been. Labor members have always opposed the move-on laws, and I am proud to stand here today to speak on our bill that repeals them. We will stand up for democratic values and the right to protest.

This legislation was a pretty strong election commitment that we took forward to the election, and the Andrews government will restore the balance for the Victorian people in favour of democracy. It is and should remain a fundamental right of all Victorians to move freely, express their views and associate with whomever they choose.

I have a little history lesson for those in the chamber. There have been many successful peaceful protests in this state.

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I renew the invitation from the member for Warrandyte, who said that if the minister wants to table her speech, then we would be happy for her just to table it rather than have her read it.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Ms McLeish**) — Order! I have already ruled on that point of order.

Mr Noonan — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, the standing orders permit members to refer to notes during their contribution, and I would ask you to allow the minister to continue to do that during her valuable contribution on this bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Ms McLeish**) — The minister can continue to make her contribution as she was doing previously.

Ms HUTCHINS — In referring to successful peaceful protests that have taken place under the current laws, in 1998 there was quite a large dispute on the

waterfront in Melbourne. It lasted three weeks and involved 1400 workers who had been sacked from their jobs across the national waterfront. During those three weeks on the Victorian docks we saw thousands of Victorian residents and workers join that peaceful protest. At the time I was one of the negotiators with the police force on behalf of the union movement to ensure that the peacefulness of those protests was maintained, and it was successfully maintained through the laws that existed at the time. Negotiation with the police force at the time meant that things went very smoothly, and through the Federal Court and the High Court those workers were able to find a lawful way back to their jobs. I cite that as an example for the record. It is a demonstration of how larger scale protests this state has seen have been successfully conducted in a peaceful way through negotiations.

The move-on powers introduced by the coalition's previous bill are draconian. They set us down a very slippery slope when it comes to democracy in Victoria. They infringe the vital rights that exist in a free democracy and they infringe the right to protest, something that the previous speaker failed to acknowledge. They also have the potential to disproportionately harm some of the most vulnerable groups in society. I would like to quote Geoffrey Bowyer, a former president of the Law Institute of Victoria, who stated at the time that these laws and changes:

> … could also have a significant and devastating impact on the homeless who, by the nature of their situation, are forced to gather in public places, often returning to a familiar spot after being moved on.

Our Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015 makes a point of returning some of those democratic rights to all Victorians, particularly the most vulnerable, those who want to stand up for their rights, those who want to protest in a peaceful way and those who want to make real social change by having their voices heard. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) — It gives me pleasure — or not — to rise this afternoon to speak on the Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015. I might say that we have seen one of the most compelling contributions to debate in this house for a long time. It was not from the member who just spoke; it was from the speaker before her. The shadow Attorney-General made a very compelling and wideranging contribution on this bill. Indeed I thought the Attorney-General might have walked out of this place and sought to withdraw the bill from the house, given the contribution and the arguments that were put by the shadow Attorney-General. They were absolutely compelling. He did a fantastic job.

If you go back and look at the history of these laws, you see there have been plenty of commentators willing to put their mark or imprimatur on them, such as the *Herald Sun* editorial of 11 February, which is entitled 'Moving backwards'. That is what this legislation will do: it is a winding back of laws in Victoria that compromises law-abiding people and businesses going about their daily activities with the veiled threat of others being able to undertake activities that threaten their livelihood. That is not something that those on this side of the house have tolerated or will tolerate, and it is why we introduced laws to prevent it while we were in government.

The history of the move-on laws was well put by the shadow Attorney-General. It was a Labor government in 2009 that introduced these laws. It did so by empowering police and protective services officers (PSOs) and giving them the ability to direct a person to leave a public place where the police or the PSO reasonably suspected that a person was undertaking a series of activities, whether that be an activity likely to breach the peace, endangering or likely to endanger the safety of another person or a whole range of other things.

But as the shadow Attorney-General said very clearly in his contribution, none of the legislation or proposed powers that Labor put forward at that time applied to a political or industrial protest or picket. That is the simple case put. One has to wonder and one can be cynical about the reasons why we now see Labor preparing to wind back these laws almost immediately on coming to government. The shadow Attorney-General put the case very well. We will not be supporting the proposed legislation; indeed, we vehemently oppose it.

I will go back to when the coalition government introduced into the Parliament by way of a second-reading speech by the then Attorney-General the Summary Offences and Sentencing Amendment Bill 2013 — I again commend the member for Box Hill, the shadow Attorney-General, for his work — which made sure Victoria Police had the powers and tools available to its members to move on people from particular situations. The shadow Attorney-General put forward a compelling case that while there is potential for legal recourse around pickets and industrial action by giving the police powers, why would you not want to give the police the power to use those tools — to simply go to a person and say, 'Move 3 feet to the left or the right'? The Police Association is very much in

favour of making sure its members who are at the front line of these disputes are able to have tools available to them to use for that purpose.

Going back to when the coalition introduced the previous legislation into the Parliament, it seems that Labor failed to recognise the intent of the act and is now winding back powers and simply showing no regard for law-abiding people going about their business. I will refer to part of the second-reading speech, when the Attorney-General at the time noted that, 'The bill continues to protect legitimate rights to lawful protest or demonstration'. He also said the new powers were a useful tool for 'safeguarding the peaceful enjoyment of public places by all, as well as defusing situations that threaten public order and safety'.

The Labor government is strongly suggesting that those changes somehow compromised the ability of people to undertake peaceful protest. That is simply not the case. The shadow Attorney-General vocally put the case that the legislation the coalition introduced simply allowed people to undertake those peaceful protests. People should absolutely have the right to do that, but when you are intruding on and compromising people's livelihoods and the business activities not only of business owners but staff members as well, then that is not good enough.

I had a look at some of the second-reading debate that took place on 20 February 2014 when the coalition brought on those particular amendments to the Summary Offences Act 1966. The former member for Bass had a fair bit to say at the time — he was certainly vocal — which makes for interesting reading. He referred to pinkos, commos; those from Trades Hall Council and Lygon Street and the John Setkas of the world, and their influence on the Labor Party and those industrial disputes. It made for quite entertaining reading.

When the then Attorney-General summed up the second-reading debate on the Summary Offences and Sentencing Amendment Bill, he reiterated that the amendments did not inhibit people's ability to undertake peaceful protest. That has been said over and over again, but the only argument the Labor Party can now put to us is to say that we were threatening those rights. The laws introduced by the coalition simply did not do that, and that is why we are opposing the bill before us today.

The *Australian Financial Review* of 11 February talks about the introduction of the bill we are debating here today, and it talks about police being able to have tools to move on people. It also says:

> The CFMEU was embroiled in a bitter dispute against construction giant Grocon in 2012, which led to a 16-day blockade of the Myer Emporium site.

In the same article Radley de Silva from Masters Builders Association Victoria (MBAV) says the move-on laws introduced by the coalition had been 'a strong deterrent against unchecked, obstructive protests in the construction sector'. He went on to say that that Grocon dispute brought the city to a 'grinding halt'. We simply cannot afford for that to happen in our state in the future. He was further quoted as saying:

> The current laws were designed to prevent protesters and picketers form unfairly blocking access to sites or intimidating other people going about their business of earning a living lawfully …
>
> Scrapping this protection gives building unions the thumbs up to once again wreak havoc in the industry, which will add delays and drive up costs of construction projects at a time when the industry can least afford it.

Those comments were not made by the opposition; they were made by Radley de Silva from MBAV.

Further comments were made by Mark Stone from the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VECCI). He was quoted as saying:

> People should be able to go about their business and earn a living without others preventing them from doing so or making them fear for their safety …

The Police Association has commented on this issue. The Minister for Police is at the table, and I wonder how he feels about it. The police should have the tools available for them to move people on. It is as simple as that. The police are right behind the opposition, so it will be interesting to hear what the Minister for Police has to say about that, given that the police member representative body asked for these laws and does not want to see them gone. That viewpoint is referred to in an article in the *Herald Sun* of 11 February, which states:

> Acting Police Association secretary Bruce McKenzie criticised Labor's plan.
>
> He cited protests when 'appalling behaviour' was used to block workers from entering buildings — such as the east–west link protests last year — as occasions when the powers could be useful. 'Our members could also use these powers in other areas, including, say, behaviour we see from time to time on the weekend in the CBD when people congregate and cause problems …Unfortunately, that won't be the case anymore.

They are comments made by the acting secretary of the Police Association. Those who are at the coalface of these disputes are saying, 'We want these tools, we want these laws. We don't want them retracted, which the Labor government is seeking to do'. One can only be cynical as to the reasons why the Labor government is seeking to withdraw a number of amendments put in place by the coalition last year. We all know why that is, and commentators not just from the coalition but from the Masters Builders Association, from our employer organisation, VECCI, and from the Police Association absolutely support the coalition's position on this bill. Again, I commend the shadow Attorney-General for his contribution to the debate on the bill. It was compelling because he told the whole story. From the coalition's point of view we vehemently oppose the bill before us today.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — I take great pride in joining the debate on the Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015. At the outset I will say that I am proud to have been an official of a trade union in this state. I am proud to have been elected vice-president of the State Public Services Federation (SPSF), which is now the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU). I was proud to serve on that state executive for some 15 years. I was also proud, like the Minister for Industrial Relations, to work at the Victorian Trades Hall Council. I was involved in many peaceful protests, working with the police and ensuring that people's voices were heard.

It has become trendy in recent years for some newcomers to politics in this state to say that there is little difference between the so-called 'old parties'. However, what people who are used to debates in this chamber understand is that whenever you mention the words trade union, occupational health and safety or equal opportunity, you get a fight from the other side. You get the sorts of rants that we used to hear from the former member for Bass, but also the insidious, obsequious behaviour of the former Attorney-General, who would act to curtail the rights of working people in this state and the rights of people to protest.

What I would say to the mouse who roared, across the other side — the member for Hawthorn — is 'leopards, spots'. The Liberal Party and The Nationals — the LNP, as they are called in Queensland; that show across the other side — are always about impeding and demonising the rights of working people. It is the party that in my childhood was led by former Queensland Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen, the same party that has just been thrown out of government in Queensland, which restricted people's right to freedom of association. It is the party of federal Attorney-General George Brandis, who tried to alter section 18C of the commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act 1975. Those on the other side will say, 'We didn't support that', but it was still their party that was trying to make those changes. Members opposite need to own it. It is the same party that brought us former federal Minister for Workplace Relations Peter Reith and the thugs in balaclavas with dogs on our waterfronts, who were there to protect employers, using the apparatus of the state and acting illegally to impede the rights of 1400 workers who had been dismissed across this country. That is where we saw the true spirit of Victorians and their commitment to freedom of speech. We saw people of all social strata and every age group, including grandmothers, supporting those workers on the docks.

We have had a great tradition of speaking up in this state. We have had peaceful protests against wars such as those in Vietnam and the Middle East. We have had the women's liberation movement speaking up over a long period of time about equal pay and about various forms of discrimination against women. We have had our Indigenous people wanting to speak up about their rights and their disadvantage. In recent times we have had farmers and other members of rural communities concerned about fracking and other reasonable things that they want to protest about in this state.

The leopards on the other side will never change their spots. They will try to tell you that they are about freedom and freedom of choice, but they are not. That is not just in this debate and the contribution of the mouse that roared, the member for Hawthorn. It is about almost any other member who has got to their feet in this Parliament. They still have not listened to what the community told them. Almost every member, without exception, when they have been on their feet has somehow demonised working people and members of trade unions. They have demonised paramedics and nurses for standing up for their patients, and demonised firefighters and vilified them because they actually had the temerity to say, 'Put the coalition last'. We do not want working people to have their say, do we? This is the same outfit that in the Howard era curtailed the ability of young people to cast a vote, that closed the electoral roll off; and the same outfit that limited the ability of Aboriginal people in remote areas who move around to be on the electoral roll. These people are not about the rights of minorities, and they are not about the rights of working people to have a say.

I said at the outset that I was a proud official with the CPSU/SPSF during the Kennett era. It was an honorary position, so I still had a public service position. I have no doubt that the reason I was made redundant three

times was that I was targeted because of my union activity. I was not the only one — there were many. Under the Employee Relationships Act 1992 introduced by the Kennett government, some of whose members still sit on the other side of the house, including the member for Box Hill, it became illegal for a public servant sitting next to another public servant doing the same job to even utter the words, 'What are you paid?'. They were not allowed to know what the person next to them was paid. Leopards, spots — the lot have not changed. Of course when we took the government benches in 1999 — surprise, surprise, we discovered that there was a huge disparity in pay between men and women. That is what that sort of secrecy and demonisation of collective action and collective bargaining produces.

Collective bargaining is a worldwide symbol of democracy. Those on the other side claim that it is the other way around. If you listen to them, you would think that trade unions are the epitome of despots. That is not true. It is fundamental to a free society that you have free association and the ability to have peaceful protests. That is something that this side of the house will always stand for, and the claims were only an attempt to get a political advantage or to demonise the labour movement to get a political advantage. The Victorian community was not hoodwinked by this. It was disgusted by the attacks during the election campaign on paramedics, nurses and firefighters because they were campaigning and saying, 'Put the coalition last'. This was simply because of the attacks on working people. Those opposite did not like it. How dare an association or its members — state employees — have a say in who they should vote for? There was a good reason why those groups said to put the coalition last, and that was the attacks on patients and on firefighting services. Those opposite then tried to connect that with some infrequent behaviour by parts of the labour movement. There has always been a provision in police powers to deal with that, but they extrapolated that to a complete demonising of every form of protest by the labour movement and anyone else who seeks to protest.

The member for Hawthorn referred to a constitutional lawyer, George Williams, as being opposed to the changes that the Andrews government has before the house. But what the member failed to do was quote from a media release issued by the Law Institute of Victoria (LIV) on 10 February. The law institute, which is the peak body for lawyers in this state, welcomed the repeal of move-on laws and exclusion orders and said in its media release:

> Repeal of laws which had restricted the rights to peaceful protests and subjected individuals to exclusion orders has been welcomed by the Law Institute of Victoria.
>
> …
>
> In its submission to the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee in 2014, the LIV said the amendments would … limit the ability of individuals and groups to assemble and protest in public. It would remove existing and important protections against move-on orders for individuals and groups engaging in picketing, protesting and public demonstration, and by introducing provisions which allow for arrest for breaches of a move-on direction, increase criminalisation of direct protest action in Victoria'.

I support the bill before the house. I do not support the puffery of the member for Hawthorn.

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran) — It is with great pleasure that the Greens have seen the introduction of the Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015. The Greens will be supporting this bill, having strongly opposed the Summary Offences and Sentencing Amendment Bill 2013 introduced by the previous government. That law was introduced with one purpose, and that purpose was to limit the right of Victorians to protest. It is no surprise that those laws came into effect at the same time as local residents were trying to stop the unpopular east–west tollway from tearing through their community. That is a battle those residents will win.

The right to protest is fundamental to our democratic society, and it is a right that we should do our utmost to protect and maintain. The law introduced by the previous government gave too many vague and discretionary powers to police and protective services officers to limit the right to protest and to criminalise protest action. It expanded the circumstances under which a person could be moved on whilst at the same time reducing and removing the exemptions for people who are protesting. The previous act, as it existed before those changes were made, was explicit in allowing police to move people on but not in allowing those powers to be used against people who were protesting. The current act is vague defining circumstances in which people may be moved on, but it also provides powers of arrest and the creation of exclusion orders. So we have a situation where a person could be moved on, arrested and excluded from an area for simply undertaking their democratic right to protest.

I give the example of a picket. We have a provision in section 6(1)(h) of the Summary Offences Act 1966 to move a person on if 'the person is or persons are impeding or attempting to impede another person from lawfully entering or leaving premises or part of premises'. That is a picket. On the one hand we have

picketing a place of employment as an exemption, albeit reduced, but on the other hand the picketing itself is a circumstance in which a person can be moved on. These strong powers and vague reasoning, when they can be enacted, are a recipe for infringing on the right to protest and freedom of expression.

There were already broad powers under the act for police to move people on if they were breaching the peace, endangering people or likely to cause injury. There is nothing to stop police from dealing with someone who is committing an offence, regardless of whether or not they are protesting. The Summary Offences and Sentencing Amendment Act 2014 was one of several pieces of legislation introduced by the previous government to limit the right to protest. Another was the Sustainable Forests (Timber) and Wildlife Amendment Act 2014, which restricted protests against logging and significantly increased the penalties for people protesting against duck shooting. We look forward to the government introducing further bills to repeal such provisions in these acts if it is genuinely committed to protecting the right to protest in our democratic society.

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) — Today I am so proud to be a member of the Andrews Labor government debating a bill that repeals the Napthine government's legislative provisions commonly referred to as 'move-on laws'. The bill we are debating today, the Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015, is part of an election commitment made by Labor to return Victoria to a more democratic state. Australians take pride in the fact that they live in a democracy, and the Napthine government's move-on laws were a step backward.

As I have heard them, the speakers on the other side of the house seem to have no idea what the move-on laws were all about. They talk hysterically about violent protest, anarchy and people running amok all over the place, but this is just not true. The recent state election should have taught them that the Victorian people do not believe a word they say and regard them as dishonest and not saying what they really mean. The Victorian people can see right through the intentions of the Liberals, whether state or federal.

There are a lot of former lawyers opposite who have spoken in favour of keeping the move-on laws, but they fail to see that they are an affront to basic legal principles. I hope everyone in this chamber still believes — but perhaps they do not — that there is a right to the presumption of innocence until proven guilty. The move-on laws of the Napthine era say that guilt does not have to be proved. If you are moved on, you can be arrested; you can be charged with the fact that you might do something. This is not the presumption of innocence. This is a big attack on the democratic rights we have all fought so long for on this side of the house — the right of everyday people to go about their business, to stand up for their families, to stand up for their children, to stand up for their future and to make a better place for all of us. We should not take for granted the things we have today, which are the result in many cases of protests by people against things like the move-on laws of the past and the objections of people to governments like the Napthine government.

Let us have a look at some of the things against which people have protested. The issue of health and safety laws is one. In the 1980s the Liberal government in this state opposed the health and safety laws. It opposed laws that tried to protect the rights of working people to have a healthy environment at work and to go home alive and unharmed. It was protesters — who were opposed by the Liberal government at the time — who protected the Franklin Dam. It was protesters who preserved the Regent Theatre and the Queen Victoria Market — things we take for granted — which are now seen as icons for this state and were made to look fantastic during the White Night event over the weekend. It has been good for the state of Victoria that protesters have preserved these things. They would not be here if Liberal governments had had their way in the past.

These are the things we should be celebrating — the protests that people have been involved in to protect the many good things in this state and the many rights for so many people for so many years.

I am unable to understand the contradiction in talking about the Liberal Party. The term 'liberal' refers to freedom, democracy, and civil liberties; there does not seem to be anything further from the truth of these things than the attributes of the Liberal Party in the state of Victoria.

I am sick of hearing people complaining about people protesting in defence of their wages, as if it were some terrible crime. I am sick of hearing that there is something wrong with people protesting in defence of their livelihoods. It is simply badmouthing by the Liberal opposition of family men and women who are just trying to make a decent living in this world and create a better future for their children. But of course this is a party that supported WorkChoices, that supported individual contracts and that has never supported the rights of people to have good, strong health and safety legislation. For example, this is a government that did not support the rights of those who

trained at Fiskville in the 1990s to have their health and safety protected. We should not take any notice of what Liberal members are saying when they talk about democratic rights or the right to a decent life.

Let us talk about some more comments from people from the Liberal Party. I will focus on Mr Abbott, that great saviour of the Liberal Party throughout the country. He talks about 'Team Australia', smirks and then smugly looks across the world at all those other countries that do not have what he says are democratic rights and that are doing things a little bit differently from him. When you look at what the Victorian Liberal Party is doing here in opposing the repeal of move-on laws which allow people to be arrested and charged regardless of whether or not they have done something wrong, just because someone thinks they might be doing something wrong, you realise there is something wrong in the Liberal Party as a whole. Liberal Party members need to have a good look at themselves and work out what it is they stand for and what it is they want to do.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) — It is my pleasure to rise to speak in the debate on the Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015. I wish to state at the outset that this is an absolute disgrace. It is the beginning of what we are going to see more of: the weakening of our police powers in this state and a weakening of laws. Here is the beginning of the soft-on-crime approach of the current government. We heard about jobs and we heard about the *Back to Work* plan this government has created, but the only jobs it will be affecting here are the Victorian jobs it will be wrecking — jobs of those who want to be safe, who want to work and who want to run businesses.

We are seeing this right here with the weakening of these powers. We have already heard from a number of business representatives who are absolutely opposed to these changes, for the good of the state. The Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry has said:

> The right to freely enter one's premises is a fundamental right. People should be able to go about their business and earn a living without others preventing them from doing so or making them fear for their safety.

This is about safety; it is about being able to walk the streets, hold your head up high and not worry about those who, for political purposes, for industrial purposes or to pay back their union mates, want to interfere. This is what we have seen from the Labor Party. This is a pork-barrelling election commitment from the Labor Party to pay back the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) and to pay back Trades Hall Council for the donations it has received during its campaigns. This will destroy our streets; it will destroy job investment. Today the Premier said that he is going to have inward trade missions. He is going to bring businesses from overseas to come and invest in Victoria. The businesses only have to look at two things: contracts that are being ripped up, such as the east–west link contract, which shows that this government will not honour any legitimate business contracts; and secondly, the fact that this government supports absolute mayhem on our streets, which ruins businesses and ruins jobs. That is what this is about.

The member for Prahran said this is about the right to protest. He failed to ask about people's right to go to work. What about people's rights to feel safe on the streets? What about those people who are entering businesses and want to do so without having to walk through a blockade, which is there just because of political purposes or for racial or religious purposes?

The member for Thomastown — and it is a pleasure to follow the member for Thomastown — said again that this is about freedom of expression in people being able to protest. What about those who want to go into a chocolate shop? What about those who want to go into Max Brenner legitimately and buy products there without intimidation from those who want to run a political protest? We know what the member for Thomastown thinks of all of this, and that is why it was not mentioned anywhere in her deliberations.

This proposed legislation is a disgrace, and it absolutely goes to the heart of what this government is all about. We have seen it at the beginning of the government's agenda, and it is going to continue to go soft on crime and continue to ensure that its union mates, the trades hall mates, can dictate what happens in this state from here on in.

I want to focus my attention on the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaign. The BDS campaign in Victoria made a terrific attempt to shut down businesses just because they had Jewish ownership or Jewish connections, however distant they may have been. There was a concerted effort, particularly in 2011, when we had five protests coordinated straight out of Trades Hall by the Socialist Left. There were five coordinated protests. These protests led to Jericho, a cosmetics company running out of the QV centre, shutting its shop because it could not continue to trade when it was being picketed on a Friday night — on the eve of the Jewish Sabbath — by these protesters. They then continued on to a number of other protests.

The pinnacle of all of this was when in 2011 protesters outside Max Brenner took their violent protest into the Max Brenner shop. They took off their jumpers, exposing offensive T-shirts and then chained themselves to the store. Nineteen of these people were arrested, and 19 of them went before the Magistrates Court in 2012. Because we did not have these sorts of move-on laws then, they were all let go. What was the magistrate's response in terms of them being acquitted? It was that it was the fault of the police and that the police are responsible for these sorts of things, not of the protesters who were instigating this in the first place.

The reason the Victoria Police Association is coming out strongly in support of these laws is that its members do not want to be intimidated or bullied. They want to be able to administer due process and keep our streets safe. I know there are many government members who do not support BDS and have strongly advocated against BDS, but it is an absolute fact that the Jewish community is very concerned about these changes. I know the Attorney-General went to members of the Jewish community to try to explain to them that this bill would have no effect in terms of a resurgence of BDS and that they would still be protected. Unfortunately, even with the Attorney-General's persuasive powers, his assurances came to nothing.

I have two statements in front of me. One comes from the Jewish Community Council of Victoria and the Zionist Council of Victoria. Jennifer Huppert, a former member in the other house, is the president of the Jewish Community Council of Victoria. I will quote from the statement. It reads:

> 'Given the government's stated opposition to BDS the proposed amendments represent a significant retrograde step in the protection of businesses and individuals from the impact of those who seek to boycott or blockade them for their connection to Israel', said Mr Tatarka and Ms Huppert …

The statement continues:

> … We trust that if there is repetition of the violence, abuse and intimidation that marked the campaign against Max Brenner and other retailers of Israeli products the government will not hesitate to reinstate appropriate protections that the Jewish community in particular and the community in general is entitled to expect as they go about their daily business'.

The Jewish Community Council of Victoria and the Zionist Council of Victoria have put the government on notice. They say they have seen a huge reduction in the amount of BDS activity on our streets in the last 12 months, which coincides with the fact that we now have laws to protect those businesses. Now we are taking those laws away and the Jewish community fears that these protesters will end up back on our streets. What is the government going to do about it? What is the Attorney-General going to do about it? What is the Premier going to do to ensure that these businesses are kept safe?

Colin Rubinstein, the executive director of the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council says in his statement on the proposed changes to the move-on laws:

> While we appreciate the Victorian government's principled opposition to the BDS movement, we remain concerned that the repeal of the move-on laws will weaken the ability of the police to counter BDS blockades of businesses which, as the government says, have no place in our multicultural Victoria. We urge the government to closely monitor the situation and to ensure that if the proposed change to the legislation results in a revival of BDS blockades, the legislation is further adjusted to allow people to go about their lawful business free of the discriminatory harassment the BDS campaign represents.

Here are three very well-respected organisations in the community. We know that members of the government have close relationships with and have been very involved in these organisations, but these organisations are concerned — and so they should be. The Jewish community should be concerned, as should all communities that will be targeted and victimised because of their race or their religion, as should all those Victorians who want to go about setting up and doing their business without the fear of union thugs intimidating and harassing them just because they do not like their politics or the way they look or because they are not members of the same union.

This is what it is all about. It is not about protecting Victorians. Let us make no mistake — it is not about workers. We on this side of the house care about workers. On the other side they only care about the shop stewards and the people who are running those unions. They worry about the union officials, the CFMEU, Trades Hall Council and John Setka, because that is where the donations came from in 2014. That is where all those elections funds for the other side came from. Those members opposite owe a debt to their CFMEU and Trades Hall mates, and this is what this legislation is about. It is an absolute disgrace, and we will be monitoring it to make sure that these sorts of racial and religious protests do not happen in this state.

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) — I will try to lower the volume a bit. I think everyone's eardrums have been slaughtered this afternoon. Thank you to the member for Hawthorn. It gives me pleasure to speak on the Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015, which delivers on an election commitment of

the Andrews Labor government. It is starting to become a hallmark of the Andrews Labor government to deliver on its election commitments.

The important elements of this bill recalibrated the rights and freedoms under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006. It is important to reflect on what the bill does. It takes it back to the legislation that previously existed that we on this side believe was adequate in protecting the rights of individuals. The bill repeals the draconian laws put in place by the former government and resets the law back to its previous position. It allows police officers and protective services officers to direct a person to move on where they reasonably suspect there is a breach of the peace, a person is endangered or likely to be endangered or their safety is in question, or that the behaviour is likely to cause injury to a person or damage to property or otherwise risk public safety. These were the previous settings of the law, and they are wideranging in their application.

If you were to hear the contributions from those opposite in isolation, you would think the world was falling apart and everything was turned on its head. The chest-beating and the box-thumping of the member for Hawthorn does not lend itself to any more conclusions about where that lies. It is worth reflecting on why this bill needs to be put forward. Importantly, the bill resets the balance of rights under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. There have been strong statements and contributions from stakeholders in our community which I will reflect on soon, but there are clearly rights under the charter that are impinged on, and I will list those for the benefit of the house: the freedom of movement; the freedom of expression; and the freedom of assembly and association.

It is also worth reflecting that the charter is an important reference and source for legislation requiring ministers of this Parliament to make a statement about the charter's compatibility with legislation. These are important checks and balances, and they went through extensive consultation. The charter was the product of a former Attorney-General, Robert Hulls, and it is a significant piece of work.

It is important to reflect on the context of the bill and not look at the changes that the coalition made in isolation. When we consider what was swirling around in 2014 as we were entering the fourth year of a dysfunctional, chaotic government, we see all kinds of spot fires in policy servicing. We had the east–west link and the debacle that has brought forward. We had the cheeky and contemptuous use of a side letter to underpin a contract that the now shadow Treasurer will be held to account for. We had the abolition of the Melbourne Metro rail project, which was a massive issue along the Frankston line. It removed the Richmond and Flinders Street services from my train line. Then there was the smear against union members, paramedics and education workers — our TAFE workers and other teachers.

Mr R. Smith interjected.

Mr RICHARDSON — Context is very important for explaining how the previous government came to introduce the current legislation. The ambulance crisis was circulating and the previous government was at war with the paramedics, therefore there was an absolute need to stifle process and proper debate in our community. What was happening was that people were thinking that if those opposition voices were not there, maybe a desperate and dysfunctional government might just creep over the line by winning an extra seat or two at the election. People thought that if those opposition voices were controlled and stifled, maybe the government could sneak over the line. It did not work.

The consequences of such legislation need to be put into context. Some members on this side have reflected on the McDonald's in Tecoma, which was a massive issue for the member for Monbulk and his constituency. I invite members to imagine what would have happened if those people had not been able to freely express their views in their community. It was absolutely their right to put forward their concerns for the Dandenong Ranges, but that protest would not have been allowed under that legislation. I ask members to consider whether protests against coal seam gas by our regional neighbours would have been allowed.

I invite members to consider the sentiments expressed about the Abbott federal coalition government by the 30 000 people who turned out to march at the first Bust the Budget demonstration. They were mums and dads who considered that budget to be callous and unfair. They were there pushing prams with their children in them, supporting their right to protest and expressing their views against those actions. Members need to be mindful when we increase police powers in our community that we are not resetting an imbalance and giving police wideranging powers.

That brings me to comments made by the member for Box Hill, then the Attorney-General, which I would like to share with the house. Thankfully, under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, the former Attorney-General was required to give an account of what rights under the charter were impinged on by a bill. He said the bill imposed limitations on:

> … an individual's right to move freely within Victoria as set out in section 12 of the charter act and may, in certain circumstances, limit the rights to freedom of expression … and peaceful assembly and freedom of association …

So there was acknowledgement that rights were being infringed upon. That fact has clearly been lost by those opposite who made contributions to the debate today.

It is also important to reflect also on third parties.

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, just reflecting on the commentary by the member for Mordialloc, the member is clearly misleading the house. He talked about the Abbott government's budget, which was handed down in May. The original bill was introduced in March, so it would not have affected the ability of people to protest.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Ms Thomson**) — Order! There is no point of order.

Mr RICHARDSON — It is worth reflecting on the reaction of stakeholders. Obviously both government and opposition members have a great interest in what stakeholders in the community are putting forward and saying to their constituency and lobbying on and presenting to government. I reflect on the contributions of Katie Miller, from the Law Institute of Victoria (LIV), who said that the changes put forward by the previous government would 'increase criminalisation of direct protest action in Victoria'. She went on to raise other concerns, including that laws which restrict freedom of movement, peaceful assembly, association or expression undermine fundamental democratic values and the most basic rights of people and groups in our community.

That third party's concerns were not referenced in any contributions by those opposite. In its submission the Law Institute of Victoria went on to say:

> The LIV is concerned that the bill does not strike the proper balance between the right to freedom of movement, freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association …

That is the impression of the current law.

I reflect also on contributions made by Tim Wilson, who those opposite will know is the Australian human rights commissioner, and someone who vehemently opposed the policy reflected in section 18C of the federal Racial Discrimination Act. Tim Wilson said that the law was excessive because it gave police the power to fine people who were suspected of a possible offence. He was quoted in the Fairfax media as saying about the law that:

> It unnecessarily gives police too much power to move on protesters unjustifiably.

Also:

> I have an issue with the low bar that is being set to give police the powers to move people on.

Members opposite have to talk to their mates. They have to reach out to their friends and ask what they think as well, because that report is pretty much an indictment of these laws.

There was also opposition from the Victorian Council of Social Service, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and the Federation of Community Legal Centres, as well as a mate of those opposite, Tim Wilson.

I want to put one thing to the member for Hawthorn. In wanting to break new ground and to tear out from under the shadow of the member for Box Hill, he has some examples to follow. He could take some reference from Mark Dreyfus, the federal shadow Attorney-General. He could take a stance against Mr Brandis, the federal Attorney-General, and he could have come out as a champion of human rights. In his contribution, as reported in the *Australian* of 27 January, he used union acronyms no fewer than 20 times. He referred to the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union excitedly. I invite members to guess how many times the member for Hawthorn referred to the charter of human rights or the impingement on rights. The answer is absolutely none. Members opposite must go back.

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — I rise to speak on the Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015. If we ever needed a bill to show how clearly the Premier is beholden to the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, this is it. This bill is about paying the piper, about payback for union support, and it shows that the Premier is tightly within union grasp. With this bill Victorians can see who is actually in charge of this state.

This bill allows the worst of the union movement the ability to protest more or less unfettered, and it could not be described as anything other than Labor's sop to its union masters. While the bill is certainly authored by the unions and allows union people to protest, it also opens the door to protest by extreme political groups, including racist and bigoted groups, as the member for Caulfield pointed out. In doing the favour that the Labor government is doing for the unions, Labor is actually opening the door to the ugliest aspects of our society. We have seen them on display many times in

the past, and the original act was put in place so that we would not see them in the future.

With this bill Labor is setting up the professional protesters against the ordinary good citizens of Victoria in a climate of professional protesting. We are seeing it more and more. We saw it in the style of the March in March and the Occupy movement's demonstrations. There are more and more professional protesters out there, and this bill gives the green light to those people. We certainly have not seen here in Australia the level of protest that has been seen in Europe, but if we ever did, these amendments would leave Victoria Police absolutely unable to deal with those situations.

The changes made by clause 4, which repeal parts of section 6 of the current act, still allow police officers and protective services officers to act in certain circumstances. However, the repeal of those provisions sets the bar so high that our law enforcement officers will be effectively completely neutered from being able to maintain law and order, maintain peace and protect Victorians. The line between harassment and intimidation and actively breaching the peace is, of course, not always a clear one.

The member for Caulfield made abundantly clear the Jewish community's concerns about the resurgence of the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement. This bill gives the green light to these thugs as they picket many businesses around Melbourne. We know that Jewish groups are particularly concerned. We know that this picketing of Jewish businesses is actively supported by some members of the Labor Party. We know that within the Labor Party there are deep pockets supporting the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement. It was in fact only in the last sitting week that the Attorney-General said:

> … there are no members more appalled by boycott, divestment and sanctions type protests than many members on this side of the house …

The Attorney-General certainly avoided saying 'all' members on this side of the house. He made it clear to all Victorians that for some — not all but some — in the Labor movement, racism runs very deep. Within the culture of the Labor Party is also that culture of thuggery and intimidation. We saw that during the election campaign, as I have mentioned in this house before, at the polling booths of Narre Warren North, Bentleigh, Carrum and Mordialloc. We saw that thuggery and intimidation — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Ms Thomson**) — Order! The member will come back to the bill.

Mr R. SMITH — It is in the blood of the Labor movement, and we see that all the time. On this side of the house we all agree on the right to protest. Our side of politics has a very strong record on the issue of the right to free speech, but that is not the question here. This bill puts the rights of the free speech of the mob above the right of law-abiding individuals to go about their day unhindered. That is the essence of this bill. It is putting the protester above the rights of ordinary Victorian citizens.

I turn to the specifics of sections that are being repealed, which will limit the police force's ability to maintain order. The repeal of one of the provisions by this bill means that in relation to a person who has committed or persons who have committed within the last 12 hours an offence in a public area, police will no longer have a right to move those people on. They will also not have a right to move on people who are causing a reasonable apprehension of violence in another person or people causing or likely to cause an undue obstruction to another person, persons or traffic. It is one thing to respect the right to withhold labour, but it is quite another to prevent someone from getting to their place of work or to stop traffic. These repeals will contribute to real disruptions in our city.

One of the more interesting provisions being repealed refers to a person or persons present for the purpose of unlawfully procuring, supplying or intending to unlawfully procure or supply a drug of dependence. Why are those opposite — why is this government — so concerned about the rights of drug traffickers? Surely that is one provision you would leave in. Surely those opposite are not on the side of drug traffickers. Police having the right to move on people who are dealing drugs is surely not something those opposite would have intended to take away. It is absolutely ridiculous. The government is also repealing the provision enabling the removal of people who are impeding or attempting to impede a person from lawfully entering or leaving premises or a part thereof. This bill puts the right of a striking worker above the right of a worker who wants nothing more than to simply go about their work. I cannot see, and I am sure my colleagues on this side of the house cannot see, any issue with allowing someone to simply go about their business and go to work.

This bill reflects Labor's complete misunderstanding of the importance to business of keeping the city flowing, unhindered by the sorts of blockades that have occurred there in the past. Labor does not understand that many people just want to get on with their lives and not be caught up in the latest trendy strike action. This sort of attitude takes us back to the 1980s, the last time that the

Socialist Left controlled Labor parties both in Victoria and around the world. At that time, at the height of the miners strike, UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher described protesters preventing others from getting to work 'using violence and intimidation to impose their will on others who do not want it'. She also said, 'The rule of law must prevail over the rule of the mob'.

It is astounding that in 2015 Victorian Labor wants to legislate to allow those sorts of clashes that occurred in the 1980s. Even in the 1980s John Cain knew enough to deregister the Builders Labourers Federation. After only three months in government the Andrews government is showing itself to be more militant and more socialist than the Cain and Kirner governments. In his autobiography John Cain called the Builders Labourers Federation and their protests a ready-made example of the unacceptable face of trade unionism. I ask the question rhetorically: would the current Premier ever say that about the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union? The fine of $1.2 million that was imposed on the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union by Justice Cavanough in relation to the illegal blockade at the Grocon Emporium work site shows the seriousness with which the law and all Victorians viewed the actions we saw down at that site. This bill snubs those views.

Perhaps the most troublesome issue in relation to this bill is the repeal of section 6B of the principal act. This section sets out in law the relationship between the police or protective services officers (PSOs) and those who potentially need to be moved on. It sets up protections for individuals, but it also gives police rights in a society governed by laws that are necessary. Very reasonable sections being repealed include one stating that a police officer or a protective services officer who intends to give a person a direction to move on may request a person to state their name and address. Acting Speaker, our side of the house trusts police. Our side of the house trusts our PSOs. We believe that it is quite reasonable for a police officer in a protest situation to ask the name and address of an individual. The fact that this government is repealing this section shows that Victorian Labor, under a Socialist Left Premier, trusts the mob far more than it trusts police. On this side of the house we trust police, and we trust police to act.

I refer to a report in the *Herald Sun*:

> Victoria Police Commander Rick Nugent said officers were forced to use capsicum spray to help their colleagues to safety.
>
> Commander Nugent said there were reports of horses being punched during the blockade.
>
> Commander Nugent said the violent scuffle lasted up to 10 minutes after the illegal blockade prevented Grocon employees getting to work …

As I said, what we have is a government siding with the mob against police. I will quote from the *Age*, which said:

> Police Association secretary Greg Davies said the new laws would be 'wholly appropriate' for police to have in certain situations.

The laws that were put in place by the coalition government were laws police wanted and supported, and the fact that those opposite are repealing those laws, which police need to do their job, shows us that this government is giving confidence to a mob whose members will seek to resist lawful instructions from police. This will empower the mob to challenge the authority of police, and that is not something we want to see in this state. That is not something Victorians want to see in this state. Again I ask rhetorically of those opposite: is this the Victoria they really want?

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie) — It is my pleasure to rise and speak on the Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015, which is an important social reform as part of the Andrews Labor government's election pledge to get in behind hardworking people, not to demonise them.

What those opposite do not understand is that they lost the election. All their contributions and their election campaign focused on the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), and where did it get them? Four years on the opposition benches, so keep talking about the CFMEU, because you are doing a good job. Do not concentrate on policy; just keep focusing on the CFMEU.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Ms Thomson**) — Order! Through the Chair!

Mr CARROLL — This is an important social justice reform. In a minute I will get to the other side's record in government on crime rates, but this bill rights a wrong. Do not take my word for it; take the word of the Law Institute of Victoria (LIV) and of the community legal centres. A recent issue of the *Law Institute Journal*, from the Law Institute of Victoria, includes the heading 'Move-on laws unnecessary'. It quotes the Attorney-General, who at the time held the shadow portfolio, as saying the laws amounted to a criminalisation of all forms of protest in this state and that everyone has a right to assemble peacefully and have their say. The Andrews government is about letting people protest peacefully. It will not harm anyone. It may be a picket at their workplace, and there

is nothing wrong with that. We are taking the laws back to what they should be and what they originally were.

What the coalition introduced back in 2014 was restrictive in nature for any protest in the state of Victoria. It was draconian, anti-democratic and simply unnecessary. You did not need to focus on it; you could have focused on a positive agenda, rather than having a negative agenda and ending up in opposition after just four years. In opposition, do your time, do your policy development and come up with a positive agenda. That may get you a bit further along in terms of public support.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Ms Thomson**) — Order! Through the Chair!

Mr CARROLL — Thank you, Acting Speaker. The coalition's amendments to the move-on laws had the real potential to disproportionately harm some of the most vulnerable members of the community. Members only have to go back to comments made by Geoff Bowyer, the former president of the Law Institute of Victoria, who said at the time that the laws could:

> … have a significant and devastating impact on the homeless who, by the nature of their situation, are forced to gather in public places, often returning to a familiar spot after being moved on.

The laws were also draconian in how they dealt with people going to their normal place of employment.

Mr Watt interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Ms Thomson**) — Order! The member for Burwood!

Mr CARROLL — The coalition made clear at the time that police would be given the discretion to decide whether a picket at a place of employment was legal or illegal; no-one needed to go to court and no orders needed to be sought or made against the picket. It was a heavily criticised, heavy-handed and unwarranted interference with the rights of working people across the state.

This reform of the Andrews Labor government is backed up by a range of stakeholders, including the St Kilda Legal Service, the Federation of Community Legal Services, the Peninsula Community Legal Centre, Youthlaw, the Western Suburbs Community Legal Service, the Independent Riders Group and the Law Institute of Victoria. We are righting the coalition's wrongs. In summary, this bill repeals the coalition's amendments and creates a more appropriate balance between the use of move-on powers to maintain public order and the protection of the fundamental rights of all Victorians to move freely, express their views and associate with whomever they choose.

The four key amendments in this bill include that move-on powers will no longer be able to be used merely because a police officer suspects that a person is likely to cause an obstruction to another person. What we are putting forward is reasonable. Move-on powers should not apply when a person is picketing at a place of employment or demonstrating about a particular issue. There is nothing wrong with putting your views forward on industrial relations or anything like that.

The member for Hawthorn — and I mentioned this during a previous debate — has been proactive with his opinion pieces. The member for Kew is trying to catch up, and there is a bit of a shootout going on about who can get the most columns in the *Herald Sun*. I welcome that. As long as they keep writing about the CFMEU and highlighting the record of the previous government, we on this side of the chamber will be pleased.

Our reforms to repeal laws that restricted the rights to peaceful protest and subjected individuals to exclusion orders have been welcomed. The current LIV president, Katie Miller, has said the LIV strongly opposed the coalition's amendments to the Summary Offences Act 1996 when they were introduced. The LIV was not consulted, as it should have been, and now the Andrews Labor government is righting a wrong. It has been endorsed by most people in the non-government legal sector. It is about making everything right. Victorian police still have the power to respond to illegal protests that include trespass or violent acts. This is very important reform.

The previous Labor administration had an agenda called A Fairer Victoria. If you were smarter in government, you might have picked up that baton and run with it, but you decided not to. You decided to attack and demonise hardworking people right through the election campaign, including ambos, teachers, the CFMEU — —

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member should speak through the Chair. That is the only comment I am making.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Ms Thomson**) — Order! The member will take his seat. Sit down!

Mr CARROLL — I will continue to speak through the Chair. The member for Burwood is a class act. You are super! You are a no. 1 draftee, you are!

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Ms Thomson**) — Order! Through the Chair!

Mr CARROLL — He is a class act who we on this side of the chamber welcome.

The member for Hawthorn could pick up a lot from my predecessor as the member for Niddrie, a former Attorney-General, and from the agenda he ran and his social reform. Let us look at where we are now, with crime rates having gone up every year of the Baillieu-Napthine term of government. We are picking up the mess. The member for Rowville, the former Minister for Police and Emergency Services, who is at the table, did his best, but there is overcrowding and the current Minister for Police is doing everything he can to turn that ship around.

We will make sure there is an appropriate balance between the rights of individuals to protest and the rights of individuals to go to work.
Bjelke-Petersen-style laws are not welcome in Victoria. We have the Royal Commission into Family Violence, and we will look at strengthening the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC), which will be an important reform. Whether it occurs at people's place of employment or whether it is about a planning matter like the Tecoma McDonald's, there is nothing wrong with peaceful protest. Protective services officers and police have had important powers for many years, and it has all worked very well. Peaceful protest is encouraged in liberal democracies right around the world, and Victoria is a liberal democracy. We should encourage people to have their say and express their views. There is no need to go down a Queensland-style, Peter Reith-style term of reform that is draconian and does nothing to improve the lives of hardworking Victorians, who should not be demonised.

Members only need to look through the agenda of the Andrews Labor government to see investment in our correctional services, including giving real teeth to IBAC, which is something the member for Hawthorn might want to write an opinion piece about, rather than focusing on the coalition's four wasted years. The member for Kew is catching up on the member for Hawthorn's number of *Herald Sun* columns. The member for Kew is on the back bench, but he is making his way down. I will get in behind the member for Kew.

Mr Watt interjected.

Mr CARROLL — I would not want to get in behind the member for Burwood, because where would that get me?

I do not have much more to say except that I wish the bill a speedy passage. It is important reform, and I hope that members of the opposition, after their stellar four years in government, learn something from it, do their homework, consult with stakeholders and learn to put forward a positive agenda. They have to start recruiting some talent. It would have been good if they had run against me in the Niddrie by-election; that might be when it all started. Ted Baillieu said no, and then he was gone, the Treasurer was gone, the member for Malvern became the Treasurer and the side letter was signed. Good luck in opposition!

Mr WELLS (Rowville) — I did not think I would see a day when a Labor member of Parliament idolised the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), but we have just seen a demonstration of that. We will see what happens with the CFMEU over the next four years — whether it will abide by the law or expect a special law for itself, as we have seen in the past with the way it has demonstrated and conducted its business.

I fear for all the building sites across Victoria. I fear for businesses in this state. This legislation today is a backwards step. What has happened is that the Andrews government has missed the point and deliberately decided to argue a point that for some reason the move-on powers were going to restrict the right to protest or were an attack on freedom of speech. This could not be any further from the truth. We strongly support freedom of speech. We strongly support the right to protest. We have no issues with that. Part of the basic foundation of the Liberal Party is the right to freedom of speech and the right to protest. There has never been any issue.

The second-reading speech says:

> Under the expanded powers, a police officer or PSO could potentially break up any protest, move someone on or arrest someone merely because, for example, they have a reasonable suspicion that a person is causing an unreasonable obstruction, is likely to do so, or is impeding or attempting to impede someone.

The laws have been in place for about a year, and I am struggling to see one example of where Victoria Police has misused that power. The government has been saying that there is the potential for misuse of power and the potential for this and the potential for that, but if the laws have been in place for a year and the government cannot come up with an example, then it is

a hollow argument. I say to the government: please carefully think about the introduction of this bill.

The reason the Napthine government introduced these laws almost a year ago is so that police could have clarity around the law. They were introduced by the former Attorney-General, the member for Box Hill, whom I have great respect for. It was about making sure that when the police went to a protest or a violent situation the law was very clear to them. The reason we brought it in was to protect businesses and to protect workers going into and leaving a business. If you do not have that, it means that you can have a protest out the front of a shop or a manufacturer and stop workers from coming and going, and that is blatantly wrong.

There is a strong difference in the way the coalition and the government see this. We will strongly support workers and businesses being able to operate fairly. Why would we, then, support very strongly the protesters or a group that is preventing people going about their ordinary day of work? To me it simply does not make any sense. As I said, the coalition strongly supports the right to protest and the right of workers and customers to be able to enter or leave a shop or factory. Introducing this law shows that the government is going to snub every single business in the state, because this could happen to any business, anywhere in the state. This issue is going to come up over and over again over the next four years. It is without doubt a grave error of judgement and one that will haunt the government.

You have to ask: why is the government doing this? Is it paying things back to its union masters? That is an obvious question. Look at how much the CFMEU has donated to the Labor Party — $1.33 million. I suspect that if a union is going to give the Labor Party $1.33 million, it comes with strings attached — it would say, 'We want to be paid back'.

The CFMEU will have a field day with this. As I said, we had trouble with the CFMEU. We saw what it did. If the laws are loosened up, the CFMEU will take advantage. You are going to have the extremists and the thugs able to do whatever they like on protest and picket lines. Look at what has happened over the last few years and why we brought in the laws. You had Grocon and what happened in the CBD with the picket lines. I looked at some of the reports. The CFMEU state secretary, Bill Oliver, said that the dispute was over union apparel being worn by workers at Grocon and safety issues. For goodness sake! They were going to bring the whole CBD to a standstill over some very minor apparel issues, and of course the building unions are very good at being able to devise safety issues. We say that all building sites must have the highest standard of safety — there is no question about that — but it does not give the CFMEU the right to abuse that particular right. Based on the demonstrations we saw, with the police horses being pushed and those disgraceful efforts, we had to do something, and we did it. As I say, we cannot have one law for the general public of Victoria and another law specially for the unions.

There has already been a lot of talk about the company Max Brenner and the situation where some believe that because it is owned by someone with a Jewish background, it should be targeted. To me it is absolutely foreign that you can pick out a particular factory or a particular shop and say, 'We're going to target you because of a situation'. We had Occupy Melbourne. We cannot have these situations. I hope that between now and this bill's consideration in the upper house the government seriously looks at this. If it is seriously going ahead with this, it is putting every single business in Victoria at risk of being protested or blockaded, and that is wrong.

Mr LIM (Clarinda) — I am very pleased to rise today to speak on the Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015. The bill repeals changes made in early 2014 by the coalition to the Summary Offences Act 1966. Those changes amended the act in relation to move-on directions. In particular, clause 3 added five situations to the existing list of circumstances in which a move-on order could be given. These were, firstly, if the person has committed an offence in the public place in the last 12 hours; secondly, if the conduct of the person is causing a reasonable apprehension of violence in another person; thirdly, if the person is causing or likely to cause undue obstruction to other persons or traffic; fourthly, if the person is present for the purpose or intention of unlawfully procuring or supplying a drug of dependence; and finally, if the person is preventing or attempting to prevent other persons from legally entering or leaving premises.

Further amendments gave police and protective services officers (PSOs) powers to arrest a person they reasonably believe failed to comply with a move-on direction without a reasonable excuse and introduced a penalty of a maximum of two years imprisonment for people in contravention of a move-on order. I am pleased that the bill intends to repeal the five circumstances I stated previously, as I consider them to be quite draconian, and many other speakers have also supported this point. Instead, police officers will still be able to direct a person to move on from a public place where officers suspect on reasonable grounds that the

person is breaching or likely to breach the peace; that the person is endangering or likely to endanger the safety of any other person; or the behaviour of the person is likely to cause injury to a person or damage to property or is otherwise a risk to public safety.

Secondly, move-on powers will not apply in relation to a person who is picketing a place of employment, demonstrating or protesting about a particular issue, or otherwise publicising their views on a particular issue. These changes align more closely with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, which states in section 12 that people have the right to move freely in Victoria, and in section 16 that people have the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of association.

Last year I expressed my concern that under the previous law one of the situations where an exclusion order may be made is when a person is or persons are causing, or likely to cause, an undue obstruction to another person or persons or traffic. I recall several issues in which this section could be pertinent — in particular, the peaceful protest by the residents of Tecoma in opposition to the McDonald's application for a 24-hour drive-through outlet in that town. The protest outside Max Brenner chocolate cafe in 2011 is another example. I believe the previous amendments went too far. For example, the expanded grounds meant that a person who has committed no crime and caused no breach of the peace could have their rights and freedoms significantly limited solely on the suspicion that the person is likely to cause an obstruction or is impeding someone.

The exclusion orders also had the potential to harm some of the most vulnerable communities, including the homeless and people with mental health issues. Such groups are more likely to use and congregate in public places, which means they were more likely to be the target of the orders. Another group affected by the changes were Victorian workers. Labor sees the previous amendments as an attack on workers rights to engage in lawful industrial action. The coalition made it clear at the time that the expanded move-on powers could be used against legal picket lines at places of employment. Police were given discretion to decide for themselves whether a picket was illegal and should be moved on. No-one needed to go to court and no orders needed to be sought or made against the picket.

The bill will also repeal previous amendments made to the act that enabled the making of exclusion orders prohibiting a person from entering a public place for up to 12 months. Lastly, the bill repeals amendments that gave specific arrest powers and powers that required a person to state their name and address in relation to move-on powers. These amendments were unnecessary, as broad arrest powers already exist under section 458 of the Crimes Act 1958. A similar power applies to both police officers and PSOs under section 218B(2) of the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983 where the officer reasonably believes a person has committed an offence under that act or related regulations or against the Graffiti Prevention Act 1997.

Under section 20 of the Parliamentary Precincts Act 2001, PSOs on duty in the parliamentary precinct, for example, also have the power to request a person to state their name and address where the officer reasonably believes the person has not complied with a direction made under section 16(1) of that act to leave the parliamentary precinct. This bill restores a better balance between the competing objectives of personal liberties and the expectation that police and PSOs will maintain public order.

I note that the bill also touches on alcohol exclusion orders. I am of the opinion that some members of the community view alcohol as a mitigating factor in violence where the offender is intoxicated. I am concerned that some offenders believe that if they are drunk enough, they can commit an offence and later say they were too drunk to remember what happened. Alternatively, they may say they never meant to commit the offence. They believe they can use the excuse of intoxication to escape the full force of the law. The orders send a clear signal that drunken, threatening and violent behaviour will not be tolerated, and that those who engage in it will face significant consequences.

I commend the bill to the house.

Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East) — It is a pleasure to rise to make a contribution on the Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015. Everybody has the right to protest on matters they feel passionate about, and in many cases a sign of a healthy democracy is that it supports the right to protest, because in many countries around the world it is not allowed in any way, shape or form. However, protesting should be done peacefully and without disrupting people who are trying to go about their lawful business. Unfortunately this bill sends a message that it is fine for protestors to ride roughshod over the rights and safety of members of the public, and that is very concerning. This bill not only does that but also restores uncertainty around police powers. The Police Association opposes the bill; it has been quite clear about saying that. That raises the question: does the current government feel it knows more about managing protests than the police do? It

will return us to the days where there are militant protests and militant protestors — and over recent years on far too many occasions on the evening news we have seen the action they undertake. They will now know there is again uncertainty in relation to how they can be acted against by our law enforcers. This bill should be of concern to all Victorians.

The move-on laws were introduced so that police could break up unruly protests that were impacting on people going about their day-to-day lawful business. These laws permitted peaceful protests. They allowed groups to make their point and push their case without disruption to others but gave powers to police to step in and take action against protests — that may have, for example, blockaded people out of a certain workplace or shut down a particular section of a town or city — that did not allow people to do what they were lawfully permitted to do.

The laws were about allowing people to go about their business without having it impacted — often at a massive cost to Victorian taxpayers — by protesters taking action that was taking police away from their core business. That was done at a great cost to and disrupted the wider Victorian community. As we have often seen in the past, protestors have regularly overstepped the line in relation to what is acceptable public behaviour — what people would see as a fair and reasonable action to be taken — while trying to voice their concerns. They have become spiteful, abusive and deliberately disruptive to law-abiding members of the public. Protests of this nature cost Victorians millions of dollars.

Since these laws were introduced, protests have continued to occur. We have seen a number of protests on a range of issues and valid points have been made — and made well — but without the disruption and cost to Victorians. The additional police powers that were making this happen will be gone if this legislation passes. The new government is moving to repeal these laws after militant unions, which have been clashing with police over a number of years, have been very outspoken about and campaigned strongly to have the extra police powers removed. Police will now have lesser strong powers to take action when protests get out of hand.

Labor's media release of 10 February 2015 is simply inaccurate. It says:

> Prior to the introduction of these excessive laws, Victoria Police already had the power to give a 'move-on' direction to a person to leave a public place. Such a direction could be given if a police officer suspected on reasonable grounds that a person is:
>
> Breaching, or likely to breach, the peace;
>
> Endangering or likely to endanger the safety of another person or damage to property; or
>
> The behaviour of the person is likely to cause injury … or damage to property …
>
> Under the bill to be introduced today, Victoria Police will retain those powers to respond to illegal protests.

That is what the document says, and that is not right. If this bill is passed, it will completely exempt political or industrial protests or pickets from move-on laws. That is a fact.

Move-on powers were first introduced in 2009 by the previous Labor government, but none of the powers for police to be able to take these actions were included. Labor's legislation provided that none of these powers applied to political or industrial protests or pickets, which it defined as being:

> … in relation to a person who, whether in the company of other persons or not, is —
>
> (a) picketing a place of employment; or
>
> (b) demonstrating or protesting about a particular issue; or
>
> (c) speaking, bearing or otherwise identifying with a banner, placard or sign … behaving in a way that is apparently intended to publicise the person's view about a particular issue …

The coalition government amended the law in 2014 in light of some of the appalling public examples we saw of protesters taking things too far. This included removing the exemption for political and industrial protests for all but two grounds. This was something the Victorian public called for. Members of the Victorian public were outraged when they saw some of the practices going on at picket lines, and they wanted the law changed. I have heard some opposition members say that that was an election-determining factor in the Labor Party's victory. I certainly do not think this was.

Our changes strengthened the existing move-on powers by providing that move-ons could also be ordered where the police or protective services officers reasonably suspect a person: (a) has committed, within the last 12 hours, an offence in the public place; or (b) by their conduct is causing a reasonable apprehension of violence on another person; or (c) is causing, or likely to cause, an undue obstruction to another person or persons or traffic; or (d) is present for the purpose of unlawfully procuring or supplying, or intending to unlawfully procure or supply, a drug of dependence; or importantly (e) is impeding, or attempting to impede,

another person from entering or leaving premises or parts of premises.

Why would you want to get rid of that? None of the grounds for ordering a move-on apply to peaceful protests under the existing laws, and we have seen many peaceful protests where good points have been made.

People can march, hold rallies, wave banners, listen to speakers, gather outside employers' premises or at the sites of projects they disagree with, hold up signs calling on people not to enter the premises or the site and offer people entering or leaving pamphlets putting across their point of view. However, under the law as it now stands, protesters and picketers are not exempt from the law when they blockade premises and stop other people from going about their lawful business, either entering or leaving. That is what is about to change, and that should be of concern to all Victorians.

The changes we introduced in 2014 do not allow anyone to be moved on because they are homeless or disadvantaged, as some speakers have indicated. Our changes were aimed at two main groups — those who cause disruption and disorder on the streets or in other public places and those who resort to blockades or violence to seek to impose their political or industrial views on others. The Victoria Police Association is advocating for the move-on laws to be maintained, as is the Master Builders Association of Victoria, but it is Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry chief executive, Mark Stone, who sums it up best. He said:

> The right to freely enter one's premises is a fundamental right. People should be able to go about their business and earn a living without others preventing them from doing so or making them fear for their safety …

Police currently have the right to break up abusive and disruptive protests involving blockades and violence, but that will now be rolled back. As the shadow Attorney-General said in his contribution, this moment should be marked in time. I believe that this is bad policy that will hurt Victorian businesses and the economy. Let us mark this point in time, and let us judge this legislation by the consequences we see in the coming years. We are opposing this bill.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — It gives me great pleasure to rise to contribute to the debate on this bill. The Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015 repeals the amendments to move-on laws introduced by the coalition early in 2014, which became the Summary Offences and Sentencing Amendment Act 2014. That act introduced by the former government was draconian and totally unnecessary. Some may ask why we are bothering to introduce this bill, as legislation was passed by the former government and we have checks and balances in our community. Indeed, it is important to think about why we need to restore the balance, and to look to other jurisdictions for guidance.

Singapore, for example, had a similar background to Australia. A former English colony, it had rule of law, freedom of association, freedom of speech and trial by jury. After independence, as you would expect, Singapore developed its own constitution. Article 14 of the constitution of Singapore guarantees the right to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly without arms and freedom of association. But in Singapore, Parliament may restrict the right to free speech, assembly and association if it is 'necessary or expedient in the interest' of a variety of factors. As we know, expediency can lay waste to fundamental rights, and our civil rights are precious.

I cannot imagine a situation where Melbourne becomes another Singapore, a gilded cage that constrains the will of the people and the freedoms we know and love. In a democracy there is always the great contestability of ideas, which helps us come up with the best public policy outcomes. I am privileged to have been an adviser to Steve Bracks in opposition. I was the former Leader of the Opposition's police adviser for six months, and in that time I worked very closely with the husband of the member for Macedon, who was involved with the Police Association — it is all about cops — and also had a wonderful association with James Higgins, the husband of the Minister for Emergency Services. I was the police adviser and James was the legal affairs adviser, and we would both try to work out what was good public policy. What was the right thing to do? How can you be tough on crime and tougher on the causes? How do you achieve that in a way that does not compromise the fundamental civil rights we enjoy? You have those private discussions, you make your case, you argue and you end up with a better public policy outcome. This act of the former government, however, slates the balance too far in the interests of Victoria Police. That is why we are moving in this direction.

It is important to look at other commentary around this issue. Thomas Jefferson said that:

> … rightful liberty is unobstructed action according to our will, within the limits drawn around us by the equal rights of others. I do not add 'within the limits of the law', because law is often but the tyrant's will and always so when it violates the right of an individual.

We have to be careful about making sure the balance is right.

I am reminded of a comment made by a former member for Bendigo West, Bob Cameron, on an occasion when he was asked to talk about legislation. He said sometimes legislation is a bit like deciding that you want to touch up a wall and opening a small can of paint. You paint a little bit here and a little bit there; before you know it you have gone beyond what you intended, and is that the most efficient use of your time? I submit that in this way the legislation introduced by the previous government went much too far.

Victoria Police has always had within its rights the ability to uphold the law and maintain the peace, and that remains. But the reality is that the current act goes too far. We are trying to restore the balance and take a more sensible approach. Victoria Police will continue to be able to do the things it needs to do, as you would expect. This is about making sure that we do not undermine or threaten the fundamental human rights we cherish. It is a very delicate balance, and if you fail to achieve that balance, as in Singapore, you can get it drastically wrong. Once you start a process you can find that you have wide paths of divergence. We are extremely lucky to be in the most progressive state in one of the most progressive nations in the world. It is important that we never lose sight of that. That is why this bill is so fundamentally important. It brings us back to the mainstream, which is where we should be, and makes sure that Victoria Police still has the powers to do the things it needs to do in order to discharge its duties. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) — In relation to the bill we are debating and the fundamental rights it deals with, it is very important that it is on the record and stays on the record that at no stage does the act that is being repealed take away the fundamental right to protest. Anybody who thinks it takes away that fundamental right has not read the act in its entirety and understood exactly how it works.

The previous speaker, the member for Essendon, said that this bill gives police the same powers and rights to do as they already had to move people on. I simply ask that if that is the case, why is Victoria Police against the removal of those rights and the repeal of parts of the act? Why does it support the bill if it does not think anything is going to change? Is it because the police know less than the member for Essendon? Has the member for Essendon actually gone out into the streets and worked with Victoria Police to try to understand what are the consequences of a protest? Did he not watch the videos? They were on Channel 7 and the *Herald Sun* website; they were on many websites. I just looked up a YouTube video of Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) workers shoulder-ramming horses and then saying, 'Nothing wrong, nothing to see here'. That was the kind of violence and the kind of protest we saw in Melbourne.

I saw this personally as a Victoria Police officer during the G20 protests and anybody who wants to say that protests like that are acceptable in Melbourne is kidding themselves. We need laws to make sure that protests like that do not happen again. I remind the member for Essendon that members of Victoria Police are also entitled to a safe workplace, and that is what the amendments being repealed were intended to do — get a safer workplace for Victoria Police officers.

When our police are having D-cell batteries and urine-filled water balloons thrown at them by protesters, when we see the sorts of things happening such as happened during the G20 protests, when we see a protest get out of control as happened with the CFMEU protest at Myer in Melbourne and when the courts endorse the fact that the protests are illegal by imposing a $1.25 million fine, that is 1.25 million reasons why we should keep the existing legislation. It is there to make sure we can keep law and order on our streets. Those protests are something we do not want to see again.

This bill gives people the right to access their place of employment. When we debated the legislation being amended and it came into effect in Victoria, we specifically focused on the rights of workers. Those opposite sit there and talk about the rights of workers, but they are not talking about the rights of workers, they are talking only about the rights of those involved in the unions that are obviously funding their campaigns. The reality is that if somebody wants to go to work — —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BATTIN — The member obviously does not understand the legislation. I am talking about the rights of workers. The government wants to allow people to mount blockades and stop other people from legally going to work. I would have thought the unions would want people to have access to their place of work. I would have thought that the unions would not want to see people standing outside Myer with A4 sheets of paper displaying symbols of guns pointed at legal employees of the Grocon workers group. I am sure that members opposite are sitting there thinking, 'That is a fantastic idea. Why shouldn't we be allowed to sit outside and intimidate workers?'.

Ms Hutchins — On a point of order, Speaker, the member on the other side has not referred to the bill or even a clause in the bill once during his contribution. In fact he is straying from the bill, and I ask you to bring him back to it.

The SPEAKER — Order! I am informed by the clerks that the debate has been wideranging and therefore the member for Gembrook is in order.

Mr BATTIN — I thank you, Speaker, and I thank the member for her attempted guidance, but I want to let her know that this legislation is about protecting workers and their rights to enter their workplace. It is about protecting people who legally want to go to a place of employment and earn an income. It is about everyday Victorians having an opportunity to go to work. I am not referring to peaceful protests. This is about the protests that are not peaceful, protests that get out of hand. This is about the protests like those that happened outside the Regent Theatre — and I can talk about those from personal experience.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BATTIN — I would love to see the member interrupt on this issue because I can talk personally about this protest. I was walking with my wife into a legal function — a function such as many political parties run, a function that many in our community run and a function that many businesses support; even unions hold these functions and have fundraisers around them — and we should have been able to walk into the theatre without any issue.

Not once will you find me on the record as saying that those people did not have the right to vote against the east–west link. Not once will you find me on the record as saying that any of those people did not have the right to protest. What I did say was that not once did they have the right to block me from entering a legal venue. At the same time as they were blocking me from entering a legal venue, they were blocking people who were just going to the theatre. People were on their way into the theatre to see *Wicked*, a fantastic show that encourages tourism in Victoria. It encourages people to come into the city, and it encourages more people to use our service industry; therefore it is good for our economy. It is good for jobs in the area. All we are saying is that these are the sorts of protests that should not be allowed in Victoria. You can protest peacefully, you can get your message across, but you do not have to blockade, you do not have to stop people from getting to a legal place of employment and you do not have to stop them by getting in their way.

Victoria Police has come out fairly openly on this issue and said that the repeal of this legislation is wrong and is not something it supports. I think those opposite should listen to that view. I am 100 percent confident that the Minister for Police — I hope I am confident — has at least spoken to the Police Association and Victoria Police management. I am sure during the discussions with those organisations, Victoria Police management and the Police Association — which work on behalf of the Victoria Police officers who protect us every day — would have had to have come out and said that they do not support the repeal of this legislation because it has given them some rights, some abilities and some tools to use when protests get out of hand. That is what this legislation is all about. It is giving the police some tools.

What saddens me the most about the repeal of this legislation is that it is an admission by the Labor Party that it does not trust Victoria Police to make a decision and get out on our streets and use this law logically. If anybody can find one instance of a member of Victoria Police in the 12 months this legislation has been in effect using it to the detriment of the Victorian public, would they please put it on the record? But there is not because Victorian police are very well trained. They are very good operators, and they have some very good groups within their organisation. They have their force response units and other units that go out and react to these protests. They do this regularly at training and to the best of their ability.

Most of the time when police go out you do not hear media stories about them because they are very professional in the way they operate. I do not understand why the Andrews government does not trust Victoria Police. I do not understand why it does not trust Victoria Police management, who have said they do not want to see the move-on laws repealed. The government should say to Victoria Police members, 'We don't trust you. We have to change the laws because we don't think you have the right to do that'.

I am sure Victorian people have quite regularly said that this move-on law is good. If we look at the results of it, if we go back and have look at the CFMEU protest, we will not find anyone in Victoria, except probably John Setka, who has said they want to see a return to that style of protest. But that is exactly where the government wants the situation to go. John Setka is a man who has been charged with assaulting police. He has, I think, 12 separate charges in relation to violence on our streets, and yet that is the advice the other side is taking in relation to this bill.

If the government wants to take advice, it should take it from the right side of law and order, from an industry representative like the Master Builders Association and the people who see the effects of these protests and how much they cost the Victorian economy. The government should get their advice on what they want done and what they think is the best outcome. The government should not take advice from those who funded its campaign and view this as a way to pay them back for that funding. My view of this bill is that it is bad policy, it is a bad direction and it sends a very poor message.

The government of the day is talking about internal discussions it has had about bringing trade missions to Victoria to talk about the positives — and, let us be honest, there are plenty of positives in Victoria we can talk about; I have no problem with that. But this is not something trade missions want to see. When they are looking at major investments in Victoria in 10 or 20 years, they do not want to have any protests outside the West Gate distributor in 2037 when the government starts that shovel-ready project. People in Victoria want to see law and order and they want police to have the ability to make that decision. I implore the government to withdraw this bill. I cannot support anything like this; it is bad policy and creates distrust with Victoria Police.

Mr NARDELLA (Melton) — If you ever wanted to know the difference between the Labor Party and the conservative, Tory Liberal-Nationals coalition, this bill is it. If the vehemence expressed against trade unions, trade union members and people protesting within our community was ever about the freedom of individual rights and collective rights or freedom of expression and how to suppress that, debate on this bill shows the nasty right-wing, Tory aspect of the Liberal-Nationals coalition within this state.

The bill before us today rolls back one of the extreme right-wing Institute of Public Affairs-sanctioned (IPA) 20-point plans. The IPA supported the Baillieu and Napthine governments during the last four long dark lazy years when they put in place legislation to suppress democracy within Victoria. You only have to listen to the contributions from the opposition to understand that vehemence. Whether it is the member for Hawthorn, who so eloquently put forward the IPA position of the extreme right-wing groups within our society and our community — it is not the HVK society, what is it called?

Ms Garrett — The H. R. Nicholls Society.

Mr NARDELLA — The H. R. Nicholls Society. It is part of the society's constitution and its DNA to suppress and push down trade unionists and trade union members whenever it can. That is who the opposition takes its directions from. We can see from this legislation that we are not part of that. When you talk about people's rights, people have a right to be able to protest legally, and there are a number of laws that determine that. The legislation put in place by the honourable member for Box Hill when he was the Attorney-General in the Tory Liberal-Nationals government attacked and suppressed those human rights and trade union rights. This bill restores the balance.

My honourable friend who just spoke talked about a safe working environment for police officers and protective services officers (PSOs). There is not one person within this Parliament who would disagree with the honourable member. Did aspects of the previous legislation do that? Absolutely not. If anyone within our society or community attacks a police officer, PSO, ambulance officer, firefighter or anybody else, they do that illegally. That is not sanctioned by anybody, either under this legislation or under the previous legislation. For honourable members to come here and put forward that false claim to the Parliament and the people of Victoria is to clutch at straws, because that is not the reality. Everybody deserves a safe workplace, and this bill does not take that away.

If members opposite want to talk about Max Brenner and the protests that occurred at those cafes, there are rules and restrictions with regard to those protests. I have put on the record before, and I put it on the record now, that I do not agree with protests that target Jewish communities or protests that target particular races or religions. I did not agree with the protests that occurred at the Max Brenner cafes. There are existing laws in place that that can be used in those types of instances. We absolutely believe that people should be protected in their workplaces, such as in the Max Brenner situation.

I also want to come back to the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU). The mob opposite ran a whole election campaign only 87 days ago on the issue of the Labor Party's connection to the CFMEU, and it did not work. It did not work because it is a false connection, in terms of our relationship with either the CFMEU or any other trade union. The falsehoods that those opposite put to the Victorian electorate were that the trade union movement in Victoria and Australia is a criminal movement and on that basis the Labor Party should not be supported.

Mr Pesutto — You know that's not right.

Mr NARDELLA — It is right, because even the Premier alluded at every opportunity, time and again, to the CFMEU and its relationships with bikies and the criminal element. Let me tell you that is not true. Trade union members within the building and construction industry have as much right as police officers, ambulance officers, fireys and other emergency workers in our community to protect themselves in their own workplace. However, this Liberal-Nationals opposition does not believe that. It believes trade unionists and trade unions should be suppressed from protecting their workplaces. The unions' protests have been about a situation where workers' bosses have employed bikies and relatives of the employer as health and safety officers, not to protect the trade unionists or the workers on those building and construction sites but to use standover tactics to make sure that the trade unions and workers are not protected, that their rights are not protected and that their health and safety is not protected. That is what those protests were about. They were not about anything other than unionists protecting themselves and the other trade union members on that site.

The Liberal Party and The Nationals are run by the Institute of Public Affairs and the H. R. Nicholls Society, which means that the legislation put in place by the previous government can never be supported by us on this side of the house. I want to applaud a number of our new honourable members, including the members for Essendon, Mordialloc and others, who have contributed to this debate and been absolutely clear about where the Labor Party stands on this issue. In a democratic society one must be able to protest. While this must be done legally, one must be able to protest. If honourable friends from the other side had actually read the dastardly bill before the house and gone to clause 4, they would have seen that there continue to be move-on powers. Members opposite will not say this, and none of them has said this, but the explanatory memorandum to the bill states that police and protective services officers still have move-on powers if:

> the person is or persons are breaching, or likely to breach the peace; or
>
> the person is or persons are endangering, or likely to endanger, the safety of any other person; or
>
> the behaviour of the person or persons is likely to cause injury to a person or damage to property or is otherwise a risk to public safety.

That is not the position of members opposite. Their position is that we should suppress the CFMEU, the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union — my union — and every other union in Victoria that protests. We vehemently oppose that. We believe in democracy, and we believe in the right of people to protest. We believe people should have the right to do what is necessary to protect the health and safety of members of their community, and I support the bill before the house.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — If you ever needed proof that this bill was a pay-off to the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) and other extremist groups that support the Labor Party, you need only look at the fact that the first speaker for the government this afternoon was the Minister for Industrial Relations, or more accurately the Minister for the CFMEU, and the bill has been passionately supported by the member for Thomastown, who is the member for BDS, and reinforced by the member for Melton. We saw what happened before these move-on laws were introduced. We saw the blockades at the Emporium site and we saw what happened to Max Brenner, which was innocently trying to sell chocolates. We have seen what has happened in the past, and we can see what we could so easily go back to in the future if these move-on laws are repealed.

Labor tries to hide behind the illusion that the move-on laws are in some form a threat to peaceful protest. There is no threat to the right to peaceful protest. Nothing in the legislation we passed detracted from that right. People remain free to march, hold rallies, wave banners, listen to speakers, gather outside employers premises or on the site of projects they disagree with and hold up signs calling for people not to enter premises or the site. They remain free to use all rights that accompany peaceful protest. What they should not have the right to do freely, and what the community is entitled to have effective protection against, is blockade others or threaten violence against others, regardless of who those protesting are or who they are protesting against.

The legislation we brought to Parliament last year, and which was enacted last year, achieved balanced, measured and reasonable provisions to weigh up those respective rights — to recognise and protect the right to peaceful protest but also to recognise and protect the right of others not to have their lawful activity interfered with by those who think they can put themselves above the law.

The bill that was passed last year expanded the existing grounds on which police could issue move-on orders under the Summary Offences Act to in future enable

them to be issued where a person is impeding lawful access to premises, has committed an offence in a public place, is causing others to have a reasonable fear of violence, is endangering safety or is engaging in behaviour likely to cause damage to property. We have heard no justification from those opposite for people having the right to engage in any of those things. Instead they have tried to pretend there is some sort of threat to peaceful protest instead of doing the honest thing and trying to justify, if they dare, giving people a free hand to engage in that sort of conduct.

The other key feature of the change that was made last year was that it removed the previous blanket exemption from Labor's own move-on powers for industrial or political protest. However, the bill as enacted last year specifically preserved exemptions relating to industrial or political protest in relation to breaching the peace or unreasonable obstruction so that those move-on grounds do not apply to industrial or political actions, given their uncertainty in those contexts. It needs to be specific blockading. The law enacted was carefully crafted and struck a fair and reasonable balance between upholding the rights of all citizens to go about their lawful business, including lawful protest, and not intruding on the legitimate rights of others.

It is important to recognise that the bill before the house does two separate things. First of all it gives back a total exemption from move-on powers to unionists and protesters who want to use force to impose their views on others. The member for Melton quoted the grounds on which the move-on powers remain, but he did not tell the house there was a total exemption from those grounds for any industrial or political protest. That total exemption is being reinstated by the bill. For the same reason, the media release put out by the Attorney-General in which he said:

> Under the bill to be introduced today, Victoria Police will retain those powers to respond to illegal protests —

was also completely incorrect.

The second thing that the bill does is wind back the powers of police to deal with yobbos and street gangs who harass, threaten and disrupt ordinary Victorians who are simply walking the streets or are in other public places. It is totally separate from industrial or political disputes. It scales back the powers to tackle the problem that the former Labor government itself recognised needed to be tackled of those who hang about on the streets and make life miserable for ordinary Victorians who just want to peacefully go out for a night's entertainment with the family. The power to protect those Victorians is also being scaled back by the bill before the house.

What the Labor Party is saying is that the police should not have this capacity to act effectively and on the spot to stop people engaging in these sorts of behaviours and to stop people in an industrial or political context or indeed in any other context from endangering safety, injuring people, damaging property, committing other offences, threatening violence, dealing in drugs or blockading premises. Protection against all these actions by the police is being scaled back by the bill that is before the house.

As I said, it is completely untrue to say the move-on laws that were enacted under the previous government stop lawful and peaceful protest. What they do is give police greater powers to stop those who seek to use force or coercion against people going about their lawful business. The legislation provides protection for everyone and against anyone who seeks to put themselves above the law. It does so regardless of the cause involved — left-wing, right-wing, pro-abortion, anti-abortion, pro duck hunting, anti-duck hunting, pro-Israel, anti-Israel. The law makes no distinctions on those grounds. The law makes no distinctions as to what the cause being advocated for is or what the actions being protested against are. It defines itself based on the criteria of lawfulness and respect for other people's rights to go about their lawful business and to carry on their lawful activities.

It is clear that those on the other side of the house have been thinking about how the legislation might apply to them in the context of a protest, and that is a perfectly legitimate thing to do. As I have demonstrated, the right to protest peacefully is in no way inhibited by the move-on laws. However, it is important for those opposite — indeed for anybody contemplating the merits of this legislation — to also think about how the law will apply when you happen to be on the receiving end of a protest and when it is others who are taking the law into their own hands and seeking to inhibit your ability to freely go about your business, be it political, be it industrial, be it economic, be it ministerial, be it governmental, be it parliamentary or be it simply your activities as an ordinary citizen. As a legislator you need to have the sense of responsibility to think about both sides of the argument and ensure that the law respects all rights. The move-on laws strike a fair and reasonable balance for all so that people can protest, but not so as to put themselves above the law or use force or violence against others.

The claims made by the government that there are alternative effective remedies just do not stand up.

Look at Grocon. Look at the cost and the time it took in the Supreme Court all the way to the High Court to have its rights upheld. How many small businesses and how many individual citizens have that capacity? Look at the claims about arrest powers being an adequate substitute. They tie up police for hours. They take police away from the street and from catching crooks. If you adopt that argument, you might as well say we will get rid of all on-the-spot fine laws for traffic offences and other street offences and require all cases to proceed by summons or arrest. It would bog down the police appallingly. It demonstrates that we will accept the fact that in these street offence matters and these on-the-spot matters police can act and a citizen always has the right, as they do with these move-on laws, to take the matter to court and have their day in court if they want to. Those rights are in no way affected by the legislation that was passed last year, so that argument also does not stand up.

As I said earlier, this badly thought through bill has a second dangerous effect. It makes it far easier for yobbos, drunks, bikie gangs and street gangs to engage in street offences, threaten and harass others, deal in drugs and block the path of anybody they do not like. The powers of police to deal with those matters are scaled back by this bill. What is that going to do for community safety? What is that going to do to make the streets safer at night for all Victorians, particularly for young women? What is that going to do for the cause of trying to reclaim the night for all Victorians, when police powers to deal with these matters are being scaled back? That is not the sort of Victoria we want to see. We want to see a Victoria that is safe for all in the community. That is what these move-on laws help to achieve.

Mr BROOKS (Bundoora) — How dare a duly elected government come into this place and seek to repeal antidemocratic, antiworker legislation — these move-on laws — that should never have been introduced by the previous government! One only has to do something that reminds those opposite of unions, workers rights and the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), and they all come in like a pack of hyenas, yelling out across the chamber. Nothing gets those guys on the opposite side of the chamber more excited than a debate that involves in some way a union and some way in which they can weave the CFMEU into the debate. They love it.

In relation to the move-on laws that were introduced by the government that got the boot, members should not take the word of the Labor Party; they should take the word of the Law Institute of Victoria. When this ridiculous move-on legislation was introduced by the previous government, the law institute said it would:

> … limit the ability of individuals and groups to assemble and protest in public. It would remove existing and important protections against move-on orders for individuals and groups engaging in picketing, protesting and public demonstration and, by introducing provisions which allow for arrest for breaches of a move-on direction, increase criminalisation of direct protest action in Victoria.

There we have it. That left-wing organisation, the Law Institute of Victoria, points out quite clearly how ridiculous the move-on laws were.

It is no surprise that this legislation has been brought in, as others in the house have intimated during this debate. This was an action that members on this side of the house foreshadowed at the time the move-on laws were brought in and then repeated before the election in 2014. I remind those opposite that, with full knowledge of this, the Victorian people duly elected the Labor Party to form the government of this state. I would say that if people on the other side of the house assume their argument is correct then rather than a failure of policy this may well be a failure on their part to prosecute their arguments before the election.

The lead speaker for the opposition, the member for Hawthorn, in his very loud and passionate contribution expressed concern that without these powers police might hesitate to move people on. He expressed some concern about that. We all support the police in doing their job, and I would have thought that people who value freedom — freedom of association and freedom of peaceful protest — would expect our police to carefully consider their actions before they moved people on.

We should not forget that Victoria Police will continue to have — indeed, they already had before the move-on powers were introduced — considerable powers where officers reasonably suspect that people are breaching, or are likely to breach, the peace; that people are endangering, or likely to endanger, the safety of another person; or the behaviour of a person is likely to cause injury to a person, damage property or is otherwise a risk to public safety. This notion that has been put forward by opposition members that somehow the world is going to come to an end, that there is going to be an outbreak of mayhem on the streets of Melbourne because these move-on laws are being turfed, is just ridiculous nonsense. It just goes to their anti-union core and their fixation with the CFMEU, which they of course ran very strongly against in the run-up to the last election.

We have heard speakers on the other side, particularly the lead speaker, talk about mob rule and thuggery and intimidation. The member for Hawthorn went on to cite the sorts of actions he meant, and he mentioned finger-pointing, swearing and name-calling. That is pretty serious stuff! I hope he never comes to the football with me. As I am a passionate Collingwood supporter, he might well feel a bit intimidated. There is lots of finger-pointing, swearing and name-calling.

On a serious note, it is a shame that opposition members get so passionate about these sorts of issues around workplaces, unions and workers rights to protest, but fail in this place to take up some of the most serious issues affecting workers in the workplace — for example workplace safety. We have not heard — or at least, I have not heard, and I may have missed it — members on the other side of the house spend any time talking about the number of people who are killed on our construction sites or in our workplaces. I have not heard them rave on about that with the same intensity as they do when it comes to union matters. I do not think they care.

On a personal note, some time ago, I think it was in 2009, one of my neighbours in the street I live in in Greensborough went to work, and he did not come home that afternoon. He was killed on the Pentridge prison site, the centre of the now infamous dispute that occurred after that incident. He was killed by a concrete pump which fell on him and killed him. I did not know him; I knew his son, who was left orphaned. His wife was widowed. There are serious issues on building sites, where unions stand up for workplace safety. It is amazing that those opposite, right through the last Parliament when they were in government and now again, ignore those sorts of things. They consistently raise concerns about the behaviour of unions, but I have not heard the former Attorney-General ever raise concerns about an employer's safety record. I have not heard it in this place, and I think he should admit that bias that he has as a conservative politician against unions and working people.

We heard the lead speaker for the opposition today talk about his concern for the rule of law and for the rule of law being upheld. I understand, looking at the Victorian WorkCover Authority, that in 2013–14, 107 prosecutions were commenced for breaches of the OHS act. I would expect that the member for Hawthorn would be just as concerned about breaches of the OHS act. I have not heard him talk about it in this place yet; in fact, I cannot remember hearing anybody on that side of the house talk about breaches of the OHS act. I have only ever heard them come in here and shout about and run down unions and the CFMEU.

Another sobering statistic, according to Safe Work Australia's 2014 report, is that 31 workers were killed in Victoria in 2013. Thirty-one workers lost their lives in Victoria, and you do not hear boo from the other side of the house. You never hear boo from the other side of the house on workplace safety. I think it is a great shame that members of the other side of the house would rather come in — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BROOKS — Those opposite have been quite happy to talk about the behaviour of many organisations in their contributions, and I am just highlighting that those very same organisations do a great job in protecting the safety of workers. In fact it is left to those organisations because governments like the previous government simply do not care. The only thing they care about is dragging down the good work that employee organisations like unions do and taking any chance they get to remove the protections they have.

This bill removes the move-on powers that were brought in by the previous government that were antidemocratic. They stopped people from associating freely and protesting freely, and this government stands proud as it removes those move-on laws. I commend this bill to the house.

Mr T. SMITH (Kew) — I rise to speak on the Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015. This bill seemingly puts the Labor government at odds with the sensible centre of Victorian politics. Move-on powers were first introduced by the Brumby Labor government in 2009, but they were limited. As a result of the 2009 changes, section 6 of the Summary Offences Act 1966 empowered police and protective services officers (PSOs) to direct a person to leave a public place where the police or PSO reasonably suspected the person was: breaching, or likely to breach, the peace; endangering, or likely to endanger, the safety of another person; or by their behaviour likely to cause injury to a person or damage to property or otherwise likely to be a risk to public safety.

However, Labor's legislation provided that none of these powers applied to political or industrial protests and pickets. In light of some very appalling and very public examples of protesters taking things too far during the period of the previous government, the coalition decided to change the law to strengthen the grounds on which police can move on protesters disturbing the peace.

Our changes also provided that exemptions for political or industrial protests or pickets continued to apply, but only on the grounds of a breaching or likely breaching of the peace, or causing or likely causing an undue obstruction. It is important to note that the grounds for ordering a move-on order did not apply to peaceful protests. People could march, hold rallies, wave banners and listen to speakers. They could gather outside employer premises or the sites of projects they disagreed with, hold up signs calling on people not to enter the premises or the site and offer people entering or leaving the premises leaflets explaining what the protesters were seeking.

As former Prime Minister John Howard said, we in the Liberal Party are the trustees of two great political traditions.

Ms Garrett — What did Tony Abbott say?

Mr T. SMITH — I am talking about John Howard at the moment, member for Brunswick. Thank you very much.

We are the custodians of two great political traditions: the classical Liberal tradition and the conservative tradition. The conservative tradition is fundamental to preserving a well-ordered society in the Burkean tradition. As Liberals we are fundamentally committed to freedom of speech, freedom of association and, of course, the right to protest, but as conservatives in the Burkean tradition we are committed to the preservation of a well-ordered society, which requires giving the state the ability to move on individuals who are disturbing the peace whilst protesting their point of view.

If you look back at the history of the Liberal Party you will see it is at its best when it balances and blends those two traditions. The ideas of Burke and Mill are interwoven into the history, the practice and the experience of our political party.

Even with our classical Liberal traditions there are of course limits to legitimate rights of collective political action. As J. S. Mill observed:

> What … is the rightful limit to the sovereignty of the individual over himself? Where does the authority of society begin? How much of human life should be assigned to individuality, and how much to society?
>
> …
>
> As soon as any part of a person's conduct affects prejudicially the interests of others, society has jurisdiction over it …

I am always prudent when restricting the rights of an individual to engage in political action — no policeman ever turned down more powers from the state — but quite frankly, simply moving on individuals, without the draconian step of arresting them, is a perfectly good idea. We all know that protests can become heated and people can get passionate. That is why we are all here. Quite frankly, move-on powers might be a good idea every now and then in this place. One wonders at the motivations of those opposite for reversing what most Victorians would see as a balanced and mainstream position.

Modern Labor is a stark example of the consequence of a special interest taking over a governing party. The key flaw in the Labor Party structure was the rule that gave the party organisation outside Parliament the power to determine policy. This rule offered power without responsibility to external interests — the faceless men and the union movement with all their class war attitudes. This is on display here today. This change to the Summary Offences Act 1966 is designed to placate Labor's trade union power base to the detriment of the moderate mainstream here in Victoria — the silent majority, to quote Sir Robert Menzies.

We on this side of the house will always advocate for the Menzies tradition of good government — that is, government in the interests of the people as a whole and hence policies that work in the interests of all. Our reforms to the Summary Offences Act struck the balance, and it is for these reasons that we are opposed to winding them back, which the government seeks to do. We will always stand for the moderate mainstream in our society. I oppose this bill. I applaud the Liberal Party and also our shadow Attorney-General for his earlier remarks.

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) — I rise in support of the Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015. The introduction of the move-on legislation in 2014 was clearly aimed at union protests. It was an attack on our unions and demonised working people and union members. As president and vice-president of the Geelong Trades Hall Council I represented workers for many years, and when we were planning protests we took a lot into consideration. We were not planning violent protests but rather representing the rights of working people in our community.

I am very proud to have protested with my union comrades. We often protested about the very important issue of safety. Occupational health and safety in the construction industry in particular is of great importance to our community. Construction is a dangerous industry. I have spoken to many families who have lost loved ones, as many workers from the construction industry had not gone home to their

families. My own son works in the construction industry with the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU). I want him to come home to his family.

As the member for South Barwon knows, I am a very strong unionist. He has criticised and attacked me in the local media quite often.

Mr Katos interjected.

Ms COUZENS — Yes, I was very pleased to have my election sign displayed at the CFMEU. The CFMEU workers in Geelong have supported not only me but their own members. I will be attending the union march on 4 March.

Mr Katos — Shock, horror!

Ms COUZENS — Yes, it is such a surprise.

An honourable member — Can we come?

Ms COUZENS — Yes, you are welcome to come. I will be there to stand up for the workers rights that the federal government is about to attack. If we did not have protests, would we have Aboriginal rights?

Ms Ryall — No-one is arguing that.

Ms COUZENS — Well, I think you are. Would we have church groups advocating for refugees? All those community organisations have the right to protest as much as union members have.

Mr Watt — No, they don't.

Ms COUZENS — Yes, they do. The ranting and raving from the other side is quite bitter and twisted — —

Mr Watt — They're exempt; that's the point. They don't.

Ms COUZENS — Yes, they do.

Mr Watt — No, they don't. That's the point; that's the whole point.

Ms COUZENS — The opposition must prefer — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Mr Dixon**) — Order! The member for Geelong without assistance. We have had enough discussion across the chamber. The member for Geelong to continue.

Ms COUZENS — The opposition's cuts to services when in government last year and the year before and the year before that all attracted protests from not only unions but communities. The lack of support for our manufacturing industry and the cuts to TAFE were all protested about, particularly in Geelong.

So much change has come about in our community due to protest. Would women have the vote now if we had not protested? Would Aboriginal people have the right to vote? They are just examples of what has changed in our community through protest.

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — So much has been said during this debate, to which I have listened intently, based on the illusion that members on this side of the house are against people protesting and are against demonstrations. I would like to remind those opposite of something that Paul Keating, their Labor hero, said. I remember the footage. He said so caringly to a university student who was protesting about fees, 'Go get a job'. He really supported the protest!

The member for Bundoora commented that we on this side are concerned about finger waving, pieces of paper being waved, shouting and swearing. I would like to tell members about something that happened to me at Upwey last year. No-one would describe me as a small person or a shrinking violet. I am quite large and I am quite comfortable in my electorate. As part of my job I went to attend a public meeting. I parked my car and I started to walk in. I saw that there was a demonstration but that was no problem; I have walked through demonstrations before. It was a rare occasion in my life but this time I was frightened because those people were jumping around, they were shouting at me, they were waving placards and I was being pushed and sworn at and spat at. The demonstration was organised by the education union and I was stunned as I know a couple of the university students who were there. They were doing that to me, a woman walking into a meeting. I was perfectly within my legal rights to walk into that meeting and I was frightened.

If I was frightened, as someone who can compose themselves and say, 'Please leave me alone; move away', how does the ordinary citizen, who does not go through what we go through in this chamber, with the interjections and the shouting, and who just wants to go into their place of work, cope with someone shouting at them? I have a sister in England. If someone impeded her on her path she would fall apart, because she is shy and retiring. If someone were shouting and waving pieces of paper in front of her, she would be really frightened. That is what has been happening.

No-one is saying, 'Do not demonstrate'. No-one is saying, 'You do not have the right to demonstrate'. I

have demonstrated and have marched through the streets of Melbourne. Over the years I have demonstrated about a number of things. We all have that right, but we on this side of the house are saying, 'You have a right to demonstrate, but other people also have a right to go about their daily business' — as I had the right to attend that public meeting without being absolutely shaken. As I said, I am not a small, shy person. I am a large person who can usually walk through a crowd without any problem.

I go to football matches. The member for Bundoora tried to compare violent, aggressive demonstrations with a football match. They are nothing at all like a football match.

An honourable member interjected.

Mrs FYFFE — No, I have never been to a Labor Party meeting. Do you mean it is worse than question time in here?

In part I am thinking that that is what is wrong with this place and why this place has deteriorated since I first came here, why we hear vitriol and shouting. We do not hear people making a speech by using wit or demonstrating the ability to make a point in a debate but — and sadly there were examples of it today — by shouting at people. Is that what we are to have? Is that the practice that is coming in? Is that where this Parliament is heading? Is that the way our society is going to continue? Instead of quietly putting a point, people will say, 'I count more than you. I'm not going to listen to you. I'm going to do what I want, and stuff you! You get out of my way. I'm demonstrating. Bad luck if you want to go to work. Bad luck if you want to go down the street. I'm going to stop you because you're in my way'.

I do not know why this bill has been introduced, because there has been no report of these laws being misused. Move-on powers are just that. I have seen them used in London. I saw a single policeman on his own moving on 20 or 30 young people — I am not good at judging crowds — who had obviously been out to a party. My husband and I were just walking along Regent Street back to our hotel. The young people were streaming down the street making a lot of noise. He just walked up to them and said, 'Come on, you lot. Move off, move on'. They obeyed and there was no problem. He was helping people like us, tourists who get lost all the time and people who were enjoying life, to just get on with their lives.

I have an office that is ideally situated near a railway station and between a pub and a fish and chip shop. I must have been out of favour when the Department of Parliamentary Services chose the site for me. We get a lot of people, particularly young teenagers — because there is not much to do in Lilydale at night, I must say — hanging around, buying chips, sitting on the pavement, making a lot of noise and stopping people from being able to go into the shop. Nobody wants them arrested; nobody wants anything terrible to happen to them. They just need to be moved on. There is a park just up the road. Our local police are great. They will come, if they can, when they are called, and say, 'Move on. Go into the park and have your chips there'. That is the sort of thing we want, where the freedom and right of the individual is protected. The right of the individual counts so much and the vast majority of people want to just get on with their lives quietly.

Members on this side of the house have been accused of being anti-union. Allegations have been made that we do not care about workers being injured on building sites. My son is a builder. He did his apprenticeship with two builders. Quite a few years ago I approached the first builder very angrily. He had two apprentices on a roof in the dark and the rain, putting up tarpaulins. There was no scaffolding — no protection at all. My son was not old enough to drive at that time so I had gone to pick him up. I flew at the builder, and I would have done anything to have put him out of business. I pushed my son out of that apprenticeship. He got another apprenticeship and worked with a master builder, and he now has his own company.

Members on this side do know and understand. We have families whose members work in industry. I come from a background in which my dad was a coalminer who cared very much about what happened to the workers. We on this side have always cared about the workers. A few of us have had small businesses and had employees we cared about. If you do not care about your employees, your business fails. In my business in the winery we took every step possible to protect the workers. We put in catwalks at great expense. We did everything we could, but we still had people who would injure themselves. We had a ladder that was connected, tied — the whole thing was perfectly safe — but for some reason a man chose to stand on a milk crate, slipped on it and broke his ankle. There was no need for him to do that, but he did it. We cared. We looked after him and made sure that he was okay.

Members opposite have said that we are anti-union. We are not anti-union. We support the right of the individual to be able to go to work, to earn an income and to run a business that needs employees to arrive, perhaps at a coffee shop so that it can be opened on

time to supply coffee to customers coming in. I can tell members that people running a business lie awake at night trying to work out how they are going to pay the wages. It is said that after eight weeks of being unemployed your mortgage is in trouble. I can tell members that in a small business after just a few days of customers not being able to get in and no trade, you can be in trouble. Those people have their house mortgaged, their wife or husband has guaranteed the loan and she or he is out working to support the business. These are the people we care about — the backbone of Australia.

They are not like some people who, while they have every right to demonstrate, do not have the good sense, politeness or good manners to make their point without impeding other people. People have the right to work, to run a business and to live in this wonderful city and be treated with courtesy and politeness. Every individual in this state counts. They all have equal rights. Are the rights of unionists — with unions having only 17 or 18 per cent of the working population as members — greater than the rights of everybody else? No, they are not, and neither are the rights of the hooligans, the thugs, the drunks or anyone else impeding the movement of others. I never again want to have to go to a meeting walking past someone who is spitting at me and swearing at me just because I am doing my job.

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) — It is an honour to speak in support of the Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015, a bill that seeks to correct a wrong — to correct the injustice caused by the draconian changes made by the coalition last year through the Summary Offences and Sentencing Amendment Act 2014. It is a bill that honours an Andrews Labor government election commitment. Unlike the example given to us by those opposite in the last Parliament, this government is dedicated to fulfilling its promises and to leading, not sleeping.

So far the debate has been colourful and sometimes alarming. I even heard the member for Warrandyte singing the praises of Margaret Thatcher. She was a walking inspiration for a protest, if ever there was one. God help us. We have heard union bashing, and lots of it, but we have also learnt that those laws impact on more than just union protests. I justifiably take issue with the laws of those opposite that targeted our most vulnerable and sought to crush our democratic rights and freedoms. This is why I support the amendments proposed in this bill we are debating today. This goes to the heart of why we on this side of the chamber are here today. It goes to the heart of fairness and of our freedoms.

Those on this side of the chamber are not the only ones to view the changes made by those opposite last year as not only antidemocratic but absolutely unnecessary. An array of legal, community and civil rights groups have raised serious concerns about the laws as they stand. Even Australian Human Rights Commissioner Tim Wilson objected to the legislation on the basis that it 'unnecessarily gives police too much power to move on protesters unjustifiably'. But there are more — many more — and I will only name a couple.

The executive director of the Human Rights Law Centre, Hugh de Kretser, expressed his concern that the changes made by the coalition government threatened protest rights and free speech and impacted negatively on young people and the homeless. He said:

> These laws go too far … The potential for misuse is very high.

Similarly the immediate past president of the Law Institute of Victoria, Geoff Bowyer, stated — and this has been quoted by other speakers — that the laws could:

> … have a significant and devastating impact on the homeless, who, by the nature of their situation, are forced to gather in public places, often returning to a familiar spot after being moved on.

Some members may recall that in my inaugural speech late last year I referred to pro bono work I undertook as a solicitor with the Homeless Persons Legal Clinic, work that involved seeking clemency for infringements incurred by the homeless often as a direct result of their exceptionally difficult circumstances. I talked at length about people being sucked deeper and deeper into desperate times, burdened by fines incurred in their struggle just to survive. What do we see in the changes the coalition introduced last year? Through these changes those opposite sought to add even more challenges to the lives of our most vulnerable, again targeting the most needy and downtrodden among us. This is simply unacceptable in a civilised society.

There is no question that the expansion of the move-on laws by the coalition was about stifling dissent and stifling our democratic freedoms. The laws did not apply just to violent protests, as some on the other side would have us believe. That is a nonsense. They enabled police and protective services officers to use move-on powers in relation to any protest.

We have rarely seen positive change in our society without some level of protest. Protest has been a reliable method of alerting decision-makers, such as ourselves, to injustice and of putting reform on the agenda. If these laws had applied in different places at

different times, our world might be a very different place today — a pretty terrible place, a place that should belong only in a Dickens novel. We would have seen people like Mahatma Gandhi fined or imprisoned, we would have seen the civil rights movement of the 1960s stifled and we would have seen Indigenous rights movements here at home squashed. Imagine that — no referendum for Indigenous voting rights, which had required protest. We might never have seen the introduction of the 8-hour working day or any number of the rights and freedoms we enjoy today thanks to the gruelling protests of champions past — champions who suffered to ensure the achievement of fairer working conditions for millions of people.

What, then, are we seeking to achieve through this legislation? Balance is what we are about today — nothing more and nothing less than balance. Imagine being arrested because a police officer had a suspicion — just a suspicion — that you had committed an offence in a public place within the past 12 hours or because a police officer had made a subjective decision about whether or not a protest had breached the peace. 'Vague' is the only word for it. It is also open to abuse.

The changes proposed in this bill strike a better balance between individuals' rights and freedoms on the one hand and community safety on the other — and both are very important. The bill still enables police to take action where the safety of any person is endangered, where there is a breach of the peace or where injury or property damage is likely. That is fair and reasonable. It repeals the specific and unnecessary arrest powers introduced by those opposite — unnecessary because police officers and protective services officers already have broad arrest powers under the Crimes Act 1958, section 458 to be precise, and these measures are perfectly sufficient.

In the spirit of balance this bill protects the rights of Victorians to picket a place of employment or to protest about a particular issue. It protects the countless numbers of peaceful protests that happen every year in this state — protests that enable Victorians to have a voice, to raise their concerns and to let us know when something is wrong, which is their right. Those opposite would have us believe that all protests are violent. That is what they try to tell us all the time — that all protest is violent and all industrial action is bad — but they are wrong. Protests are not all violent; it is a lie.

Let us face it, conservatives hate dissent. They love control and power — the more draconian, the better — unless it is big business of course. Conservatives are happy to let big business run wild at the expense of all honest, hardworking people. Those opposite are all about the top end of town, and the changes they made last year demonstrated that. It is time those opposite came to terms with their rejection by the Victorian people and allow this government to exercise its mandate and implement its commitments, which were put to and supported by the people of Victoria in November last year. In short, we won. The Victorian people gave us a mandate, so those opposite should let us work for the Victorian people. These amendments are extremely — —

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the Speaker has made a very clear ruling about reading speeches, and I wonder whether you would ask the member whether she is reading her speech.

Mr Donnellan — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, many new members of the opposition have been reading their speeches and have not been pulled up. We are quite happy to apply that to all.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Mr Dixon**) — Order! I ask the member whether she was referring to notes or reading her speech.

Ms WILLIAMS — Just copious notes, Acting Speaker.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Mr Dixon**) — Order! There is no point of order.

Ms WILLIAMS — These amendments, as I have said, are extremely important to redressing the imbalance that was imposed on us by the changes made last year. They rightly enable Victorian people to have a voice and enable the most vulnerable in our community to struggle along without more challenges being piled on their plates unnecessarily. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms RYALL (Ringwood) — I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015. I am not sure the title is correct; it should probably say 'Move on except if you are a unionist or a political protester', because now it seems they will not need to move on. Labor first introduced laws in this area in 2009, and if this bill passes, then essentially Labor will have exempted political and industrial protests and pickets from the move-on laws.

It was interesting to listen to the contribution of the member for Evelyn, who referred to a time when she was spat at and abused verbally, because in the months leading up to the election I had my arm wrenched and I was pushed, also by a member of the Australian

Education Union. I am not sure whether that has happened to those opposite, but to be treated in that manner in a public place — actually, regardless of whether it is a public place — is not only totally disrespectful but also appalling. If anybody opposite thinks that is good or acceptable, regardless of what they think the protest is about, then I would say they are not in support of antibullying legislation, including Brodie's law and the like. When we go about our business in our workplaces, in our jobs and in our roles, we do not expect to be bullied, harassed or abused. I am supportive of antibullying culture and making sure that people are respected when they are fulfilling their roles in any situation, whether it be at a school, in a workplace or any other location.

As a former business owner and an employer, having had employees I felt responsible for in making sure I made a go of my business such that they were able to provide for their families, and as somebody who risked everything to go into business to make a better life for myself and my family, I can honestly say it is important to make sure you maintain productivity and your business runs, because it depends on the very people you support by providing them with an income. I do not know whether those opposite have ever been in that situation, but when a business is blockaded and employees of that business are unable to enter freely and go to work, it is extremely difficult.

Mr Howard — Did that happen to you?

Ms RYALL — The member opposite asked, 'Did that happen?'. I refer to Max Brenner and the circumstances in which the employer and employees were not able to freely go about their business. I also draw the member's attention to the Melbourne Emporium blockade, where I vividly recall a sheet of paper that had on it the faces of Grocon employees, a double-barrelled shotgun and text saying they were scabs.

I wonder whether that has happened to those opposite. Have they ever been in a situation where they have been called scabs and had their photographs taken just for wanting to go about their daily work? Have they ever been called scabs and had a photo of their faces together with a picture of a gun on the page? They can sit there and laugh and think this is funny, but they have never been in that situation. They have never been responsible for making sure that employees can go about their work freely, that their wages are paid and that the business can function to best effect to support others and help the economy.

As for risking everything, government members should go ahead, because the last time anybody in Labor tried to run a business, it was Bob Hawke and ACTU-Solo. They should look it up and see what their background is in trying to run a business. It is absolutely appalling. Making sure that people get an income, that their income is protected, that they can go to work freely and that they can leave freely to go home is vitally important.

We have heard suggestions that protests could not happen, but that is absolute rubbish. No-one has diminished the opportunity for people to protest peacefully; this is an issue of respect and making sure that people can exercise their right to go to work and go home peacefully without being called scabs, without having their photos displayed with shotguns on the pages, without being intimidated and without being bullied. If people were respectful of making sure those sort things do not happen, they would not support situations where it has happened and will continue to happen if this bill is passed. It is frightening to think that those opposite, who are in government, would support the abuse of workers as happened at Grocon.

As somebody of Jewish heritage, as I am, I was absolutely appalled by what happened at Max Brenner. Indeed, I was out on the steps peacefully protesting about the behaviour going on in relation to that business. Those opposite can sit there and smile and say it is not so, but they should imagine for a minute that it is their business, their income and their employees, for whom they provide the opportunity to put food on the table and make a life for themselves. They should put themselves in that position for a moment.

Mr Angus — It has gone quiet now.

Ms RYALL — It has gone quiet now, because when you turn the tables and say, 'You accept it' — —

Mr Staikos interjected.

Ms RYALL — The member for Bentleigh raises his hands and so forth. Does he like being spat at? Has it ever happened to him? If a situation arises when there is offensive behaviour, when workplaces are blockaded, when people are no longer free to exercise their rights, yet those causing the disruption cannot be moved on because they are unionists or it is an industrial situation, then it will be absolutely shameful.

On that point, we do not support this bill. We support Victorians being able to exercise their freedom to go about their daily lives in a peaceful manner. I thank the shadow Attorney-General for his excellent contribution

outlining the absolute falsehoods that have been fabricated by those opposite.

Mr HOWARD (Buninyong) — I am pleased to enter into this debate and to get the balance back into the right sort of area, because that is what this legislation is all about; it is about getting the balance right in regard to people's right to protest. Let us go back to 2014, just last year, when the Napthine government became the ousted government because the people of Victoria chose to vote for Labor at the election. Before the move-on powers were introduced we had good, balanced legislation in place. We had move-on legislation and police had available to them a whole range of other powers in dealing with protests when the protesters went too far.

I believe, as do all people on this side of the house, that protesting is a right people have. However, when people protest they need to recognise the people around them and protest responsibly. We on this side of the house support responsible protest, and I want to make that clear.

I remember in my earlier days the government of Joh Bjelke-Petersen and how he decided that in his government they would do things differently. 'We do things differently up here in Queensland' was Joh Bjelke-Petersen's great line as he put down the protesters if they protested against anything, just as his minister Russ Hinze wanted and as other ministers showed their excesses in a range of ways. Joh Bjelke-Petersen's government did things differently. What we saw last year was the then coalition government in Victoria attempting to do something very similar to Joh Bjelke-Petersen. It did this on the back of trying to vilify union activities and union protests and taking advantage of anti-Jewish protests, and it took this legislation way too far, to a place it did not need to go.

Before the former government — the government that was voted out by the people of Victoria at the last election — brought forward this move-on legislation we clearly had move-on laws that did three things. Those laws said that police could require a person to move on if the person was breaching or likely to breach the peace; a person could be required to move on if they were endangering or likely to endanger the safety of any other person; and a person could be required to move on if the behaviour of the person was likely to cause injury to a person, cause damage to property or was otherwise a risk to public safety. They were reasonable powers police could take up.

At the same time, police had a range of other powers available to them. I believe our police act well, especially if they are prepared for protest activity. If they are appropriately trained, they generally do very well in protecting the community and finding the right balance in dealing with protesters.

We know that before the coalition's move-on legislation was brought forward there were a range of powers available to police allowing them to take action against inappropriate activity by any individual protesters. There were powers they could use to follow up on undue obstruction of footpaths or roads, wilful trespass of a public place, wilful trespass of a private place, entry likely to breach the peace and so on. A range of powers within the Summary Offences Act 1966 and a range of other acts enabled police to take action against people who were doing the wrong thing when protesting. I can go through that list; it is certainly a very long list. I can see when I look at the powers available to police at present that there are three or four pages of different trespass offences and different summary offences that can be applied.

As the member for Buninyong and former member for Ballarat East, the Wombat State Forest comes within my electorate. We had issues with people protesting against logging in the Wombat State Forest, for example, just as there have been protesters in other areas. The police had powers under the acts to deal with protesters who may have been in inappropriate areas or were putting themselves at risk or putting the workers who were appropriately undertaking logging activity at risk. There are special powers under the Sustainable Forests (Timber) Act 2004 and so on.

Of course one of the other areas where we have seen protests and where there are concerns about the safety of protesters and other people going about their business is in association with duck hunting. We clearly have a range of powers in place that address the issues around duck hunting protests.

What we are doing with this legislation is what we clearly promised to do ahead of the election. The people of Victoria clearly supported us. They said, 'No, we don't want Joh Bjelke-Petersen-type activities. We don't want that heavy-handed law and order agenda that the conservatives — the coalition — were putting forward. We want a balanced government that recognises the right of people to protest in a whole range of activities. We want that balance right'. In November last year the people of Victoria clearly voted for a change from that tired, old law and order rhetoric we get from the conservatives. They wanted a progressive approach returned to Victoria, as they have

wanted in the majority of elections since 1982 when the Cain government was elected.

That is what they will get under this government; they will get a good, balanced, progressive government that recognises people's right to protest but also recognises that there are powers under the law that police can use to act on people who are protesting in inappropriate ways.

I reflect back on protests I have been involved in over the years. I remember my earlier university days. I was of course pleased that university students saw that there were good reasons to protest a whole range of activities. I was a little too young for the Vietnam moratorium protests, but they were clearly very significant, changing the way we deal with war issues in this country.

In my student days I joined protests, but more recently I have supported trade and labour protests in Ballarat when then Prime Minister John Howard was introducing his WorkChoices legislation. I have also protested against issues associated with the former Kennett government and its sale of public assets. I was very much involved in the Public First movement that said, 'No, we want to keep our public assets in public hands because that's the best way for them to be administered'. Unfortunately, of course, we lost that opportunity under the Kennett government, and we have seen the results of that since.

I have also been involved in protests in Ballarat over the war in Iraq. Sadly, we saw the results of that war, which the Americans and Prime Minister John Howard quickly supported under the guise of weapons of mass destruction that were supposedly in Iraq. Those protests were not successful and, sadly, that war took place, and we have seen what has happened in Iraq since that time.

I was on the other side of the protests when I attended the Israeli Independence Day celebrations over the road from Parliament a few years back, and a pro-Palestinian protest occurred. A number of people who attended the event were concerned about the protests. My experience of that event was that the members of Parliament who attended were asked to stay together and police horses were in place to provide protection for those of us who attended the function, and I must say I was perhaps a little more intimidated by the horses than by the protesters themselves. It is clearly a matter of getting these issues in balance.

I want everyone to have the right to protest about the things that are important to them, whether it be WorkSafe issues, issues associated with the union movement or other broad issues of public importance. I want to see that happening safely, and I believe that this progressive Andrews Labor government is restoring the balance, as the people of Victoria wanted us to do on 29 November last year.

Debate interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Mr Dixon**) — Order! I recognise in the gallery a former member for Warrandyte and Minister for Tertiary Education and Training, the Honourable Phil Honeywood.

SUMMARY OFFENCES AMENDMENT (MOVE-ON LAWS) BILL 2015

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) — I am pleased to rise this evening to speak in relation to the Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015. I place on the record my strong opposition to the bill before the house; I believe it will be a retrograde step for all Victorians. It has been interesting to hear the contributions from the other side suggesting that the mandate was given to them as a result of the election last November. I do not remember seeing any particular policy position of the Labor Party on this issue in any material anywhere during my campaign journey. Therefore it is quite delusional to suggest that this initiative was front and centre in the Labor Party's proposals in the lead-up to the election. It was well and truly tucked away, and I think most Victorians will be shocked when they realise the potential ramifications of this piece of legislation.

From the outset it is important to note the position of the coalition, which was so very well articulated by the shadow Attorney-General earlier in the day. He made an outstanding contribution which clearly put on the record the position of the opposition in relation to the bill. It is important to look back over the history of the bill. In 2009 the Brumby Labor government first introduced the move-on powers, but the caveat was that they were significantly limited. In particular they provided that none of the powers that were introduced through that piece of legislation applied to political or industrial protests and pickets.

That provision is very telling because that is the area where we have seen examples in recent and not-so-recent times of lawlessness in relation to pickets

and protests that have taken place on the streets of Melbourne. All Victorians were shocked a couple of years ago — and I spoke about it at the time — when they witnessed the outrageous and lawless behaviour that occurred just a few blocks from this very building at the Myer Grocon building site. Who here in Victoria could forget the footage of the assault on police and police horses and the absolutely outrageous behaviour led by the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union members? It was an attack on law and order and the fabric of our community here in Victoria. It was a shocking example, but it is sad to say that it is not the only example.

Many years ago when I was in public practice I witnessed a very serious example of such behaviour involving our business. One of our clients was black-banned by the Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) back in the 1980s. The BLF was a formidable force. My clients were lawfully involved in a construction project, lawfully going about their business and making the light towers for the MCG, which was a significant and iconic project here in Victoria. However, they received the kiss of death from the BLF at the time, and in less than a year they were out of business because of the black bans that were placed on them by the BLF. That is an extreme example, but it demonstrates the thin edge of the wedge leading to an honest family business going completely out of business, causing people who were going about a lawful pursuit to be unemployed.

It was a shocking situation not only in terms of the consequences for our practice but also in terms of having to deal with those family members and their employees trying to put the pieces of their lives back together again, having had their viable and profitable business ruined. Their whole life savings — everything — was in that business, and it just disintegrated before them. That is the sort of endgame you can end up with with this sort of protest. That is an example from many years ago in my own lifetime.

It is important that we do not think of this as just some sort of hypothetical thing; it is a very real issue. We have heard other examples here in the chamber today, such as in relation to some of the boycott, divestment and sanctions, or BDS, protests. The previous speaker mentioned the Israel Independence Day protest that occurred in front of the Windsor Hotel over the road from this very place. I went across to that and I, too, well remember the extraordinary behaviour that was going on there. To be subject to the abuse and hurling of missiles — objects, and so on — as we went across to another function, as members of this place, was quite extraordinary and totally outrageous. We can see that, unchecked, this sort of behaviour has very significant consequences for the broader community.

As a result of all that, in 2014 the coalition government of the time amended the laws to extend and strengthen the grounds on which police can move on protesters and to remove the exemption for political and industrial protests for all but two grounds. Others have eloquently outlined some of those strengthening provisions with the amendments that were made. The changes provided that the exemptions for political or industrial protests or pickets would continue to apply, but only on the grounds of their breaching, or being likely to breach, the peace or causing, or being likely to cause, an undue obstruction.

As I have said, the best example I heard today was the one given in the contribution of the member for Hawthorn. It related to the fact that there could be a situation where there is a lawful protest but it is impeding a lawful business. Under the amendments the coalition government introduced, those protesters could be asked to move on, to just move aside, so they do not impede the lawful business being undertaken. Of course that provision will go in the event that this bill is passed.

It is also interesting to look at what third parties have to say about this matter. Rather than listening to one side or the other in here, often it is good to listen to some of the experts in the field and those who will be most affected and will be up close to and have to deal with this legislation, should it pass. The first example I cite today is that of the Police Association. It is advocating that the move-on laws the coalition government introduced in 2014 should be maintained. If any party in the community should know what is or is not good for the community, particularly in relation to the area of law and order, you would think the Police Association would be front and centre. That has not been heeded by those opposite.

I turn to the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry — VECCI. It issued a public statement on 12 February. I will quote some extracts from that statement. It said:

> ‘Victorian business competitiveness and certainty around major projects requires a legislative framework that protects the fundamental rights of business from illegal protest activities’, said VECCI chief executive Mark Stone.
>
> ‘Laws must provide Victoria Police with adequate powers to keep the peace, protect the safety of individuals and their property and allow employers and employees to enter worksites and operate their businesses without risk or unnecessary disruption’.

> The 2014 laws expanded police powers to 'move on' people engaging in illegal protest activities.
>
> 'The right to freely enter one's premises is a fundamental right. People should be able to go about their business and earn a living without others preventing them from doing so or making them fear for their safety', said Mr Stone.

The statement finishes by quoting Mr Stone as saying:

> It is important that the proposed changes to the move-on laws strike a sensible and workable balance that acknowledges the right to peaceful protest, but sends a clear message to those who act unlawfully.

That is a good summary of the position. As I said a moment ago, in this very town a couple of years ago we had the situation where there was absolute lawlessness on the streets of Melbourne. It was a frightening situation; it was a frightening exhibition of what the endgame can be if this is allowed to go unchecked.

I turn to the Master Builders Association, which was quoted in an article in the *Australian Financial Review* of 11 February. It states:

> Master Builders Victoria chief executive Radley de Silva said the move-on laws have been a strong deterrent against unchecked, obstructive protests in the construction sector.
>
> He said the 2012 Grocon dispute brought the city to a 'grinding halt'.

On it goes, and quotes Mr de Silva as saying:

> Scrapping this protection gives building unions the thumbs up to once again wreak havoc in the industry …

At this stage of the construction cycle and at this important time in the economy here in Victoria, the last thing we need is for construction projects to be jeopardised.

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) — I am very pleased to rise to speak today in support of the Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015. I am pleased because this amending bill sets right the draconian amendments made last year by the then government, now opposition. The amendments made last year were unnecessary at best, and at worst, an attack on the civil rights of our fellow citizens and their ability to peacefully protest.

At the time of the previous government's amendments to the act, Labor clearly made its opposition known, vowing to repeal the legislation upon coming to government. The bill before the house today is testament to a party that is delivering on its commitments. In this case the legislation is before the house after less than 100 days of government.

We have heard from the opposition that it believes in the fundamental right to protest. But based on what we saw last year, I seriously doubt this. The right to protest on a specific issue, to peacefully picket a workplace for employee rights, or to publicly congregate to discuss a particular matter are all rights that Australians hold dear. They are a fundamental reflection of our true democratic society, whether they be protests by our valued teachers, our firefighters, our paramedics or our nurses; whether they be protests about government decisions, including state government decisions we make in this chamber; or whether they be protests by those who seek to protect our natural environment or who are working for the most basic of human rights. Importantly there are also the many people over two centuries in this country and this state who have protested for employee rights and the safety of our workplaces.

Many times those actions by people who have protested have been at a significant cost to their personal lives. Those people have enabled us to have our freedoms today. May I say that those same protests have resulted in safer workplaces and other enormous achievements which exist now in our democratic society. It is clear, as the member for Dandenong said in her contribution, for the other side that much of this is about anti-union ideology. The previous government's amendments were directed at trade unions, and, both directly and indirectly, the impact is felt by workers.

I take issue with some of the comments from the other side, which portray every protest of employees or workers as characterised by thuggery, spitting and groping. All the negative behaviour that could possibly occur rests with the workers and employees, while the behaviour of small business is always kind and caring. Of course there are business owners like that, but that is not what these laws are about. This is not about workers or about bosses; it is about freedom of expression and the right to congregate with your fellow citizens.

Providing the powers to move people on, to take their names or to arrest them when they are doing no more than congregating legally is anathema to us. It is a backward step. The amendments introduced by the opposition last year were a breach of our fundamental rights. They were not designed to maintain public order and safety — those laws already existed, and the police already had sufficient powers — they were designed to restrict the rights of Victorians. This was highlighted particularly by the introduction of exclusion orders, where people could be restricted from entering a particular place for 12 months. If we allow these laws to remain as they are, it is a slippery slope to the next restriction and the one after that.

We in Australia are often rightly critical of jurisdictions in other countries that restrict freedoms and human rights, but we cannot be critical of those jurisdictions when we do the same. We are progressive here in Victoria; we have long regarded ourselves in Australia as one of the most democratic and free nations. It is interesting that the coalition, having the word 'liberal' in its name, is ready to trample on liberties that small-l liberals hold very dear.

I have listened to other speakers on this side of the chamber say that the bill before the house today gets the balance right. I agree entirely; it does get the balance right. This bill will repeal the ability of police and protective services officers (PSOs) to issue move-on orders for any type of protest. It will repeal their ability to seek the name and address of any person and direct them to move on. I have enormous respect for police — I have often dealt with them in my line of work and in other contexts — but I do not think you can franchise justice, or give it over to 10 000 police officers. The rightful place for justice is in the courtroom, in the hands of a legally trained judicial officer. Of course police need reasonable powers to keep the peace, and under the government's changes police will retain those powers. It is not right to disregard the process of the law and the role of the judicial officer.

Police and PSOs will still have the ability to properly police this state. It is their right and responsibility under the law to keep illegal behaviour at bay. There will still be the ability to move on people who are breaching or likely to breach the peace or who are endangering the safety of others. There will still be the ability to move on people where they are likely to cause injury or damage property. Police and PSOs will still be able to use their general powers to require a person to state their name and address. That is not what we are talking about today. We are talking about the previous government's amendments, which were designed to suppress human rights. When someone as progressive as the Australian human rights commissioner, Tim Wilson, opposes this legislation, then you know you must be doing something wrong.

Last night a City of Monash council meeting in my electorate of Oakleigh drew an audience of 250 people. It was considering a big issue about the possible sale of a prized piece of land, and the community objected to the sale. People could not fit into the hall and spilled out onto the street. Prior to that a few protests had been held on the site in question. There were musical performances and people assembled with no permits. Speeches were made from the back of a ute, rallying the community. All that activity is at risk under the laws of the previous government.

The bill before the house is about freedom of expression and of association. It is about protecting the fundamental rights that for many years were guaranteed in Victoria and in this country. It is about the right to peacefully assemble and to participate in our democratic society. I am pleased that this bill is before us today. I feel very strongly about civil liberties, and I am proud that the Labor Party protects those liberties — not just for workers and employees but for any member of our society. This is not a worker-boss issue but an issue of human rights. I am happy to support it, and I commend the bill to the house.

Mr WATT (Burwood) — I rise to speak on the Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015. There are certain bills that come to this house which stir passions, and this is certainly one of those. Members on the other side would have us believe that the laws enacted last year would stop all protests, yet the member for Mordialloc talked about Bust the Budget protests, which took place after the introduction of these laws. They did not and would not stop those protests. The member for Mordialloc does not know what he is talking about. There have been other protests in this period. Every July for the last four years I have protested, and last year's march was no different to the march before or the march before that. The current laws do not stop protests; they allow protest, but they also allow people to go about their business. They allow people to walk into their place of work or go and buy a coffee. It is simple: the law allows freedom of movement.

The Labor Party would like to stop freedom of movement. It thinks people should have the right to stop somebody from going about their business, from being able to walk around the street or from being able to go to work. The Labor Party talks about representing the workers. If it represented the workers, it would let them go to work. It is that simple. All I want is for people to be able to go into their place of business, for people to be able to go to work — —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The time has come for me to interrupt the business of the house. I apologise to the member for Burwood; he will have the call when this matter is next before the house.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Marlborough Primary School

Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater) — Today I rise to ask the Minister for Education to fund infrastructure upgrades at Marlborough Primary School to cater for the expanded student enrolment. This dynamic learning community in my electorate of Bayswater has experienced enrolment growth of nearly 20 per cent in four years. In 2011 the school catered for just 163 students. That figure has grown to an enrolment of 202 in 2015. Under the leadership of its experienced and passionate principal, Angie O'Hare, and her fabulous team, the growth of the school is set to continue, and at this pace the current facilities are simply inadequate and being outgrown very quickly.

Marlborough Primary School is the hub of its local community, and participation is encouraged not just for parents but also for external organisations, something they are currently not able to do. The lack of a school hall or gymnasium is an ongoing concern for the school and the local community. School assemblies are held outdoors year round. Whole-school incursions and events are held outdoors and local organisations must be directed elsewhere if they are looking to use an indoor space that is of a decent size. I have personally seen the children stand for entire assemblies because the ground was too wet or cold to sit on, and that is obviously not ideal. In 2015 a school hall is not an 'optional extra' but an essential space where joint activity and learning can be undertaken.

Marlborough Primary School is in desperate need of an indoor space which is large enough to accommodate its growing student numbers. The school needs to be able to hold school assemblies and provide a space for functions, graduations and productions. It also needs to be able to make that space available for use by various community groups on weekends and in the evenings. In winter, physical education presents a real challenge for this school as there is no gym, so sometimes children go without exercise. At a time when we are trying to encourage more physical activity, knowing its long and short-term health benefits, this is simply unacceptable.

I am certain the school would welcome a visit by the minister to talk with the staff, students and parents at Marlborough Primary School and to see for himself the vibrant, dynamic community which is committed to promoting excellence in all students. Again I ask the Minister for Education to consider the growing needs of students at Marlborough Primary School and to fund a new gymnasium and multipurpose hall for the school.

Casey Hospital

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Health and concerns Casey Hospital in my electorate. The action I seek is for the minister to visit Casey Hospital to discuss the Andrews Labor government's fantastic commitment to expand the hospital.

The Baillieu and Napthine governments promised to fix our health system. They promised to reduce elective surgery waiting times, open 800 new hospital beds — we still have not found them — and improve access to the health system for all Victorians. We know that not one of these promises was kept, not a single one. Instead savage cuts were made to our health system, leaving hospitals just like Casey Hospital at breaking point.

Casey Hospital was built by Labor and during the 2010 election campaign we committed to expanding it, a commitment that the Liberals refused to match in opposition or in government. This is despite Casey Hospital servicing one of the fastest growing areas in the state. In 2013 the hospital admitted 38 000 patients and 52 620 people attended the emergency department. No wonder local residents were often forced to wait for hours in the emergency department before receiving treatment. This placed great pressure on our hardworking ambulance officers, who had to spend hours ramped outside the hospital. Even the elective surgery waiting list blew out, with over 2000 people waiting for surgery at Casey Hospital.

That is why the local community was really pleased when we announced that this government was going to provide $106.3 million for a major expansion of Casey Hospital. This expansion will ensure that Casey Hospital can provide for 12 000 more patients, 8000 more surgeries and 500 more births. We will build an eight-storey inpatient unit from the ground up, with four new operating theatres, a new elective surgery recovery centre and Casey's first intensive care unit. The intensive care unit will ensure that local families can get the specialist care they need closer to home.

Ninety-six new beds will be opened, with room created for a further 64 beds if required in the future. Computed tomography and magnetic resonance imaging services as well as day surgery admissions at Casey Hospital will be expanded. Labor built this hospital and will make it bigger and better. Local families deserve to have access to world-class health care close to home,

and that is exactly what the Andrews Labor government will deliver. I invite the Minister for Health to join me in visiting Casey Hospital to discuss the expansion and meet with patients and staff, who will be really thrilled to meet her.

Wangaratta aquatics plan

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) — I rise to raise an adjournment matter for the Minister for Sport. The action I seek is that the minister visit Wangaratta so that I can give him a firsthand understanding of the aquatic needs of the rural city of Wangaratta. Wangaratta's 2014 aquatics plan for the future is designed to deliver regionally significant aquatic facilities that will meet the needs of the community over the next 50 years. Attendance at the pools has declined significantly over the past 10 years, making the continued operation of three separate aquatic facilities unsustainable. In 2013–14 Wangaratta's outdoor pools attracted only 5 per cent of the total number of visits to aquatic and wellness facilities and cost more to run for the 15-week summer season than the sports and aquatics centre cost for the entire year.

Swimming is the third most popular form of recreation in Wangaratta. The proposed new 50-metre outdoor pool, located at the Wangaratta Indoor Sports and Aquatic Centre (WISAC), would provide the universally accepted standard for lap swimming, aquatic education, and competitive training and events. Partnered with the existing 25-metre pool this facility would create a regionally significant aquatic facility that would be eligible for state-level swimming events.

Our community is evolving and becoming increasingly diverse. We must be innovative and offer inclusive aquatic facilities that meet the demands of a changing population. Aquatics are increasingly purpose based, with aquatic therapy and aqua fitness programs continually increasing in popularity, particularly with our older demographic. The addition of a hydrotherapy pool at WISAC will ensure adequate provision for aquatic therapy and aqua fitness programs at a time when the proportion of our population over 65 years of age is projected to rise from 16 per cent to over 25 per cent.

A proposed splash park at Yarrunga will provide an additional unique summer aquatic option in Wangaratta. It will be free to access and open seven days a week, which is a great thing for the Yarrunga community. It will increase opportunities for residents to engage in water play at times suitable to them. The facility will be developed within the established Mitchell Avenue playground. It will add to the play and community infrastructure that has recently been developed through state government support and will create a premier recreational and social precinct in the Wangaratta South neighbourhood.

The two existing outdoor pools face numerous challenges. The Yarrunga Family Swim Centre is failing structurally, leaking water and is poorly attended. The Olympic pool was constructed in 1956 and no longer meets the needs of competitive swimming, which was its primary purpose. Both pools have now undergone two separate third-party technical assessments confirming their current state. Estimates indicate that it would cost as much to repair and redevelop Wangaratta's outdoor pools as it would to realise the proposed aquatics plan for the future. To pursue redevelopment and repair options would leave Wangaratta underserviced for aquatic therapy and aqua fitness programs.

I hope the minister can make the time to visit the rural city of Wangaratta so that he can fully understand Wangaratta's aquatics plan for the future.

Strathmore Secondary College

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Education. The action I seek is for the minister to reinstate the Strathmore Secondary College school zone boundary. The people of Strathmore and Strathmore Heights are incredibly proud of their secondary school. A day before the end of term 1 last year the then Department of Education and Early Childhood Development announced that it had determined to unilaterally alter the boundaries of the Strathmore Secondary College school zone, excluding all of Strathmore Heights and parts of Strathmore. There was no consultation, no negotiation and no discussion. The community were simply told that there was no place for their children, despite the fact that many families had bought a home in the area years before in order to ensure that their children could access the very best secondary state school education.

This callous decision was met with disbelief which quickly turned into anger from the families of those children who were due to form part of the 2015 school intake. I would like to acknowledge the role my predecessor, the Honourable Justin Madden, played in immediately working with the community to support their campaign.

I would also like to acknowledge the contribution made by the Minister for Emergency Services and the member for Pascoe Vale who have advocated on behalf of their communities in relation to this matter. It should

come as no surprise that the community quickly mobilised to oppose these changes. As the then new candidate for the seat of Essendon, I found their passion and commitment to this issue and their children's education truly inspiring. In particular I would like to thank Suzie Beayni, Jodie Knox, Lisa Telford, Darren O'Connor, Catherine Gibson and Michael Atallah from the local community. I therefore ask the Minister for Education to reinstate the Strathmore Secondary College zone boundary.

Ripon electorate level crossings

Ms STALEY (Ripon) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport and concerns two proposed level crossing closures in Ripon. The action I seek is that the minister ensure that the proposed level crossing closures at Burrumbeet and Windemere do not occur. Recently VicTrack informed Ballarat City Council that it must recommend a level crossing closure as a result of the imminent re-opening of a level crossing on Remembrance Drive, and four options have been suggested. Mr Josh Morris, a member for Western Victoria Region in the other place, and I met with Ballarat City Council councillors from the affected ward. They told us the council is not keen to close the level crossings and that the communities of Burrumbeet and Windemere are opposed to the closure of any level crossing. However, the City of Ballarat, at the request of the state government, wrote to local residents proposing that it will block off railway crossings and close down roads on Ballarat's western fringe. This move has angered many local residents.

I call on the minister to halt this process. Closing down local roads does not make sense and will not increase safety. Blocking off roads will be devastating for local farmers and those with livestock who will not be able to get agricultural machinery and trailers where they need to go. My office has been inundated with calls and messages from angry locals who fear the prospects of being forced to drive on unsealed roads. This madness needs to be fixed. The current rail crossings are clearly marked and meet safety standards. Boarding them up and closing down surrounding roads will force heavy traffic onto unsealed roads that cannot sustain that much use. The local Burrumbeet Country Fire Authority brigade is also opposed to the proposal. The brigade is concerned that response times will increase and that local residents will have diminished escape routes. What happens if there is a devastating bushfire nearby? Blocking off local roads will frustrate evacuating residents as well as delay emergency services. The Andrews Labor government needs to stand up for local safety and instruct VicRoads and VicTrack to abandon this ridiculous proposal.

Blackwood sewerage scheme

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water. This is a matter that you, Deputy Speaker, will have a keen interest in. The town of Blackwood in my electorate is a beautiful small town waiting for a sewerage solution to secure its future. The action I seek is for the minister to bring together the relevant authorities to map out a plan for a sewerage solution for the township. Let me take the house through some history. In December 2005 the then Premier, Steve Bracks, announced the country towns water supply and sewerage program. It was a great program and a wonderful example of what can be achieved when you have a government with a strong commitment to supporting regional Victoria and ensuring a strong future for our regional communities and small towns. The objectives of the program were to resolve existing public health and environmental issues and risks, as identified by local councils and Environment Protection Authority Victoria.

Under this program the responsible water authority for Blackwood, Central Highlands Water, received a $1.735 million grant to design a centralised sewerage system for Blackwood. The procurement phase for this project commenced in 2008 and in this time a key permit was denied. When the previous Liberal coalition government took office this project was put in the too-hard basket and all work stopped. While there are some challenges to the project, this is no excuse for the previous government's complete inaction. No wonder the Blackwood community felt the previous government was trying to disappear the town.

Blackwood is a lively little community of around 300 people. It is amazing to think it was home to almost 14 000 people during the gold rush. It has a great cafe and general store, The Blackwood Merchant, where I enjoyed lunch last week. It has a pub where I have participated in a lively pre-election forum, and the town hosts an Easter carnival and a woodchopping competition on what is undoubtedly Victoria's most picturesque cricket oval right in the heart of the Wombat State Forest. Each month the Blackwood Academy of Blue Grass and Old-Time Music holds shape-note singing sessions, workshops and a live acoustic concert at the Blackwood Uniting Church. The little town of Blackwood produces its own monthly newspaper, *Blackwood Times*, brought to the community by the Blackwood Action Group. In short, Blackwood is a fantastic and proud community. It has been my pleasure to meet with members of the Blackwood community on a number of occasions over the past year. The action group is meeting tonight, and

its members will be interested to hear the outcome of my adjournment matter.

All the locals are seeking is a future for their town. I know the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water will not put her head in the sand; she will not ignore our small towns and she will not shy away from a difficult problem. What a contrast to the previous government. The minister is welcome to visit Blackwood with me. She would be warmly received by a community that was completely ignored by the previous government. I look forward to meeting with her and the relevant authorities soon.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I concur with the member for Macedon, having served that area.

Goulburn Valley Health

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — I rise to call on the Minister for Health to invest in plans for the redevelopment of Goulburn Valley Health and invite her to visit the hospital to assist herself in understanding the need for that investment. This health facility has suffered from underinvestment for too long and is now struggling to cope. Goulburn Valley Health has been known as a leading provider of health care in regional Victoria. It services not only the Shepparton district but a much wider catchment, which stretches north to the Murray River and beyond and covers around 110 000 people.

Now the infrastructure is struggling to support the growing population of the catchment, and the area is being left behind. There are no cardiac services in Shepparton; you must travel to Bendigo or Melbourne. If you have cancer and require radiation therapy, you have to go to Bendigo or Melbourne. If you require eye surgery, you have to travel to Benalla or Melbourne for that treatment. The lack of operating theatres means that surgery cannot be performed in a timely and efficient manner. We cannot attract the surgeons we desperately need in our area because of the lack of appropriate operating facilities within the hospital.

The Goulburn Valley Health master plan has been in development for over 15 years. The service plan is almost complete, and strategic funding over a number of years will now be required to roll out the plans that have been in development for so long. We need urgent funding in the forthcoming budget for the preparatory stages of a new development and a commitment to funding a development more suited to the Shepparton district's needs today and into the future.

Earlier this month Goulburn Valley Health confirmed that it was in escalation talks up to twice a week to move patients to Benalla and Cobram due to bed shortages. The emergency department is facing chronic bed shortages; it has 13 beds while it needs 30. Nurse-to-patient ratios are worsening. The sight of ambulances backing up outside the emergency department is not unusual. Late last year the *Shepparton News* reported that at least a dozen ambulances were waiting to offload patients, leaving only one available ambulance to service the region. Staff do a tremendous job caring for patients with the limited space they have, but the situation is not fair to them or those in their care.

Last year's *Victorian Labor Platform 2014* says 'Everyone deserves world-class health care, regardless of their age, income, suburb or background'. In it Labor promised to address the issue of overcrowded emergency departments and life-threatening ambulance delays. Will the Andrews government back up its statement with real investment? I implore the government to use its first budget to show the residents of Shepparton and surrounds that they have not been forgotten. I urge the Minister for Health to give priority to funding stage 1 of the hospital redevelopment in the May budget and to promise to fund the additional stages planned.

Frankston electorate homelessness

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) — I rise today to call on the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, whose portfolio also encompasses mental health, to visit the Frankston electorate to look at the issues surrounding us, which I believe the minister is familiar with. There are many services available within the Frankston electorate that provide much-needed assistance to address the high rate of unemployment for young people, the abuse of alcohol and other drugs, mental health issues, homelessness and family violence.

Alarmingly, young people who are homeless access services at a much lower rate than others, despite their higher level of need. The Council to Homeless Persons states that young homeless people are often unsafe in the family home, are in conflict with family members, are at risk of abuse and assault on the streets and in state care, and are unable to earn enough income to access a reasonable level of housing. These problems are often exacerbated due to young people's relatively low income-earning capacity, their low level of power within society, unacceptably high rates of youth unemployment and discrimination in accessing housing. The majority of homeless young people are only homeless for brief periods, while those who are

chronically homeless — sometimes referred to as street kids — are a small minority.

According to Australian Bureau of Statistics data, 19.9 per cent of the city of Frankston's households were classed as low income in 2014, compared to 16.9 per cent in greater Melbourne, which shows that there is an issue. The *Community Support Frankston — Annual Report 2014* lists Frankston North as having the highest proportion of low-income households in the city of Frankston, at 31.9 per cent, followed by Frankston, at 28.2 per cent.

In a headspace position paper on homelessness dated 21 June 2011, it was noted that psychiatric hospitalisations were higher in Frankston compared with Victoria as a whole. I note that the McClure report, *A New System for Better Employment and Social Outcomes*, which was released today, raises more questions than it answers about the support such services will receive from the federal government.

Frankston also has high rates of youth disengagement from education and employment compared with the rest of Victoria, according to the Frankston Mornington Peninsula Local Learning and Employment Network. I call on the minister to visit Frankston with me. This would be of benefit to my constituents as a starting point for planning towards better outcomes for disadvantaged members of the Frankston community.

PenBus service

Mr DIXON (Nepean) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Public Transport. I ask the minister to fund the Mornington Peninsula PenBus service from the end of June this year at the conclusion of what has been a very successful trial. The PenBus gives students from the Mornington Peninsula direct access to the Monash University campuses at Frankston and Clayton. The trial was funded jointly by the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council and the federal government on an initial 12-month basis with the expectation that ongoing funding would be provided by the state government. I was in advanced discussions with the previous Minister for Public Transport and had put in a budget bid for the service for the next financial year.

I have received numerous letters from local students who use the service. It has been a great time saver for those students and a far better option than using the existing public transport system. The PenBus has meant that students can attend early or late lectures and get home safely in the evening. It has also given them the opportunity to live at home and therefore save a lot of expense which they would have incurred by moving closer to their university campus. In many cases, without the PenBus these students would not have attended university at all.

While there may be a perception that the Mornington Peninsula is an affluent area, of the 88 electorates represented by this Parliament the Nepean electorate is the fifth poorest in terms of average income. There is a high degree of poverty throughout the electorate and a lot of youth disengagement. There are also low numbers of youth undertaking further study and high levels of youth unemployment.

The PenBus service has enhanced the opportunities for young people to attend university. The service has been well received and well used, and there is a high expectation that it will continue. I once again ask the minister to fund the service for the benefit of the young people in my electorate who want to continue in further education.

Chelsea Kindergarten

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Families and Children. The action I seek is that the minister meet with staff from Chelsea Kindergarten to discuss ongoing challenges with funding for four-year-old kindergarten hours. Prior to the last election it was a pleasure to join the then opposition leader, now Premier, and the former shadow minister for children and families, now the Minister for Families and Children, to commit $350 000 to the Chelsea kinder, which will fund the construction of indoor play spaces designed specifically for early learning along with new outdoor learning and play spaces.

I would like to commend the Chelsea kinder community and its manager, Imogen Kelly, for their tireless work, and I look forward to delivering this important investment for our region. This announcement was part of Labor's bold plan to support early childhood education, our schools and our TAFE system. The government is investing $50 million to build and upgrade kinders across Victoria as part of its $1.3 billion plan to make Victoria the education state.

During the past 12 months I have had the opportunity to meet with local kindergarten providers and hear about the wonderful gains they are making in early childhood education since the introduction of the 15 hours of preschool education, which was part of the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education. Under this agreement the

Victorian government provides 10 hours of funding, and the commonwealth provides an additional 5 hours.

There is substantial research that makes the benefits of four-year-old kinder very clear. It was not an easy task for kindergartens to expand to 15 hours under this program, with many hours of work, planning and preparation needed to meet the targets under the agreement.

Last year the sector was hamstrung with uncertainty after the commonwealth government refused to guarantee that it would continue to provide the 5 additional hours in funding. On the eve of going into caretaker mode, the Liberal government rushed to sign up to limited funding under more onerous conditions, with no time line for a new agreement.

This uncertainty will rise again with this commitment due to expire at the end of this year. The commonwealth government must commit long term to continuing the funding or more than 70 000 Victorian children will be worse off, particularly as kindergartens are already planning their budgets, timetables, enrolments and staffing needs for 2016.

I welcome the work of the Premier in lobbying Prime Minister Tony Abbott to support early childhood education in Victoria, considering that today we see almost all of Victoria's 2168 kindergartens — including those in my electorate of Mordialloc — providing children with 15 hours of quality teacher-led preschool education. There are now an extra 1200 teachers employed in Victoria to deliver the 15 hours of preschool a week since the agreement to boost the hours from 10 to 15 was signed in 2008.

In conclusion I request that the Minister for Families and Children meet with Chelsea Kindergarten to discuss the plans to upgrade the kinder and work to ensure that future commonwealth funding for 15 hours of kindergarten is maintained.

Responses

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing) — I thank the member for Frankston for raising this important matter and for his commitment to social justice not just in his community but across the state. It is a commitment that is shared by all members on this side of the house and reflects his deeply embedded support for everyone in his community, particularly its most vulnerable members.

The challenges highlighted by the member in his adjournment matter are very real and serious. They are factors that shape the lives of not only our young people but all members of our community. Whilst it might be a minority of people whose lives are directly affected by this issue, it is one that indirectly affects every Victorian. Either through their own family or their community every Victorian has links to the issues the member highlighted, including homelessness, housing stress, mental health, youth disengagement and a range of other difficulties in people's lives.

As the member highlighted through the data he shared with us, these difficulties and challenges are significant and have only been made worse over recent years by Liberal governments, both federal and state, not just through their attacks on the people of Frankston and other vulnerable communities but also by their deliberate, targeted underinvestment.

To highlight some of the damage to which the member referred in his adjournment matter, when it comes to housing, as members would be aware, the former Liberal government ripped out over $470 million from the social housing budgets of this state from the years 2011 to 2014. That is despite the fact that homelessness services reflected record demand. Last year over 99 000 Victorians had direct engagement with homelessness services.

I could also refer to the mental health area, also highlighted by the member, where the botched recommissioning by the previous government led to a massive loss in services and jobs. Those services that have been recommissioned have found it incredibly difficult to match the expectations of communities and those people dealing with mental illness due to having been reduced and severely stretched.

Drug and alcohol services were also botched by the previous government. Only last week the peak body in the sector, the Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA), highlighted the growing service gaps around the state. In its estimation the gaps in services have been made worse to the tune of a $40 million shortfall in unmet demand. This is at a time when the scourge of ice is ravaging so many communities, particularly our regions and suburbs, including the area represented by the member for Frankston.

I would have thought there were few issues that would unite this Parliament — and the last Parliament in particular — more than this one, as demonstrated by the seminal report produced by the Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee. This government has committed to respond to it during its first 100 days in office, and it will do so. The fact that it is regional and outer suburban communities that have borne the worst

of the brunt of the ice ravages of ice was reflected in the honourable member's contribution.

But of course the Liberal Party's attacks on our most vulnerable have not stopped with the change of government here in Victoria. They are being continued apace by its mates in Canberra. We have not heard a peep from those opposite criticising or holding to account their Liberal mates in the Abbott government for a range of cuts in the same areas. Take, for instance, housing, where the national partnership agreement on homelessness, which is due to expire in a few months, is so far not being recommitted to by the Abbott government. This will see some of the most innovative programs for the most vulnerable in our community — youth, women fleeing domestic violence, regional communities and Aboriginal communities — and those programs most at risk due to their cutting-edge solutions to housing problems being ignored by the federal government. We could take, for example, its white paper on housing, which essentially, as part of the Federation reform process, foreshadows that the federal government proposes to abandon any support for state-based housing programs beyond targeted individual private rental support.

Those opposite stay mute and quiet whilst their mates in Canberra run amok, because as the policy-free cockroaches they are, they have no commitment to a better understanding and delivery of services for our most vulnerable Victorians. We could go to the national disability insurance scheme, which up until this point in time has been an area with some support from both sides of the house and on which honourable members opposite could show their support by insisting — despite the rumoured position of the federal government of not rolling out in time the heads of agreement between jurisdictions signed by the former Premier, the member for South-West Coast — that it roll out the full program of the national disability insurance scheme from 2016 to 2019. Instead we have a situation where those opposite stand mute on this process. Those opposite have plenty of opportunities, which the honourable member for Frankston highlighted in his contribution.

I close by highlighting, from the member's contribution, today's McClure report, which was released by the Honourable Scott Morrison, Minister for Social Services in the federal government. Whilst the reform is clothed in all the appropriate rhetoric of better delivery for the most vulnerable Australians and the most vulnerable Victorians, this government puts the federal government on notice that it will hold it to account and oppose any measures that disadvantage Victorians in any of the categories that we have gone through and that the honourable member has highlighted in his contribution, because we on this side of the house know that Abbott government reform leaves working people, and particularly the most vulnerable of working people, as highlighted by the honourable member's contribution, worse off. We will hold the federal government to account every step of the way, from here to the next election, to make sure that it does not disadvantage the kinds of people the honourable member for Frankston has highlighted.

I welcome the invitation from the member for Frankston, and I look forward to joining him to highlight the attacks of those opposite and their mates in Canberra on our most vulnerable Victorians and their communities, and to see what we can do in partnership with communities to rectify the damage done in four long dark years under those people opposite.

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) — Perhaps with less flourish than my colleague, the member for Albert Park, I thank the member for Narre Warren South for her request and acknowledge and applaud her for her advocacy in respect of her local community, particularly when it comes to health and wellbeing. I understand the extreme pressures that Casey Hospital is under. I am proud that Labor made a pre-election commitment to invest $106.3 million to expand the hospital, and that will include delivering its first intensive care unit to support the growing needs of that community. I am delighted to inform the house that I have made arrangements to visit Casey Hospital, and I look forward to meeting with patients and staff to discuss this very important project. Again I commend the member for Narre Warren South for her advocacy in respect of her community.

I would also like to thank the member for Shepparton for her request. I understand that Goulburn Valley Health is facing quite demanding growth pressures in terms of servicing the community it aspires to serve. I intend to visit Goulburn Valley Health in March, and I look forward to gaining a more direct understanding of some of the pressures it is under. I am not in a position to make budget announcements tonight, but I commend the member for her advocacy on behalf of her local community. I look forward to gaining a very direct understanding of Goulburn Valley Health's work, pressures and aspirations on behalf of its patients.

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water) — I thank the member for Macedon for raising the issues at Blackwood, and I welcome the member for Macedon. The seats of Macedon and Bellarine have a lot in common, and that is why I and the former member for Macedon worked a

lot together on a number of issues. I welcome the member to the Parliament and commend her on the interest she has taken and the engagement she has had so quickly with the towns and communities in her electorate. I know she will not ignore the town of Blackwood.

As the member outlined, there is a very long history here. Blackwood was going to benefit from a program to install sewerage systems. That program did see sewerage systems installed across a number of communities in regional Victoria. Unfortunately it was brought to an end by the previous government, and Blackwood was left out of that process.

Pretty quickly after taking office I had my department establish a working group. I know the local water authority had had a study done into the septic tanks in the town. That study found that about a quarter of those tanks, about 360 of them, needed either remedial or major rectification work to be operational to protect both community health issues and waterway issues. The working group I have asked to come together consists of Central Highlands Water, the Moorabool Shire Council, Western Water, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Environment Protection Authority Victoria.

The group first met on 12 February this year and in its first meeting considered the issues in the report done by the water authority. It is now looking at options for the town of Blackwood. The findings in the report are being looked at by the Environment Protection Authority Victoria and Western Water. I will ensure, as the member has requested, that these relevant authorities come together again and continue to work on developing a plan for the town and that they keep the member and the community engaged and up to date as that review occurs. I would also be pleased to meet with the member's local community and talk about some of the issues they are confronting in relation to this.

I will refer all the other matters raised to their respective ministers.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The house is now adjourned.

House adjourned 7.38 p.m.

WRITTEN RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Responses are incorporated in the form provided to Hansard

West Gate distributor

Question asked by: **Member for Warrandyte**
Directed to: **Minister for Roads and Road Safety**
Asked on: **24 February 2015**

RESPONSE:

Dear Speaker: In response to the supplementary question asked by Mr Smith (Member for Warrandyte) on 24 February 2015, I advise:

The business case will be released.

Thursday, 26 February 2015

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

ACTING SPEAKERS

The SPEAKER tabled warrant nominating Lizzie Blandthorn to preside as Acting Speaker whenever requested to do so by the Speaker or Deputy Speaker.

DOCUMENTS

Tabled by Clerk:

Auditor-General:

Effectiveness of Support for Local Government — Ordered to be published.

Local Government: Results of the 2013–14 Audits — Ordered to be published.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Adjournment

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

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until Tuesday, 17 March 2015.

Motion agreed to.

RETIREMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY OFFICER

Yiannis Tremoulas

The SPEAKER — Order! I would like to inform everyone that Yiannis Tremoulas, who is sitting in the gallery, will be retiring after 30 years of service to the Parliament of Victoria. He has contributed tremendously to the Parliament, especially his technical expertise and his work around our beautiful building.

Yiannis's knowledge of the electrical system of Parliament is extremely valuable. Over the years he has seen many changes to the building and to his duties. He used to repair the microphones and record the proceedings in the Assembly chamber. One of his duties continues to be testing all the bells and microphones throughout the house and grounds. All of this knowledge is extremely valuable to his new co-electricians. Yiannis has an incredible eye for detail and is a craftsman who takes pride in his work. Yiannis has a big heart and genuine affection for his work and colleagues. On behalf of the Victorian Parliament and all of our colleagues, we wish him all the best and a happy retirement. We will all miss Yiannis. I will particularly miss our very good yarns about football — the world game. I wish Yiannis all the best.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Wyndham Private Medical Centre

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I rise to inform the house of my visit on 6 February to the Wyndham Private Medical Centre in Werribee. The Wyndham clinic is currently undergoing a significant expansion of its medical facilities, including expanding its day care facilities and the addition of a new operating theatre, as well as much-needed mental health beds and services. It is fantastic to see the investment in health care in Wyndham. I was taken on a tour of the facility by Michael Vickers-Willis, the managing director, and Scott Vickers-Willis, the executive director, of the Techne Group.

The clinic also provides a range of specialised local services that are otherwise difficult for local people to access. The expanded clinic will sit next to the proposed site of the new St Vincent's Private Hospital in Hoppers Lane, and with the Werribee Mercy Hospital situated across the road it will provide a fantastic medical precinct to service the growing shire of Wyndham. This area will adjoin the nearby East Werribee employment precinct and form part of a crucial hub of employment for local residents.

Destiny Transformations

Mr PALLAS — On 13 February I opened the Destiny Transformations centre in Hoppers Crossing. The centre is a privately run centre designed for vulnerable patients with alcohol and drug addiction issues.

Destiny Transformations is a long-stay house and provides treatment within a community atmosphere in an attempt to address the host of other issues which often confront people with drug and alcohol addiction problems. These problems are confronting a significant and growing number of Victorians, and it is important that we are innovative and empathetic in how we tackle the challenges caused by drug and alcohol addiction.

Alex Theatre St Kilda

Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater) — A star was born on Tuesday night, with the opening of the Alex Theatre in Fitzroy Street, St Kilda. The brainwave of theatre-loving entrepreneur Aleksander Vass, the three spaces, ranging from 500-plus and 330 seats to a black box and rehearsal space, open up a world of opportunity to develop new works, potentially preparing them for larger main-stage productions. Ably managed by the wonderful Richard Fitzgerald and a team of experienced professionals, this place is so important to Melbourne. The first show is *Sexercise — The Musical*, a hilarious look at modern life and relationships. I encourage those with a sense of humour and love for supporting new Australian works to get along and have a fabulous night out.

Glen Park Community Centre

Ms VICTORIA — Pancake Day at Glen Park Community Centre was the fantastic initiative of Heidi Butler and her incredibly community-minded and dedicated team. Many calories were consumed and funds raised, with all the profits going to assist Uniting Care. Well done to the team!

Leonard Ricardo

Ms VICTORIA — Over the past 102 years Leonard Ricardo has seen many changes, and it was a huge pleasure and honour for me to spend time over a cup of tea and some birthday cake with him last week. A delightful and charming man, I wish Len many more healthy years ahead.

Country Women's Association Boronia branch

Ms VICTORIA — Fellow members of the Boronia branch of the Country Women's Association and I participated in a community awareness campaign recently, with a stall at the local shopping centre. It was with great enthusiasm that we talked about our latest cookbooks — the slice one is so delicious — but also about the important social issues often discussed at our meetings. Well done on the great initiative, ladies!

Bill and Peggy Comerford

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water) — Last Sunday afternoon I had the privilege of attending and speaking at a testimonial for Queenscliff living legend Bill Comerford, who together with his wife, Peggy, has served the Queenscliff and Point Lonsdale communities tirelessly for nearly 50 years. The Queenscliff Football Netball Club hosted the testimonial following Bill's decision to retire as president after 20 years at the helm. As president, Bill lived and breathed the club — for example, he and Peggy used to run the canteen and cook meals every Thursday night. He and Peggy fought hard to keep the club going until they were able to secure funding for the redevelopment of the club. That included running training camps at the Monahan Centre. The training camps were for football clubs and they cooked all the meals, changed all the sheets and did all the work to keep the club going until they could get the funding, which I was pleased to work with them on, to secure the first stage. I am looking forward to working on the second stage with them as well.

But Bill and Peggy's contribution to their community goes way beyond the footy and netball club to the Point Lonsdale Surf Club. In fact Bill is a life member of Water Polo Victoria, so he played an important role there. He has been an integral member of the community and in Victoria as well. There are some people who make a real difference to the world in which they live, and I can assure Parliament that Bill and Peggy are very much such people. My congratulations to my friends Bill and Peg.

Greyhound racing

Mr BURGESS (Hastings) — Like most other Victorians, I was shocked to learn of the sickening practice of greyhounds being trained by chasing live bait. The scandal broke two weeks ago when the RSPCA and police raided a greyhound track at Tooradin. A number of greyhound trainers have been accused of using live animals to train their greyhounds and some have been suspended by Greyhound Racing Victoria.

The greyhound industry is worth $3 billion a year to the Victorian economy but has been rocked by the fallout of the shocking *Four Corners* footage of live possums, piglets, rabbits and other animals being mauled by dogs. I have received hundreds of emails and letters from people throughout my community who were sickened by what they saw, angry at the cruel and callous attitude of the perpetrators and frustrated that they were not able to do something there and then to protect the animals that were being subjected to this grotesque cruelty. I call on the minister to take strong and decisive action to ensure this conduct has ceased, that it can never occur again and that the perpetrators are quickly brought to justice.

Public holidays

Mr BURGESS — Along with Victoria's business community, I am astounded that the Andrews Labor

government has introduced one new public holiday in the form of Easter Sunday and intends introducing another in the form of one on grand final eve. A government that is less than 90 days old has already distinguished itself by being the most dishonest in Victoria's history, breaking promise after promise and being caught out making false claim after false claim. It has decided that the one commitment it will keep is one that will damage Victoria's economy, hurt business and cost thousands of jobs. It truly redefines the term ironic to have a small business minister whose first act as a minister is to do such damage to our state's small businesses. This comes at a time when Victoria's jobless rate is at a 13-year high of 6.8 per cent, the economy is sluggish and business confidence — —

The SPEAKER — Order! I call the Leader of the House.

Campbel Giles

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — I rise to pay tribute today to the fabulous Campbel Giles, a friend and colleague of many of us in government and across the broader labour movement. Campbel so sadly passed away from cancer last week at the young age of 41. A Mount Gambier girl, Campbel moved to Shepparton to advance her career at WIN Television. A tall, blonde, smart girl called Campbel certainly stood out among the regional journos. She was very well regarded amongst her peers. She was then recruited from Shepparton to work for the Bracks Labor government.

Campbel worked in many roles during her time with the government, including in the Premier's media office and advising in ministers' offices. When John Brumby became Premier in 2007 and I took on the role of Minister for Regional and Rural Development I was very keen to recruit Campbel as my adviser. There was stiff competition for her skills, and I was thrilled when she agreed to come and work with me.

Campbel brought great energy, passion and commitment to her role as an adviser. She listened to stakeholders and community members with respect. With her sharp intellect she provided valued advice. People enjoyed working with her. As a result Campbel was a workmate who became a great mate to so many of us. Our memories of our time with Campbel shine brightly. She was wickedly funny as well as being whip smart, kind and generous. Her friendship was a treasured gift.

On behalf of your many friends in this government and the former Labor government, I thank you, Campbel, for your commitment to our shared cause of seeing government as a way to improve lives and build communities. On behalf of Yorick and our family, I pass on our condolences to Matt and Elsie.

Government performance

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — The Andrews government, in just a few short months, has shown Victorians that it is a government with a lack of vision, a lack of a plan and a willingness to use spin over substance. This is the Labor hallmark. In just a few short months we have heard about a shovel-ready project that is anything but, a Metro rail plan that cannot be paid for and the removal of level crossings that were planned and paid for a year ago by the former government.

The Minister for Roads and Road Safety, in what have become increasingly painful experiences for both him and the rest of the house, has repeatedly proved that his West Gate distributor has not been planned or consulted on, has not had the appropriate studies done for it and does not even have a ballpark budget that is within $150 million of reality.

The Metro rail project has much in common with the Brumby government's much-advertised $38 billion transport plan: there is no funding attached. The Premier's hyped-up 'fully funded and fully costed' project apparently cannot go ahead unless he gets a federal government handout. He certainly forgot to fill us in on that small detail before the election.

Finally, clearly showing Victorians that this government has nothing to offer, the first announcements on the great level crossings removal project were about locations clearly set out in the coalition government's last budget, for which tenders were short-listed last September. This government is taking Victorians for fools. Adding the words 'shovel-ready' and 'fast-tracked' do not make the Premier's wish list of projects a reality, and Victorians are very quickly realising the shallowness of the Premier's promises.

Lunar New Year

Ms THOMSON (Footscray) — On 18 and 19 February I got to enjoy the coming in of the Lunar New Year, the year of the goat, at the Quang Minh temple in Braybrook. With 7000 people in attendance, my parliamentary colleague the member for St Albans and I saw in the new year in great style.

I have been going to the temple for many years now to celebrate the coming of the Lunar New Year, but as this

is the year of the goat it is a special one for me, because it is my year — I am in fact a goat! So it was especially important for me and for those who celebrated with us. An ever-increasing number of people are going to the Quang Minh temple.

I congratulate the Venerable Thich Phuoc Tan and the committee of management which organises this event. Each year is bigger and better than the last. It is an amazing event to attend.

Australian Jewish News

Ms THOMSON — I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the *Australian Jewish News* on its 120th year in operation. It is the second oldest Jewish newspaper; another newspaper in the United Kingdom is the oldest. I congratulate the *Australian Jewish News* on its 120th year of providing current news to a community that is very keen to take all the news it can get.

Lake Charlegrark Country Music Marathon

Ms KEALY (Lowan) — I congratulate the Lake Charlegrark Country Music Marathon committee on its excellent work in coordinating the recent event held near Minimay. This event, now in its 24th year, is completely run by local volunteers. Not only does it provide a key tourist attraction and stimulate the local economy, but all profits are reinvested into local community organisations, including the Edenhope hospital.

I commend the committee for its excellent support of the local area and for providing a great community event. I also congratulate Betty Pretlove on being honoured with life membership of the Lake Charlegrark Country Music Marathon. Betty has worked tirelessly to support this fantastic community event, and it is fitting that her hard work and commitment to the local area is recognised with this great honour.

Coleraine Men's Shed

Ms KEALY — The story of the Coleraine Men's Shed is an absolute credit to the Coleraine community. About five years ago a number of inspired locals set up the shed, initially housed in a mechanics workshop, with rent paid by the Coleraine community branch of the Bendigo Bank. Today the Coleraine Men's Shed is housed in a brand-new, purpose-built shed. This project was made possible through the generous donation of land by Reg Milton, whose mother, June Milton, is now an 'honorary man' and member of the Coleraine Men's Shed.

Individual members also donated to the project, and local tradies generously supplied their time and expertise at no cost. Finally, the Coleraine community bank contributed $5000 toward the fit-out, bringing its total contribution to in excess of $33 000. I congratulate the Coleraine community on a fantastic project and wish the Coleraine Men's Shed all the best for the future.

Kaniva College

Ms KEALY — I congratulate Kaniva College school captains Ellen Wheaton, Lewis Bothe, Jesse Grant and Zac Vivian for their recent appointments to these important positions of leadership and for coordinating the highly successful leadership ceremony. I wish all Kaniva College students every success in the coming year.

Bendigo Chinese community

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) — Bendigo has a long and proud multicultural history, and an integral part of this history includes the Chinese community. This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Bendigo Chinese Association and the establishment of its precinct on the Bendigo Creek in Bridge Street.

The Golden Dragon Museum has become renowned as the Chinese cultural centre of Australia. The museum opened in 1991 to document, interpret and preserve the rich Chinese heritage and culture forged on the goldfields of Bendigo. Chinese people were attracted to the Bendigo goldfields in great numbers, establishing a large Chinatown at Emu Point and eventually making up 20 per cent of the Bendigo population in the 1850s. In 1879 the Chinese community joined the Bendigo Easter procession, and to this day it plays a prominent and important role in Easter celebrations. First Loong, the world's oldest imperial dragon, and then Sun Loong, the world's longest imperial dragon, have been the highlight of every Easter in Bendigo for decades.

The Chinese called the rich goldfields of Bendigo Dai Gum San — Big Gold Mountain — a place of untold wealth and promise. Today Dai Gum San is again as rich as the beautiful Chinese precinct Bendigo so loves. Where wealth was once measured in gold, it now sits in the deep history left behind by the early Chinese goldminers. The precinct is a place of peace, beauty and colourful Chinese symbolism.

On Saturday night it was a pleasure to join with the Bendigo Chinese Association to celebrate Chinese New Year and the Year of the Goat. I congratulate the Bendigo Chinese Association for its dedication and

support to the Bendigo community and for the preservation of this important history.

Knox Gardens Primary School

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — I raise a concern on behalf of Knox Gardens Primary School in Wantirna South, and I call upon the Minister for Education and the Department of Education and Training to urgently look at the needs of the school with respect to plumbing problems. The school underwent some repairs last year that were funded by the coalition government. However, extensive plumbing issues in the school have resulted in continual flooding in the prep building, and this needs to be urgently attended to. On behalf of the school I request that the minister and the department look at this important project.

Hungarian community

Mr WAKELING — I take this opportunity to congratulate Marta Marot and the Hungarian community in Wantirna for the wonderful Hungarian festival held last weekend. It was a great tribute to the work of the Hungarian community, and I congratulate all who were involved.

High Street Road, Wantirna South

Mr WAKELING — It is great to see the construction on the $16.2 million High Street Road duplication between Stud Road and Burwood Highway, which was funded by the coalition government. It is fantastic to see this duplication finally going ahead.

Knox Stroke Survivors Support Group

Mr WAKELING — I take this opportunity to congratulate Lister Sabin, Rob Morgan and the team at the Knox Stroke Survivors Support Group on the recent 10th anniversary celebrations. This is a fantastic group that is providing wonderful support for people who have suffered from stroke, and I congratulate all who are involved for the great work they do.

Knox Bocce Club

Mr WAKELING — I also take this opportunity to congratulate Michael Migliaccio, president of the Knox Bocce Club, and the players. I was very pleased to attend the annual club celebrations.

Edithvale Aspendale Sporting Club

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) — Recently I attended the season launch of the Edithvale Aspendale Sporting Club, which was hosted by former Hawthorn premiership player Robert DiPierdomenico. It was a tremendous fundraiser at the Rossdale Golf Club, which was well attended by over 200 people. I congratulate the committee, particularly the president, Peter O'Connor, and the vice-president, Aaron Martello, for a great evening. The Edithvale Aspendale Sporting Club now has over 20 sides across juniors and seniors and a thriving netball program, and I look forward to working with the club into the future.

Chelsea Football Club

Mr RICHARDSON — Recently I also had the opportunity to stop by the Chelsea Football Club to hear about its future plans and the season ahead. The club recently acquired the services of Brent Guerra, a former Hawthorn premiership player, and it is looking towards success after a few lean years. Leigh Matthews is a former great and a Team of the Century star for the Chelsea Football Club, and although I am an Essendon fan I thought I would put that on the record for the Chelsea Football Club. I pay tribute to Richard Howlett and Max Shelton for showing me around the club and its facilities. It accommodates all of its 19 sides on the one ground, which is an amazing effort. I look forward to joining the club on Sunday, 12 April, for the big round 1 clash between the Edithvale Aspendale Sporting Club and the Chelsea Football Club.

African community

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) — I rise to take the opportunity to recognise the contributions and strength of the African community in Melbourne. Over the past 18 months I have been proud to attend a number of events with the Somali, Eritrean, Ethiopian and other African communities in my electorate. These events have included Iftar dinners, Eid celebrations, meetings at the mosque in North Melbourne, local barbecues and meetings with small business owners to hear about their ideas and concerns. I was particularly excited to attend the launch of Afrocare last week, where three young women, Tabotu, Tasha and Hiba, launched a program to raise awareness of and shine a light on the stigma surrounding mental health issues amongst the African community. Every event I attend reaffirms what we already know — that these communities are making Melbourne stronger and that this city of ours benefits greatly from its multiculturalism.

I would like to put on the record my sincere thanks to the leaders of the African community. I would also like to highlight that these communities are affected by systemic barriers to safe housing and employment, and this has a hugely negative impact on their quality of life. I commit to doing everything I can to overcome

these barriers. I will offer support from my office to constituents with housing uncertainty; advocate for more and better public housing; amend bills like the Back to Work Bill 2014; advocate for more employment opportunities; make sure that this government delivers better infrastructure, such as a new pedestrian crossing on Boundary Road; and speak out when I hear about injustices or unfair treatment of these communities. I have very much appreciated the support of the African community and will do everything in my power to continue to support them as they have supported me.

Bob Sims

Ms WARD (Eltham) — I rise to speak of the importance of our neighbourhood houses and to mark the sad passing of a gentle, kind man who felt he could never do enough to repay the gift that one of our local neighbourhood houses, the Diamond Valley Learning Centre (DVLC), gave his wife, June. I met Bob Sims a number of years ago when I joined the committee of management at DVLC. He seemed involved in almost everything: he was on subcommittees, he was involved in classes and he was involved in many day-to-day activities. He provided invaluable advice and mentorship to DVLC, especially after the harsh budget cuts by the previous government. Bob was everywhere, and he gave DVLC all he could.

Bob's devotion to DVLC did not stem from his own education at the centre; instead, it was to repay a gift the centre had given his wife. After June passed away eight years ago, Bob set about remembering her by helping at DVLC. The gift that DVLC gave her was self-respect and confidence. Bob's wife did not receive a great formal education, and for a long time she was only too aware of what she felt were her shortcomings. It was only when she attended her local neighbourhood house, DVLC, that she expanded and developed her talents and that her confidence grew. This is why we cannot neglect our neighbourhood houses and must support them.

Neighbourhood houses have the power to absolutely transform lives, whether they be young kids without permanent homes, young mums wanting to get back into the workforce or older people who want to connect with the wider community. They have given so many people the gift they gave June — knowledge, confidence and self-respect.

Bob was a wonderful man whom I was very pleased to know. His devotion to DVLC is a beautiful story of the love he had for his wife. He will be greatly missed by the DVLC community.

Euroa electorate fires

Ms RYAN (Euroa) — In December severe fires swept through much of the Euroa electorate, including Creightons Creek, Stewarton and Lake Rowan. I wish to place on the record my sincere thanks and the thanks of those affected to all Country Fire Authority members and other volunteers who fought the fires and assisted the community through the long and difficult weeks that have followed.

Girgarre botanic gardens

Ms RYAN — I wish to draw the attention of the Minister for Regional Development to a magnificent proposal by the Girgarre community to establish a botanical garden. Gargarro would be a unique drawcard in northern Victoria. In addition to the capacity to hold events, with a large lawn and an amphitheatre, the garden would contain rare and indigenous plants which once flourished in the region. The Nationals committed funding to kickstart the project before the election, and I urge Labor to match its commitment to see this innovative idea come to life.

Heathcote community games

Ms RYAN — On Saturday Heathcote held its first ever community games, an event for all ages and abilities which promoted social inclusion and the importance of getting active to improve health and wellbeing. The games were the brainchild of eight-year-old Jesse Bruce, who suggested the idea of a mini-Olympics-style event at a community meeting last year.

Merrigum post office

Ms RYAN — Yesterday Merrigum residents were celebrating the rescue of their post office. Residents contacted me last month after the current owners of the post office decided to call it a day. They were concerned that the post office's closure would lead to the loss of other businesses in town. The news that Australia Post is taking steps to keep the post office open has been welcomed by residents and is a great testament to what can be achieved by a small but passionate community.

Seymour Blasters

Ms RYAN — My congratulations go to the Seymour Blasters under-18 girls basketball team, which took out the division 1 state championship in Traralgon on the weekend.

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

Rotary Club of Oakleigh

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) — I rise today to record my sincere appreciation of the Rotary Club of Oakleigh and its incredible work over many years for the local community. The Oakleigh Rotary team is well known for its long-term commitment to running a Sunday market in the Oakleigh area. In its nearly 28 years of operation this truly fantastic market on Hanover Street has raised over $1 million for charitable works and people in our community. Every Sunday — rain, hail or shine — the Rotary team is out in force, coordinating a market that people come to from all over Melbourne.

In recent times the Rotary Sunday market was under threat due to a local council proposal to sell to developers the public land on which it is held. As I said when this matter came before Monash City Council last year, not only would sale of the land have removed an important car park, it would have displaced the market — something that is a true icon in my community.

I am thrilled to say that on Tuesday the Hanover Street site and Rotary market were saved. I would like to praise the work of the Oakleigh Rotary team — in particular market chairman, Peter Norman, and John Jarvis, president of the Oakleigh Rotary Club — and the whole Rotary community for their longstanding, dedicated commitment on behalf of our community.

I would also like to single out local resident Chris Pearson and the many volunteers and stallholders who have worked tirelessly in recent months to save the Rotary market. Together they collected around 3500 signatures on a petition to keep the market. On Tuesday over 200 local residents attended a Monash City Council meeting, where the proposal to sell the site was rejected, now and into the future. I am very pleased that common sense prevailed and that the Oakleigh Rotary team can now continue their fine work into the future.

Beach Road–Surf Coast Highway, Torquay

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — I rise to highlight the need for safety measures to be implemented along the Surf Coast Highway, particularly the urgent need to signalise the high accident prone intersection at Beach Road.

The Andrews Labor government made no funding commitment to signalise this intersection and has in fact cut the $160 million country roads and bridges program. This callous funding cut will see the Surf Coast shire lose $1 million a year in funding for our local roads. I call on the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to provide the shortfall to fund the desperately needed improvements to this intersection.

The Surf Coast Shire Council wears some of the blame for this intersection not being signalised, given that support and approval was provided in 2014 by the then Minister for Roads, the member for Polwarth, to use money from the country roads and bridges program to fund the signalisation of this intersection. Rather than getting on with the job of fixing one of Torquay's most dangerous and frustrating intersections, the Labor-dominated Surf Coast Shire Council rolled the political dice in an election year and lost. Both the state government and the Surf Coast Shire Council need to take responsibility for these works and fund this important intersection upgrade immediately.

Darwin Defenders

Mr KATOS — I was honoured to attend the commemorative service for Darwin Defenders last Thursday to lay a wreath on the 70th anniversary of the bombing of Darwin. I was pleased to join Brian Dunn, the Victorian president and chairperson of the commemorative committee and members of the Geelong RSL sub-branch in Belmont at this very significant event. About 200 000 Australians served in Darwin in World War II, and through the ceremony we give them the recognition and respect they deserve. Lest we forget.

Walk from Robe anniversary

Mr LIM (Clarinda) — Next year marks the 160th anniversary of the overland walk by more than 18 400 Chinese gold-diggers who were compelled to walk the 500 kilometres from the township of Robe in South Australia to the Victorian goldfields. The walk was to avoid the racist poll tax that was imposed to restrict the number of Chinese people entering the colony at the time. Many died as a result of exhaustion and sickness or attacks by Aborigines. Many more were left stranded in the wilderness by unscrupulous guides.

The Chinese community is planning a re-enactment of this important milestone. This is an initiative of the Victorian chapter of the Chinese Community Council of Australia, with support from the wider Chinese community. The older established Chinese communities such as the See Yip Society, the Nam Poon Soon, the Masonic Society, the Hong Kong Club and the Chinese Museum are showing a keen interest in

taking the lead in this project. The commemoration is to celebrate the success and achievement of the early Chinese settlers as well as to recognise the suffering and hardship they went through on the goldfields, where they were surrounded by a harsh alien environment, oppression, discrimination and the ugly race riots to follow. The re-enactment is also to pay tribute to and acknowledge the significant contributions and sacrifice of the early Chinese settlers, who showed courage, resilience and tenacity in their great effort to make a success in their new land.

Beaumaris sporting clubs

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — I pay tribute to members of the Beaumaris sporting community as they have continued to raise funds to develop the new Beaumaris Sports Club, which will advance the interest of the Beaumaris tennis playing, cricket participating and football playing community. I wish Beaumaris Football Club all the best in the A grade season in 2015.

Reverend Barbara Darling

Mr THOMPSON — I place on the record the sadness of many people in the Bayside community following the passing of Reverend Barbara Darling. Barbara was a pioneer as one of the first Australian Anglican female clergy in 1992 and Victoria's first woman bishop in 2008. She served as bishop of the eastern region from 2009, where she was an expert at multitasking — overseeing 66 parish churches, tertiary and school Anglican chaplains, supporting ministries to family, and children's ministries; preaching, writing and teaching; and travelling extensively across Victoria. Barbara will be remembered as a caring listener, a wise counsellor and faithful friend across Australia and the world.

Sandringham electorate schools

Mr THOMPSON — I acknowledge the great work undertaken by Sandringham school communities as they have allocated leadership roles for students across many different areas, including general school leadership, leadership in the environment, leadership in music and leadership in the arts. I congratulate teachers for their great work undertaken within the Sandringham electorate schools and the way they have inculcated values.

Lunar New Year

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) — I was happy to bring in the Lunar New Year celebrating the year of the goat with over 10 000 locals at the Quang Minh temple in Braybrook on Wednesday, 18 February, together with the member for Footscray. I am also looking forward to the 40th year anniversary celebrations this year to mark 40 years of settlement by the Vietnamese community in Australia. The Vietnamese community's contribution to the west has been an important part of the tapestry in Sunshine and St Albans in particular, where food and culture come alive.

I commend the Senior Venerable Thich Phuoc Tan and the organisers of the Quang Minh temple for hosting another successful event, with live performances and a spectacular showcase of fireworks. The Quang Minh temple also provides valuable services to the community. The temple is run by dedicated volunteers who work very hard during the year, and I commend them all. With your indulgence, Acting Speaker, Chuc Mung Nam Moi!

Highvale retirement village

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) — I recently had the pleasure of attending the Highvale retirement village's 30th anniversary afternoon tea celebration. It was great to celebrate this significant milestone with residents and staff alike and to award longstanding residents with certificates. I congratulate manager Joseph Bailouni and his staff and wish them and all residents at Highvale well for the future.

Reverend Sylvia Akauola-Tongotongo

Mr ANGUS — I was very pleased to attend the recent induction service for the new minister at Burwood Heights Uniting Church. Despite the fact that the service commenced almost in the dark following a local blackout, it was a great service. I join with the church members in welcoming Reverend Sylvia Akauola-Tongotongo and her family to the local area and wish her well in her new role.

Lunar New Year

Mr ANGUS — I congratulate the Asian Business Association of Whitehorse (ABAW) for organising another fantastic Chinese New Year celebration at Box Hill earlier this month. As always, it was a spectacular event with huge crowds in attendance. I congratulate ABAW president Andrew Yu, committee members and all involved in putting on this great celebration, and I wish all Forest Hill residents of Chinese descent a happy new year of the goat.

Box Hill Reporter District Cricket Association

Mr ANGUS — I congratulate the Box Hill Reporter District Cricket Association on its 125th anniversary. It

was great to attend the anniversary celebrations last Saturday night and to see the extensive range of memorabilia contributed by member clubs on display. I wish the association well for the future, and particularly member clubs from the Forest Hill district.

Government performance

Mr ANGUS — Since being elected, the state Labor government has been incessantly repeating its mantra that it had a pipeline of infrastructure projects that were shovel ready. After almost three months in office, all Victorians can now see that no projects have commenced and that the Labor Party is just full of empty words. The Labor Party is to be condemned for its dishonouring of the east–west link contract, as this project was ready to go. The loss of 3700 direct jobs on this project is a shameful action of an incoming government that is big on rhetoric but small on action.

Medical marijuana

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — This morning I had the privilege of visiting our world-class Royal Children's Hospital and spending time with Cassie Batten, the most amazing mother I know. She is the mother of Cooper Wallace, who is dealing with a dreadful illness at the moment. He and his family — Cassie, little brother Logan, little sister Ruby and his dad, Rhett Wallace — and the rest of the kids deserve all our support in our drive to make sure that medical marijuana can be available to this little boy so he can live a good life.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Mr Crisp**) — Order! The time for members statements has expired.

SUMMARY OFFENCES AMENDMENT (MOVE-ON LAWS) BILL 2015

Second reading

Debate resumed from 25 February; motion of Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).

Mr WATT (Burwood) — As I was saying yesterday, this bill is all about individuals' rights and an individual's right to move around, an individual's right to go to work and an individual's right to protest. As I discussed yesterday, I have attended the Justice for Cyprus march in the middle of July every year for the last four years. My right to protest about the removal of troops and the occupation of Northern Cyprus was certainly not curtailed after the introduction of the laws we introduced last year. I felt there was no difference between the marches that I participated in for justice for Cyprus in July 2011, July 2012, July 2013 or July 2014, and it is my intention, regardless of whether this bill passes the house, to participate again this year. I do not necessarily feel that this will change my ability to protest.

A person's ability to protest is not curtailed by the laws we introduced last year. What we did curtail was a person's ability to stop others from moving around from place to place. We curtailed a person's ability to stop others from entering a building, worksite or coffee shop.

There are some members on the other side — mostly the newbies — who either have no idea what this debate is about or who do understand and are trying to pull the wool over their constituents' eyes. Those members should not kid themselves. If this bill is passed, people participating in industrial action or political protest will be exempt from move-on laws. Every single person who stands up in this chamber and says, 'No, the police will still have the right to move people on', should know that that is utter crap.

Ms Asher — Nonsense?

Mr WATT — Nonsense. I apologise to the member for Brighton.

That is utter nonsense, because political and industrial protests are clearly exempt. Something like the boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign would be exempt as a political protest. The stuff that members on the other side have been saying is just not true. Some would call them untruths; and some might call them deliberate untruths, because the government does not want the public to know the truth about the bill it has introduced.

I have looked at the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006. That charter only relates to government entities. It does not cover, say, the activities of a union. I am not a union basher; I have a staff member who was a member of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union for 8 years and an organiser within his workplace. I am certainly not anti-union, and those on the other side who bash members on this side for being anti-union should know that that is just not true. What we are is pro-workers: we want workers to be able to get to work. The fact that the charter only affects government entities is, in my opinion, a weakness.

I will go through one section of the charter which was introduced by members on the other side of the house, some of whom are still in the house. I note particularly section 12, which relates to freedom of movement. A summary of that section, produced by the Victorian

Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, reads:

> People can stay in or leave Victoria whenever they want to as long as they are here lawfully. They can move around freely within Victoria and choose where they live.

Currently people are free to move around, but they will not be able to under the changes this bill will make to the act. If a whole bunch of people decide to lock arms and blockade a particular building, claiming they are engaging in a political or industrial protest, then under the new law there will be nothing the police can do about it if the protestors are standing there peacefully. The people in my electorate will certainly come to understand that either the members on the other side are trying to pull the wool over their eyes or they have got their heads in the sand.

I have heard some on the other side talk about freedom of expression and freedom of speech, and I certainly believe in those freedoms. I am a big believer in freedom, including the freedom to enter a business or walk into one's workplace. Not every person who is a member of a union or of the Labor Party or who goes to work necessarily agrees with the people protesting outside, but they should still be able to go to work. They should still be able to walk in that door.

Quite frankly, I know there are members on the government side who could not possibly agree with the effect of this bill. I have spoken to members on the other side who are vehemently opposed to the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement, and I know there are some who support that movement. I am not going to mention them because they have been mentioned previously, probably earlier in this debate. But I know there are members on the government side who are bitterly divided over this bill. They have to be, because if they understand what the effect of this bill is then there is no way that certain members on the other side of the house could possibly agree with the bill and the effect it will have. I know there are those who are vehemently opposed to BDS. If they did not have their heads in the sand, they would understand the effect this bill will have on certain members of society.

Ms Kairouz interjected.

Mr WATT — Not certain members of society. The member for Kororoit screams out 'No', and I agree with her. Not some members of society, every member of society, because this bill says that it is okay to blockade a building; it is okay to stop a person being able to go into their place of business, a coffee shop, a hot chocolate shop or anywhere in Victoria, as long as the people standing in front of them, refusing to let them move around, say, 'No, this is a political protest. Amnesty. You can't touch me. This is a political protest'.

This bill is vehemently opposed by members on this side of the house and will be opposed by members on this side of the house for a very long time. There is no way I could ever support a bill that would allow people to stop me from being able to go to work; a bill that would allow people to stop me from being able to go to a coffee shop or a hot chocolate shop, or, quite frankly, go anywhere where it is legal for me to enter those premises. But apparently it is okay, according to people on the other side of the house, for somebody else to stop me.

Ms WARD (Eltham) — I happily rise to speak in support of this bill. This is an important bill which restores the rights of Victorians to gather together and protest where they like. Victorians will again be able to freely engage in legitimate protests in this state — this wonderful state which has a proud history of community activism and of getting up and having a say. These laws, imposed by the previous government, had the potential to quieten the voices of dissent in our community. They took power away from the people. Police and protective services officers had the power to move on any group that was protesting, including those exhibiting no violence or unlawful activity. Protestors could be moved on because there was a reasonable suspicion — although reasonable to whom is a question — that an unreasonable obstruction could be caused or that a person could be impeding someone else. Our friends opposite have used this opportunity to again bash the union movement, a favourite pastime of theirs. I have an interesting story to tell those opposite.

During last year's election campaign I had a wonderful visit from a community mum. She wanted to chat with me about two concerns, and one of them was relevant to this very argument. It was relevant to the behaviour that is being displayed opposite, again bagging our unions and our union movement. This average suburban mum living in an average suburb came to talk to me because she was hurt. She was upset that the Premier of the day had called her husband a thug. He had called him a hooligan. This is the man who is the father of her children, who loves her and loves his kids, who volunteers in our community, who participates in community events at the school, who works hard. His one sin — the reason why he is a 'thug' — is that he happens to work with the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union. Who could imagine that an average person could work with a union, that an average person could get out and try to represent the

rights of workers, that an average person could get out and protect people?

I saw this mum again just before polling day. She again came to talk to me about this issue, but she also wanted to have her say to the then Premier. She had heard he was coming to our community, so she stood patiently in the sun waiting with her two small children for an opportunity to have her say. How would she have been affected by these laws? Is it possible that she could have been seen to be unreasonably obstructing the Premier in his day-to-day business? Unfortunately the Premier did not turn up, so she did not get the chance to have her say.

The move-on law takes away people's rights. This is not why we are here. We are here to enshrine people's rights and promote democracy; we are here to promote the ability of people to have their voices heard. As a former member of the West Heidelberg Community Legal Service Committee of Management, I well understand the importance of ensuring that the rights of individuals are protected, especially the vulnerable in our community. It is reasonable to expect that people with a shared concern will gather together to share their views. It is unreasonable to legislate that these people be restricted in their democratic rights. It is reasonable to expect that workers have the right to not only collectively bargain but also collectively protest. Like many in this house, I joined protests against increased university fees, violence against women, nuclear armament, discrimination and WorkChoices. I walked with thousands of people in support of reconciliation.

I take the house back to protests in the past in this state: women have chained themselves outside the front of buildings demanding the right to vote, people have sat in trees to protect them, people have sat outside buildings protesting the demolition of a significant historical site. Why would we take this history away? Why would we remove people's right to express themselves? As it stands the law means that anyone who ignored a move-on command could be arrested and face a $720 fine. Police also have the power to obtain exclusion orders banning people from a place for 12 months — not for engaging in unlawful activity, not for breaching the peace but for being part of a group of people who are protesting.

The Federation of Community Legal Centres executive officer, Liana Buchanan, expressed her concern that the laws were unnecessary as existing laws already covered protests or criminal conduct. She is worried that the laws:

> … could be used to stop positive activism, including 'peaceful protests about family violence, working conditions or even the sort of public protest we saw following the death of Jill Meagher'.

What I found especially galling, as a proud resident of the most progressive state in Australia, was the comparison of our state with the regime of Joh Bjelke-Peterson. What an embarrassment!

I am a unionist, my parents are unionists, my partner, who is a teacher, is a unionist — none of us are thugs. This vilification of the union movement by those opposite is appalling. The use of this emotive, damaging language highlights all that is wrong with this law from the previous government. This law means that a person who has not committed a crime, who has not breached the peace could lose their rights and their freedoms because someone is suspicious that the person may obstruct or impede someone.

It may be news to those opposite, but perhaps if they spoke more often to people, they would understand a very obvious point — that is, it is not mainly unionists who protest. More than just unionists gather as a community to have their say. If we look back to the activities that happened during the docks dispute, that horrendous period in our history brought about by the previous Howard Liberal government and Peter Reith, we see that it was more than unionists who were protesting. We saw kids, grandparents, mums and dads. We saw people gather together to protect the rights of workers, to make sure that people were being looked after and that they had opportunities. They should not have been shut down. These laws shut people down and they are wrong.

Margaret Thatcher said there is 'no such thing as society' as she set about systematically destroying as much of the collective British society as she could. The laws enacted by the previous government reduced the power of the collective, and this is not the way of a democracy. All individuals have the right to stand up for themselves and be heard. They have the right to stand up and say, 'This is not right'. The laws introduced by the previous government set about stopping collective voices, which, as we know, are far more powerful than a voice that sings out on its own. This is what these laws are about. They are not just about stopping people from getting out there and having their say; they are about splintering the union movement and they are about splintering collectivism. They are about chipping away at our rights as a collective group of people to protest — to protect our rights, to protect ourselves, to have our say, to contribute to our community and to let our community know how we feel about a certain issue.

These laws are wrong, and the Andrews government promised the people of Victoria that it would set this wrong right, which is exactly what this bill does. This bill restores rights to people. This bill allows people to go about their day-to-day lives, to do their day-to-day activities, to participate in democratic protest, to join together and collectively protest, and to join together and collectively have their voices heard. As we have seen throughout this debate, those opposite have tried to shout us down. Those opposite have continued to try to shut the debate down. They have continued to try to silence us and silence the worst that we have to say. They have tried to drown us out with their shouting, with their taunts and with their criticisms of the union movement.

That is not the way forward. That is an example of why these laws are wrong. These laws are wrong because they try to shut people down, and they try to take rights away from people. Our changes to the law will enshrine those rights. Our changes will help people to have their say, and they will give them back the gift of democracy. They will give them back the gift of speaking as a collective, which those opposite tried to take away. This is a good bill. This is a bill that is exactly right for our state, and I commend it to the house.

Ms ASHER (Brighton) — I wish to make a couple of comments in opposition to the Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015. In the first instance, I want to make the comment that the specific rationale for this bill is that this Labor government wishes to undo the move-on law protections that were introduced by the previous government in 2014. Those laws were specifically related to moving on demonstrators — not just demonstrators per se, but demonstrators who were using threatening words, threatening behaviour, intimidatory tactics or threats of violence.

I note that in the second-reading speech on this bill — and I do not know whether this is the hallmark of what we can expect from this government — there are two fallacious claims. The first is that the government is still maintaining that our legislation restricted legitimate protests, which it did not. It was directed at a particular type of protest. The second fallacious claim is that somehow or other the bill before the house is meant to be protecting vulnerable groups. The shadow Attorney-General and others have gone through in detail the two fallacious claims made in the second-reading speech. It is a long time since I have seen a second-reading speech containing errors like that.

I refer to the rationale put forward by the previous government for the introduction of the piece of legislation that seems so offensive to the Labor Party at the moment. In a press release of 12 December 2013 headed 'Coalition government to act on unlawful pickets and blockades', the former Attorney-General, the member for Box Hill, outlined the rationale behind the Summary Offences and Sentencing Amendment Bill 2013:

> Orders will in future be able to be issued where a person:
>
> is impeding lawful access to premises,
>
> has committed an offence in the public place,
>
> is causing others to have a reasonable fear of violence, or
>
> is endangering safety or engaging in behaviour likely to cause damage to property.

They were the specific criteria for introducing our legislation, and indeed the then Attorney-General went out of his way to say it. Again in this press release, he stated:

> Every Victorian has the right to protest and express their views. However, when individuals resort to unlawful tactics that threaten the livelihood of law-abiding businesses, employees and their families, they must be held to account.

So a series of very specific criteria were to be applied; the legislation was not to be applied to protests per se. We on this side of the house support peaceful and legitimate protests. What we do not support is impeding access, threatening behaviour, intimidatory behaviour and so on.

The fact of the matter is of course that this is an early payback to the Labor government's union mates in the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) and elsewhere. It is interesting to note the priorities of this government, evident in the fact that such a bill would receive such attention in the Parliament so early.

The bill is heavily opposed, and I am sure my colleagues would have made reference to the *Australian Financial Review*, which on 11 February 2015 outlined the opposition of Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry through Mark Stone, who said:

> Laws must provide Victoria Police with adequate powers to keep the peace, protect the safety of individuals and their property and allow employers and employees to enter worksites and operate their businesses without risk or unnecessary disruption.

The *Herald Sun* was also opposed to the government's position, as expressed in its editorial of 11 February as follows:

> It requires no stretch of the imagination to see the hand of the state's more militant unions in encouraging the government to make it a priority in the first sitting week of the new Parliament.

I can also refer to a press release issued by the Jewish Community Council of Victoria and the Zionist Council of Victoria, which was also opposing this bill. I understand that the Police Association also opposes this bill.

It is no coincidence that, on top of the CFMEU demonstrations that we all saw in the city previously, within a very short time of this government being elected the CFMEU shut down the Altona Aldi site. This bill is a payback from the government for its obligation to the unions as a consequence of the election.

However, I have another very grave concern about the bill before the house. I am sure that not too many people have touched on this, but as a strong supporter of women's rights and as someone who voted pro-choice in this Parliament when we had our abortion debate, I am deeply concerned about obstructionist protesters standing outside abortion clinics and preventing young women who are seeking legal abortions from entering. We have seen instances of these protesters obstructing, harassing and indulging in intimidatory behaviour towards young women.

I wish to make a distinction: those of us who were members of the last Parliament would have seen — every day basically — the right-to-life protesters outside this Parliament. That protest is legitimate. Those people for four years stood there in the rain, in the cold and in the heat, and held up signs. They often waved hello. I am in favour of that sort of protest. It does not reflect my view, but that to my mind is a legitimate protest, to have right-to-lifers outside the Parliament holding up their placards, expressing their legitimate political view.

However, I am deeply concerned that we have seen in this state — and indeed in others — aggressive protests that confront young women seeking abortions. They are shocking protests in my view, intimidating young women at a particularly vulnerable time in their lives when they are seeking to terminate a pregnancy that they do not wish to proceed with, legitimately and legally. These move-on laws would have assisted the police in managing protests like that. These protests to my mind are enormously offensive. A legitimate, peaceful protest is fine; to intimidate, harass, use threatening language or give an impression that you are about to perpetrate violence on a woman seeking an abortion is beyond the pale. The laws that we introduced as a government I firmly believed helped police move on protesters like that.

This bill before the house — unfortunately, in my view — means that the police will not be able to move on protesters like this. I think it says a great deal about a party, many of whose members voted in favour of choice, that it has made this choice. It has made its choice: a payback to union mates is more important than the rights of these women to secure an abortion unimpeded by protesters at the front steps of abortion clinics.

I oppose this bill. I oppose it for the reasons outlined by many of my colleagues in terms of the payback to the union movement, the violent protests we have seen and the obstruction by many unionists of people in the workplace, but I also oppose it because I think it removes police powers to assist women who are seeking abortions being impeded by right-to-life protests that are out of control, violent and intimidatory.

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) — I appreciate the chance to rise and speak on the Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015. I can appreciate the passion shown on both sides of the chamber. I think I can appreciate and respect everyone's opinions on the matter.

I believe passing this bill is a must in order to restore the balance to protect people's fundamental human rights. These laws are not revolutionary, they have not been a magic pill, and repealing them will not relegate us to a Mad Max world.

Up until the coalition's amendments came into operation last year, move-on powers could only be used where a police officer or protective services officer (PSO) reasonably suspected that a person is breaching, or likely to breach, the peace; a person is endangering, or likely to endanger, the safety of any other person; or the behaviour of a person is likely to cause injury to a person or damage to property or is otherwise a risk to public safety. These three grounds provide a broad basis for the use of move-on powers and strike an appropriate balance between police powers to maintain public order and the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms of all Victorians.

The coalition went about upsetting that balance by including five additional circumstances in which police officers and PSOs could direct a person to move on.

These additional grounds were not necessary. The original grounds of breaching the peace and endangering the safety of another overlap with several of these new grounds. Labor, along with many people in the community, criticised these grounds for going too far. The expanded grounds meant that a person who has committed no crime and caused no breach of the peace could have their rights and freedoms significantly limited, solely on the suspicion that the person is likely to cause an obstruction or impede another person.

While I listen to the opinions of other members in the chamber with the greatest respect, I like to refer to the law experts. Human rights commissioner Timothy Wilson put it well when he said that the laws were excessive because they gave police the power to fine people whom they only suspected of a possible offence. He stated that the law:

> … unnecessarily gives police too much power to move on protesters unjustifiably.

He also said:

> I have an issue with the low bar that is being set to give police powers to move people on.

So much for innocent until proven guilty! Victorians who respect the law have the fundamental right to move freely, express their views and associate with whomever they choose. The police still have adequate powers to do the fantastic job they do in keeping people who break the law off the streets. This is an amendment bill for all Victoria, not just some. If there is unlawful protest, the police already have the power to arrest for offences like besetting, trespassing and obstruction to name just a few. Indeed if most of the examples of bad behaviour that we heard from members yesterday were reported to the police, they would have resulted in charges.

I believe the move-on laws go too far. The orders impose serious limitations on freedom of movement, the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of association. They can be made in circumstances where a person has committed no crimes at all. I will take this one step further. Although I am no expert, I believe the Law Institute of Victoria might have a couple in its ranks. The law institute said that the amendments would:

> … limit the ability of individuals and groups to assemble and protest in public. It would remove existing and important protections against move-on orders for individuals and groups engaging in picketing, protesting and public demonstration, and by introducing provisions which allow for arrest for breaches of a move-on direction, increase criminalisation of direct protest action in Victoria.

I would like to give members a practical example of a recent situation. As members would be aware, for over two years paramedics — who are good family people who want to work, help the community and save lives — were attacked by the former government. That is a fact. The relevant minister would not meet with them. They were ignored. Yet I believe they had a fair case and Victorians voted that way as well. The only means of paramedics being heard was through protest. Those people do not want to protest. They want to be at home in between their 14-hour night shifts. They want to be with their family, kids and friends. They are not union bullies, and it is a cop-out to call them that.

So here we have the members of a former one-term government accusing someone they have never met — a special school teacher and former firefighter with a wife and three small children — of being a bully. They do that because they disagree with my opinions. I ask: if I can be conveniently labelled a bully, who else can? All the fathers, mothers, sons and daughters who are firefighters, paramedics, TAFE teachers and other workers who speak up against the government can be labelled as bullies, as can anyone else who disagrees with the government. If people can so easily be conveniently labelled bullies for speaking up against the government, it is not beyond comprehension that these laws could, as the Law Institute of Victoria and Timothy Wilson suggest, be used to limit the ability of these so-called bullies to protest in public.

Whilst in government members of the now opposition ignored education, emergency services, public transport and employment matters and lost an election because they fell out of touch with the community, and the community found strength in unity. Opposition members are now passionately and aggressively defending laws which could potentially be used to silence dissent and stop people having their say during an election campaign. Who would have thought it? Seriously, if you are able to demonise ambulance officers, call them bullies and accuse them of ramming into a candidate's car, you can make up anything. Would those on the other side of the chamber fabricate stories of union thuggery to score political points? Would they involve police to score political points?

I refer to an *Age* article published on the day prior to the election with the headline 'Liberal claims of union thuggery debunked'. The Liberal Party campaign director released a statement detailing 'thuggish behaviour' at a pre-polling station in Yan Yean and a Liberal staffer then released times and locations that police attended. The same events took place at Narre Warren North. But the *Age* goes on to state that Victoria Police released a statement saying that police

did not attend either location and they have no records of such events. It is possible that these laws could be misused by false claims to interrupt totally legal protests.

We heard stories of firefighters bullying people at a Narre Warren pre-polling station, but it came out later that there were no firefighters at Narre Warren North; it is not an ultra-marginal seat. The truth is the passing of this bill protects these people from the real bullies.

Mr Watt — Not firefighters — just people dressing up.

Mr EDBROOKE — Keep on thinking that. Keep it up! Like the rest of the coalition's changes to the move-on laws, the exclusion orders also have the potential to harm some of the most vulnerable in our community: the homeless, the Koori community, youth and people with mental health issues — in other words, people who are likely to congregate in public places could be the target of such orders. The repeal of the coalition's draconian reforms to move-on powers will not provide protection to illegal protests. Businesses may also seek injunctions and damages through civil actions. Protests which may otherwise be seen as lawful and peaceful should not be criminalised.

Labor made its position clear during the election campaign. Its commitment was to repeal these laws and Victoria voted as it did. Nothing spoke to me like the number of times that opposition members mentioned unions in the past couple of days — union this, union that. The truth is that that totally gives their game away. This bill is not about unions. It is about protecting everyone's rights in Victoria — whether they are left, right, pro-life or pro-choice. The Victorian community was not hoodwinked by the union bogeyman running Victoria. Booga booga booga — he does not run Victoria. A whole campaign worth millions was based on this ridiculous premise. What Victorians do know is that community members are union members and constituents who are law-abiding citizens. I believe we are on a very slippery slope when we endanger our community's right to protest, and I wish this bill safe passage through to the other place.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms SPENCE (Yuroke).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES AND INQUIRIES ACTS AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Second reading

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

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) — I rise to lead the opposition's response in the debate on the Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015. I advise the government and the house that the opposition is opposing the bill. In my contribution I will outline the very sound reasons for our opposition. The government is seeking to amend the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 to amalgamate certain committees. The bill also provides for various minor amendments to the Inquiries Act 2014, with which the opposition does not have a problem.

As people in this place know, committees play a very important role in the Parliament. They have a long and proud history and I think members on both sides of the house would respect the very important work of parliamentary committees and the role that they have played in this Parliament over many years. The opposition provided nominations to assist the government in establishing two important parliamentary committees — the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee and the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. We facilitated that to allow those committees to get on with their important work of scrutinising legislation and dealing with the very important reference of the inquiry into the Country Fire Authority's CFA Training College at Fiskville.

The opposition is also very keen to provide further nominations to and references for the existing parliamentary committees. Here we are, 88 days into the government's term and the government is yet to set up the other important joint investigatory committees provided for in the legislation. Given that it is 88 days into its term, that shows the importance this government is giving the joint parliamentary committees. Many suggest that this is a lazy government and that its members are yet to get on with their job of actually governing. I ask: how hard is it to actually establish committees? They are provided for under the legislation, and they are actually shovel ready — ready to go.

It is odd that the government has dropped this bill into the Parliament and then approached the opposition to have some meaningful discussion around the structure of parliamentary committees and how they function or operate in this Parliament. If we can get a good

outcome on the structure of parliamentary committees, opposition members are of course happy to accommodate that. We are happy to move forward. We do not want to rush in. We are happy to have some discussions about the structure of committees but we will not tolerate a do-nothing government taking no action at all but just setting up committees that the opposition provides references for or populates the membership of.

I understand that the Greens might be moving a reasoned amendment so that the bill does not pass the second-reading stage until further consultations are undertaken with members as to the number, structure and functions of the parliamentary committees.

Mr Donnellan interjected.

Mr HODGETT — I understand that they are going to move that. We will see what their reasoned amendment looks like, but we are happy to consider that too. We just want some action, and we would be more than happy to drag the government along through this process.

Mr Donnellan interjected.

Mr HODGETT — If it is in the interests of the committees, sure, we will. I said that at the outset. We are happy to have discussions with the government and other parties to get a good outcome on Victorian parliamentary committees. We are happy to consider whatever the Greens put forward, if they do put forward a reasoned amendment. We just want some action. We are happy to drag the government along through this process so that we can get the committees set up and have them get on with the important work that they do. We rate committees; we give them a high priority. As I said, we value the important work committees do in serving the Parliament.

Let us look at what the government is seeking to do to the parliamentary committee system through this bill. In relation to the Parliamentary Committees Act, the bill merges six existing joint investigatory committees to form three new committees. One of those new committees will be the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee that will undertake the functions of the current Economic Development, Infrastructure and Outer Suburban/Interface Services Committee — we were always in favour of a name change for that committee — and the Education and Training Committee. The Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee will undertake the functions of the current Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the Rural and Regional Committee. The Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee will undertake the functions of the current Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee and the Road Safety Committee.

As is outlined in the second-reading speech given by the minister, the government will of course argue that the bill consolidates the functions of the six joint investigatory committees into three with the aim of ensuring that the committees operate more efficiently and that the workloads between the different committees are better distributed. What a load of crock! In the former parliaments' committee structure system committees operated efficiently. They had workloads, they had plenty of references and they had plenty of work to do. To put forward an argument that merging committees or collapsing their number from six to three will make them operate more efficiently or have a better distributed workload is just a nonsense.

The government says the new committees will continue any inquiries that are before the committees they replace, and it also says that any members who already have been appointed to committees affected by this bill, such as the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, which has been set up and populated with members, will continue as members of the new relevant committee. The government cannot even get that right. It has stuffed that one up. It has established the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, appointed members and given it an important reference, and now it wants to amalgamate it with another committee and change its name. That is the sort of arrogant practice we are going to see from this government. It has rushed in, it has set up a committee, it has grandstanded, it has given it a very important reference, it has populated it with some good people and now it wants to collapse that committee and merge it into another one, to change its name and to give it other work to do.

Let me outline for the house our areas of concern and indicate why we are opposing the bill. We are opposing these changes because the government, in our view, wants to dumb down the committee system. It wants to take away resources and restrict the work of committees in scrutinising the activities of government. We believe that is a direct attack on the parliamentary committee system; it is a planned, calculated attempt by the government to diminish the work of joint parliamentary committees.

As we know, a committee system in a parliamentary democracy system provides a way of achieving greater public input into issues being considered by the Parliament. The Parliament of Victoria, as we also

know, has an extensive system of committees which hold inquiries into particular issues. Committees have the ability to call for input from the wider community, including experts, individuals, businesses, governments and organisations that are asked to express their view. That is what we want to protect, and it is what the government wants to shut down. The government wants to restrict and shut down these opportunities. We are about protecting the capacity of committees to call for input from the wider community, including experts, individuals, businesses and groups, and to ask them to express their views and to get involved in the parliamentary system through the work of the committees.

If we accept this bill, there will be less opportunity for public input because there will be fewer committees. The government states that the new committees will have the same functions as the committees they replace and that there will therefore be no loss of coverage of the issues considered by the committees. However, as I have said already, reducing the number of committees is a deliberate attempt by the government to reduce the scrutiny of the activities of the government. Let us be clear about this: fewer committees means there will be fewer references to consider, which means less work undertaken, and that will result in less scrutiny of the government and its operations and activities.

Members who have served on various committees will argue that there is great value in those committees, and I agree. They will also argue that any reduction in the number of committees, firstly, limits the opportunity to serve on a committee, and secondly, represents a cut to the scrutiny that is applied to the operations of government. We would always be happy to consider ways of providing more balance in committees and to bring about greater confidence that there will be no reduction in the scrutiny of the activities of government under the new parliamentary committees structure. We would always be happy to consider that. That might be what the Greens have in mind, given their foreshadowed reasoned amendment, but as I said before, we will wait and see what the Greens put forward and respond to that in due course.

The current list of joint investigatory committees is extensive and very important. We have the Accountability and Oversight Committee; the Economic Development, Infrastructure and Outer Suburban/Interface Services Committee; the Education and Training Committee; the Electoral Matters Committee; the Environment and Natural Resources Committee; the Family and Community Development Committee; the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee; the Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee; the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, the Road Safety Committee; the Rural and Regional Committee; and the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee. The government wants to collapse six of those very important joint investigatory committees into three. As I said, the Economic Development, Infrastructure and Outer Suburban/Interface Services Committee will become the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee. The very important Education and Training Committee will also turn into the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills committee. The Environment and Natural Resources Committee will become the Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee. The successor of the Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee will be the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee. The Road Safety Committee will of course also become the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee. Finally, the successor of the Rural and Regional Committee will be the Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee.

I put all that on the *Hansard* record because I want to show what the existing committees are and what the government is trying to do by collapsing six of these important committees into three. I will take the example of the Education and Training Committee. That committee is arguably one of the most important. Its functions are to inquire into, consider and report to the Parliament on any proposal, matter or thing concerned with education and training. The government wants to merge this committee with another, collapsing two into one. Given this government based its election campaign platform on making Victoria the education state and went as far as proposing to put 'Victoria — The Education State' on numberplates, I am at a loss to understand why the Andrews government wants to merge this committee into the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee.

Surely the Education and Training Committee is such an important committee as to warrant its stand-alone status. We have seen some of the important work it has done. It has conducted many important inquiries, providing extreme value to this Parliament. I applaud that committee on some of the inquiries it has conducted in response to references it has been given in the past. It has inquired into approaches to homework in Victorian schools, it has inquired into the extent and benefits of potential music education in Victorian schools and it has had an inquiry into agricultural education and training. It has done some terrific work. Given the government had in its election platform that Victoria would be the education state, I am at a loss to

understand why it would want to water down, diminish and restrict this committee in terms of it having the important stature it has now.

I served on the Economic Development, Infrastructure and Outer Suburban/Interface Services Committee in the 56th Parliament. It was at that time chaired by George Seitz, a former member for Keilor. George was a great chair! We learnt a lot about Mr Seitz's activities. He taught me well about preselections and various other things — —

The SPEAKER — Order!

Mr HODGETT — Speaker, I thought everyone had come in to listen to my contribution!

The SPEAKER — Order! The member shall continue when this agenda item comes again before the chamber.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Speaker, I refer you to the new sessional orders, specifically sessional order 11, and I ask you to provide a couple of points of clarity.

The first point is in relation to sessional order 11(2), which directs a minister who has been asked to provide a written response to a member of the opposition or another party to lodge that response with you by 2 o'clock. I accept that the answer you directed the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to give to you in response to a question asked on Tuesday of this sitting week did go to your office before the 2 o'clock cut-off, but I seek clarity around the time frame within which members should expect to receive such a response from your office. While I accept that your office received the response before the 2 o'clock deadline, it was some hours before I subsequently received it.

Secondly, I refer you to sessional order 11(3), which says:

> The Speaker will determine the adequacy of a written response to a question provided under this sessional order.

I respectfully seek clarity from you as to what process you used to determine the adequacy of the written response, because by any reading of the six-word response I got from the minister, it is hardly adequate.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, it is probably not unreasonable for the member to ask you to provide the house with some guidance on when members can expect to receive written responses. It is remarkable to see how well opposition members are using our sessional orders, which they opposed, and to note that they are making sure they are fully implemented in this place.

On the second point that was raised, you may wish to reflect on the fine line the member is trodding in terms of how — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms Allan — Trodding, treading, crossing — it is Thursday! Quite clearly, when it comes to you giving direction to the house and making rulings, this is at your discretion. There are many instances in the standing orders and in our practices where the Speaker can determine in his own way how he interprets and acts on the sessional and standing orders the house has in place. I am sure you will do that appropriately, and I suggest to the member that he think twice before challenging you in this way.

Mr Clark — On the point of order, Speaker, any suggestion that the member for Warrandyte was reflecting adversely on you is completely unfounded. The member for Warrandyte was respectfully seeking an indication from you as to how you intend to apply sessional order 11(3). We are in the early days, and this is the first instance. In this particular case the question in relation to which the minister was ruled unresponsive was whether or not a business case existed. The answer that was received was that the business case would be released in due course. The member for Warrandyte is entitled to seek guidance as to how you intend to apply standing order 11(3) in determining in instances such as this whether or not a written response is adequate as well as in relation to the time frames that can be expected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I thank the member for Warrandyte for the point of order he raised. In relation to the adequacy of delivering the response the minister provided to my office, I will check with my office. My expectation is that the response will be provided to the member very promptly, as is the intent of the sessional order, so I take responsibility for that and will make sure that is the case. I will double-check on that and come back to the house.

On the other matter raised, in relation to seeking clarification as to whether the minister was sufficiently responsive to the question, it is my recollection — but I am happy to double-check *Hansard* — that the question asked of the minister was whether or not he

would provide a business case. On that basis it was my view, and so far remains my view, that the minister provided a very good response and one that was responsive.

I am happy to come back to the house on these two matters. I am happy to give members — and, may I say, the Chair — the benefit of the doubt. We have, as the Leader of the House correctly pointed out, entered into operation under new sessional orders, so not just members but the Chair as well have to work through these matters, and we should give ourselves the benefit of the doubt. On the next sitting day I will come back to the house in relation to the matters raised by the member for Warrandyte and the manager of opposition business.

Cage fighting

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Minister for Education. Noting that in 2007 the now Deputy Premier stated that 'the spectacle of two competitors in cage combat-style competition does not meet the community's standards', I ask: how will the minister explain to schoolchildren that it is now government policy to allow violent cage fighting in Victoria?

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question — a pretty desperate question, can I say, and a pretty long bow he is trying to draw. This is just ridiculous. There are a couple of points here.

Firstly, mixed martial arts is legal in Victoria. The combat sports body has made recommendations in regard to the safety of the competitors that it needs to be in an enclosed environment. That is the commitment Labor made prior to the election. Those opposite have form on this side of the chamber. They continually want — —

Mr Guy interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition will stay silent!

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, the Deputy Premier is now debating the question. I ask you to bring him back to answering it.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the Minister for Education to come back to answering the question.

Mr MERLINO — To deal with the question, Speaker, we will not break an election commitment. Those opposite continually want us to break our election commitments, and we are not going to do it. This is a question of the safety of the competitors. Mixed martial arts is legal. It is the recommendation of the Professional Boxing and Combat Sports Board, and that is what we will implement.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — I ask the minister if he will now instruct his education department to update antibullying and antiviolence campaigns in our schools to ensure that students are aware that caged combat violence is not okay.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition understands clearly that he must remain silent while the Chair is on his feet.

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — The outbursts from the opposition leader are no example for any child at school. This is a legal sport. We are implementing the recommendations of the combat sports board. We will not break an election promise. If the Leader of the Opposition — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I cannot direct the minister to respond in any particular way. I understand that the Leader of the Opposition may wish the minister to respond and explain things to schoolchildren, but I suggest that at times I find it hard to explain to our schoolchildren our own behaviour. I call on government and opposition members to stay silent and allow the minister to continue to respond to the question.

Mr MERLINO — I would suggest that if you wanted to talk to schoolchildren about bullying and bad behaviour, they just need to look at the opposition leader.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! It is Thursday, but I expect government members to come to order. The member for Mordialloc will come to order.

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, I have asked the Minister for Education a serious question in relation to bullying and antiviolence campaigns, and I ask the Deputy Premier to withdraw his offensive remarks and come back to — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Guy — It is a reflection upon you. Do you support violence?

Mr Eren interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the Minister for Sport. The minister will come back to answering the question, but before doing so allow me to seek clarification from the Clerk relating to the remarks, which I have not heard.

Neither the Clerk nor the Chair heard any remarks. I rely in good faith on members and, respectfully, the Premier to make a comment on the subject should that be the case. If not, neither of us has heard that, so I ask the minister — —

Mr Andrews — He is happy to move on.

Mr Guy — Yes.

The SPEAKER — Order! I appreciate that the Leader of the Opposition is happy to move on and to give us, the Clerk and the Chair, the benefit of the doubt in that we did not hear any remarks, and the Deputy Premier indicates to us that he had not made any remarks.

Mr MERLINO — We will implement all our election commitments, and we make no apology for that. What we have seen in relation to this question on our seventh parliamentary sitting day of this new Parliament — it has only taken seven days — is the opposition leader clutching at straws and making desperate outbursts.

Ministers statements: penalty rates

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I am very pleased to make it clear to all Victorians and certainly to every member of this house that this government values and believes in a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. I might also suggest to all members of this place that the 587 000 Victorians who work most weekends and rely on their penalty rates to feed and educate their kids, to pay their mortgage, to live their lives, to survive and to have a decent quality of life also support fair reward for fair work.

What is most troubling, and what I am very pleased to announce today the government will stand up against, is Tony Abbott's agenda to introduce via the Productivity Commission inquiry — via the back door, if you like — WorkChoices, which is a failed policy, a policy with no mandate and a policy with no good reason. In every forum we will — —

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, again we are defining and determining what the scope will be for the new ministers statements that have been provided for under sessional order 7, which is expressed to be an opportunity 'to advise the house of new government initiatives, projects and achievements'. So far the Premier has been engaging in an attack on the commonwealth government and asserting broad statements of principle. I submit to you — and this will be a test for how this sessional order operates — that the Premier is not in fact responding to either the letter or the spirit of the sessional order and advising the house of new state government initiatives, projects and achievements.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, the member is obviously right, these things will be determined somewhat in the running by your rulings, but if you refer to *Rulings from the Chair* in relation to question time as a whole, you see that the impact of the commonwealth government's policy settings on the state is a matter that can be canvassed.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms Allan — We got rid of Dorothy Dixers. You should be happy about that. We did what you wanted.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the House will continue to make her point of order or she will resume her seat.

Ms Allan — Speaker, if we are seeking examples of current established practice in the house, that practice is established already in some of the rulings from the Chair that apply to question time as a whole. I suggest they can be used as guidance when determining that the Premier is indeed quite within the scope of the requirements of ministers statements to address the matters that the commonwealth has in place that affect Victorian workers.

Mr Walsh — On the point of order, Speaker, I seek your clarification. My understanding of the intent of the government's changes — the house's changes — to sessional orders was to get rid of Dorothy Dixers.

Ms Allan — We did. You proposed it, remember?

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the House!

Mr Walsh — We now have the manager of government business asking you to rule on rulings around question time, not around ministers statements.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of The Nationals will continue, and the Attorney-General will stop interjecting.

Mr Walsh — Speaker, I ask you to disregard the argument put forward by the manager of government business and rule in favour of the point of order raised by the manager of opposition business.

Ms Thomson — On the point of order, Speaker, whichever way you look at it, even in relation to the statements by ministers and by the Premier, they should be allowed to set the scene for whatever initiative or project they wish to outline to the house, otherwise it is not in context. The Premier has been on his feet for less than half of the time allotted to him, and I suggest that he be allowed to continue in relation to this matter so that we can establish what the new initiative or project is that he wishes to outline to the house.

The SPEAKER — Order! I was listening very attentively to the Premier. He was outlining a government position on a particular matter. I do not uphold the point of order.

Mr ANDREWS — Let every member of this house and the Victorian community be in no doubt that this government will lodge a detailed submission to the Productivity Commission, and let me be very clear that it will be new and it will be different from that which would have been lodged by those opposite. We know their form: Liberals first and Victorians second.

We will fight these regressive changes, this agenda to bring in WorkChoices by stealth, in every forum and in every way, in defence of our nurses, our paramedics, our firefighters and our prison officers — all of those who in so many cases do the hardest and most dangerous work. They do it in our service, and they ought to be protected. Their take-home pay ought to be protected and safeguarded, not ripped away by a federal government that does not have the courage to put its regressive industrial relations agenda at the front of its government but instead tries to do it via the back door. This government will have none of it.

Cage fighting

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — My question is to the Minister for Local Government. With the Lord Mayor stating about cage fighting that 'Melbourne doesn't need these displays of ultra-violence' and 'Normalising violence like this can lead to the wrong attitudes. We should be condemning violence, not promoting it', I ask: will the minister allow local councils that oppose the violent sport of cage fighting, like the City of Melbourne, to ban tournaments from their municipality — yes or no?

Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Local Government) — I thank the member for his question. I am a little bit shocked. I have actually met with a lot of councils over the last few months, and not one of them has raised this issue with me — not one.

An honourable member — You're kidding!

Ms HUTCHINS — No, not one. There are plenty of other issues on the agenda of councils, I can tell you.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Government members will allow the minister to continue.

Ms HUTCHINS — I can tell the member what is at the forefront of the minds of councils today. An Auditor-General's report was tabled in this house just an hour ago — —

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is debating the question. It was a specific question in relation to cage fighting and local government, and I ask you to bring her back to that question.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister had just begun. I do not uphold the point of order.

Ms HUTCHINS — The thing that concerns councils the most today is the $1 billion cut made by the mates of those opposite in Canberra to the budgets of local councils. That $1 billion cut we have seen in the Auditor-General's report today has put nine councils in deficit. Shame!

Mr R. Smith — My point of order, Speaker, goes to relevance. There is absolutely no way the Minister for Local Government can seriously have interpreted the question as being to do with the Auditor-General's report.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister will come back to answering the question.

Ms HUTCHINS — I remind the house that under the Local Government Act 1989 councils are sovereign bodies. They have the ability to bring in by-laws. But I have to say that I have not had one council raise this issue in all of the roundtable meetings I have had — and you are irrelevant!

Supplementary question

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — I refer to the minister's closing remarks, noting the fact that Crime Victims Support Association spokesman Noel McNamara has said that cage fighting is 'brutal and encourages people on the street to be violent', and I ask: will the minister allow councils to introduce new local laws that allow them to protect the community in relation to the circumstances surrounding violent cage fighting venues?

Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Local Government) — As I have already stated, local governments are sovereign bodies. They can introduce their own by-laws, and if they choose to do so, they have the right to do so.

Ministers statements: penalty rates

Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Industrial Relations) — I rise to inform the house of a new initiative, and that is that the Andrews Labor government will be making a submission to the Productivity Commission's inquiry into workplace relations — an inquiry, as the Premier has outlined, that has foreshadowed drastic, dramatic changes to the penalty rates and minimum rates of pay of our workers in Victoria. What we are going to do is stick up for Victorian workers.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, again we are determining the scope of new sessional order 7, which relates to a minister being able to advise the house of new government initiatives, projects and achievements. As I understand it, the Premier's statement informed the house about the government's intention to make a submission to the Productivity Commission in relation to its current reference. The Minister for Industrial Relations seems to be talking about exactly the same subject.

I submit to you, Speaker, that if the Premier has already informed the house about this matter, the Minister for Industrial Relations is no longer advising the house, because the house has already been advised, and she is no longer talking about a new government initiative, project or achievement because the house has already been informed about it.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, unless the member opposite has remarkable powers of perception, he does not know what new information the minister may be wanting to provide to the house. The minister is indeed the Minister for Industrial Relations, and she is expanding further on the information the Premier provided to the house earlier. There is nothing in sessional order 7 that prohibits a minister from expanding and adding to information that has already been provided, particularly when it is relevant to their own portfolio area.

The SPEAKER — Order! It is my understanding that the intent of this sessional order is that a minister not be prevented from making a statement on occasions for a second time.

Mr Watt interjected.

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

Ms HUTCHINS — I do have new information to reveal in relation to our submission to the Productivity Commission's inquiry. I can reveal the true cost to Victorian workers of cuts to their penalty rates.

Let me outline: there are over 580 000 Victorian employees who work on weekends, over 300 000 who usually work on Saturdays in their main job, over 200 000 who work on Sundays, over 157 000 who work a nightshift on any given night and over 277 000 who are paid at or below the minimum wage. Many hardworking Victorians rely on their penalty rates, including retail workers at our supermarkets, tradies on weekend calls, machinery operators, and drivers of the vans and trucks that keep our cities serviced day and night.

A Liberal cut to penalty rates has nothing to do with productivity and everything to do with penalising Victorian workers, making it harder for them to put food on the table and petrol in the car and to meet their mortgage demands. Victorians rely on their penalty rates; they factor them into their family budgets and way of life. We will stand up to Tony Abbott and defend Victorian workers' rights in every way.

Cage fighting

Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater) — My question is to the Minister for Health. The Australian Medical Association Victoria says that cage fighting injuries include facial lacerations, bruises, broken teeth, fractures, damage to eyes and vision, internal bleeding and damage to internal organs as well as the transmission of blood-borne infectious diseases and permanent brain damage. I ask: what assessments or advice did the minister ask for on the health dangers of this violent sport before she agreed to support it?

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) — I thank the member for her question. I must say I am delighted

to see the Liberal Party finally interested in the health of Victorians, because it certainly showed no interest over the last four years. Here is the irony: mixed martial arts contests are legal in Victoria, and they have been for a long period of time. If the Liberal Party were so concerned about this issue, it would have taken steps whilst it was in government, and it failed to do so.

The Labor government made a commitment to safety enclosures to make mixed martial arts safer for participants. But given that the Liberal Party has suddenly decided that it has some interest in the health and wellbeing of participants, I might remind its members that this is a sport that is strictly regulated. In fact participants must undergo a pre-fight medical examination within 24 hours before they engage in a contest. They have to have a medical examination 24 hours after they have engaged in the contest. Competitors are actually prevented from competing unless they have been declared fit to do so by a medical practitioner. Contestants must undergo an annual medical examination. Contestants also undergo six-monthly blood tests for HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, relating to relevance, the question was seeking information about the assessments and advice obtained by the minister on the health dangers of cage fighting. She is not addressing that question, and I ask you to bring her back to it.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister is in order. The minister will continue.

Ms HENNESSY — Just in case the Liberal Party did not pick this up, there are also six-monthly blood tests for HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C. I am surprised by the member's question regarding the health of mixed martial arts contestants, because the health and wellbeing of all Victorians was neglected for four years under the previous government.

Supplementary question

Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater) — Can the minister name one women's health group that supports Labor's policy to allow violent cage fighting in Victoria?

Ms Allan — On a point of order, Speaker, while I am absolutely confident that the Minister for Health will deal with this question appropriately, I do seek your guidance, and it is in line with some of the previous points of order from the opposition. This is an entirely different question. Supplementary questions are meant to have a relationship to the original question that was asked. This is an entirely different question seeking new information from additional groups, and I cannot see how it has relevance to the original question that was asked.

I am happy, Speaker, for you not to rule on this now; I am happy for you to come back and provide some information to the house on how supplementary questions are to be appropriately presented to the house to make sure they have relevance to the original question.

Mr Clark — On the point of order, Speaker, the original question asked about dangers of cage fighting. The minister's response in effect was that there was not a problem, for the reasons that she has given. The member is now asking in effect if there is not a problem, can the minister name one women's health group that is in support of it. The member's supplementary question fully flows on from the theme of the question and from the answer that was given by the minister.

Ms Thomson — On the point of order, Speaker, my recollection at least of how supplementary questions operated in my time in the upper house was that you could not introduce anything new into your supplementary question; it had to arise from the question that was asked. No reference was made to women's health groups in the original question, and therefore it should be ruled out. If the member had mentioned that in her original question, then that would be relevant, but in fact there was no mention of that whatsoever. It brings in a totally new question. It requires an individual question in its own right and not a supplementary question.

Mr R. Smith — On the point of order, Speaker, the themes of cage fighting and stakeholder condemnation of this brutal policy that the Labor Party is bringing into this state was certainly current in both the substantive question and the supplementary question.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Government members will come to order, and whoever is making that funny noise on a Thursday will desist. I will withdraw the remark that I made about the Deputy Leader of the Opposition having the best lungs in the chamber — I think the member for Melton has them.

I ask the member for Bayswater to rephrase her question.

Ms VICTORIA — Can the minister name one peak medical group or other non-self-interested group that

supports Labor's policy to allow violent cage fighting in Victoria?

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) — I have met with many medical and health groups, including women's health groups, and let me say, the issues the member raises have not been missed, but those groups have been very clear about the role of the previous government and its $1 billion cuts to the health system. They have been very clear about the pressure and the consequences — —

Ms Victoria — On a point of order, Speaker, the supplementary question was very narrow: I asked for the name of one organisation that has given its support.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing. The minister will continue answering the question. I do not uphold the point of order.

Ms HENNESSY — Every health group I have met with has been very clear about the impact of the previous government's cuts. It is the absolute height of hypocrisy — —

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is debating the question, and I ask you to bring her back to answering it.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister will continue answering the question.

Ms HENNESSY — As I said, it is the height of hypocrisy for members of the Liberal Party to stand in this place and to confect any concern for the health and wellbeing of any Victorian after their four years.

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Speaker, given the narrowness of the member for Bayswater's supplementary question I think it is appropriate, and I put it to you, Speaker, that you should invoke section 11(2) of the new sessional orders and ask the minister to provide a written response to the answer. The member for Bayswater's question was narrow in that she asked the Minister for Health to name just one peak body that supported this brutal sport that the Labor Party wishes to bring in. In answering the question — or not answering the question — we did not have even one body offered by the Minister for Health. Again I implore you, Speaker, to invoke sessional order 11(2). It is entirely appropriate in this case.

Ms Allan — In response to the point of order, Speaker, I think it is incredibly unfair for the Minister for Health to have to provide further information in answer to the shadow minister's clumsily worded question. It is very unfair on the Minister for Health. She was faced with great challenges in answering that question because of how clumsily it was worded. The Minister for Health should not be punished because the opposition cannot write an appropriate question.

Mr Clark — On the point of order, Speaker, the member for Warrandyte is correct. The minister did not address the question. If the answer is, 'There is no such group', that is the answer she should give, and she should be directed by you to do so in writing.

The SPEAKER — Order! I have ruled on the matter. However, I will give myself as Chair the benefit of the doubt and for the benefit of all I will review the answer and come back to the house on the matter on the next day of sitting.

Ministers statements: penalty rates

Mr NOONAN (Minister for Corrections) — My ministers statement today addresses an important initiative that the Andrews Labor government is pursuing to protect the wages and working conditions of Victorian workers. Ministers on this side, including the Premier and the Minister for Industrial Relations, have already referenced the Labor government's intent to lodge a submission to the Productivity Commission's inquiry into workplace relations.

It goes without saying that we on this side of the chamber will defend the working conditions of Victorian workers. We will not allow the federal coalition government to revive WorkChoices, a scheme that the Prime Minister — —

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, again we are determining the scope of this new sessional order. This ministers statement is being made by the Minister for Police, who is also the Minister for Corrections. I take it to be implicit in the new sessional order that a minister makes a statement on matters relating to his or her ministerial portfolios. So far the minister has not related his remarks to a portfolio. If the interpretation of these new sessional orders is that a minister is not confined to his or her own ministerial portfolio, it makes these new ministers statements even wider than the Dorothy Dixer questions they were supposed to be replacing.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, you have already ruled on this matter and made it very clear to the house that the content the minister was endeavouring to provide to the house is within the

scope of new sessional order 7. I suggest you rule the point of order out of order.

The SPEAKER — Order! I will make judgements on each and every ministers statement. I ask the minister to outline new material to the house.

Mr NOONAN — Speaker, I am very happy to take your guidance because I have done an analysis of what it would mean for custodial officers here in Victoria who might be impacted by changes to the Workplace Relations Act 1996 at a commonwealth level.

Let me talk about custodial officers first. They have a very tough job. They supervise some of the most hardened criminals in this state, and they do it 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They do not clock off at 5 o'clock. Let me tell the house that these workers do receive penalty rates — a grade 2 custodial officer has an average gross wage of $1194 per week. If those opposite and their mates in Canberra had their way, this custodial officer would earn $907 per week, without penalty rates. That would be a loss of $286 per week, and in fact that would be 24 per cent of their average weekly earnings.

I know that may not mean a lot to those opposite, but it certainly does to the more than 2000 custodial officers across the state, including the 1700 in regional Victoria. We will stand up and defend the rights of all custodial officers and Victorian workers.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, I renew the point that statements under sessional order 7 need to relate to new government initiatives, projects and achievements. So far the minister has not related his remarks to matters relating to state government administration. My understanding is that custodial officers in Victoria are regulated by an enterprise bargaining agreement rather than by an award, so the minister needs to indicate whether he is intending to alter the state-negotiated enterprise bargaining agreement, otherwise his statement is not in order.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, you have previously ruled on very similar subject matter raised by the manager of opposition business, and I put it to you that standing up for Victorian workers is indeed a very new initiative: Victoria has not seen it for four years.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister had concluded his answer. The minister was in order.

Greyhound racing

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran) — My question is to the Minister for Racing. Given the complete failure of Greyhound Racing Victoria (GRV) to detect, prevent or stop the outrageous and illegal practice of live baiting, how can the minister have such confidence to give GRV $3 million to self-regulate ahead of the findings of the review by the racing integrity commissioner?

Mr PAKULA (Minister for Racing) — I thank the member for Prahran for his question, and I note that he understandably misconceived almost everything about the question he has asked. Despite the fact that 3000 full-time equivalent workers are employed in the greyhound racing industry and despite the fact that there are some 20 000 volunteers and other people who participate in the greyhound racing industry, I understand that the Greens would like the entire industry to be shut down. I understand that there is very real and understandable revulsion at the revelations that were shown on the *Four Corners* program.

When the member for Prahran suggests that as minister I have shown an outrageous display of confidence in the GRV board, he knows that not to be the case. In fact, the government has announced a review by the chief veterinarian, Charles Milne, and the racing integrity commissioner, Sal Perna, has announced an own-motion inquiry into greyhound racing. Interim reports of both those inquiries will be returned to me and the Minister for Agriculture by 10 March ahead of more fulsome reports that will come later.

The chairman of Greyhound Racing Victoria has resigned, trainers involved in these despicable practices have been suspended, the Tooradin trial track has been suspended and the greyhound industry awards night was cancelled. This government has taken an enormous array of actions to try to get to the bottom of the live baiting scandal that has occurred over the last period of years.

In regard to the Victorian Racing Industry Fund, which is provided from unclaimed dividends and from which there is already an allocation to each code based on the predetermined percentage, the government has determined that the proportion of those funds that would have otherwise gone to greyhound racing for other things — infrastructure, race day attractions and the like — will instead go to integrity, to animal welfare and to inspections, as is entirely appropriate. If it were not spent on that, it would be spent on things far less amenable and far less worthy for the benefit of greyhounds and those who are trying to clean up the sport.\

If the member for Prahran thinks that those funds already allocated to greyhound racing ought to be spent otherwise, perhaps he can tell the house what he thinks they should be spent on.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Government members will come to order. I warn the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing and ask him to allow the member for Prahran to ask a supplementary question.

Supplementary question

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran) — Given the failure of Greyhound Racing Victoria to protect animal welfare, will the government now adopt the Greens policy of setting up an independent regulatory body for animal welfare?

Mr PAKULA (Minister for Racing) — In responding to the supplementary question, may I say in the first instance that I think it is appropriate to acknowledge the former member for Prahran, Mr Newton-Brown, who I do not think was acknowledged by the member for Prahran in his inaugural speech, so I take the opportunity to do that.

In regard to the supplementary question, can I say that it is not this government's practice to adopt Greens policies in this respect or in respect of anything else. In regard to animal welfare, the response will of course be guided by the report provided to me and the Minister for Agriculture by the chief veterinarian, Dr Charles Milne — and I will take the advice of Dr Milne before I take the advice of the member for Prahran, the member for Melbourne or indeed the Greens in the other place.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the members for Footscray, South-West Coast and Hastings.

Ministers statements: penalty rates

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) — I rise to update the house on the government's submission to the Productivity Commission's workplace relations framework as it relates to Victorian health workers. Our paramedics work unsociable hours, covering shifts 24 hours day, 7 days week. They work day and night to save lives and support people in their most deserving time of need. The impact on their health and wellbeing and on their families is something they deserve to be fairly compensated for. That is reflected in the payment of penalty rates and shift loadings, measures that the Liberal commonwealth government wants to junk. We will proudly support and defend our nurses, our paramedics and our frontline health services against the attacks by the Liberal Party on penalty rates and shift loadings — —

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, I renew my raising of the issue of whether a minister's statement needs to relate to his or her portfolio. The only way in which this statement can relate to this minister's portfolio is if this minister is foreshadowing that she is proposing to change enterprise bargaining agreements negotiated with state government workers in order to reduce their penalty rates. Unless that is what she is proposing, her statement is not relevant to her portfolio.

Ms HENNESSY — On the point of order, Speaker, I am informing the house of an analysis of what the commonwealth government's plan to junk penalty rates would mean for our health workforce. I am also updating the house in terms of how that data will be reflected in the state government's submission to the Productivity Commission.

Mr R. Smith — On the point of order, Speaker, it is plain that the Labor government's pre-election promise and its sessional orders are increasingly becoming a farce. This is the fourth question — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The member will take his point of order.

Mr R. Smith — My point of order is simply this: the farce the government is making of its own sessional orders is becoming patently obvious when the fourth question is on the same issue. From four different ministers — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The member will take his point of order.

Mr R. Smith — It is quite simple, Speaker. The point of order is that sessional order 7 is not being adhered to. They are the government's sessional orders and the government is clearly laughing at them.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The house will come to order! I do not uphold the point of order.

Ms HENNESSY — We will proudly support and defend our nurses, our paramedics and our frontline health service workers against attacks from the Liberal Party, which is unable to help itself. The kind of attack on our health workers would see, for a paramedic, in the order of $230 a week taken out of their take-home

pay. If you were a nurse and Prime Minister Tony Abbott and the Liberal Party, and evidently the state opposition, get their way, we will see approximately $280 taken out of an average nurse's take-home wage. Of course it is not the first time that our paramedics and our nurses have been attacked by the Liberal Party. They have not forgotten how they were treated — —

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, the sessional order requires that the minister be advising the house of new government initiatives, projects and achievements. The minister has ceased to do so. I ask you to bring her back in compliance with the sessional order.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the minister to return to making a statement.

Ms HENNESSY — In terms of the matters that will be canvassed in our submission, it will be standing up for the nurses and the paramedics that the Liberal Party has attacked at both a state and federal level. We will ensure that the fair pay and conditions of our medical workforce are protected by a Labor government when they are attacked, always by a Liberal government.

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

Cage fighting

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Minister for Sport. If Victoria Police, the Crime Victims Support Association, the Australian Medical Association, former Chief Commissioner of Police Ken Lay, the Lord Mayor of Melbourne, and even a former Labor Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Bob Cameron, have all said they want the violent sport of cage fighting banned, why does the minister not do the right thing and stop this violent sport coming to Victoria?

Mr EREN (Minister for Sport) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. The only violent sport that has gone on in this place is the way in which the Leader of the Opposition got to this place. He got to this place by pushing aside the former member for Bulleen, Nick Kotsiras, and further to that — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Speaker, I think you can anticipate my point of order. The minister is debating the question. He should get back to answering the question that was asked.

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

Mr EREN — I can say that all these highly disciplined sportspeople who practise mixed martial arts are highly offended — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition asked a question, and he should allow the minister to answer that question.

Mr EREN — I express the hope that the Leader of the Opposition cleans his ears out this time. The sport of mixed martial arts has been around for a long time, and I advise the house through you, Speaker — —

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is not being relevant to the question. The question did not relate generally to mixed martial arts. It related to cage fighting.

Ms Thomson — On the point of order, Speaker, the minister has been unable to get more than a few words out — not even a complete sentence — because of the interjections that have been coming from those opposite. The minister is entitled to put the question into context. I believe, from the little I could hear, that is what he was endeavouring to do.

Mr EREN — On the point of order, Speaker, the member for Box Hill is confused. Cage fighting is not a sport. What is a sport is mixed martial arts. Mixed martial arts is a sport, and it is legal. Just for the record — —

The SPEAKER — Order! What is the minister's point of order?

Mr EREN — My point of order is that the member is confused about which sport he is talking about. There is no such thing as 'combat sport'. That sport is cage fighting; it is mixed martial arts.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister will resume his seat. I have heard sufficient on the point of order. There is no point of order. The minister will continue answering the question.

Mr EREN — This highly disciplined sport has been around for a long time. It was around at the time of the former government, yet it did not make any changes to make that sport safe. What we have is a situation where the now opposition in the lead-up to the last election made a very strong case, according to its members, in

relation to mixed martial arts. It did not work, because do you know what? People did not believe the coalition when it was in government, and they do not believe it now.

Mixed martial arts is a legal sport, and people who participate in that sport are entitled to do in safety. Further to that, there are certain promoters at the moment who are moving their events to Albury Wodonga because New South Wales has a current policy of allowing that sport to be fought in safety. Mixed martial arts — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Opposition members will come to order.

Mr EREN — We made a commitment leading up to the election that we would make that sport safer, and that is what we are doing. It is a policy position we have, and the opposition knows very well that the only blood sport that has happened here is how the Leader of the Opposition got to this place. He moved from the upper house to the lower house — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister will desist.

Mr EREN — Nick Kotsiras, the former member for Bulleen, was first, Mary Wooldridge, a member for Eastern Metropolitan Region, was second and then the leader — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Minister for Sport will resume his seat. I warn the minister. Opposition members will come to order, and so will government members. I would have thought that of all debates, this is the one in which we should have had some semblance of calm, control and composure.

Mr Walsh — On a point of order, Speaker, I raise the issues of relevance and debating the question. I ask you to bring the minister back to answering the question. The only thug in this place is him.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of The Nationals was doing well until he used that last word. I ask him to withdraw.

Mr Walsh — I withdraw.

The SPEAKER — Order! I call on the minister to come back to answering the question.

Mr EREN — We made a promise leading up to the election, which was the right thing to do, because the Professional Boxing and Combat Sports Board, which the minister takes advice from, suggested that we make the sport safer. That is exactly what we did, and we will honour that commitment to make that sport as safe as possible.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — Can the minister confirm that he announced Labor's pro cage fighting policy just days after he returned from an all-expenses paid trip to Queensland courtesy of cage fighting operator Ultimate Fighting Championship?

Ms Allan — On a point of order, Speaker, I am sure the minister will be happy to answer the question. However, my point of order goes to seeking your guidance on the marked difference between the original question, which involved a range of commentary and quotes, and the supplementary question, which introduces substantially different and new material. I ask you to provide some guidance to the opposition in its drafting of supplementary questions to ensure that they comply with the new sessional orders.

Mr Guy — On the point of order, Speaker, I noted that the member for Footscray in one of your determinations referred to how supplementary questions are asked in the upper house. Supplementary questions in the upper house are obviously based on the minister's answer and the substantive question. I noted that in the minister's answer he talked about the opposition leading up to the election in the formation of its policy, thus the supplementary question goes entirely to what the minister said in his substantive answer.

Mr Pakula — On the point of order, Speaker, in response to the Leader of the Opposition's point — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Pakula — The Leader of the Opposition clearly misheard the minister's answer. When he referred to 'the opposition', he was referring to the current opposition's policy and the fact that the position it took to the election was rejected. That was the point he made.

Mr Clark — On the point of order, Speaker, the closing remarks of the minister were that the policy was adopted following representations made to him by, as he put it, the mixed martial arts sector. So the Leader of the Opposition's supplementary question flows on directly from the closing remarks of the minister.

The SPEAKER — Order! I have heard sufficient on the point of order. The question is in order. The minister will respond.

Mr EREN (Minister for Sport) — This question is coming from somebody who should tell us what happened with Ventnor and the Ombudsman!

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the Minister for Sport. The minister will resume his seat immediately in silence. The Leader of the House will resume her seat. It is Thursday, and I have had every opportunity to ask many members to withdraw themselves from this chamber given that I have been on my feet. However, I ask members to regain some composure, and I ask members for silence. However, I warn the Minister for Sport. When I ask the minister to resume his seat, he shall do so immediately. It will not happen again.

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Speaker, the barely contained rage and aggression from the Minister for Sport — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Warrandyte will resume his seat. I also warn the member for Warrandyte; it will not happen again.

Mr EREN — I go back to my original point. The professional combat sports board advised me while I was doing the stakeholder consultation in relation to that sport being safer.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr EREN — I would further say that some 75 per cent of the Liberal Party conference floor overturned the cage ban, and he knows that. I go back to my point, and I totally reject the premise of that question and the insinuations that have been made by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, I raise with you sessional order 11(2) in relation to whether or not an answer is responsive to a question. The question related to an all-expenses-paid trip to Queensland. I submit to you that the minister has not been responsive to that question, and I submit that you should ask him to provide a written answer.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, perhaps the member opposite could not hear the minister's answer because of the carry-on from those opposite, but the minister did totally reject the claim that was put by the Leader of the Opposition and therefore has answered the question.

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

Mr Guy interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I will not allow members to reflect on my rulings. The Minister for Sport did reject the premise of the question. I have ruled on the point of order.

Ministers statements: penalty rates

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — I am pleased to add some additional information about how the Andrews Labor government's submission to the Productivity Commission inquiry into workplace relations will be all about standing up for Victorian workers. This is a very important thing that this state needs because for four years we have not seen this sort of initiative.

In addition to the information that has been provided by my colleagues earlier, I can advise a house that it is not just police officers, nurses and paramedics who will be affected by any changes in this area but also train and tram drivers as well. I am advised that around 25 per cent of the pay of these workers is related to shift penalties and penalty rates. The people we have been discussing today are people who serve our community each and every day.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, I renew the points of order I previously made about ministers statements needing to be relevant to their own portfolio, and I renew the point that so far the Minister for Public Transport has given no indication as to whether or not she intends to apply the matters she refers to enterprise bargaining agreements, which apply to workers in her portfolio. She is therefore not relating her remarks to her portfolio and therefore I submit that she is not complying with sessional order 7.

Ms ALLAN — On the point of order, Speaker, I am the Minister for Public Transport. I would have thought train and tram drivers would be something that was very relevant to my portfolio, and indeed, as the Minister for Employment, matters relating to jobs and workers and workers conditions are also entirely relevant to my portfolio. I suggest that the shadow Minister for Industrial Relations stop his tiresome efforts and let us finish question time.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order raised by the manager of opposition business.

Ms ALLAN — As I was saying, these are people who serve our community each and every day, and I am

proud to be part of a Labor government that is going to stand up and defend Victorian workers' wages and conditions. This is a vital initiative. This is a vital action from the Victorian government. Alongside these steps, we are going to create jobs. We will create jobs through our transport infrastructure program, through level crossing removals and through the Melbourne Metro project, and this is in stark contrast to the last four years when the only time the government of the day mentioned workers in this place was to bag them and criticise them for being members of a union. This government will support them. We want this support to be universal.

However, we do not know if we will be able to achieve this. I will read this quote:

> If the government were really serious about getting businesses going and getting people back to work, it would look at penalty rates and at reducing red tape.

This call from the member for Caulfield to strip penalty rates in this state is rejected by this government. We will stand up for Victorian workers.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Box Hill electorate

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — (Question 83) My question is to the Minister for Education. I refer the minister to Koonung Secondary College, to which the coalition government allocated $8.8 million for a much-needed upgrade after Labor failed to fund an upgrade for the school when last in office, and I ask: will the government proceed with this vital upgrade for Koonung Secondary College?

Pascoe Vale electorate

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) — (Question 84) My question is to the Minister for Public Transport. Labor identified the railway crossing at Glenroy Road, Glenroy, as one of the 50 worst level crossings in Victoria. Indeed the RACV identified it as one of Victoria's most dangerous and advocated for its urgent removal. This is not news to the local community, who have long worn its cost to local productivity and suffered the dangerous implications of its setting.

This crossing cuts across Glenroy Road just before Pascoe Vale Road. The vicinity includes a busy bus interchange and a vibrant shopping precinct. It is a major thoroughfare for anyone travelling from east to west across the northern part of the Pascoe Vale district. Thousands of cars travel this route every day. As the railway line carries both metropolitan and regional services, the boom gates are often down. Relentless traffic jams ensue sometimes all the way down Pascoe Vale Road to Oak Park and from Glenroy Road to Hadfield. Traffic jams can go the length of suburbs. The frustration this causes leads people to take silly risks. Twenty one reported safety incidents have occurred at this crossing. Labor committed to the removal of this crossing, and I ask the minister to provide an update for the community regarding this project.

South-West Coast electorate

Dr NAPTHINE (South-West Coast) — (Question 85) My constituency question is for the Minister for Health. I note that the coalition budget for the financial year 2014–15 provided record funding of $14.9 billion for Victorian hospitals and health services. This meant that public aged-care services and hospitals across my electorate of South-West Coast received record levels of funding to meet the increasing health needs of our ageing and growing population. However, this funding did not include any provision for the additional penalty rate costs associated with the Labor government's decision to declare Easter Sunday a public holiday. I ask: given the government's commitment to penalty rates, will the government guarantee to provide the full amount of the additional funding required by public hospitals and aged-care services in my electorate to meet the additional costs of higher penalty rates as a direct result of the government's decision to declare Easter Sunday a public holiday?

Eltham electorate

Ms WARD (Eltham) — (Question 86) My constituency question is to the Minister for Training and Skills. Can the minister provide information on how the government's $4 million investment, fast-tracked from the $320 million TAFE Rescue Fund, will benefit the Melbourne Polytechnic community in my electorate of Eltham? The Greensborough campus of Melbourne Polytechnic, which was formerly the Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE, in my electorate of Eltham was shamefully closed under the Napthine Liberal government. As a result of the former government's cuts, the number of government-funded students at Melbourne Polytechnic declined by 27 per cent between 2011 and 2014. These cuts hurt not only students but also their families, their parents, their communities, women returning to work and local businesses. I welcome the quick action by the Minister for Training and Skills in fast-tracking $4 million for Melbourne Polytechnic from the $320 million TAFE

Rescue Fund and ask the minister to outline the benefits this will provide Melbourne Polytechnic, its students and the local community.

Evelyn electorate

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — (Question 87) My constituency question is to the Minister for Mental Health. I refer to the fact that during the time of the Napthine coalition government 54 synthetic drugs were banned under the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981. However, every day new synthetic forms of drugs such as synthetic marijuana are appearing and being sold through various retail outlets in the Yarra Ranges. I am told that synthetic marijuana is highly addictive and that it is being sold through shops such as sex shops. It is sold as tea, potpourri, incense et cetera and often carries the instruction 'Not for smoking'. The chemical composition changes frequently, with businesses having backup compositions ready to sell. Not only are these drugs addictive and have an impact on the user's thought processes and motivation but with long-term use they can damage the organs of the body. Does the government have any plans at all to ensure that all forms of synthetic drugs are banned, given my constituents' current concerns about the impact of drugs on our society?

Macedon electorate

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — (Question 88) My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Planning. As the minister knows full well, the previous government implemented an arbitrary no-go zone banning wind farms of all shapes and sizes in the Macedon Ranges. This ban paid no heed to science, no heed to evidence, no heed to the job-creating opportunities that renewable energy presents and no heed to the wishes of local communities within my electorate. The Andrews Labor government's pre-election commitment to lift the ban and enable proposals for community wind farms in the Macedon Ranges to be assessed on their merits was therefore greeted enthusiastically in my electorate, particularly by the passionate and committed members of the Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group. I ask the minister to provide me with advice and a time line for the delivery of this commitment.

Shepparton electorate

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — (Question 89) My constituency question is to the Minister for Public Transport. Shepparton currently has four passenger rail services to and from Melbourne each weekday, while Bendigo has 18 services to Melbourne and 21 back to Bendigo. A survey released last year found residents are, and I quote, 'extremely dissatisfied with the city's passenger rail services to and from Melbourne'. Can the minister advise what steps are being taken to engage the residents of the Shepparton district in the draft regional network development plan consultation process to provide a blueprint for an improvement in passenger rail services in the Shepparton region?

Carrum electorate

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) — (Question 90) My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I ask that the minister provide an update on the government's election commitment to duplicate Thompson Road. Thompson Road runs right through my electorate of Carrum. It is an important arterial connection through the region, and many of my constituents use this road every day to drive to work and school. During the election campaign last year concerns about traffic congestion on this road were raised over and over again by local residents. The bottlenecks along this road are notorious, and travel in both directions is heavily affected during both morning and afternoon peak drive times. Residents, quite rightly, are sick and tired of sitting in bumper-to-bumper traffic — time that could be spent with families or at work. Businesses are also very concerned with traffic delays on Thompson Road, citing safety issues and impacts on productivity. I believe residents and businesses in my electorate would be very keen to participate in and hear about what plans are in place for the proposed duplication of Thompson Road, and I ask the minister if he could provide an update for them.

Mildura electorate

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — (Question 91) My constituency question is to the Minister for Health. I refer to a matter raised by Joan Hill, who is a volunteer at the Sunraysia Information & Referral Service, and to the fact that the Victorian patient transport assistance scheme will reimburse the cost of taxi transfers from the airport for medical treatment, and I ask: will the minister extend the reimbursement to chauffeured hire cars to and from Melbourne Airport given that they offer personalised pick-up and delivery, assistance with luggage to the door, assistance with mobility aids and a child's car seat?

Dandenong electorate

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) — (Question 92) My constituency question is for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. I ask that the minister provide me

with some information about the process that will take place to determine the most appropriate location for the Indian precinct committed to by the Premier prior to last November's election. As I represent the most multicultural electorate in the state, this commitment is of great interest to many in Dandenong. The Indian community is numerically one of the largest ethnic groups in the Greater Dandenong and Casey local government areas. I am sure my neighbouring members would agree that this community is a very important and vibrant part of the multicultural south-east. Traders in Dandenong's Little India are particularly excited about the commitment to an Indian precinct, and they are eager to make the case for the precinct to be located in Dandenong. As such, information from the minister on this matter would be most helpful.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES AND INQUIRIES ACTS AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) — Before question time I was talking about the wonderful work of parliamentary committees and I was defending the parliamentary committee system against the government's plan to water down and diminish the work of the committees. I was talking about the earlier version of the current Economic Development, Infrastructure and Outer Suburban/Interface Services Committee, which was known as the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee, and my time as a member of that committee in the 56th Parliament and the good work done by the other predecessor of the current committee, the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee, which was chaired by George Seitz, the then member for Keilor.

The Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee looked at economic development, industrial affairs and infrastructure. We looked at the provision of services to new urban regions and at development for expansion of new urban regions. I very much enjoyed my work with various members of the Parliament in conducting those inquiries. Earlier I said that many members of this place and the other place would value their contribution to the work that the committees do.

I refer to the Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee. I know the member for Narre Warren North, who is the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, would be particularly interested in the work of this committee, which undertook a number of important inquiries. It looked at legal constitutional parliamentary reform; the administration of justice; law reform; the use of drugs, including the manufacture, supply and distribution of drugs; and the level and causes of crime or violent behaviour. Members need only look at some of the work the committee did to agree that the work that parliamentary committees do is valuable.

As an example of the terrific work that the Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee did, I refer to one of its references. The committee was requested to conduct an inquiry into the supply and use of methamphetamines, particularly ice, in Victoria. I would have thought the work of that committee would be protected when one considers the important work it did around methamphetamines. I will put on the record the importance of some of the work the committees do.

I will touch on the work done in response to that particular reference given to the Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee. It looked at examining the channels of supply of methamphetamines; it examined supply, distribution and links to organised crime organisations; it examined the nature, prevalence and culture of methamphetamine use in Victoria, particularly among young people, Indigenous people and those who live in rural areas; it examined the links between methamphetamines and crime, in particular crimes against the person; it looked at the short-term and long-term consequences of use; it reviewed the adequacy of past and existing state and federal strategies for dealing with methamphetamine use; and it considered best practice strategies to address methamphetamine use and associated crime, including regulatory, law enforcement, education and treatment responses, particularly in relation to those groups I mentioned above.

Despite this important work, the government wants to diminish the work of committees by watering it down and having fewer references, which means having fewer members and fewer resources. I would have thought members of both houses would have relished the opportunity to serve on such important committees, to look at those important references and to do valuable work and bring it back to the Parliament.

Without doubt the Road Safety Committee is one of the Parliament's most important joint investigatory committees, having undertaken some terrific work over many years. Its functions are to inquire into, consider and report to Parliament on any proposal, matter or thing concerned with road trauma or safety on roads and related matters. There probably would not be a person in this place who has not been touched in some

way or form by road trauma or the issue of safety on our roads and related matters. As I said, this is without doubt one of the most important committees, and it has done fantastic work over the years as it has looked at a number of issues. I have never served on it, but I have spoken to members who have served on it, and they have spoken very highly of the work it has undertaken and its value.

During its time as a stand-alone committee members of the Road Safety Committee conducted inquiries into serious injury; motorcycle safety, which is a big issue in Victoria and particularly out my way in the shire of Yarra Ranges, which includes the Yarra Valley, where the numbers of motorcycle accidents and safety issues are enormous; federal and state road funding; and safety at level crossings, to name a few. You would have to ask: why would the government want to diminish the work of such an important committee? I know the government will argue that amalgamating committees allows them still to do the work, but as I said before, having fewer committees means fewer references, fewer members and fewer resources, and the outcome is going to be that less work will be done by these important committees.

Have a look at the Rural and Regional Committee. This committee has been examining the provisioning of services to regional Victoria and the development of regional Victoria. We know the government does not care about rural and regional Victoria; while it is wrong, we know the government wants to shut down this committee and stop the valuable work it has been doing. This committee has conducted inquiries into opportunities for increasing exports of goods and services from regional Victoria; opportunities for people to use telecommuting and e-business to work remotely in rural and regional Victoria — and we know about some of those issues; and the impact of food safety. The list goes on and on. Again, the Rural and Regional Committee has done some fantastic work over the years.

Finally I refer to the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. I mentioned earlier the importance of the reference it has been given to do an inquiry into the Country Fire Authority training college at Fiskville. We facilitated the setting up of that committee, and we helped populate it with members so it could get on with that important reference. Again I ask: why would the government now want to merge that committee — by collapsing two committees into one — and therefore reduce the number of references that members of two stand-alone committees could take on? Need I say more? I could go through the important reference that committee has, but I think we all understand the importance of that inquiry into the CFA training college in Fiskville. We will support that, but again I argue that the government should not be collapsing those six committees into three and watering down and diminishing their work.

In conclusion, I note that we oppose this bill. We oppose the government's direct, deliberate and planned attempt to restrict, limit and shut down the important work of the parliamentary committee system. We will do everything we can to protect the committee system, and we will argue for the continued scrutiny of the activities and operations of government. We on this side of the house oppose this bill.

Mr BROOKS (Bundoora) — It is a pleasure to be able to join the debate on the Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015. This is an important bill because it deals with the operation of parliamentary committees — I will come to that part of the bill in the moment — but it also has a very important part 3, which deals with the Inquiries Act 2014, an act brought in under the previous government. I would have thought the opposition would have identified this part of the bill as being very worthy of its support. In fact I am quite concerned that the opposition may not have done its homework of addressing this part of the bill.

Despite the concerns of the opposition about the operation of parliamentary committees and their structure, which we can have a debate about, to simply oppose this bill in its entirety, when it contains important changes to the way in which the Inquiries Act will operate, is quite short-sighted. I hazard a guess that opposition members have not spent enough time considering all the aspects of this bill.

The lead speaker for the opposition, the Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party in this place, the member for Croydon, in his contribution a few moments ago mentioned that he understood that the Greens might be moving a reasoned amendment. We will wait and see if that eventuates. Again, that would be a great concern, because the part of this bill that deals with the Inquiries Act is quite important. There are some minor aspects, which I will go through, but there is a very important component of the bill which deals with the ongoing operation of royal commissions, including the McClellan Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

I would not think that the Liberal Party, The Nationals or the Greens would want to oppose a bill — or have a

bill taken out of this place by a reasoned amendment — and put in jeopardy the ongoing viability of that very important royal commission. We will see if their position changes or not — whether or not it has been a mistake and whether or not they come to their senses and are able to adjust the way in which they are going to approach this bill. I would in fact ask them to do that. I would ask them to come back with their position on part 3 of this bill, which is an important part of this bill. If the relevant shadow minister has made an error and not picked up this part of the bill, then they should come back to have discussions and see whether we can get this part of the bill through the house.

Part 3 of the bill deals with the Inquiries Act 2014. There are some reasonably minor aspects to these changes. The first few clauses deal with clarifying the definitions of 'judicial officer', 'member' and 'non-judicial member of VCAT' and clarifying the circumstances in which witnesses who are attending a formal review under the act are entitled to be paid expenses and allowances. The most important aspect of this bill, in my view, relates to the provisions in clause 16, which allow for the continuing operation of royal commissions. The example I cite is the McClellan Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. I would have thought the Liberal and National parties would want to reconsider their position of total opposition to this bill, given the important nature of that clause. I call on them to separate themselves from the Greens, if the Greens do move a reasoned amendment, and to have another look at this important part of the bill.

The bill also looks at parliamentary committees, which are an important part of the way in which this Parliament operates. They are one of the most productive and useful ways in which members participate as members of Parliament, often cooperating across party lines to look at different sorts of policy issues and challenges, working together to come up with solutions and policy responses to put to the government. Parliamentary committees are an important aspect of parliamentary life and work. I do not think members of the general public see enough of that work, but it is great work for members of Parliament to participate in. It is very rewarding and a great learning experience as well.

The bill sees the Economic Development, Infrastructure and Outer Suburban/Interface Services Committee merge with the Education and Training Committee to become the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee; it sees the Environment and Natural Resources Committee merge with the Rural and Regional Committee to become the Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee; and it sees the Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee merge with the Road Safety Committee to become the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee.

It is important to reinforce that the functions of the previous committees under the previous act will be transferred to the new committees, so there is no loss of function with any of these changes. All the functions of the previous committees, all the areas they could inquire into and all their roles are carried forward to the new committees. The bill effectively presents no change in the ability of committees to carry out their work. Some opposition members suggested this will mean that less work will be done and that we are shutting down committees, but anyone who reads the bill will know that is nonsense. There will always be a level of work done, and the number of committees in this place will always change. It is worth noting that before 2003 there were 8 joint investigatory committees. That number went up to 12, and this proposal sees it coming back down to 9. It is still a good number of committees across a broad range of policy areas that are important to the Parliament.

It is also important to note that it is not just this side of the house that makes changes to the way in which parliamentary committees operate. In March 2011 this house considered the changes of the then government, now opposition, to membership and quorum requirements for parliamentary committees. At that time the then minister in his second-reading speech indicated that, because of the changes to the number and workload of upper house members, changes to committee quorums were required and also that membership requirements should be changed. There is history in this area of changing the function of committees to better suit each individual Parliament. With 8 committees prior to 2003 and the number going up to 12 and now back to 9, there is a good number of committees across a range of portfolio areas that will do a great job in providing advice to government and to the Parliament.

Another aspect flowing from this bill that is worth discussing in this debate is what government does with the recommendations of parliamentary committees. The Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party in his contribution went through some of the inquiries the Education and Training Committee has undertaken. I was lucky enough to be the deputy chair of that committee for a short time at the end of the last Parliament. Over the life of the Parliament it inquired into a range of areas, including approaches to homework, music education, agricultural education and training and also the

education of gifted and talented students, which are all great policy areas for government, and particularly for that parliamentary committee, to have a look at.

That committee had pretty much all of its recommendations ignored. The government responded to them, but if members read through the government responses to those inquiries, they will see lots of, 'We'll do this subject to resources being available'. By the time we got to the end of the last Parliament, virtually none of those recommendations had been acted upon in a meaningful way. It is all well and good to talk about the usefulness of parliamentary committees and about wanting more or fewer committees, but one of the key things is that a government must be committed to giving parliamentary committees good references to look at serious policy issues and then have an approach of dealing with those recommendations once they have been presented to the government. It is not just about keeping parliamentary committees busy but about giving them work that will be recognised and supported once it is completed, and that is the way this government will approach this issue.

In conclusion, I commend the bill to the house, and I commend the changes to the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003. It may be that the opposition has concerns with the way in which parliamentary committees will work, but, most importantly, I ask the opposition, with or without the Greens, to have a serious look at the Inquiries Act aspects of the bill and have a discussion with the government — and it may be aside from the debate in this chamber — around the important aspects of being able to maintain the operation of royal commissions.

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — I am interested that government members are now proposing how we should respond to their bill. If they want to address a particular aspect of the Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015, perhaps they will take it into a consideration-in-detail stage rather than trying to push it through. Despite the urging of the previous government speaker, I have no intention of devoting my speech on this bill to their subject matter. I propose to focus on the impact on parliamentary committees.

Committees have a long, important and honourable role in this place, and many members have spoken about it at length at other times. I served for four years as the deputy chair of the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee and two years as a member and a further two years as the deputy chair of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. For eight out of the eight years I have been in Parliament I have been heavily involved with committees.

I was interested to note that this bill was introduced by the Deputy Premier, because normally these sorts of matters are the purview of the Leader of the House. I also note that despite the method of the introduction the Leader of the House seems to have carriage of this bill outside this place. I am not surprised that she sought to remove herself from carriage of the bill within this place, given her attitude to previous reforms. This is Labor hypocrisy at its absolute best.

Many members will be aware that in 2013 we had a similar debate in the 57th Parliament. I was interested to contrast the attitudes of some members of the chamber then who are also members of the chamber now. There was an extensive debate at the time. The member for Bendigo East, the member for Melton, the member for Cranbourne, the then member for Macedon, who is now retired, and the member for Narre Warren South all had a crack. Five members from the other side spoke in that debate — four of them are still members of the house, and two of them are now senior office-bearers of the house — and all of them were totally opposed to those earlier reforms. There was much confected outrage about the changes that were proposed. There was much confected outrage even when debate on the bill was going to be adjourned, and that outrage was even reflected by the now Deputy Premier, when he came into the chamber to protest that decision.

What crime was the government of the day committing? Were we abolishing the committee system? No, we were not. Were we cutting the budget of parliamentary committees by 90 per cent? No, we were not. Were we proposing custodial sentences for members of committees who get out of hand? No, we were not. None of the above. In fact what we were doing was combining four committees into two. That bill sought to make some sensible adjustments. This bill seeks to take six committees — already expanded committees — and turn them into three.

There is absolutely no logical synergy in the proposals before the house. In 2013 the proposal was entirely different — it was to combine committees that worked together. The Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee was combined with the Law Reform Committee. The Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee was combined with the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee. They were sensible measures. As a former deputy chair of the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee I obviously have a good working knowledge of the activities of that

committee. We often dealt with issues that demanded legislative change, but we could only make the most general recommendations with regard to amendments. We did not have that legal expertise, and certainly legal expertise would have been helpful.

There were similar synergies with the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee and the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee. To give an example with regard to the former, in the 2013 debate the member for Bendigo East referred to a report that that committee had produced into people trafficking for the purposes of sex work. I was part of that investigation. It was a pretty torrid investigation, and I can say clearly to the house that the addition of the Law Reform Committee function would have been of great assistance. The member for Bendigo East said at the time that that was a reason why those reforms should not be pursued. In fact it is a great example of why those reforms should be pursued. She got it wrong then, and she has it absolutely wrong now.

As I said, there are great synergies between the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee and the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee. As a member of an interface electorate I can see those obvious synergies. Perhaps the member for Bendigo East, as a provincial member, could not see those synergies. I certainly could. Those combinations have been an outstanding success.

Let us contrast those 2013 amendments, which were so vigorously opposed by Labor, with proposals in this bill. In 2013 four committees were consolidated into two, capitalising on the synergies of their activities. By contrast, under this bill the Economic Development, Infrastructure and Outer Suburban Interface Services Committee is abolished. The Education and Training Committee is abolished. The Environment and Natural Resources Committee is abolished. The Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee is abolished. The Road Safety Committee is abolished. The Rural and Regional Committee is abolished. This bill takes the sensible reforms of 2013 and expands them beyond recognition in a grossly irresponsible way. It takes those larger committees — the committees that were created in 2013 — and makes them absolutely huge, to the point where they will become effectively unworkable. They are tripled in size by this proposal.

If Labor had problems with the committee changes that were made in 2013, how can it possibly put this proposition forward? The net effect of this bill is that the eight committees that existed before 2013 will now be reduced to three. What did the member for Bendigo East have to say about the last changes? She had a lot to say, but I will give just two small quotes. She said:

> It is very clear that the government is quite content to reduce the scrutiny that will be afforded through the work of parliamentary committees in important policy areas.

I will paraphrase the following, almost quoting it. She also said that it will require the two new committees to do the same amount of work as that done by four committees and will load up the committees with extremely broad terms of reference. The resources will be spread incredibly — —

Mr McGuire interjected.

Mr MORRIS — I am starting halfway through the sentence. The quotes are there; they are available to *Hansard*. Hansard will sort out how it wants to do it. The fact is that the member for Bendigo East was wrong then, but if she were to repeat those charges in the Legislative Assembly today, I would say that she would be absolutely correct.

The second recurring theme of that debate which rears its head again is the suggestion, which was constantly made by Labor members, that coalition members were less committed to the committee system and indeed less committed to work than their Labor compatriots. ‘Lazy’ was the term that was used. The accusation was that fewer committees meant a lower number of members would be engaged. That accusation was effectively and rightly rejected at the time because a number of new committees had also been established, so there was no trimming. This time, however, there are no additional committees being introduced. It is simply a huge cut.

This government has a larger majority than its predecessor. There are more members to go around, but is Labor prepared to pull its weight? No, it is not. The opportunity here is to change section 21 of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, which determines the number of members on each committee, but the government will not do that. If it did, it might make these changes more defensible; there would still be a reasonable number of members involved.

In the last Parliament 18 government members were required to service these committees at a minimum. Under this proposal only nine government members will be required to service these committees and cover the same ground. That is nine members who could have been doing something useful and nine members who could have been earning their money. Are Labor members prepared to do it? No, they are not. Coalition members did it. We did it for the term. We did the hard yards. I contrast that with the government of today —

not this time, not Labor. Some members clearly are in it for what they can get out of it and others for what they can put in. I suspect the former is the case for the members who congregate around the Treasury benches.

I say in conclusion that, yes, the committee system needs to be adjusted to the needs of each Parliament; it is not set in concrete. Consolidation is okay if it is done in conjunction with other measures. If we had additional committees and additional members, improved independence from the executive or any of the other many alternatives that would be available with a reorganisation of this nature, then these changes might be reasonable. However, in this case Labor is simply proposing to abolish six committees in the absence of other measures. It is a step too far, and as the member for Croydon said, the coalition cannot support it.

Ms THOMSON (Footscray) — I rise to support the Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015. In so doing I might refer, firstly, to the amendments to the Inquiries Act 2014, as contained in clause 16, and make it clear why this is an important component of the bill. The member for Bundoora also spoke about these matters in his contribution.

The bill clarifies that the Governor in Council may amend the letters patent of a royal commission, such as the McClellan Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. This amendment is important because the federal government has extended the term of the royal commission's inquiry, and unless we sign the letters patent it will not be able to act within Victoria. This is a nice, simple measure that will enable the royal commission to continue its role within Victoria. This is an important clause. The impact that it may potentially have cannot be underestimated. It is one that needs to be reflected upon when members register their vote, and it should also be reflected on when considering any reasoned amendment that may be proposed by the Greens party. Those are the things that I wanted to raise around the practicalities of this bill.

I now wish to talk about the committee structure. Like other members of this house, I have served on committees. As a former minister I have had to attend and present at hearings of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. I have not served on it, but I have been a member of the former Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee of the Parliament. I know the worthwhile work that committees can do and I recognise the importance of joint committees in being able to come to decisions based not on party lines but on the evidence that is presented to them. I understand the work and effort that is put in by people who make submissions to ensure that committees can make their recommendations based on as much information as they can possibly get their hands on. They are really worthwhile.

The other thing that committees can do, which is not so readily easy for governments to do, is to look beyond the day-to-day, year-to-year or parliamentary term issues and actually look at initiatives that may be applied for a longer term agenda. That is an amazing role that committees can play that goes well beyond the next election. If you have a look at the way in which these new committees are structured, you may consider that the change should be seen as a potential opportunity for that rather than a limitation.

As I go through the newly structured committees, I will refer, firstly, to the one I probably know best, that is, the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee, which replaces the Economic Development, Infrastructure and Outer Suburban/Committee and the Education and Training Committee. We are now learning of the importance of early childhood development in creating people with active minds — people who may become our entrepreneurs of the future. We know the importance of infrastructure for driving economic growth. We know the important role that education plays in creating young people who will take on skills and jobs, which have to be the jobs of the future, not just the jobs of now.

We know all those things, but this new committee enables the consideration of references that encompass all of that, which we would not have been able to do until now. Parts of the reference would have gone to the economic committee and parts would have gone to the education committee. The inquiries would have been disjointed, whereas now all the matters can be brought together and considered for a longer term view about how communities can be taken into what should be an exciting new future for Victoria. Up until now and certainly under the previous government it has not been a case of looking to what the future may look like for Victoria and where we may need to place ourselves to be ready for it; it has been a case of just sitting back and sort of letting it happen. Letting it happen is not good enough. We cannot just let things happen any longer. The work of these committees can result in committing future governments to undertaking activities that otherwise they may not even have thought of.

This is a perfect example of where everything that has been put into a committee may make for amazing results and recommendations. People who may present

to those committees would never have thought to go to, say, an education committee. They may be involved in businesses that deal in a very small sphere of business activity, but because the committee's work involves economic development and infrastructure suddenly it takes on a new meaning for them and they can see the value of skills training, education and infrastructure, all driving our economic growth, and looking to the future. There is no doubt that we are now in an industry-transition period. We have to be ready for what our new industries will look like in the future. We have to have our young people ready. By that I mean we have to have children who are born today ready to be able to fill those jobs of the future, and we need to be planning for that right now. These committees can be an important part of helping us plan for that future.

I refer the house to the new Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee, which will replace the Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the Rural and Regional Committee. I have heard it said that there is no link, but I have not heard any debate in this house that has not included the importance of the environment and issues to do with climate change, which we will have to confront in the future, to regional and rural communities. We also talked about the importance of channelling the irrigation areas and the food bowl work that was done by the previous Labor government.

All these things are so important to regional and rural areas. So why should the work on the environment and regional and rural issues work not be complementary? I think they are a natural fit. I cannot think of an area of Victoria that is not affected by the changes that will occur in our climate. It is important that we start factoring that in as we consider the way that our rural and regional communities will develop. As I said, it is a natural fit. I believe regional and rural communities would welcome a committee structure that allowed for a longer term view of the impact that environmental circumstances will have on them and hopefully develop the policies that will bring positive opportunities to those communities. It is a natural fit, particularly as this government is very keen on pursuing the food sector as an important part of Victoria's long-term future in relation to jobs and economic development. I think that is a very good fit.

I go to the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee, which will replace the Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee and the Road Safety Committee. Again I say that we are putting all those at-risk behaviours together into one committee, along with law reform, which brings the legal overlay that the previous speaker, the member for Mornington, spoke of. Those will all be brought together into the one committee so there will be the at-risk behaviours and the legal capacity to try to come to terms with them in an innovative way.

These are structured committees that, if given really creative references, and I believe the government will give creative references to them, will be enabled to do work that is quite challenging — I hope very challenging. I hope they will enable thinking outside of the box so that people can embrace new ideas, new ways of thinking and new ways of problem-solving, because as a state we have a lot of challenges ahead. These challenges are not in neat little boxes or little policy silos; they cut right across them. These committees will enable that work to be done, and I think this arrangement will give committee members an opportunity to develop new ways of seeing issues.

I commend the bill to the house. I look forward to its passing and to the work these committees may undertake in this, the 58th Parliament.

Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East) — I am pleased to rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015. As we have heard, the purpose of the bill is to amend the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 to amalgamate certain committees. I do not believe this is a good move. We have heard from the previous two government speakers about the importance of the inquiries provisions of the bill being passed. I point out that the opposition would be more than happy to agree to the bill if the government were prepared to split the bill and leave the committees structure alone, for the many reasons that speakers on this side have pointed out. That is certainly something we would be happy to accommodate.

I would like to expand on this by making some commentary on why the provisions relating to the committees structure are flawed. It was interesting to note that in her contribution the member for Footscray spoke about a number of the many issues that relate to rural and regional Victoria — not only issues at the current time but challenges that will be experienced in the future. Therefore it makes no sense to disband the Rural and Regional Committee. I would have thought that this would be the perfect argument to put forth as to why that committee should be retained.

I will focus my contribution on the impacts of the bill on rural and regional Victoria. The bill merges six existing joint investigatory committees into three. It proposes to merge the Economic Development, Infrastructure and Outer Suburban/Interface Services

Committee and the Education and Training Committee; the Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the Rural and Regional Committee; and the Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee and the Road Safety Committee. The government states that the new committees will have the same functions as the committees they replace and therefore there will be no loss of coverage of the issues that are covered by committees. That is simply not accurate; it is just not right.

The fact is that there will be fewer inquiries undertaken and therefore fewer inquiries undertaken relating to rural and regional Victoria. Let us look at some of the inquiries these committees that are proposed to be abolished have covered in recent years and the importance of those inquiries to rural and regional Victoria. Let us look at the Education and Training Committee. Its inquiries over recent years have included an inquiry into agricultural education and training. Could there be a more important topic in relation to growing our agricultural industries in rural and regional Victoria than what came out of the recommendations of this inquiry? The committee also undertook an inquiry into skills shortages and an inquiry into improving healthy living, which is not only of huge importance to all Victorians but is a serious issue in relation to many rural and regional Victorian communities. It also undertook a number of inquiries in relation to improving student outcomes; there were a whole range of these inquiries.

I point out to government members that in rural and regional Victoria we well know our school completion rates. When those rates are compared to those for city-based students it can be seen that we have lower school completion rates. We also have a lower rate of students who progress from secondary to tertiary education. A number of the recommendations from all the inquiries about improving student outcomes have related to rural and regional Victoria. They will be ongoing challenges. What is the government's response to that? It is to abolish the Rural and Regional Committee.

The Environment and Natural Resources Committee is a committee I have personally been involved with, having served on it for two and a half years. Among the recent inquiries it undertook was the inquiry into heritage tourism and ecotourism. They are very important industries to rural and regional Victoria. The findings that came out of that inquiry gave rise to a great range of recommendations for how those industries can be grown in this state.

The committee has also responded in relation to issues and challenges that have confronted our rural areas. The floods in Victoria in 2010 obviously had a devastating impact on a lot of regional areas. Following on from that we had inquiries into flood mitigation, levy bank ownership and maintenance and rural drainage. These inquiries needed to be done quickly and to provide sound advice on how to deal with these issues going forward. The committee conducted inquiries into renewable energy projects, pest plants — which is a massive issue in rural Victoria — fisheries and many other rural and regional issues. Labor's response to the incredibly important work this committee has undertaken on behalf of rural communities in recent years is to abolish the committee. It makes no sense.

Then there is the Rural and Regional Committee. We just heard from the member for Footscray about the massive challenges regional and rural Victoria will be facing — in fact she gave a perfectly reasoned argument as to why this committee should be maintained — yet the committee is going. In recent times it has undertaken inquiries into opportunities to increase exports; telecommunications and working remotely in rural Victoria, which is so important for its economy; attracting and retaining young farmers; disadvantage in rural Victoria; and fatalities and injuries on Victorian farms. These are all important and pertinent inquiries. We will not have that committee to look into matters of equal importance that arise in the future.

The Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee will also be merged. The work this committee did in relation to the supply and use of methamphetamines, particularly ice, in Victoria was absolutely crucial. That committee is now going. The Road Safety Committee, which was specifically tasked to look at road safety issues and held inquiries into the country road toll, rural road safety and infrastructure and various other road safety issues, will go.

Reducing the number of committees is clearly an attempt by the government to lessen the scrutiny of government activities and also to reduce this government's commitment to rural Victoria. Members on both sides of the chamber who have served on these committees would be in unanimous agreement that the work they undertook was extremely important. They provided very sound advice to government on a range of contentious issues.

The great state of Victoria has many areas that are growing in population in rural and regional as well as metropolitan areas, and it has many areas with population forecasts in the negative. Growing

populations in some areas and reducing populations in others will bring a range of challenges in themselves in terms of employment, industry, health, education, growth and infrastructure. These issues need to be looked at and dealt with, but instead we have a reduction in the committees that could look at them. This government's solution is to reduce the number of committees that can make sound recommendations.

Reducing the number of committees will also lessen the ability of the government to respond quickly to issues. I mentioned the 2010 floods earlier; the inquiries in relation to the issues arising had to follow shortly after those events. The government says it is looking after country Victoria, but we have to go outside Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong when we talk about country Victoria. It is all the rural areas that sit outside those areas — —

Mr Foley — Let's look at South Gippsland, shall we?

Mr T. BULL — The minister at the table mentions South Gippsland, which has been ignored again, with no candidate. It is another rural area that is being ignored, and I have to ask what is going on.

For these reasons we are opposing this bill. We do not think this is good legislation, and that is the reason we strongly oppose it.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — I am delighted to join the debate today on the Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015. This is a bill to amend two acts, the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 and the Inquiries Act 2014. I will start my contribution focusing mainly on the Parliamentary Committees Act before turning to the Inquiries Act.

The bill amends the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 to reduce the number of joint investigative committees from 12 to 9. I have listened with interest to the contributions of opposition members, and they have been quite pedestrian and workmanlike to date. It has been almost a 20th-century debate in the sense that it has been quite linear. There does not appear to have been great thought or consideration given to the way in which the economy and society are changing, or the fact that we do not have a compartmentalised approach to the economy, life or business anymore. It is much more free-flowing, and you often see a greater level of collaboration between businesses, organisations and industries than you would have seen previously. It is important that the parliamentary committees reflect and embrace those changes. Change is nothing to be scared of. There is no need to be frightened by the fact that we are moving into a different economy with greater levels of engagement. The opposition should be concentrating on thinking about the opportunities created by these changes and how we can best make use of the committees' time to investigate matters.

The previously existing Economic Development, Infrastructure and Outer Suburban/Interface Services Committee and the Education and Training Committee will now become the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee. This committee could look at issues such as education in the suburbs or the intersection between higher education and economic development. We are a smart society. We are a smart state. In fact we are the education state, and we should be encouraging the development of a committee to look at that nexus. It is clear that looking at encouraging people to broaden their education and their skills, be that in terms of vocational education and training or further higher education studies, will be a key economic driver for this state. That is a good thing.

The contribution to date from the opposition has been this dead hand of reform; this saying, 'No we need a compartmentalised approach. We have specific and strict terms of reference and you will only stay there. You will not be allowed to go beyond there'. That is just not the way our society or our economy is structured. That is not how it works. You need to have that free-flowing ability to move across and to examine other forms of inquiry. Having that freedom is fundamentally important, and I think will improve the quality of the work of the committee structure.

The Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the Rural and Regional Committee will now become the Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee. I would have thought that would be supported by The Nationals. I would have thought that if you looked at how the development of, say, the mineral sands industry in Western Victoria can be linked to improvements in the quality of life in regional and rural Victoria, you would have to say that that would be a very good thing. I would have thought the opposition would embrace that; I would have thought they would support it.

Similarly, on the topic of environmental tourism and the impact that can have in terms of strengthening and growing regional and rural communities, I would have thought that would be supported and embraced by The Nationals. I would have thought they would understand the fact that this is an important structure. I think they are quite important aspects of this legislation. Similarly, in terms of agriculture, growing and developing agriculture in this state will have a direct correlation to

improving the quality of life of those who live in regional and rural Victoria. Again, there is a key correlation between those two former committees. What we are doing now by making them into one better committee is looking at making sure there is a capacity to look at how you can grow the dairy industry in Victoria, for example, and the implications that will have in terms of making regional Victoria a destination for people who want to live, work and raise a family. These are good things.

I believe the member for Gippsland East expressed some concern about the fact that this bill is proposing to look at merging the Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee with the Road Safety Committee. Again, looking at the great work that was done in a previous Parliament in relation to ice, in which I know the member for Niddrie played a key and pivotal role, there is clearly a correlation between road safety and crime. I think it is important that we understand that and that we develop an appropriate committee structure to reflect it. From that point of view there is nothing to be afraid of. This bill is about making sure that you can look at having the freedom to explore a number of wideranging policy areas that will impact upon a number of different portfolio areas and a number of different industries.

If we are looking at the new Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee, we can see that clearly leads to a discussion around innovation start-ups in the suburbs. Encouraging people out in the suburbs to potentially broaden their education, to look at starting their own business or to look at working from home is what we want. Traditionally the way in which Melbourne was structured, again in the 20th century — which I think is where most opposition members currently wish they were — was that you had the doughnut society. The outer suburbs were commuter suburbs, where you just went to sleep and raise your family and you got in the car and drove into the city to work where your place of employment was. That is no longer the case.

We should be looking at encouraging flexibility within the committee structure to look at issues around innovation and how the nexus with education will drive our economic growth. That is the future. That is where we are headed as a society and as an economy. We have to make sure that we structure our parliamentary committees in such a way that they have the freedom and the liberty to look at pursuing those important matters as they see fit. This is a very important thing to do, and that is why I commend the government for having an approach that allows that flexibility.

The Inquiries Act 2014 is largely a technical act which looks at making changes to replace the definitions of judicial officer and non-judicial member of Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. It is looking at clarifying that royal commissions and boards of inquiry established before the act came into force can continue any current inquiries. It is important to have that consistency. The Inquiries Act also talks about formal reviews. I was not familiar with formal reviews, but I understand that they are a fairly new instrument arising from the Inquiries Bill 2014. It is a fairly new and lower level form of inquiry, and it is important in terms of these changes that witnesses who appear before a formal review can be paid expenses and allowances. That is very important, because we have to have a triaging of our inquiry system. Clearly whenever a government seeks to establish a royal commission, it is usually because something very serious has gone wrong, something that is often quite tragic. The next level down is a board of inquiry, and we now have a formal review process.

I think it is important that we look at the empowering of formal reviews. We should look at trying to make sure we get the structures around those reviews properly in place to make sure that if you are asking for witnesses to appear, they are properly remunerated for their time, and look at making sure that the formal review can do its job. Sometimes I suspect that it may well be better in the interests of public policy to have a flexible formal review structure in place so that we are conducting formal reviews on a regular basis rather than sitting back and doing nothing and then having to have a royal commission because something has gone awry. Empowering the formal review structure is really important. It will ensure an improvement in the quality of public policy in the state.

It is also important in relation to the bill that we are also looking at allowing royal commissions and boards of inquiry to continue their work and, more importantly, to address matters such as updating their terms of reference or extending their reporting date. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran) — I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015. This bill has two parts — a committee section and an inquiry section — and I will speak first to the committee part. I will now move my reasoned amendment, which specifically relates to the committee part of the bill. I move:

> That all the words after 'That' be omitted with the view of inserting in their place the words 'this house refuses to read

> this bill a second time until consultation has taken place with members of Parliament regarding the number, structure and functions of parliamentary committees'.

The Greens are moving this reasoned amendment because, as with our previous reasoned amendment in the last sitting week regarding sessional orders, we feel that the new Parliament, with its changed make-up of increased party representation here in the lower house and a very diverse party representation in the other place, provides an ideal opportunity to rethink and review how committees can best work for this Parliament. Firstly, the consultation should look at how other parliaments use their committees. I have had a look at parliaments in other states and countries, including the federal Parliament. Before anyone gets too excited, I am not proposing a study tour or anything like that, but parliaments have various different iterations with joint, standing and select committees, so I feel that a thorough review in that area would be appropriate.

Secondly, we could have a look at the membership structure of committees, and specifically the provision to have temporary participating members of committees rather than simply having full members. I note that this bill collapses a number of committees. Having participatory members of committees would allow members to join committees when that particular committee was investigating an issue or a topic in which that member had expertise or a particular interest. It would allow them to join a committee for the discussion of that issue rather than being a full member of that committee.

The Greens also feel that a consultation process could look at whether it is appropriate for oversight committees such as the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee and the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee to be chaired by a government member, regardless of which party is in government. For those oversight committees the chairmanship should be looked into, because essentially parliamentary committees are a tool of the Parliament. I will quote some information from the federal House of Representatives:

> Parliamentary committees are one mechanism the house uses to keep a check on the activities of the government.

It may be appropriate that we look at those oversight committees. As I said, the committees are a tool of the Parliament. We saw the previous government undertake reviews into significant policy matters — for example, when it looked into adoption and TAFE issues — and I think it would be appropriate that a consultation process about the role of committees take place. The public might see it as a small thing, but I am sure many members consider the work of committees a serious and important matter.

I will move on to the inquiries section of the bill, and I note the contribution from members in regard to new part 7, which clarifies that the government may amend the letters of patent, royal commissions and instruments of appointment of boards of inquiries that were established before the Inquiries Act 2014 commenced. If the government were of the view that this clarification would have a material impact on the ability of royal commissions to act, then I would welcome the opportunity to pass this section of the legislation by splitting it off from the other part of the legislation.

I note that there are two other somewhat minor technical changes in the bill. I am aware that the previous government made changes to the Inquiries Act. At the time the Greens argued that before introducing that legislation the government ideally should have established a committee inquiry that consulted with all relevant stakeholders as to how to legislate for inquiries in the best interest of this state. Now the new government is introducing changes, and it has the opportunity to hold such an inquiry, and the Greens urge it to do so. An inquiry could look at questions such as what is the function of public inquiries, what principles should underlie their use, are the inquiries generally set up only when they are needed and are there examples of cases where an inquiry would have been useful but was not set up. Nothing like that occurred in Victoria before the current legislation was introduced. This is important legislation, and if we are looking at inquiries as a whole, the bill needs to make sure it works for Victoria and is adapted to the needs of all Victorians.

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) — The public view of Parliament is too often distorted through the lens of question time, and like today's question time it sounds and looks like two dogs barking rather than considered debate in the public interest. There is a critical point that we need to understand in relation to what happens within the parliamentary committee system, and it goes to it being a great credit that we are able to address serious issues in the public interest in a considered way, seek bipartisanship and then make the necessary legal changes for systemic change and in some cases for generational change.

The most critical inquiry in the 57th Parliament was the inquiry undertaken by the Family and Community Development Committee into child sexual abuse by religious and other non-government organisations. I had the privilege to be the deputy chair of that committee.

Members of the Liberal Party, The Nationals and the Labor Party were able to work through the deeply concerning issues and hear from members of the public, who sometimes disclosed for the first time what had happened to them, showing enormous fortitude and courage to come before the Parliament to address this issue.

We were able to get to a bipartisan report, which was hailed by the then Attorney-General as a landmark report, the *Betrayal of Trust* report. I remember clearly that we had middle-aged men weeping with joy and we had women who had been silenced by unspeakable crimes since they were girls raising three cheers for the Victorian Parliament on the day more than a year ago when I told survivors that we had won bipartisan support and had secured support across the chamber to implement all the recommendations. That was the key.

The findings revealed a cover-up that killed in religious and other non-government organisations in this state. Heinous crimes were exposed, blighted lives acknowledged and remedies agreed across the political divide. Victims who had been abused physically, emotionally and sexually as innocent children felt vindicated after summoning the fortitude as adults to testify. Survivors waved red balloons and hugged each other during their Rally of Hope on the steps of this Parliament in recognition that after so much suffering at the hands of institutions a measure of trust had finally been restored.

Unfortunately goodwill expired with Victoria's 57th Parliament. Survivors have contacted me expressing dismay that the key recommendations were not implemented, despite incontrovertible evidence that the sexual and physical abuse of children has been endemic for generations in many Victorian public and private institutions. The dark heart of sexual crimes against children has always been individuals and organisations getting away with the use and abuse of power. A recommendation not implemented required non-government organisations to become incorporated and adequately insured where the Victorian government funds them or provides them with tax exemptions or other entitlements. This reform would have provided scrutiny, accountability and compliance, because it paves the way for the organisations to be sued for offences.

Men claiming to represent God committed crimes against children, once hanging offences in Victoria, the parliamentary inquiry revealed. Whether criminal child abuse was concealed because of noble cause corruption or a misplaced sense of loyalty to a higher duty, religious organisations rationalised the most egregious conduct. The Anglican and Catholic churches and the Salvation Army regularly took steps to conceal wrongdoing through wilful blindness and codes of silence, according to their concessions before this inquiry and a substantial body of credible evidence. Jewish and Islamic representative bodies testified that their communities also suffered the scourge of child abuse but experienced difficulties even mentioning that it may have occurred. A similar situation can be expected in other religious, social, sporting and cultural groups where offenders have easy access to children and where, for a range of reasons, abuse has been kept hidden, the inquiry disclosed.

Betrayal of Trust validated the rights of individuals. The failure to introduce an important principle ignores lessons from other jurisdictions. Only organisations that appeared before Victoria's parliamentary inquiry benefit from delays in implementation, anticipating that community outrage and the media spotlight would shift to fresh concerns, leaving them relatively unscathed. Child sexual abuse is too important for politics. It is about crime, not faith, as I have long argued. Church and state must implement recommendations in the public interest no matter who is in power, because if accountability simply involves acceptance of temporary outbursts of anger and nothing more, it is not meaningful, least of all to victims. Worse, it does not provide any greater protection in the future for our children.

With this bill today we go to a critical issue in the ongoing examination of child sexual abuse. The work that was done through the *Betrayal of Trust* report and by the Victorian Parliament is being echoed nationally, as other inquiries have discovered internationally. To get to the heart of the matter we need to amend the Inquiries Act 2014 to clarify that the Governor in Council may amend the letters patent of a royal commission, such as the McClellan Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, or an instrument of appointment of a board of inquiry that was established prior to commencement of the Inquiries Act to facilitate the continued operation of that royal commission or board. This piece of legislation is vital.

In the 57th Parliament the reason that the then government gave for not implementing all the recommendations, as it said it would, as we had bipartisan support, was that it was waiting for the royal commission to hand down its findings. We are now in a situation where it could jeopardise this process. During the debate we have had shifts in position by the Liberal Party, which is now calling for the bill to be split. We cannot play politics with this issue. It is too important

and always has been. This should be addressed, and this bill should be passed for this issue alone.

I will go now to some of the other points that have been raised in the debate. What this bill is looking to do is to provide new committees with exactly the same functions as the committees that they will replace. It will enable them to inquire into the same subject matter, and that is the critical point. That is the crux of the matter. It is all about the references that are given to address what needs to be done. If we go through the detail, we will see that some of the committees have had their titles changed to give them a stronger focus on what needs to be done right now in our community to deal with unemployment, the changing nature of work and the demise of the automotive industry. An entire industry is being lost, and the impact will be felt most in this state.

We have six existing joint investigatory committees, which will be formed into three. The first of the new committees is the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee, which will undertake the functions of the current Economic Development, Infrastructure and Outer Suburban/Interface Services Committee and the Education and Training Committee. To return to the point about references, even with a title as long as the previous one was, that committee was given a reference into marine safety. I was deputy chair of the committee. What was the direct relevance of marine safety to that committee? That was something that should have been done by the department responsible for police and emergency services. Let us not kid ourselves about what that was about. It comes down to the references — to their time lines and to their appropriateness. My argument is that this is a much better frame of reference to deliver what needs to be done.

Similarly with law reform, the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee will undertake the functions of the current Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee and the Road Safety Committee. That issue is clearly covered as well. The same applies to the third new committee that is going to be established. This house must pass this bill, because it goes to the heart of the issue of the *Betrayal of Trust* report.

Ms ASHER (Brighton) — I too wish to make a couple of comments in relation to the Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015, and reiterate the coalition's opposition to this bill. There are a number of basic functions undertaken by the bill, and I will confine my comments to the structure of the parliamentary committee system. My having been a member of this place for over 22 years, most members would know that I am a strong supporter of the committee system. The committees do very important work.

Currently there are six committees, which will be merged to form three new committees. The Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee will undertake the functions of the current Economic Development, Infrastructure and Outer Suburban/Interface Services Committee and the Education and Training Committee. The Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee will undertake the functions of the current Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the Rural and Regional Committee. Much has been made of that by previous speakers. The Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee will undertake the functions of the current Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee and the very important Road Safety Committee, which over the decades has achieved an enormous amount for the people of Victoria.

One of the reasons we are opposing this bill is that there are two problems for the Labor Party in its framing of the bill. The first problem is that the Labor Party forgot that Victoria is not a unicameral system. There is an upper house in the state of Victoria. The reasoned amendment moved by the member for Prahran, on behalf of the Greens, goes to the fact that if the Labor Party wants a bill to pass this Parliament it will need to have some discussion with opposition party members, be they Greens, coalition or any of the other range of people in the upper house.

The other problem for the Labor Party, and why I am so excited to speak on this bill, is that this bill is in direct contrast to the way the Labor Party behaved in opposition when the coalition, in government, sought to change the structure of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003. The coalition government sought on two occasions to change the structure of the Parliamentary Committees Act.

I have heard some reasonable comments by government members who have spoken on the bill already, but I would give a piece of gratuitous advice to those on the government side, particularly the new ones. They might want to look at the history of some of these matters before they blindly jump in, support their cabinet and make an idiot of themselves. Unfortunately the Labor Party's track record on amendments to the Parliamentary Committees Act is one of complete and utter obstruction.

When the coalition government sought to amend the Parliamentary Committees Act in 2011, it was hoping to make small changes in relation to the membership of committees and what numbers would constitute a quorum, but the Labor opposition vigorously opposed those very simple changes. The Labor Party had not provided enough members to participate in the committees: it offered only seven upper house members, which was the reason the government sought to institute the changes to the legislation.

In her contribution to debate on the Parliamentary Committees Amendment Bill 2011, on page 747 of *Hansard* of 23 March 2011, the member for Bendigo East, who was then the manager of opposition business and is now Leader of the House, said:

> The amendments in this bill seem to be what could be described as a ruthless attempt by the government not only to change the requirements of the Parliament but also to reduce scrutiny of the activities of the government.

These were minor changes that the government of the time was seeking to introduce. Recorded on the same page of *Hansard*, the member for Bendigo East said:

> I think it is a real shame that at these early stages of this parliamentary term we are already seeing that the government is more willing to use its numbers —

as the current government is intending to do in this place —

> in a very blunt, ruthless way rather than to take a reasonable approach to working things through with the opposition.

The member for Bendigo East, when she was in opposition, wanted to have issues worked through with her and the opposition, but now this Labor government has just introduced into Parliament a bill stating exactly what it wants to do. This bill stands in complete contrast to the way the Labor Party approached this matter when it was in opposition. In her contribution to that same debate in 2011, the member for Bendigo East said:

> What they —

coalition government members —

> want to see is a reduction in the scrutiny that is applied to the operations of government.

I put it to the house that if it were a reduction in the scrutiny of the operations of government when the Labor Party was in opposition, then ipso facto it must be a reduction in the scrutiny of the operations of government when the Labor Party is in government, and Labor cannot budge from that position.

I now move on to 2013, when the coalition government attempted to merge four committees into two. We tried to merge some committees, in much the same way as the government is seeking to now, though on a much lesser scale. I might also add that two new committees had been established, the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee and the Accountability and Oversight Committee. We in government moved to merge four committees into two. We are now seeing six committees merge into three, and we will apply the same logic Labor applied to our activities in government.

The member for Bendigo East is just a gift that keeps on giving. I refer to her contribution to the debate on 17 April 2013, when she said that the then government was 'winding back scrutiny' and accused it of 'reducing opportunities for members of Parliament to serve as members of committees' and of 'being consistent in undermining the parliamentary committee system'. If a merger of committees was undermining the parliamentary committees system in 2013, surely it follows that it is an undermining of the parliamentary committees system now. Of course this was one of the points made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition when he spoke on this bill.

The member for Bendigo East also said in this 2013 debate:

> It is not merging four parliamentary committees into two … but it is abolishing four parliamentary committees.

That was her thesis: that if you merge a committee, you abolish it. Oddly enough, the member for Bendigo East then went on to argue that because the coalition government was merging the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee and the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee meant that it did not care about those committees. Surely it follows suit that if that is the argument in opposition, it should be the argument in government. Indeed I note that this is one of the committees that is being further merged — further dwindled and further diluted in its capacity to do its work.

I continue on with comments of the member for Bendigo East. I guess this is the crux of her argument at the time:

> When the number of committees is reduced it will mean they will be doing fewer inquiries, and the only people who will benefit from that are members of the government, who do not want the light shone on issues that may embarrass them, may expose their policy failures or — heaven forbid, as we have seen this week — may expose grubby, potentially corrupt matters that breach parliamentary privilege. That is the true

> reason why the important work of parliamentary committees is being restricted and why the parliamentary committees are being gagged and starved of funds. It is all because, firstly, the government does not want to do the hard work, but most importantly I believe, secondly, government members are just not prepared to stand themselves up for scrutiny.

Again, if this argument held in opposition for the now Leader of the House, one of the most senior members of this government, surely it then holds that the reason the government is merging these committees is that the government wishes to avoid parliamentary scrutiny and it is too lazy to provide members of Parliament to actually populate the committees and do that work.

I am delighted to have had the opportunity to say a few words on the Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015. I think what is good for the goose is good for the gander. Labor vigorously opposed two parliamentary committee restructures when it was in opposition. Labor members used language such as 'seeking to avoid scrutiny' and seeking to collapse the amount of scrutiny of Parliament. They used that form of language in opposition. We too oppose the fact that this newly minted Labor government is seeking to avoid scrutiny, which is one of the Parliament's fundamental roles. I wish the government really well in dealing with the upper house.

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie) — It is my pleasure to rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015. It is nice to follow the member for Brighton and to hear voice again. She made some useful comments, and I will get to those a little later.

The bill has two broad purposes, the first being to amend the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 to reduce the number of joint investigatory committees from 12 to 9. The second purpose is to make minor and technical amendments to the Inquiries Act 2014. The bill seeks to merge six investing joint investigatory committees into three new committees. The Economic Development, Infrastructure and Outer Suburban/Interface Services Committee will be merged with the Education and Training Committee to create a new Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee. The committee will inquire into education development, education and skills. Essentially the committee will go in a new direction in terms of lifelong learning. The new Labor government is keen to put education front and centre, whether it be from our numberplates to putting back the $1 billion into education that from the previous government ripped out. The committee will look into the TAFE sector and how to make it more sustainable.

The Environment and Natural Resources Committee will merge with the Rural and Regional Committee to create a new Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee. I would have thought the opposition would support this one. This committee could look at the opposition's policy of trying to commercialise our national parks. The former government wanted to rip up our national parks and make them purely commercial entities. This committee could provide an ideal investigative report on what that policy was and how we can look into it. That could be a useful inquiry for that committee.

The Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee will be merged with Road Safety Committee to create a new Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee. This committee would inquire into matters relating to law reform, drug use, crime and road safety. I was very proud to be a member of the Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee in the previous Parliament, and I brought in the committee's two-volume report into ice. The report attracted wide media attention. It was a groundbreaking report in terms of its examination of how New Zealand halved the use of methamphetamine, also known as P in New Zealand — from the New Zealand Prime Minister's leadership down.

One of the key recommendations of the report was that the Premier set up a ministerial task force and take the lead on this. The former Premier was fairly silent once the report came out. He announced a policy on sniffer dogs, which the committee did not even look at. You will not see mention of sniffer dogs in this 500-page report, but for some reason the former Napthine government thought sniffer dogs was the answer. As the Leader of the Opposition, the Premier knew sniffer dogs would not provide the complete answer, and as opposition leader he led the debate on tackling ice. Now we see he has not just been a man of words; he has been a man of action. He has committed to a task force to come up with a real plan to tackle ice within the first 100 days of government, and the substantial inquiry that was undertaken will inform that task force and any plan that the Premier announces.

Overall we received 78 submissions, conducted 113 public hearings and heard from more than 220 witnesses. The committee produced a 2-volume, 32-chapter, 900-page report with some 54 recommendations. This body of work will be instrumental in tackling the ice epidemic going forward. There were other inquiries that were undertaken by the Law Reform Committee — which can still conduct inquiries in the future — and the Acting Speaker, the member for Ivanhoe, was quite

instrumental in some of these inquiries, as was the former member for Prahran.

The inquiry into sexting looked at issues around children under the age of 16 being put on the sex offenders register for sending images of one another. This was groundbreaking, cutting-edge reform to make the laws adaptable. The former member for Prahran did a good job as chair of that committee, and was supported by the members for Brunswick and Ivanhoe on our side. They were at the forefront in terms of supporting that report. On our side, the members for Broadmeadows and Thomastown, along with members on the other side, produced the groundbreaking report entitled *Betrayal of Trust*, which made recommendations on where we go into the future to make sure that what happened in the past never happens again. It is a commendable report. This type of inquiry will still happen in the future with the new committee structure.

The members for Brunswick and Prahran contributed to the inquiry into donor-conceived children. This inquiry also attracted media interest. In fact the television program, *Australian Story*, did a whole episode on the inquiry. If members look at that what happened at the inquiry, they will see that it started off with the viewpoint that perhaps the donors should be protected. Then it came around to support the interests of the children in the quest to know what the family history was and where they came from.

The opposition has nothing to worry about from this reform. It is about making our committee structures workable and putting them at the forefront of the new Parliament. The bill should be embraced as a way to really make our committee structure more seamless and more transparent. It will attempt to minimise a lot of the disruption that happens with joint investigative activities and ensure that our joint investigatory committees continue to be strong and bipartisan.

One of the things I noticed as the previous Parliament came to an end was that in their valedictory speeches almost every member, from the member for Hawthorn through to others, spoke about their committee work and the importance of committees, including the importance of committees adapting to the times and changing. My experience of working on a couple of inquiries was that it was a great way for me to get to know members on the other side, no matter their political persuasion. The committees do important work.

I refer to the report on the inquiry into ice. The editorial in the *Age* of 8 September 2014 is headed 'Ice report must spark comprehensive action' and states about the report released in the final days of the last Parliament:

> The landmark report into methamphetamine, a powerful and highly addictive stimulant, released in recent days by the Victorian Parliament's Law Reform Committee needs to become a catalyst for a comprehensive community offensive against an illicit drug that is causing tragic harm, particularly to young people in regional and rural areas, where youth unemployment is striking hardest.
>
> …
>
> The report, which makes 54 recommendations, must be backed by manifold action.

The editorial describes the report as being 'a compelling call to action' because it reflects the community's concerns. The editorial highlights that alcohol is by far the worst drug but states that the use of ice needs to be tackled. It refers to a key recommendation that was ignored but was taken up by the new Labor Premier. It states that the recommendation was to create a ministerial council, led by the Premier, to engineer a statewide response to ensure that communities have a strategy to deal with crystal methamphetamine use. As I said, the Premier has very much taken up the baton and is taking action on that.

Whether it be the *Betrayal of Trust* report, the reforms recommended by the inquiry into sexting or the inquiry into donor-conceived children and the rights of those children to know where they come from, in many respects committee inquiries inform what the laws of this state should be. You, Acting Speaker, had an important role in the sexting inquiry as well as the inquiry into donor-conceived children. As I said, often during an inquiry people have the time and resources to really get down into the issue. The inquiry into donor-conceived children began with looking at the rights of the donor but by the time the inquiry was finished it was about the rights of the children to know where they came from — that is, their family history.

All committee work to date has been substantial. It has informed Parliament. Almost all members from both sides of Parliament when they leave this place look back on their committee work fondly. It will continue to be a key part of the work of this Parliament. The reforms to committees that will make sure that they are transparent, workable and highlight the subject matters that are most pertinent to society today are very important. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr GIDLEY (Mount Waverley) — I rise this afternoon to make a contribution to the debate on the Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015. I do so with particular reference

to the changes made by the bill to the joint investigatory committees. The bill amends the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 by merging six existing joint investigatory committees to form just three new committees. If the bill is passed the first of those committees will be the Economic, Education, Job and Skills Committee, which will undertake the functions of the current Economic Development, Infrastructure and Outer Suburban/Interface Services Committee and the Education and Training Committee. The second committee established by the bill is the Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee, which will undertake the functions of the current Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the Rural and Regional Committee. The third joint investigatory committee established by the bill is the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee, which will undertake the functions of the current Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee and the Road Safety Committee.

A number of speakers across the Parliament have clearly articulated the work that committees have done during past parliaments, including the most recent Parliament. I refer to a number of the reports. The Education and Training Committee tabled a number of reports of inquiries into important topics. During the hearings of those inquiries Victorians had the opportunity for greater engagement with their parliamentary representatives based on the terms of reference of the committee. To name just two, the Education and Training Committee conducted an inquiry into the approaches to homework in Victorian schools and an inquiry into the extent, benefits and potential of music education in Victorian schools.

The Environment and Natural Resources Committee also did important work. In its inquiry into heritage tourism and ecotourism in Victoria it considered the opportunities to grow our state, including employment opportunities, while at the same time balancing that against the importance of conservation. The member for Niddrie clearly outlined the report tabled by the Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee following its inquiry into the supply and use of methamphetamines, particularly ice, in Victoria.

The Road Safety Committee produced a report that generated significant interest in my district — that is, the report of its inquiry into motorcycle safety. As many members would know, the issue of motorcycle safety, particularly along freeways such as those that make up the Monash-West Gate corridor, is something that comes up consistently in considering whether the measures that have already been taken by the state of Victoria are effective, whether they are doing more harm than good and also what alternatives there are.

As I said, I mention those reports of inquiries because they are a good snapshot to show that the existing committee structure has served the interests of Parliament and the people of Victoria quite well. That is why it is enormously concerning that this bill changes the status quo by reducing the current number of committees. Many contributors to the debate on this bill have indicated that the current committee structure has worked well. Given that the current structure is working well, as is clearly shown in the good work that the committees have done, it would be odd to look to change the structure.

Given the information provided in the bill, there is really only one reason why a government would seek to make a change to the committee structure, and that is to reduce scrutiny of government. I refer to what was clearly outlined by opposition members, including the member for Brighton, and what members of the government when in opposition in earlier parliaments said about possible changes to parliamentary committees.

It is very clear that, based on the rationale that they would reduce scrutiny, those opposite opposed those changes strenuously. That logic and that reason stand today, as does the record. Yet just 12 weeks into government, just 12 weeks after gaining the ministerial cars and offices, members of this government have already reached such a level of arrogance that they put aside what is on the record — that is, their previous clear opposition to a reduction in the number of parliamentary committees.

That opposition was very successfully prosecuted by those opposite in previous parliaments. They have arrogantly put that aside and now they say, ‘That doesn’t apply anymore. We will hoodwink the Parliament and the people of Victoria, and we will reduce the number of parliamentary committees’. That is being done for one reason only, and that is to reduce the scrutiny of government.

The changes are being made not because of any criticism of reports prepared following inquiries but as a mechanism to reduce the scrutiny of government. It probably should not surprise members that just 12 weeks into this four-year term the arrogance of this government is already on display in reducing scrutiny, because the record of the Victorian branch of the Labor Party is appalling in a number of areas of good governance in the state of Victoria.

Whether it is in the expenditure of public funds on botched projects such as myki, the desalination plant or HealthSMART — a personal pet favourite of the Premier — the record is very clear that in this state Labor has an enormous problem in managing significant budgets made up of valuable taxpayers money. Therefore it should not surprise members that in just 12 weeks the government has come in to reduce the transparency and scrutiny of government under the parliamentary committees structure. It is being done to ensure that Victorians are less able to hold this government to account through there being less transparency in and less scrutiny of the way the government spends money. It is true to form.

What have we seen thus far in terms of the treatment of Parliament by this government? Firstly, we have had the introduction of a bill that is clearly going to reduce the scrutiny on this government in terms of the committee structure. Secondly, just 12 weeks after members of this government got their ministerial cars, offices and spin doctors, they defied the Parliament and clearly indicated that they will defy the Parliament when it seeks information on government contracts. So the government has reduced the number of committees and thumbed its nose at Parliament when it sought information on behalf of the people of Victoria. That is two things in just 12 weeks — goodness knows where we will be after four years in terms of scrutiny, arrogance and the government thumbing its nose at Parliament and the will of the people.

Thirdly, the government has clearly followed its consistent form by reducing opportunities for debate and the ability of Victorians to look at how the government is spending and managing their money — that is, the number of hours this place sits outside of normal business hours. That is just another example of the changes to the sessional orders that — there is no question about it — have reduced the capacity of people to hold this government to account.

Those are three actions in 12 weeks which not only are clearly aimed at reducing scrutiny and transparency, as I said, but also go so strongly and clearly against the propositions put by the members of the then opposition, which are on the record. They are not my words and they are not the words of the members for Brighton or Euroa; they are the words of members of the then opposition, which were very clear in relation to the negative consequences that reducing the opportunities of parliamentary committees would have for Victoria. It is crystal clear. Yet 12 weeks after Labor came to government, Labor members come here and say, 'Forget about everything we said in opposition. Forget about the commitments, whether they be about releasing contracts, accepting and obeying the will of the Parliament regarding the release of contracts, the sitting hours of Parliament or the parliamentary committee structure. Forget about what we said and look at what we are doing now'.

It is the height of arrogance to think that the people of Victoria, through their parliamentary representatives, can be hoodwinked. It is holding the Parliament in contempt. It is wrong. It is against the principles of good governance. There is only one conclusion that can be drawn as to why this government, just 12 weeks in, wants to defy the Parliament, shut it down, strip resources from it and silence it by reducing the number of parliamentary committees on offer, and that is that the government is afraid of scrutiny. It is afraid of transparency. It is afraid of the nightmares of myki, the desalination plant, the Premier's pet HealthSMART project and the other projects which Labor's record clearly shows it cannot manage. It is worried that those nightmares will reappear and it is not prepared to confront that, therefore it will shut down, defy, silence and strip the Parliament. That is why this bill should be opposed.

Mr HOWARD (Buninyong) — It is good to see you in the chair, Acting Speaker. I am pleased to add my comments on the Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015. To start off, I cannot follow the member for Mount Waverley without commenting on his contribution, because he immediately did what I guess oppositions have done in the past — that is, try to paint this legislation as a dark act undertaken by a newly elected government that is afraid of scrutiny.

Clearly we on this side of the house are not afraid of scrutiny. We welcome scrutiny, and we are pleased that when we put ourselves in front of the Victorian people for scrutiny in November last year they said, 'Yes, we want the Labor Party to lead our government in Victoria. We don't want another four years of the Liberal-Nationals government we just had, because it didn't do much. It was a very disappointing government. We want a progressive government that is going to get in there and deliver for all Victorians'. We on this side of the house are certainly not afraid of scrutiny.

The bill is not about scrutiny; it is about practicality. We recognise that we need to get on with appointing parliamentary committees, because they form an important function within the running of our parliamentary system here and we want to appoint new committees. But there are practicalities involved in coming to government, looking at the issues associated

with the committees and determining the best structure for them. Obviously at the start of any term a government is going to review the committee structure it inherited from the previous Parliament and look at making some changes. Clearly there are practical issues to do with ensuring that members of Parliament are not overworked and that we have the right number of members available to be on committees.

The Liberal-Nationals coalition in the last Parliament experienced the same problem. What did it do? When it was initially elected in 2010 it kept the number of committees the same rather than reducing them, but it reduced the number of members of Parliament who could be on those committees, so we went from having seven members on most of those committees to having five. That put a lot more work on those five members on each committee. Sometimes one or two of them may not have been able to attend an event or public hearing, which meant the committee was down to three members. What the former government did — keeping the same number of committees in place but reducing the number of members on those committees — was not a practical solution.

This government does not want to reduce the number back to five. We want to have more members of Parliament on committees. We have also recognised that there has been a practical issue with the way the committees have functioned. For example, in the last term of Parliament I was on the Rural and Regional Committee. One of our reports related to looking at education or training opportunities for young people who wished to go on to a career in agriculture, so we undertook studies associated with that, but what else happened? At the same time, or nearly the same time, the Education and Training Committee was given a very similar reference, and it also went around the state. In fact members of the Rural and Regional Committee bumped into members of the Education and Training Committee on a number of occasions and found that they were going to an education and training institution that we had just visited a few days before, conducting a similar inquiry.

There have therefore been overlaps in inquiries in so many areas in the past, so to have the six parliamentary committees we had in the last Parliament reorganised, recognising there are connections between them, is a very practical and sensible way to go.

What have we proposed? One proposal relates to the Education and Training Committee and the Economic Development, Infrastructure and Outer Suburban/Interface Services Committee, which was itself a committee that had been combined under the former government. As we know, it had two bites at changing the committees; half way through or in the latter stages of its four-year term it collapsed four committees down to two. It is hard to know whether or not it was that the government had found that having five members on a committee was not enough. Perhaps when the member for Mount Waverley said we were trying to avoid scrutiny, he was actually thinking about why those opposite did what they did back in 2013. What he has tried to accuse us of today is perhaps referring to the motives of the then government in collapsing the committees. In contrast, our motives are practical motives; we are trying to make the committees function more successfully. We are not reducing the resourcing of those committees or of the committee structure at all. We are simply compacting committees where they have cross links.

As I said, it is proposed that the Economic Development, Infrastructure and Outer Suburban/Interface Services Committee be combined with the Education and Training Committee. Clearly when you look at economic development you are looking at skills development, at education and at jobs all linked in together, so why not make it one committee? There is some clear practicality there. In terms of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the Rural and Regional Committee, again I note that the Environment and Natural Resources Committee already has a reference before it in relation to issues associated with Fiskville. When you look at that matter, you ask yourself, 'Where is Fiskville?', and you note that it is in rural and regional Victoria and that the matter is to do with the Country Fire Authority. It clearly has a link to both rural and regional Victoria and to the environment, so it makes absolute sense to combine those committees if you are looking to compact the number of committees.

Lastly, it is suggested that the Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee be combined with the Road Safety Committee to create a committee that looks more broadly at community safety issues. Linking those committees makes practical sense. I heard the member for Mornington talk about the benefits of having had the then Law Reform Committee and the then Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee linked together during the last Parliament: they could share skills, and they had a natural linkage. We have therefore already heard, during this present debate, from the opposition about there being practical linkages proposed between these committees that make sense.

Let us be clear about this. Members on this side of the house are not doing this for the wrong reasons. We are doing it so that we can make these committees work,

with enough members of Parliament on each committee to make them function well. It is always a shame but I guess in this system of Parliament also natural that the opposition opposes legislation rather than deciding to work in a bipartisan way to make this place work better. It is in the nature of our parliamentary system that we have an opposition that wants to oppose the government. That perhaps emphasises further the value of our parliamentary committees. I have really enjoyed being on parliamentary committees, because they bring members of both parties and both houses together to work on issues.

Working together helps to break down some of those unhelpful aspects of the Westminster democratic system we have inherited — a system of governments and oppositions — as members of Parliament come together within our committee structure to reach agreement. In the parliamentary committees I have been on I have been really pleased to see that members from both parties and both houses have been able to work together. We have produced joint committee reports with very little argument overall, and we have found that the committees have been very helpful and good ways of developing social relations with people on the other side of the house. I am therefore certainly pleased to see this bill before the house.

I am hopeful but not confident that the bill will have a speedy passage. I will be disappointed if it does not, because we want to get on with appointing the committees and getting into some committee work, and if the bill is held up either in this house or in the other house, clearly we will not have our committees in place for some time. These are sensible, practical changes that the government is putting together. We would welcome some cooperation from the opposition with respect to this matter. We would welcome it not trying to do the usual thing of opposing simply for the sake of opposing but looking at this as a practical way forward and recognising that we want to have at least seven members on all committees and that there are clearly linkages between the committees this government is proposing to join together. I commend this bill to the house, and I hope we can get on and appoint committees and see some progressive work done to assist this Parliament.

Ms RYAN (Euroa) — I am pleased to rise to contribute to this debate on the Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015. The Nationals oppose this bill, which seeks to change the structure of parliamentary committees. Those opposite are seeking to rationalise six existing joint investigatory committees into three new committees in addition to making a number of minor and technical changes. The bill proposes amalgamating the Economic Development, Infrastructure and Outer Suburban/Interface Services Committee and the Education and Training Committee to create the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee; amalgamating the Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee with the Road Safety Committee to create the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee; and amalgamating the Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the Rural and Regional Committee to form the Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee.

These changes may seem minor, but they will have a profound impact. Members opposite argue that the functions of these committees will be exactly the same, but it will not be possible for these committees to do twice as much work as committees did during the last Parliament. I would submit that either those opposite are too lazy to do the work that is needed on parliamentary committees or they are seeking to stifle debate on these very important issues. The government wants to restrict these committees to prevent scrutiny, and earlier in the debate we heard the member for Brighton outline some of the very hypocritical comments of the member for Bendigo East, who described a previous effort in the last Parliament to make some sensible changes to the committee structure as 'gagging' the committees. It is interesting to now see a role reversal on the other side of the house.

How quickly things change. Less than a year ago the now Attorney-General released Labor's election platform, which promised more transparency and more scrutiny. In a media release titled 'More government scrutiny under Labor reform plan', the Attorney-General said that 'an Andrews Labor government will not be afraid of genuine scrutiny'. In the first couple of weeks of this Parliament we have already seen how untrue that is, with the farce that question time has become and the apparent abolition of Dorothy Dixers, which have simply been replaced by ministers statements.

I am particularly concerned that the changes outlined in this bill will take away a dedicated focus on rural and regional Victoria. There will be less opportunity for regional Victorians to have input into public policy, particularly through public hearings. The Rural and Regional Committee was tasked with two main focus points, being the provision of services to regional Victoria and the development of regional Victoria, and the committee's reports over the years have provided incredibly important insights into the issues and opportunities that affect rural and regional Victoria.

For example, the inquiry into the opportunities for increasing exports of goods and services from regional Victoria, undertaken in the last Parliament, found that to grow regional exports much-needed government support was required to identify and support our competitive advantages, reduce costs of production and increase efficiencies while also seeking greater access to existing and emerging export markets. The report of that inquiry acknowledged the critical role that rural and regional Victoria plays in the state's exports, in particular in relation to primary production like agriculture. It also noted that in the near future agriculture will become increasingly important to the state's economy, particularly with the growing wealth of the large developing economies to Australia's north. Victoria's dairy and meat sectors are already recognised throughout the world as being among the best in the marketplace.

Outbound and inbound trade missions and other international representations from the Victorian and commonwealth governments are critical to opening up new and emerging markets to greater exports from regional Victoria. This was a major focus of the coalition government through its $50 million international engagement strategy. In 2011, I was pleased to accompany the then Premier, Ted Baillieu, to China, where we took some 400 businesses and 600 delegates on the largest ever trade mission from Victoria. If members were to speak to any of the delegates on that trade mission, they would get a real sense of how important it was to them and to their businesses.

However, in the early days of this Labor government we have already seen that it simply does not understand the importance of agricultural exports. There was no ministerial representation at the Gulfood expo in Dubai this year. A spokesperson for the Minister for Agriculture said, when questioned about that decision, that 'future overseas visits and trade missions will be considered in the context of the minister's existing and future priorities'. What could be more important to the agriculture minister than securing new export markets for the industry?

In that same report on increasing exports, the Rural and Regional Committee acknowledged the expectation that governments would provide a world-class telecommunications network across rural and regional Victoria that meets the demands of businesses, including Victoria's growing tourism market and education sector. The coalition government responded to that with a $40 million blackspot program, which was widely well received throughout regional communities. That program was designed to leverage money from the commonwealth's $100 million fund.

Across my electorate there are communities that face serious challenges as a result of communications blackspots, including Goorambat, Tatong, Reedy Creek, Broadford, Tarcombe and Upton Hill, just to name a few. As the Rural and Regional Committee noted, addressing these blackspots and providing adequate communications infrastructure across electorates such as Euroa does not just address the serious risk to emergency services but also grows businesses and jobs. Of all the 23 recommendations, one of the most critical was that the Victorian government continue to support policies that grow regional towns and cities.

Another inquiry of the Rural and Regional Committee during the last Parliament was the inquiry into the extent and nature of disadvantage and inequity in rural and regional Victoria, which is an issue that The Nationals members in this house are passionate about. It was another incredibly important piece of work. The committee examined the evidence of disadvantage in rural and regional Victoria with a view to identifying the social groups most affected by disadvantage and the geographical locations in rural and regional Victoria where disadvantage is most severe. The purpose was to prioritise these areas for future action by government.

Again we see that the role of these committees and inquiries is to highlight priority areas for government to act upon, and that underpins the concerns on this side of the house that in collapsing these committees we will see a reduction in the scrutiny of government policy and in the number of ideas that can be put forward to government. If we look through the recommendations of these committees and note the number of recommendations that are adopted by government, we can see just how important they are in policy formulation.

In conclusion, members opposite claim they care about regional communities and regional industries, but they do not care enough to give them a dedicated voice in Parliament. By not ensuring that the scrutiny of government policy for rural and regional Victoria will continue, they have seriously let regional communities down. While the opposition would be happy to have a discussion with the government about how the committee system can best operate, it cannot support the rationalisation of committees in a manner that will reduce representation of the issues that are important to rural and regional Victoria.

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) — I am pleased to make a contribution to the debate on the Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015 and pick up on some of the comments of previous speakers, particularly the member for Buninyong, who has a lot of experience in this place and a lot of committee experience too. He made the point that the arrangement put in place by the previous government — that is, of having more committees with less representation from parliamentarians, who are elected by Victorians — was not satisfactory. Not only that, but a lack of resourcing meant that many committees had to function less than optimally because of cuts to committee budgets by the previous government.

When we talk about scrutiny, it is important to note that the Liberal government cut funding to the Parliament and to committees, and that lack of resourcing in the committee structure meant there was less accountability and less scrutiny by the independent, bipartisan and cross-party committees. Their resourcing was less under the previous government. When we talk about scrutiny, the previous government should consider the cuts it made to the committee process, which undermined the capacity of those committees to effectively carry out inquiries into the references given to them by the government of the day.

I note that the bill clarifies that witnesses who are requested to give evidence to formal reviews are entitled to be reimbursed for expenses when the formal review's establishing instrument authorises this. That is about making sure we provide adequate resourcing to committees and the structure that is in place.

In picking up the comments of the previous speaker, the member for Euroa, I hope her experience of the committee process in the coming years is more positive than she sought to outline to the house. We have seen a lot of evolution in the way committees have been established in this place to reflect changes over time. We have had interface and outer suburban committees established in the past by the Bracks and Brumby governments, which is also about acknowledging the role of growing communities in outer suburban Melbourne and making sure their issues and concerns are raised and investigated by members in this place.

I was fortunate to serve as a member of the Law Reform Committee, a committee that was scrapped by the previous government despite three very effective reports that saw changes to legislation and also changes to the way in which the law operates here in Victoria. When I came into this place the then Speaker, the former member for Bass, outlined to new members that their work on the committees would be some of the most valuable work they would do. That is absolutely true.

I was pleased to serve with the former member for Prahran, Clem Newton-Brown, along with the member for Morwell and the member for Brunswick on the Law Reform Committee. We had to do that work with fewer members than committees had previously had because of the way in which the previous government sought to structure committees. The work was onerous at times because we had to spread that work amongst fewer people. As I made the point before, the budgets for committees had been cut by the Baillieu and Napthine governments.

There were three reports in particular that we worked on. One was on an inquiry into sexting laws in Victoria. To outline to the house some of the effective roles committees can play in this place, I note that one of the key recommendations from that inquiry is for:

> … the Victorian government to introduce legislation to create an offence for the distribution of intimate images or video of a person without consent, and to introduce legislation so that minors who make or possess sexually explicit images or video of themselves or their peers cannot be charged with child pornography offences.

The report also states:

> While in most circumstances little or no harm is done to willing participants in sexting, real and significant harm can occur when images are distributed to other people without consent.

This is the digital footprint people these days can leave out there for all time. After we made those recommendations the government responded. We had changes to legislation that were effective in protecting the rights of individuals and also making sure we were reflecting community attitudes. Sometimes people can make mistakes in the digital world, and their digital footprint is there for all time.

We also produced a report on access to the justice system by people with an intellectual disability or cognitive impairment in which we investigated and recognised the important role played by police along with the courts and the legal profession in safeguarding the rights of all people with an intellectual disability or cognitive impairment. While the previous government did not pick up on any of the 47 recommendations we made in that report, it did raise a number of issues and present a number of recommendations. The previous government chose to ignore those recommendations. While the committee process is important, it is often only as good as the reference it is given by the government of the day and the willingness of the

government of the day to act on the recommendations of the bipartisan committees.

Another example of the work with which I was involved as part of the Law Reform Committee was the inquiry into access for donor-conceived people to information about their records. The committee's press release of 28 March 2012 outlines the issue:

> Under current Victorian legislation, people who were conceived using gametes donated before 1 July 1988 have no rights to any information about their donors. People conceived using gametes donated between 1 July 1988 and 31 December 1997 can access information about donors if the donor consents to release of that information. By contrast, people conceived using gametes donated after 1 January 1998 have unconditional access to identifying information about their donors.

The point we were making was that there are three laws that applied that were based on, in effect, when you were born. I quote from the former member for Prahran, Clem Newton-Brown:

> While the committee recognises that donors who donated their gametes before 1988 did so on the basis of anonymity, the committee considers that donor-conceived people have a right to know the identity of the person who contributed half of their biological make-up …
>
> The committee is convinced that this right must be given precedence, even over the wishes of those donors who would like to remain anonymous.

That report was released in March 2012. The government had six months to respond. We got a one-page document saying that the government was going to take more time to respond, but it was a year to 18 months before we got a further response from the government at the time. It chose not to take action that we thought would have been satisfactory.

The member for Brunswick and I worked on a private members bill, which was introduced in the other place by the now Leader of the Government in the upper house. It was all about trying to bring about change to those circumstances that were recognised in the reference we were given — change that responded to the recommendations of the report we tabled in the Parliament. We continued to fight and lobby and bring private members bills to this place to seek action on this issue, where the government of the day, despite having given the reference to the committee, had chosen to ignore the committee's recommendations.

The 2014 Victorian ALP platform says on page 71 under the heading 'Rights of donor-conceived people to know their genetic heritage':

> Labor will:
>
> Introduce legislation that ensures all donor-conceived people have the right to identifying information about their donors, regardless of when they were born and whether or not the donors believed they would remain anonymous
>
> Ensure the legislation contains the safeguard of contact vetoes for those donors who do not want contact with their offspring, in recognition of the fact that donors may well have more than one donor child

This is in the Victorian Labor Party platform. It is going to be introduced in a bill that will come before this place. It will be introduced by the Minister for Health. It is a Labor commitment that was supported by the Victorian people at the election. It goes to show again — and this brings me back to my point — that the work of committees in this place is critical, but it can only be as good as the references given to committees by the government and the government's willingness to act on the recommendations of those bipartisan committees and to resource them adequately to be able to do their work. The previous government cut funding to parliamentary committees and therefore cut the level of scrutiny that was available to members of this place.

The changes that the Andrews government is making to the committees structure will make the committees more effective, and I am sure that the recommendations that committees make will be given due consideration by this government. I look forward to continuing to meet our pledge to act on the recommendations of the Law Reform Committee's work in relation to donor-conceived people.

Ms KAIROUZ (Kororoit) — Firstly, Acting Speaker, I congratulate you on your appointment to that role. Today I rise also to speak on the Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015. As the house has heard, the bill has two broad purposes. Firstly, it amends the Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Act 2003 to reduce the number of joint investigatory committees, reducing the number of committees from 12 to 9. Secondly, it amends the Inquiries Act 2014.

Joint investigatory committees are essential to the transparency of our Parliament. Their role in conducting inquiries into legislation allows proper scrutiny of the workings of government to take place and ensures that there can be adequate participation in the legislative process. The greater the input there is into the legislative process, the better the outcomes are for the Victorian people. Joint investigatory committees have played an important role for the Victorian

community throughout the history of this Parliament. Take, for example, the Family and Community Development Committee inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other organisations, which the member for Broadmeadows talked about earlier. The inquiry received 578 written submissions from the community. It heard from many witnesses who spoke for the first time about their abuse. That prompted the government to implement important recommendations to keep Victorian children safe, as well as to ensure that religious and other organisations are equipped with strong approaches to prevent and report child abuse when it happens. Joint investigatory committees such as that show the impressive work that members from both sides of the house can do when they work together.

I point out for the benefit of the new members that joint investigatory committees present an important opportunity for members of all political persuasions to work together, to do so in a professional and sometimes personal way, to research, and to deliver to the government of the day fair, balanced and sound advice in the form of recommendations. Members in previous Parliaments and those in the current Parliament who have been around for a while will all attest to the fact that committee work is the most rewarding work that a member of Parliament can do. It is reports like those from the child abuse inquiry and that to which the member for Ivanhoe referred in his contribution that attest to the great work that members who sat on those committees did.

In order for joint investigatory committees to fulfil their important role in the Victorian Parliament it is essential that they operate efficiently. This bill aims to consolidate functions of the current six joint investigatory committees in three new committees to ensure that they are able to function to the best of their ability and enable the workloads between the different committees to be better distributed. The bill creates new joint investigatory committees in the following ways: the Economic Development, Infrastructure and Outer Suburban/Interface Services Committee and the Education and Training Committee will become the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee; the Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the Rural and Regional Committee will become the Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee; and the Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee and the Road Safety Committee will become the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee.

These changes reflect the many priorities of the current government, including creating more jobs, growing our regions and ensuring that our roads and communities are safe. It is important to note that while the names of the committees are important, it is the references and the policy formation that matter most. These changes will also minimise disruption to the activities of the current joint investigatory committees. The bill enables previous joint investigatory committee inquiries to continue under the new joint investigatory committees. It provides, firstly, for any inquiry that has been referred to a previous joint investigatory committee to be referred to the relevant new joint investigatory committee; and secondly, that any members appointed to a previous joint investigatory committee are now to be appointed to the new relevant investigatory committees. These transitional provisions will ensure that the new joint investigatory committees are able to continue the good work of the committees that they replace.

I also direct the attention of members to the amendments the bill proposes to the Inquiries Act 2014. These minor yet important amendments clarify the circumstances in which witnesses to formal reviews are entitled to be paid expenses and allowances; clarify that royal commissions and boards of inquiry established before the act came into force can continue any current inquiries; clarify that the Governor in Council may amend the establishing instruments of royal commissions or boards of inquiry that were established before the act came into force; and replace the definitions of ‘judicial officer’ and ‘non-judicial member of VCAT’ as these cross-refer to the Judicial Commission Bill 2014, which has not been enacted. These amendments to the Inquiries Act are important, particularly in the case of expenses and allowances for witnesses in formal reviews. These amendments clarify that a formal review witness is entitled to be paid expenses and allowances under certain circumstances. As I mentioned earlier, the amendments also make necessary changes to royal commissions and boards of inquiries that were established prior to the Inquiries Act.

The Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015 makes important changes to both joint investigatory committees and the Inquiries Act. These changes encourage cooperation and promote a transparent and open legislative process. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) — Thank you, Acting Speaker, and I congratulate you on your role today. I rise to follow my colleagues in also speaking in support of this bill and to echo the same sentiments. This bill amends the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 and the Inquiries Act 2014. It will reduce the number of joint investigatory committees from 12 to 9

by merging committees. This will enable Parliament to work effectively, allow members to express their views and provide an opportunity for stakeholders, in particular our communities, to have a say. I repeat that there will be no loss of the functions of previous committees.

One matter that is important to me is that the existing Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee and Road Safety Committee will merge to become the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee. A matter that is extremely important to the electorate of St Albans is clearly safety on our roads — safety for motorists and safety for pedestrians. I know the previous committee did a good job in finding some solutions, but with the new committee there will be an opportunity to find better solutions in relation to safety.

Another matter that is close to me is law reform. A particular issue that is close to my heart is family adoption in this state. At the moment there seems to be a gap where there are adopters who may be discriminated against because of their religion. There will be an opportunity for the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee to address this concern.

There are other important matters, such as crime statistics. In the west, and particularly in the area of St Albans, we can see that crime statistics went up under the previous government. With the joint committee there will be an opportunity for openness and transparency and for there to be a real sense of engagement with stakeholders to look at some real solutions in that area. I reiterate that there will not be a loss of function; this is a change. This government is committed to making sure that there is an honest, transparent and effective way of working within the committee structures. Yes, the names will change but the functions will not change. I commend the bill to the house. In conclusion, as I have made clear, there will be more scrutiny, better consultation and an opportunity for all members of the house to contribute to the committee process.

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) — Thank you, Acting Speaker, and it is good to see you in the Chair. I also rise to support the Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015, which amends both the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 and the Inquiries Act 2014. I will confine my contribution to the debate to the proposal to reduce the number of parliamentary committees by merging some of them.

At the moment there are 12 parliamentary committees, and they will be merged into 9. The Economic Development, Infrastructure and Outer Suburban/Interface Services Committee will merge with the Education and Training Committee and be known as the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee. There will also be a merging of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the Rural and Regional Committee. I am currently a member of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, together with a member on the other side, who is in this chamber. The committee is currently undertaking an inquiry. It is proposed that the new committee will be the Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee. The third merged committee will be the merged Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee and Road Safety Committee, which will be renamed the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee.

As I mentioned, I am confining my contribution to the debate to the merging of parliamentary committees, and it particularly relates to the merging of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the Rural and Regional Committee. I put to the house that this is a good proposal. How many times with inquiries do we hear about concerns expressed and organisations saying that the government operates with a silo mentality — one department does not know what another department is doing, and one organisation does not know what another arm of government is doing? This is a way of bringing together important aspects in the policy area.

When you look at issues concerning the environment and natural resources, you see that they fit so well with rural and regional communities. Often things like the fracking and coal seam gas debate and the timber industry — all the things that require particular policy and have controversy about them — have the greatest impact on people living in rural and regional areas. This seems an absolutely natural fit and is being proposed by the Labor government for very good reason. The ridiculous arguments we hear from the other side, that for some reason a reduction in the number of committees will reduce transparency or the ability to scrutinise government, just do not make sense, particularly if you look at their record on this sort of stuff. For example, in the last term of the Liberal-Nationals government we saw committee member numbers drop from the original seven down to five.

Mrs Fyffe — Speaker, I direct your attention to the state of the house.

Quorum formed.

Ms HALFPENNY — I believe the Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the Rural and Regional Committee are a very good fit for a merger. When I listen to the Greens, it sometimes seems that the environment and natural resources are the province of the inner city, while the direct impact of those issues and policies on people living in rural areas is largely ignored. This affects their livelihoods and the economic development of their communities. It therefore seems fitting that a committee looking at issues around the environment and natural resources would also look at issues affecting rural and regional communities.

The idea that this is somehow an issue of laziness, as the member for Euroa said, is offensive. I have sat on parliamentary committees, including in the last Parliament, and a lot of work, time and effort is put in by all members of those committees. It is not important how many committees there are. A matter is referred to the committee for inquiry, or the government determines that a matter should be inquired into, and it is then up to the members to do their duty, be diligent and work hard to make sure a thorough investigation takes place. Some members have also said that this is an issue of reducing scrutiny. That is a laugh, particularly when you consider the reduction of the number of members on committees in the last Parliament. We now have an increase in numbers from five to seven. That allows for further scrutiny, because there are more members on the committee to share in the work and contribute.

It seems members on the other side are complaining just for the sake of it. It is either that or a complete lack of understanding. I find it incredible that The Nationals would sell out to the Liberal Party, which is doing this for political pointscoring — although I do not think it is succeeding. Members opposite want to try to argue that merging the Environment and Natural Resources Committee with the Rural and Regional Committee is somehow not a good thing. Of course it is a good thing, and it is important. We should all get on with the job of trying to work in the interests of the Victorian people, rather than making a song and dance about the silliest and smallest of issues.

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) — I rise today to speak on the Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015. I must admit that throughout the last two days I have seen more of what I expected Parliament to be — a lot more passion, a couple of smiles, a couple of chuckles and a couple of words across the chamber. It has been good.

The Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015 will amend both the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 and the Inquiries Act 2014, and I do not see any big issue with that. I would like to speak on the Parliamentary Committees Act first. The bill merges six existing joint committees to form three new committees: the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee will undertake the functions of the Economic Development, Infrastructure and Outer Suburban/Interface Services Committee and the Education and Training Committee; the Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee will undertake the functions of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the Rural and Regional Committee; and, last but not least, the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee will undertake the functions of the Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee and the Road Safety Committee. I look forward to seeing the more efficient running of parliamentary committees through the consolidation and believe that this bill should pass quickly.

I have been told committee work is some of the most valuable we will do in our careers as MPs. I have just started on a committee, and I cannot wait for that work to begin. I am particularly interested in the joint parliamentary inquiry into the Country Fire Authority's training college at Fiskville. As a career firefighter for 14 years, I will be very interested to see how that one goes. Again, this is just an example of how rewarding committee work is, and how much Victoria counts on the recommendations of committees. I have probably spent a year of my life in Fiskville. In 2001 started as a rookie firefighter. I was involved — —

Mr Battin — On a point of order, Speaker, in relation to the comments around Fiskville, that inquiry is before the committee at the moment. I want to urge caution in the comments that are made by the current speaker in relation to Fiskville as the matter is currently under investigation by the committee.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member can talk about the inquiry in general terms, but the member cannot disclose any content of the committee inquiry, if he sees the subtle distinction. I am sure he does.

Mr EDBROOKE — As the member for Gembrook would know — and I thank him for his caution; I do not want to step over the line — I do not know anything about what the committee is dealing with at the moment.

The value for me as a member of the Victorian community is to know that these things, whether good or bad, are going to be investigated. As I said, as someone who spent a year of my life up there and who

was in Fiskville doing drills during a time that is being investigated, it is very reassuring to know that these committees will do the correct job. It does concern me, though, that the previous government cut budgets for some of these committees, meaning there is less scrutiny and less accountability, and that cannot be a good thing. I challenge anyone in the Victorian community to say that having less scrutiny and accountability is going to lead to better governing of Victoria.

Some people just do not like change. That is a fact. Throughout my career as a teacher and as a firefighter I realised that some people do not like change, and there are various motivations behind that. Some are political, some are because we have different opinions and some are because people are conservative, and that is all great. What I take exception to is the member for Euroa suggesting that laziness could be part of it. I am not sure if the member is on any committees yet, as she is in a similar position to me and fairly new to the Parliament, but I would say that it is not laziness. We are trying to make things more efficient; we are trying to make things open to more scrutiny, and that is a good thing.

Consolidating the functions of the six joint investigatory committees into three will ensure that the committees run more efficiently and that the workloads of the different committees are better distributed between them. As the committees will have the same functions as the committees they replace, there will be no loss of coverage of issues considered by the committees. Any suggestion that that is the case is purely hypothetical. The new committees will continue any inquiries currently being conducted by the committees they replace. In addition, any member who has already been appointed to a committee will carry on as before.

I would like to support this bill in its ascension to the upper house. I believe it is a good bill and not something that should be argued about. It is a very simple change. It is not rocket science, and I do not think it is going to affect any kind of government decisions. The committees make recommendations, and they will make them efficiently and effectively. I think this bill should be passed.

Mr NARDELLA (Melton) — I support the bill before the house. I have been on a number of parliamentary committees in my very short time within this place, ranging from the Crime Prevention Committee with Ken Smith, the former member for Bass, who was also with me in the upper house.

Mr Walsh — Two rogues!

Mr NARDELLA — That is absolutely correct. Talking about rogues — and I am not referring specifically to my honourable friend — Ken Smith was my chair on the Crime Prevention Committee from 1992 to 1995 and he was then my deputy chair for the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee from 2002 to 2006, so the rogues got back together again.

I have spoken about this matter in the house before, but the major inquiry that committee undertook with Ken Smith and others from about 1993 to 1995 was with regard to sexual assault against women and children and was extremely important. One thing, among a number of others, that came out of that inquiry that continues to this day was the cover-up by the Roman Catholic Church. I know that Ken Smith was extremely upset when one of the monsignors lied to the committee.

Mr McGuire — Monsignor Cudmore.

Mr NARDELLA — It was Monsignor Cudmore, as the member for Broadmeadows points out to me. He is now the late Monsignor Cudmore. We were looking at recalling the monsignor because of the statements he made.

We did a number of things on that committee that I think were quite groundbreaking. Perhaps members can remember the pink taxis that were floated by the Premier at the time, the Honourable Jeff Kennett. That idea arose from an inquiry that again was done by the Crime Prevention Committee on the taxi industry in Victoria. So there is a continuance of factors that then go into policy development and changes to laws within this state.

I have served with some very difficult people on parliamentary committees, especially on the Family and Community Development Committee from 1999 to 2002 — and it was not someone on my side of politics. If you have a look at the membership of that committee, there was one particular lady who was impossible. I am not going to cast aspersions on her but she was in this house and is now in the upper house. She is still around, having managed to come back after losing her seat. She was extremely difficult.

One of the amazing things about parliamentary committees is that you do some fantastic things: you learn things not only from the trips and the evidence taken but also from the members from the other side of the house. There are not many opportunities to develop an understanding, a friendship or a rapport with

members from the other side of the house, but the parliamentary committees enable you to do that. When I was chair of the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee, I tried to get consensus in the inquiries that we undertook. When George Seitz was the chair — even though I was doing the work! — we tried to get consensus amongst the members of Parliament to come up with the best recommendations, which the Parliament and the executive of the government could then consider. Those things are extremely important.

The number of parliamentary committees will be reduced through this bill. It is a difficult situation because of the changes in the upper house. The number of committees that have to be staffed and dealt with by the upper house will mean that the understanding of members from both chambers of this Parliament will not be to the same extent as it has been in the past.

I also served on the Crime Prevention Committee and on the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee (SARC). Why I was on SARC a second time is beyond me; I am still trying to work out why — and my therapist is still working on that. I was also on the Family and Community Development Committee, the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee and the Rural and Regional Committee, which did extremely interesting work when we did the investigation into disadvantage and inequity in rural and regional Victoria.

When we visited communities during that investigation, it was interesting to learn about the way they dealt with disadvantage and isolation. The distances they have to deal with on a day-to-day basis gives you real inspiration. I will give the house an example. Donald High School has, I think, one of the best education processes in its delivery and results anywhere in the world. I will explain why. The principal works with other schools within the district, which is very large. With the use of technology, he provides subjects to his students and to other students in other schools where subjects cannot be provided, so it breaks down a lot of barriers. One of the really interesting things is that, for example, when a parent meeting is held at Donald High School — there are about 220 families there — 200 families turn up. That is an effect of the respect for that principal and his staff. Again, it is about how you break down barriers, and you get those insights from the parliamentary committee system.

I have served on committees with a number of members and former members, including the member for Bulleen and the former member for Hawthorn, the Honourable Ted Baillieu, on the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee, where we did a number of investigations, and the member for Burwood, who is waving at me, served with me on SARC.

Mr McGuire — What a privilege!

Mr NARDELLA — Yes, and I can tell the member for Broadmeadows I have never looked back! The time you are able to spend with people gives you a different perspective. Members from the previous Parliament know that the former member for Benalla, Dr Sykes, would spar with us quite vigorously when we were on the other side of the house — —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr NARDELLA — Ten; that's right, but when you were on a committee and working with Dr Sykes you found that he was very human. You deal with some really serious issues on committees, and I think the newer members will appreciate the work they will get to do on the committees. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms WARD (Eltham) — I welcome the Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015, which will amend both the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 and the Inquiries Act 2014. I welcome this bill for a number of reasons. Firstly, and most importantly, I welcome this bill for its ability to continue to put into action Labor's commitment throughout last year and since this Parliament was sworn in to get ourselves and this state back to work.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms WARD — That is exactly right: we will get ourselves and this state back to work. For four long years this state was in hibernation. It was asleep at the wheel; we went nowhere, we did nothing. Very little happened. There was much bluster and much inefficiency. We need to get back to work. Labor promised to be different, and it will be. This bill offers that opportunity. I cannot fathom why those opposite want more of the same tired ideas, more of the same tired inaction and more of the same tired old inefficiencies.

We have changed sessional orders to provide a more efficient Assembly. We have made announcements such as fast-tracking $20 million of our $320 million TAFE Rescue Fund to help prop up our failing TAFE system. We are getting this government and this state back to work after four years of doing nothing and four years of doing little — half of that with our Doctor

Dolittle former Premier. This bill is yet another example of the Andrews government getting down to business and providing for greater efficiencies. We do not want to spend four years sitting on our hands doing nothing, as the previous government did, letting our state drift into apathy and inaction. We need to get back to work. We want a government and a Parliament that work for the people of this state. We need to lead by example. We need to get to work, and we need to be efficient. We want our communities to know that we are hard at work and achieving outcomes in the most efficient, non-wasteful way possible.

This bill will merge six joint investigatory committees to form three new committees. That is it. It is not a complex problem. It is not a complex development. Those opposite, being conservatives, oppose change. They fear it. They are afraid of it. They were afraid of the change in sessional orders. They appear to be afraid of the changes this bill will create. Allowing the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee to continue the functions of the Economic Development, Infrastructure and Outer Suburban/Interface Committee and the Education and Training Committee makes sense. It is efficient, and it will ensure that the committee will work hard. We will be getting back to work, and we will be hard at it.

My own committee will change. I welcome this. For the Rural and Regional Committee to be incorporated into the Environment and Natural Resources Committee makes sense. Our natural environment is vitally important to our rural and regional communities. For example, we are currently looking at the issue of the Fiskville Country Fire Authority training facility. This is of strong interest to those living in and around that rural area. I would have thought the member for Euroa, coming from a rural area as she does, would welcome the change. This new committee will expose more people to the issues that confront rural and regional areas and will be able to merge the concerns of people in metropolitan areas with those of people in rural and regional areas.

Climate change is another environmental area of extreme interest to our rural and regional communities. The climate is changing, and this affects farming and agricultural economies. It makes little sense to separate the two areas. This issue is important to the needs of rural communities. Scientists are clear that farmers will need to adapt as our climate continues to change. It will affect Victoria; there is no question of that. CSIRO climate applications scientist Steve Crimp has been quoted as saying:

> Certainly across most of southern Australia, the projections of the future are for warmer and drier conditions, so when we experience warm and dry conditions, growing those crops, canola, wheat, barley et cetera will be more challenging in the future.

When he says ‘across most of southern Australia’, that means Victoria. That means we need to be on board, we need to know what is going on and we need to ensure that there is a relationship between the people working on the environment committee and the people working on the rural and regional committee. We need to put the two together. It creates greater efficiencies.

The CSIRO report warns us that our farms and our grazing livestock, especially cattle, will also be under threat. Animals will experience stress and will find it harder to breed. This is a serious economic concern. Why would you not then combine the Environment and Natural Resources Committee with the Rural and Regional Committee? Why would you not have these people talking to and working with each other? Again this will create greater efficiency and get us back to work. It will mean we have a Parliament that is working hard and getting results. As I said earlier, it all makes perfect sense.

The people in my electorate care deeply about the environment. We care about our green wedge, which begins at the edge of my electorate and extends all the way to just below Kinglake. This is a rural area with dirt roads, farmland, vineyards and so on. Why would this not be a part of a committee that also talks about the environment?

However, to a conservative mind change is a challenge. We believe change can be good, and in this instance it is an excellent change. Change does not hurt us. Change and progress can help us to better develop and have a more efficient Parliament — a Parliament and a committee system that work well. It also makes sense to create a new Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee that incorporates the responsibilities of the Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee and the Road Safety Committee.

I find it astonishing that those opposite are resisting moves to make this Parliament as efficient as possible. They talk about efficiencies all the time. They talk about making things better all the time. So why can we not do it here? Why can we not have committees that are efficient, address the issues that concern people and have a relationship with each other? Committees will continue to function just as the sun will continue to rise, and they will continue to do their work. These changes will not hamper the committees; instead they will make them better at what they do. There will be better

communication in shared areas of interest. People will be able to work better together. This is us looking at what we have and how we can make it better. This is what Labor wants to do. This is part of our policy and our drive to get our state back to work, to get us on our feet and to get things moving.

Since the first day we were elected to government, we have moved forward and we have worked hard to get things happening in this state. This is just a small example of how we are going to be able to do that. We have made the sessional orders more efficient. We have a better working Parliament, and we are going to have better working committees that will better represent the needs of the people we represent. I welcome the opportunity to talk to the people in my committee who have a focus on rural and regional areas. This will be interesting for me, since I live on the border of the metropolitan area. I have kangaroos, paddocks and vineyards — all in my backyard. I want to know what is important to those people as well. I want to know, from an environmental perspective, how we can work together to get better outcomes for our community across the board.

This is a very good move by the government. This is a far-sighted move by the government. It shows again why we won the election last year; it is because we have the vision to take this city and our state forward, to give better opportunities and to get better outcomes. I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

Quorums

The SPEAKER — Order! I wish to respond to a point of order raised with me by the member for Burwood concerning the calling of quorums. On Wednesday, 11 February 2015, the Deputy Speaker used his discretion to decline a second quorum call as a quorum had already been called and established a little earlier in the day. The member for Burwood sought my guidance on how many quorums could be called before such a call would be considered excessive. Two previous rulings relate to situations where the Chair has declined to ring the bells for a quorum, the first being where a quorum had been sought shortly after the bells had been rung to establish a previous quorum and the second where the persistent calling of quorums was deemed to be a disruption to proceedings.

The calling of quorums is an essential part of our procedures. However, it will remain the discretion of the Chair, depending on the circumstances in the house at the time, whether or not to ring the bells for a quorum in accordance with our current practices.

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, I noted in question time today that the Minister for Sport said he rejected the premise of a question I asked, the premise of that question being around a trip to Queensland to a cage fighting match in Queensland. I note that the minister has in fact declared the trip about which I was asking, yet he said he rejected the premise of the question.

Not wanting the minister to mislead the Parliament, I ask if you would be able to seek a personal explanation from the minister given the inconsistency between the answer given in question time, which was that he totally rejected the premise of the question, and a declaration that he has made in relation to gifts exceeding $500, one in relation to the ultimate fighting championship sporting event held at the convention centre on the Gold Coast in Queensland. There is a clear disparity, and I ask if you would thus seek from the minister a personal explanation to the house as to where that disparity has occurred.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, in responding to what the Leader of the Opposition has just said I wish to make two points. I appreciate that the Leader of the Opposition is new to this chamber and that there may be practices that are a bit different in this chamber to those that he has been used to.

The first point I would like to make is that this point of order has been taken long after the horse has bolted, and it is not an appropriate use of the parliamentary procedures. This takes me to my second point: if he wants to raise this, there are appropriate ways to raise with you questions of other members misleading the house and seeking personal explanations. I would suggest to you, Speaker, that you may wish to consider counselling the Leader of the Opposition on the practices of this place and not uphold his point of order at this time.

Mr R. Smith — On the point of order, Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is completely within his rights to raise a point of order at any time during the sitting. The Leader of the House suggests that the horse has bolted, to put it in her vernacular, but the fact of the matter is that the Leader of the Opposition can raise a point of order at any time, and he is certainly entitled within the precedents of this house to request a personal explanation from the minister. There is a perception

that the minister has misled the house, and we certainly want to clear that up.

The SPEAKER — Order! On the point of order, I wish to make two points. The first is that I had already ruled on that point of order, and the second is that — as the Leader of the Opposition knows — it is not for the Chair to direct the minister to respond in any particular way.

SUMMARY OFFENCES AMENDMENT (MOVE-ON LAWS) BILL 2015

Second reading

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

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — As there are no further speakers on the Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015, in summing up the debate I would like to commend members on their contributions to the debate despite the fact that it was not always in the best spirit and nor was it the most temperate of debates we have had in this chamber. I want to thank all members for their contributions. I wish to make particular reference to the audition by the member for Hawthorn, which I would describe as being a work of fiction at very high intensity. It was certainly something — —

Mr Pesutto interjected.

Mr PAKULA — Well, he says he has learnt from the master, and I assume he is talking about his leader. They seem to be in a sort of high-agitation intensity contest. It was, if nothing else, a very entertaining contribution by the member for Hawthorn. I am not sure the dispatch box has yet recovered!

These additional move-on powers have been in place for less than a year, but if you were to believe the contribution of the member for Hawthorn and the contribution of the member for Caulfield, for the 150 years prior to these move-on powers, the police have had no adequate ability to respond to protest in the state of Victoria. Never in the 150 years before these move-on powers came in did they have adequate powers, and if those powers are repealed — as we committed to do before the election — the police will once again be powerless. It has only been for these few months between this law being enacted and this law being repealed that police have had the ability to deal with protests!

If you listened to particularly the contribution of the member for Caulfield, you would have heard that if these move-on powers are repealed our streets will be destroyed. The use of the word 'destroyed' indicates the level of hyperbole that we are contending with in this debate. We are also being asked to believe by the member for Hawthorn, the member for Burwood — resplendent as he is — the member for Caulfield and others that somehow these move-on powers would have been the solution to the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union protests that we saw in the city. Those protests were described by the member for Box Hill at the time as violent and illegal — all sorts of descriptors were used.

What we are being asked is to forget the court action that took place, forget the enormous fines, forget the contempt action, forget the Australian building and construction commissioner or the Construction Code Compliance Unit or the trade union royal commission. We are being asked to believe that what was really needed were the move-on powers. If only the police could have said, 'Hey fellas, would you move on?', that would have been the solution to what the then government, the now opposition, described as the most violent, unlawful, outlandish, outrageous protest that we have seen. That is the kind of logic that we are being asked to accept. The same could be said for those boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) lunatics that the member for Caulfield talked about. He described their conduct in debate in this place in August 2011 as trespass on private property — a crime, as we already know. That is something that police already have the powers to deal with.

The member for Hawthorn also tried to tell the house that these move-on laws, the ones we are seeking to repeal, were brought in in response to the BDS protests. We know that that is not the case. We know now, and we knew it then. We know that these laws were in fact brought in in response to people like Miranda Devine, Michael Kroger, Andrew Bolt and Tanya Cirkovic hopping into Ken Lay, Ted Baillieu and Peter Ryan because they would not send the police in to break up industrial disputes. They would not send police in to break up one particular industrial dispute.

I remember hearing Mr Kroger on Melbourne Talk Radio — some of us remember MTR — lambasting the Chief Commissioner of Police and the police minister at the time because they would not use Victoria Police as a private security firm. Back then Mr Kroger was only the party's spiritual leader; now he is its actual leader. Now he is the state president, and that — —

Ms Staley — Not yet.

Mr PAKULA — Not yet. I withdraw the grave assertion that Mr Kroger is the state president of the Liberal Party, although we know it is coming.

We also know phone calls were made to the police minister's office, and that was the genesis of these laws — the inability or refusal of Victoria Police to be used as a private security firm in industrial disputes and the ensuing lambasting the then Premier, the then police minister and the then chief commissioner got from the Liberal Party's conservative commentariat, whether from Ms Devine, Mr Kroger or Mr Bolt.

Despite the sophistry of the Liberal Party contributions to this debate, we know these laws as they stand on their normal construction could absolutely be used against protesters like the McDonald's protesters at Tecoma. We know that because when that assertion was made during the debate on this bill last February the member for Malvern said, 'And so they should be'. We know absolutely that these laws could be used against protesters like the Lock the Gate protesters, who are opposed to coal seam gas extraction. We know absolutely that on their normal construction these laws could be used against nurses, paramedics, firefighters and taxi licence holders conducting protests.

We also know there is nothing in these laws, as they are currently constructed, that requires a protest to be either violent or illegal before the move-on powers are invoked. When opposition members come in here and say this is only about violent protests or illegal protests, that is absolutely untrue. There is nothing in the act that limits these move-on powers to violent or illegal protests. There is nothing in this act that requires a union picket line to be declared illegal before these laws can be invoked. They can be used even where industrial action is legally protected industrial action, and they can be used against union picket lines when no injunction has been granted or even sought. That is absolutely clear on the construction of the act.

We heard the member for Hawthorn trotting out examples of those who support their position, but we know that the legal fraternity was absolutely opposed to these laws when they were introduced. We know Geoff Bowyer, the former president of the Law Institute of Victoria (LIV) and a solicitor from Bendigo — he is hardly Che Guevara — —

Mr Pesutto interjected.

Mr PAKULA — I don't want to get you going — goodness!

We know the laws were roundly condemned, particularly for their potential to be used against homeless people, and we know the current president of the LIV, Katie Miller, has warmly welcomed the decision to repeal these laws.

There were protests long before these move-on laws came into effect, and there will be protests long after they are quite appropriately consigned to the dustbin of history. Where those protests are violent or illegal, there are laws to deal with that. There always have been and there always will be, and the suggestion from members of the opposition that once these move-on powers no longer exist there will be no ability for anyone to deal with any violent or illegal protests is just so much guff — absolute guff. I heard the member for Hawthorn during his contribution talk about people being racially and religiously vilified. Let me say that where there are breaches of state or federal provisions regarding racial or religious intolerance or hate speech, there are laws to deal with that.

While we are on the subject of racial and religious intolerance, I would like to put on the record and hopefully once and for all make one point clear to those opposite. This party — the party that conceived of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 and the party that introduced the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 in this state — will not be lectured to by the party of the Melbourne Club. We will not be lectured to by the spawn of Abbott and Brandis and Bernardi and Morrison. We will not be lectured to — —

Mr T. Smith — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, there is no member of the parliamentary Liberal Party who is a member of the Melbourne Club. I would ask the member to withdraw.

The ACTING SPEAKER (**Mr Angus**) — Order! That is not a point of order.

Mr PAKULA — I am glad the member for Kew considers membership of the Melbourne Club to be an insult. He probably ought to talk to some of his sponsors about that.

Mr Pesutto interjected.

Mr PAKULA — I'll never get as excited as you, John. We will not be lectured to by the party that sought to repeal section 18C of the commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act 1975 — we never have and we never will. Likewise we will not be lectured to by members of this house who purport to represent communities yet seek to do no more than whip up unjustified fear and loathing in those communities. We will not be lectured to by people who seek to frighten, for no good reason, the people they claim to represent.

There is one final thing, and this has been aired consistently during question time this week: it seems that members opposite just do not comprehend this concept. This is an election commitment that we made during the campaign — an election commitment we made from the time this bill was originally introduced in February last year — and that was repeated consistently throughout 2014. In his contribution the member for Caulfield conceded that it was an election commitment. He tried to make out that it was somehow a bad thing, but there has been a concession from those opposite that this was indeed an election commitment. We intend to adhere to the election commitment we made. We have an obligation to the people who elected us to adhere to our election commitments, and that is what we intend to do.

Good governments are not afraid of protests. Protests are inconvenient. They are often most inconvenient to government. They are often more inconvenient to government than they are to anybody else, because they highlight the decisions of government and sometimes they highlight the mistakes of government. While they are often inconvenient to government, they are the price of democracy.

By all means, we should give police the power to deal with violence, illegality, trespass, besetting and breaches of the peace. What we do not need in this state are laws that send Victoria down the road towards Queensland circa 1975. That is what we do not need. We do not need laws such as those, despite the fidelity and loyalty to and idol worship of the Leader of the Opposition of Joh Bjelke-Petersen. The fact that he has his poster up in his office is not a reason for us to have 1975 Queensland-style laws. This is bad legislation, it is unnecessary and we have promised to repeal it — and that is what we are going to do.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 47

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

Noes, 35

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

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Consideration in detail

Clause 1

Mr PESUTTO (Hawthorn) — I want to comment on the debate we have heard over the last day and acknowledge all the contributions made by members. It has certainly been a stirring debate, one which has excited the passions, but I am afraid to say that the speeches I have heard from members on the other side of the chamber have shown no understanding of the real dangers of this bill and the practical problems that innocent people — whether bystanders, commuters, business operators or police — face in the heat of a protest. It is fine for us to have a nice debate, as passionate as it is, about democratic principles — in large measure we agree that everyone has the right to protest peacefully and express their views; we have no argument with that — but the real problem is how you manage flashpoints, which can easily evolve into violent eruptions or confrontations that involve racial exchanges or other kinds of intimidatory behaviour. We need a public policy response as to how we deal with that.

Yes, there is an arrest power, but it is not easily exercised by police officers in the heat of the moment and sometimes as a practical matter it is probably better and safer for everybody involved for a police officer

who is confronting a mob of protesters, whatever they are protesting, to say, 'We want you to move on just a little bit to make some room for people who need to get out of this property or enter a building'. Is that not better? That is what we are really talking about here. We are not necessarily talking about political differences; that is really not relevant.

The issue is how police officers manage difficult situations. With the Grocon protests that may well have worked. It might have been easier for the former Chief Commissioner of Police, Ken Lay, to meet with the leaders of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, and say, 'Look, unless we can resolve this by exercising our move-on powers, we will need to look at invoking powers under section 458 of the Crimes Act 1958 and deploying personnel to take people into custody if they are putting others in harm's way'. As I said yesterday and my colleagues said in the second-reading debate, is it not sensible and reasonable to give police officers an option to manage protests? That is what it is about.

Believe you me, no-one wants to interfere with the exercise of democratic rights. But I remember what happened in the heat of the Grocon protests. I was working in the Premier's office at the time, and whatever you might say about the political differences we all had, that was an exceedingly difficult situation. There were over 1000 protesters. Maybe not all of them were militant, but even those opposite would acknowledge that there were many who went way overboard in how they behaved.

I read some of the excerpts yesterday that are on the public record, and I remember participating in the processes. I will not go into the detail about how that was managed, but members should imagine dealing with a city on edge, with over 1000 protesters professing open and scornful defiance of a Supreme Court order. Whether members like the order or not, it was an order of the Supreme Court, and they were defying it again and again, scornfully, publicly and abusively. It was difficult for the police. They wanted to deal with it. It was not that they did not have the power of arrest; they had that. The difficulty was how to approach the situation. Resolving that situation required an enormous deployment of police personnel. It would surprise Victorians to understand just how much by way of resources had to be invested in managing that protest.

The repeal of the move-on laws that the coalition government introduced does not address the practical difficulties that our law enforcement agencies confront when they try to manage difficult protests. Having now raised these issues for consideration again, I ask: what does the minister say this bill does to ensure that police officers can manage such difficult situations?

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I thank the member for Hawthorn for his question. I find it surprising that despite the fact that the bill was debated in the second-reading stage for hours and hours — there must have been something north of 20 contributors to that debate — he seeks to traverse ground that has already been traversed extensively during the second-reading debate. I say to him again — as I said to him in that debate and as I said to him back in February 2014 in the debate on the Summary Offences and Sentencing Amendment Bill 2014 — that there are extensive powers for police to deploy when protests become violent or illegal and where there is trespass or other forms of illegality. For the member for Hawthorn to believe that the thing that was required — the thing that would have been the silver bullet — during the Grocon disputes was move-on powers shows just how detached from reality he is.

Mr WATT (Burwood) — On the purpose of the bill, which removes some of the provisions we put into the Summary Offences Act 1966, I sat through most of the second-reading debate and listened to most of the contributions. Although there were well over 20 speakers, as the minister said, I did not hear any members on the other side say whether it would be better if police had powers not only to arrest people but to diffuse the situation in the first place by asking people simply to move aside by a few metres. That is the question I have for the minister. Surely a better way to deal with these situations would be for the police to be able to say, 'Can you move over a bit? Someone wants to come through. Then you can come back again.'.

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — Was there a question?

Mr WATT (Burwood) — That was the question. The question is: would that not be a better — —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I inform the member for Burwood that I consider that to be two contributions.

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I will take it as a statement of the member for Burwood's view of the world, and to the extent that there was a question included I will attempt to answer it. The purpose of the bill, as set out in clause 1, is to repeal the move-on changes that were made by the former government in its February 2014 act. As for the member's view about

the relative merits of the law as it stands now and the law as it will stand if the bill we have before the house is passed, I simply point out to him that we have a difference of opinion with him about that. We think this bill strikes an appropriate balance between the powers of Victoria Police and the ability of Victorians to conduct peaceful, legitimate protest.

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) — It is a pleasure to speak in the consideration-in-detail stage of this bill, which delivers on an election commitment of the Andrews Labor government and on Labor's opposition to the existing legislation, which it has held since last year. As I come to the set of changes in this bill, it is worth reflecting on the consultation that is gone through to get to this stage and particularly on the time the previous government's legislation was brought forward in February 2014.

A number of issues were raised by third parties at that time. Those third parties included the Law Institute of Victoria, which raised concerns about the bill increasing criminalisation of direct protest in Victoria — a very poor outcome — and undermining fundamental democratic values and the most basic rights of people and groups in our community which are justified in a free and democratic society. There was also the consideration of the Victorian Council of Social Service, which raised the concern that vulnerable people in the community, such as homeless people, people with a mental health issue, people with drug or alcohol issues or young people, might be disproportionately affected by the legislation. The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission referred to challenges in the proposed move-on laws and raised concerns about the government's lack of adequate justification for the expansion of move-on powers and exclusion orders.

Those are some of the concerns that were raised about the legislation the previous government brought in, and that brings us to the proposed repeal. Noting that a previous Attorney-General raised significant concerns about the infringements upon charter rights — section 12 — and in particular freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and free association, I ask: what has been the response of third parties in our community? I want to mention one more third party: the Australian human rights commissioner Tim Wilson, who has had a number of things to say on the former government's legislation. He has said it was excessive — this was in relation to the legislation we will repeal — and that:

> It unnecessarily gives police too much power to move on protesters unjustifiably …

Mr Wilson also said:

> I have an issue with the low bar that is being set to give police the powers to move people on.

That is someone who had some things to say about section 18C of the federal Racial Discrimination Act 1975 which we on this side found pretty offensive. Again I ask the Attorney-General: what has been the response from third parties and the community in relation to our repeal legislation?

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I thank the member for Mordialloc for his question. I do not think I have had the chance to congratulate him yet on his election to this house. I have no doubt he will do a sterling job.

Of course at the time the former government's legislation was introduced it was extremely gratifying to hear the comments made by Mr Wilson in his role as a human rights commissioner. He is not someone members opposite could accuse of being a Labor Party acolyte in any respect. He is indeed far from that. In his role as a human rights commissioner he recognised that which many opposite did not: that there is a need to strike an appropriate balance between police powers and the rights of people to lawfully protest and indeed to engage in legally protected industrial action in pursuit of their rights and their wages and conditions.

He was but one voice, but the member for Mordialloc should also be aware, as I indicated during my summing up, that the former government's legislation was roundly criticised, not just by the Law Institute of Victoria but by the entire community legal centre sector. The community legal centre sector of course has experience in dealing with some of our most disadvantaged people. Whether it was the Peninsula Community Legal Centre, the St Kilda community legal centre or any of a number of others, the community legal centres were all roundly critical of the then bill, as it was in February 2014, and in turn the institute itself was very concerned about its potential impact upon the homeless.

I am pleased to say that those organisations have warmly welcomed the fact that the government is now prepared to abide by the commitment it made to the Victorian people and, by extension, to those organisations to rebalance the situation as between the rights of police and the rights of protesters and as between the rights of Victorians to engage in lawful demonstration and the need for police to deal appropriately with protests that become violent or illegal or get out of hand. I should indicate to the member for Hawthorn, in relation to his assertion that

the power of arrest will effectively be the only measure the police will have in their armoury if these provisions cease to be part of the statute book, that police have and often use their power to give warnings prior to arresting people. It is not as if they simply walk in and arrest people as a first port of call. We have said we are going to put the balance back into this legislation. That has been warmly welcomed by many stakeholders, and I am sure that they will be most gratified that the government is adhering to its election commitment.

Mr TILLEY (Benambra) — The Attorney-General could assist by making clear the practical implications of repealing the provisions of the move-on powers. Let me speak from firsthand experience, as a former member of the police force who has worked in places like Williamstown, St Kilda Road and even at the Crown Casino during September 2000. The repealing of these provisions will have an effect on the very people who are charged by the state of Victoria to uphold the rights of every person and the principles behind those rights, regardless of whether it is people going about their business of peacefully protesting in relation to an issue that is near and dear to them. How is going back to the draconian days of the common-law provisions in relation to breaching the peace going to assist the police?

I have had significant dental work as a result of trying to apply the breach of the peace provisions under common law, having got into a number of physical struggles. It has cost me a small fortune. There is a part of my mouth where I cannot chew my steak nowadays, thanks very much to those people — —

Mr Pakula — You still look good.

Mr TILLEY — I appreciate that; I will take it while I can. Nonetheless, can the Attorney-General assist the house by telling us how repealing the move-on laws and going back to the breach of the peace provisions under common law will assist the very people who uphold people's rights in the state of Victoria?

It is quite interesting to stand on the line out in the sun and talk to people about the issues of democracy that upset them. I have had many great conversations with a lot of people. The policy settings of Victoria Police — the organisation applying the legislation — are such that it would not be a constable or a senior constable turning around and making the decision to apply the move-on laws. It would be a person of more senior authority, whether a sergeant of police or an inspector in charge of keeping the peace, negotiating with a picket leader and making a decision when people are getting out of control.

Back in the days of the Albert Park grand prix protests, which were great fun, we had problems under the common law in moving people away from that area in that 10 minutes later we had the same people back disrupting traffic and doing a range of things. We had to effect an arrest to move them on, but they would be back 5 minutes later. This is not solving that problem. That was probably a lesser standard, but there were other times down at Swanston Street when we punched on pretty hard because it got a little over the top. How does the Attorney-General propose to protect those who uphold the democratic rights of all Victorians to go about their business?

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I thank the member for Benambra for his question. I say at the outset that, like all members of the house, I honour his contribution as a member of Victoria Police. I am sure he served his community with distinction when he wore the uniform.

Dr Napthine — He still does.

Mr PAKULA — The member for South-West Coast says he still does. I am sure he would not expect me to agree with him on that point. That is a matter for the electors of Benambra to decide.

I say to the member for Benambra that his assertion that the only powers Victoria Police will have after this repeal goes through, assuming that it does, will be common-law powers is simply incorrect. There are a range of relevant offences under the Summary Offences Act 1966 and the Crimes Act 1958 that the police will continue to have at their disposal. The repeal of move-on powers will not affect the ability of Victorian police to arrest people for a number of relevant offences, whether they be undue obstruction of a footpath or road; wilful trespass of a public place; wilful trespass of a private place; the use of profane, indecent or obscene language; the use of threatening, abusive or insulting words; conduct endangering persons; or property damage.

I also indicate that there will still be move-on powers in relation to circumstances where a police officer or a protective services officer reasonably suspects that a person is breaching or likely to breach the peace, that a person is endangering or likely to endanger the safety of any other person or that the behaviour of a person is likely to cause injury to a person or damage to property or is otherwise a risk to public safety.

We support members of Victoria Police. These particular move-on laws were not requested by the police. These move-on laws were handed over by the

former government without a request, and the government has no doubt that Victoria Police will still have a wide range of capabilities to deal with unlawful or illegal behaviour. In the normal course of events, as the member for Hawthorn knows, if Victoria Police comes to the government with requests for expanded powers, for changes to criminal law or for changes to summary offences, the government — as government always does — will give those requests due consideration.

Dr NAPTHINE (South-West Coast) — The nub of the issue in clause 1 is the nub of the issue in the legislation as a whole with regard to whether the move-on laws should be retained or whether they should be repealed, as proposed in clause 1. The nub of the issue — and the Attorney-General said it himself — comes down to a difference of opinion. It is clear to me that, when balancing the rights of protesters versus the rights of ordinary citizens to go about their business, the Attorney-General and the Labor Party plump for the rights of protesters ahead of the rights of ordinary citizens. That is what clause 1 is about. It is about a matter of opinion about the rights of various groups within our society. The Attorney-General is telling us that according to him and the Labor Party the most paramount right is the right of protesters.

I agree that protesters have rights. They have the right to protest and make their views known in a peaceful manner. That is their right in a democratic society. However, where that oversteps the mark is when protesters interfere with the rights of other citizens to go about their business in a legitimate way, whether it be going to work, going shopping, walking down the street, driving on the highway or opening and running their businesses. They are the rights of a larger number — the majority — of the members of our community. In clause 1 the Labor Party is saying that by removing the move-on laws, which are there to protect ordinary citizens, it is putting the rights of protesters ahead of the rights of ordinary citizens.

Even when protesters protest peacefully, at times they can interfere with, interrupt and disrupt the rights of ordinary citizens. I recall, as members of this house may recall, a protest that went on for some months outside a sporting goods shop in the central business district. On many Thursday and Friday nights protesters stood in front of the shop quite peacefully — not committing an offence but deliberately intimidating people who wanted to go into the shop and intimidating and threatening the workers in the shop by their very presence. They were stopping that shop from conducting its business.

We have a similar issue with the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement, where people are using their right to protest in an inappropriate way by interfering with the broader right of people to go about their daily business. What this government is saying with clause 1, and what the Attorney-General has succinctly put in his comments, is that this is about a difference of opinion — and it certainly is. It is about the opinion of the Attorney-General and the opinion of the Labor members. Their opinion is that the rights of protesters exceed the rights of ordinary citizens.

We on this side of the house have a different view. We have a clear and distinct view: it is the right of ordinary citizens that ought to be paramount. If people are protesting apparently peaceably but are interrupting ordinary citizens going about their daily activities, then there ought to be appropriate powers for the police to ask those protesters to move on and stop interfering with the daily activities of ordinary citizens. Yes, it is a matter of opinion. We know where Labor stands; it stands with protesters first and ordinary citizens second, third and fourth. On this side of the house we put the rights of ordinary citizens ahead of the rights of protesters.

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I am not surprised to see the member for South-West Coast seek to defend his legacy, even a legacy as unacceptable as this one. He has sought to verbal me and the Labor Party in terms of our view. Let me simply say that I would have a different description of the difference of opinion to his description. What the member for South-West Coast fails to understand when he says that this is about the rights of protesters versus the rights of ordinary citizens, what he fails to appreciate — I think that this is the cat that has been belled — is that protesters are ordinary citizens.

Protesters are ordinary citizens, whether they be people standing up for their rights at Tecoma or whether they be paramedics, nurses, firefighters, taxi operators or indeed ordinary workers on a picket line seeking to defend their ability to secure higher wages and conditions or seeking to avoid exploitative piecework arrangements or seeking to avoid terrible injustices, as we have seen in certain disputes over the last four years. We think those people are ordinary citizens. We do not believe in this divide-and-conquer mentality, which is about some of us versus the rest of us, which has been so eloquently displayed by the member for South-West Coast, perhaps inadvertently.

We do not draw these false distinctions between protesters on the one hand and ordinary citizens on the other. We see that every citizen of Victoria has a right

to express their view and to protest and that the right of police to move on ought to be confined to certain circumstances. We believe the legislation now before the house gets the balance right. We believe the legislation we are seeking to repeal does not.

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) — I would just like to raise a question in regard to the comment of the member for Mordialloc about the Australian Human Rights Commissioner, Tim Wilson. An *Age* article states:

> Australian Human Rights Commissioner Tim Wilson said the laws were 'excessive' because they gave police the power to fine people whom they suspected of a possible offence.
>
> 'It unnecessarily gives police too much power to move on protesters unjustifiably', he said. 'I have an issue with the low bar that is being set to give police the powers to move people on'.

Am I wrong in my belief that in Victoria we should be lining up somehow with Australia's human rights expectations as listed by the human rights commissioner? I would like to know from the minister: by repealing this bill, how do we line up with Australia's human rights expectations? How do Labor's amendments to this law address Australia's human rights commitments?

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — Let me simply say to the member for Frankston that the laws as they currently stand were opposed by the Australian Human Rights Commissioner. While I am on the topic, let me indicate that I too stand with Gillian Triggs, and I hope members opposite will as well. Mr Wilson, in his capacity as human rights commissioner, is not someone I always agree with, but on this occasion I do.

Mr Pesutto — He doesn't agree with you. He's on the record.

Mr PAKULA — He does not agree with me, apparently.

Mr Pesutto interjected.

Mr PAKULA — I am sure you will get a go. The laws were also opposed by the Human Rights Law Centre, and the repeal of this bill will indeed bring Victoria back in line with expectations under various human rights provisions.

Mr PESUTTO (Hawthorn) — I seek to put a question briefly to my counterpart. Mr Wilson is a good man. He has been a good friend of mine for many years, but he has clarified in recent hours — —

Mr Pakula interjected.

Mr PESUTTO — No, we all know Tim Wilson, and he is not to be leaned on. He is a strong, independent-minded person, but he felt that his position was being grossly misrepresented. I will clarify and then put to my counterpart what he thinks. Mr Wilson has said by way of tweets:

> Vic parliamentarians r stating I think previous govt's 'move on' laws went too far. Correct. But so does the current govt's repeal —

and —

> Protest should be preserved because it is an exercise of free speech, that doesn't justify stopping others exercising their freedoms …

I put to the Attorney-General: will he now correct the record to ensure that he does not misrepresent Mr Wilson?

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — We may have moved beyond the purposes of the bill, but let me simply say that if Mr Wilson thinks that the current law goes too far and that the repeal goes too far, then my suggestion is that he resubmit himself for Liberal Party preselection. He can get himself elected to this Parliament, and he can suggest an amendment of his own.

House divided on clause:

Ayes, 46

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

Noes, 35

Angus, Mr	Northe, Mr
Battin, Mr	O'Brien, Mr
Blackwood, Mr	Paynter, Mr
Bull, Mr T.	Pesutto, Mr
Burgess, Mr	Ryall, Ms

Crisp, Mr	Ryan, Ms
Dixon, Mr	Smith, Mr R.
Fyffe, Mrs	Smith, Mr T.
Gidley, Mr	Southwick, Mr
Guy, Mr	Staley, Ms
Hodgett, Mr	Thompson, Mr
Katos, Mr	Tilley, Mr
Kealy, Ms	Victoria, Ms
McCurdy, Mr	Wakeling, Mr
McLeish, Ms	Walsh, Mr
Morris, Mr	Watt, Mr
Mulder, Mr	Wells, Mr
Napthine, Dr	

Clause agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.

Clause 4

Mr PESUTTO (Hawthorn) — The question I have for my counterpart is the consequence of the repeal of section 6(1)(d) of the principal act, which provides that police may give a direction to a person to move on, on the grounds that the person has or persons have committed an offence in the public place within the last 12 hours. The reason I am asking this question is that in recent times we have witnessed a matter which a number of speakers have addressed in this house during the course of the debate. The boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaign involved protesters who on the basis of race targeted Max Brenner, a lawful business, on the basis of race vilified that business and targeted it publicly, put patrons of that business in harm's way, caused injury to police officers, and according to the Magistrates Court judgement, cow-kicked police officers. That is totally unacceptable in our community.

The problem with the repeal of the expanded grounds that the coalition introduced in 2014 is that a number of the activities that were caught by the expanded grounds will no longer be caught because the provision outlining those grounds will be repealed by this bill and we will be left with the three grounds that had existed previously. Prior to the amendments that the coalition made, the grounds were restricted to breach of the peace, endangering or likely to endanger the safety of another person, or causing injury.

The scenario I want to put to my counterpart is this: let us say a person, not as part of any political protest, stands in front of that same business, chanting racially abusive remarks and waving racially abusive flags and related matters. Those activities would not be caught by the three principal grounds, but subsection 6(1)(d) provides that move-on powers can be exercised where there is an offence. In the scenario I am depicting, the conduct would fall foul of the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001; arguably that would be unlawful conduct — an offence. Can the Attorney-General address the house on the justification for depriving police officers of that power to move somebody on in those circumstances, where that conduct does not technically breach the peace, does not technically endanger the safety of another person and does not technically entail the causing or likely causing of injury?

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — The member creates a self-described scenario.

Mr Pesutto interjected.

Mr PAKULA — He asserts that the conduct he describes would not fall within any of those other heads, and frankly he is not in a position to do that. The fact is that, as he has already indicated, the behaviour he describes may well be in breach of the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act, and as he knows, there are offences triggered by that behaviour and the ability of police to take action as a consequence of that.

He may wish to describe certain actions as only offending some provisions of the ongoing move-on powers and not others, but frankly that will be a matter of circumstance in terms of what is actually occurring in any given protest. In other words, what he is describing is hypothetical, to the extent that he cannot know in future whether protests will or will not engage those remaining heads of the move-on power.

Mr WATT (Burwood) — The question I have for the Attorney-General relates specifically to the removal of subsection 6(1)(h), which states:

> the person is or persons are impeding or attempting to impede another person from lawfully entering or leaving premises or part of premises.

I wonder whether the intention of this removal is to say that it is okay for certain people in Victoria to blockade a particular building to stop people from being able to enter, let us say, a place of work or business for any particular activity that might be legal — obviously people going about their business and doing things which are legal, such as going to buy a cup of hot chocolate or simply going to work. I wonder whether the Attorney-General might explain whether or not, by removing this subsection, the government policy is that it is acceptable to blockade a particular building or premises to stop people from coming in or going out of that particular premises?

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I am wondering, in response, if that is a serious question, but

I will treat it as if it were. The intention of the government in — —

Mr Pesutto interjected.

Mr PAKULA — I am annoying?

Mr Pesutto — Mean.

Mr PAKULA — Mean; I thought the member said I was being annoying.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr PAKULA — I am not setting out to be either annoying or mean. The government's policy is to return the move-on provisions available to police to the position they were in prior to the enactment of the Summary Offences and Sentencing Amendment Act in 2014.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) — My question is in relation to the provision in subsection 6(1)(h) of the principal act, which is, again:

> the person is or persons are impeding or attempting to impede another person from lawfully entering or leaving premises or part of premises.

I refer to the situation that both the member for Hawthorn and the member for Burwood have correctly mentioned in terms of the sorts of protests we have seen in the past where people have been particularly targeted on racial or religious grounds. In these situations, and in many instances, they are deliberately targeted as such. The Attorney-General has correctly said that it is within the rights of Victorians to go about protests in a legitimate way. However, what my particular point comes to is, when there are deliberate attempts by individuals to target premises and continue to obstruct premises, what guarantees can the Attorney-General give us that by repealing these powers, the Jewish community in particular — and I am certainly aware that the Attorney-General has met with the Jewish community and that — —

Mr Pakula — In fact I am a member of it.

Mr SOUTHWICK — He is a member of the Jewish community, and I know he is also concerned about some of these activities. But as he would certainly also be aware, after that meeting the Jewish community, including the Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV), the Zionist Council of Victoria and the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC), all expressed concerns that these laws would weaken the position of where they are now compared to where they were before. What guarantees can the Attorney-General give the community, in fact give his community, that by the repeal of these laws these businesses will be protected — the Jewish businesses will be protected, but frankly all businesses will be protected — and people can go about their legitimate day without fear or favour?

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — The member for Caulfield talks about the fears and the concerns. As he indicates, I have met with the JCCV and spoken to AIJAC as well. I understand those deep concerns, because those boycott, divestment and sanctions protests were, in many cases, utterly outrageous. He asks for guarantees, and there seems to be an assumption implicit in the question that there is a guarantee now that these move-on powers would effectively resolve some of those outrageous, violent and disgraceful protests. I say to him that that is a heroic assumption. It is a heroic assumption to imagine that the appropriate response to people who are displaying and engaging in violent, repugnant religious and racial vilification could be or should be appropriately dealt with by being asked to move to the left 3 metres.

I think it is far more appropriate for the full weight of the law to be applied to those people who engage in racial and religious vilification. Where people are behaving violently or illegally or engaging in trespass I would hope, as I know the member would hope, that police would use the powers available to them to deal with people who are breaching the provisions of the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act, if that was indeed what was occurring.

Mr T. SMITH (Kew) — I have two questions. There is a general exemption for political protest, but what protest is not essentially political? They basically all are. My next question is: within the confines of political protest, at some point a police officer may make a judgement call that a protest is getting out of control, but he may not feel it is appropriate at that point to arrest a person for breaching the peace or the like. What powers will the police have to prevent protests from getting out of control by moving people on and dispersing that protest?

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — The member makes an assertion that all protests are political. I do not think that is actually the case; I can think of many protests that are not political. I saw a bunch of Essendon Football Club supporters standing outside the Federal Court saying, 'Free James Hird'. I do not know if that is a political protest. The member answered his own question in his contribution — that is, it will be a

matter for police to use their judgement and discretion on the ground at the time.

Mr WATT (Burwood) — My question to the Attorney-General is along similar lines to that of the member for Kew. My question is: what protest would not be considered, as the explanatory memorandum to the bill states:

> picketing a place of employment; or
>
> demonstrating or protesting about a particular issue; or
>
> speaking, bearing or otherwise identifying with a banner, placard or sign or otherwise behaving in a way that is apparently intended to publicise the person's view about a particular issue.

I am not sure what protest would not be demonstrating or protesting about a particular issue. If all protesters who are protesting about a particular issue are essentially exempt from move-on powers, can the Attorney-General explain which protests would be able to be moved on, or indeed if there are any protests that will be able to be moved on, considering they are all about a particular issue? I assume people do not protest if they do not have an issue.

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — Again the member is asking me to speculate. He is asking me to speculate about circumstances that may exist in the future. All I can say to him is that the move-on powers that will apply after the repeal of these provisions will be the same move-on powers that applied prior to their introduction, and people will be able to be moved on unless they are engaging in the conduct that he just described.

Mr T. SMITH (Kew) — I will ask the Attorney-General my question again. How does a police officer — —

Ms D'Ambrosio — He's answered it.

Mr T. SMITH — No, he has not.

If a police officer does not feel it is appropriate to arrest a protester, but he wants to move them on to prevent them from possibly disturbing the peace or for the general good order of the premises where the protest is occurring, how does he do that now?

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — Police will be able to exercise all of the powers that they had prior to the introduction of this legislation in February 2014.

Mr PESUTTO (Hawthorn) — My question relates to section 6(1)(e), which is proposed for repeal under the bill. In the course of preparing for this debate I had occasion to speak to a number of people who have experienced a violent picket or protest. Naturally they are very fearful on the whole; they do not like their identities being revealed. But what I can say is that I spoke to one lady in her early 60s who works at a construction company that was the target of protests relating to the east–west link project — the contract for which this government has torn up with an outrageous threat to legislate, and which I note has today been canned by yet another group of experts saying how irresponsible it would be to proceed with such an action.

Interjections from gallery.

Mr PESUTTO — I take the point. This lady gave her account to me of what happened during the course of this protest — —

Mrs Fyffe — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I think you ought to advise the member that there should be no communication with the gallery.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! There is to be no communication with the gallery. I ask members and people in the gallery not to communicate — it is inappropriate. I thank the member for bringing that to my attention.

Mr PESUTTO — On an occasion in 2013 this woman, who had undergone spinal surgery and was walking with a walking stick, arrived at her workplace, and she described for me what she had to do to get to her office. This 63-year-old lady, who is physically challenged in the way I mentioned, had to walk between a brick wall and a cordon of police officers about half a metre from the brick wall, getting jostled by protesters who were cow-kicking, pushing police officers, yelling abuse and causing this woman and others to fear for their safety. I asked her if she would allow me to at least use her name. Unsurprisingly, she did not want her name to be revealed.

But it would not surprise anybody that those are the sorts of experiences people have when they have to negotiate their way through a picket to get to work. It is not easy at all. They are the forgotten ones, and when I stood up yesterday and spoke about the silent, the law-abiding, those who place their faith in the police force and the agencies we entrust with the responsibility to enforce the law, they are the ones I had in mind. They are not out to interfere with people's wellbeing; they just want to live their lives in accordance with the law. They are caring, they are sensitive and they do not quite understand why they should be the victims of abusive behaviour.

In terms of section 6(1)(e) of the Summary Offences Act 1966, which provides that police, in the circumstances that section deals with, have the power to move on someone when the conduct of that person, in this case a protester, is causing a reasonable apprehension of violence in another person, should not the woman I described be entitled to some protection? Is the protection limited to a police officer having to make the situation worse, potentially, by executing arrests? Is that easier? If a woman were walking through a 0.5 metre cordon between a brick wall and a line of police officers, those opposite, our counterparts, would have us all believe that it would be better and more manageable for the police officers in that scenario to start arresting the protesters, as if that would make the position of the woman I described safer and more secure.

The move-on option may or may not be used in such a situation, but it is vital that it be there. I ask the Attorney-General whether the government would consider excising the relevant provision repealing it from the bill, because it appears to me that the provision in the current act is a reasonable provision to protect people who have a reasonable basis for apprehending the threat of violence and harm.

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — The short answer is no, on the basis that the bill before the house implements the commitment made by the government when it was in opposition. The assumptions made by the member for Hawthorn are erroneous. He seems to believe that where there is a violent, unwieldy protest that is completely out of hand, those circumstances can be alleviated by simply asking people who have clearly, in his description, decided to be unwieldy, to move on.

It is not correct to assume that in those circumstances that would be the most appropriate course of action. We have made it clear on numerous occasions that where are protests that are violent or illegal or involve trespass or other offences there are ongoing powers for police to use. I find it interesting that the member in his questions only ever uses examples of people behaving in a violent or unwieldy way, but as the member for South-West Coast made clear in his contribution, they are not the only circumstances in which those move-on powers, as they currently stand, can be used. It is quite clear that there are many forms of non-violent, non-illegal protest that can be caught up in the move-on powers as they currently stand. That was made clear by the member for South-West Coast.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) — My question goes to section 6(1)(g) of the Summary Offences 1966. It is in regard to the person or persons present for the purpose of unlawfully procuring or supplying, or intending to unlawfully procure or supply, a drug of dependence. We have heard from the Police Association its concerns about this particular issue. As I understand it, our changes to the move-on laws protected and gave powers to police to ensure that they could move on people in certain circumstance. The first is when they are obstructing businesses. This is because there have been many examples of businesses being effectively places of drug drop-off. You will often find people outside those premises, which again makes those premises a place where customers who would normally like to frequent them might not frequent them because of the drug dealing that may or may not be taking place.

The second thing is the targeting of vulnerable people. The Police Association has said, quite rightly, that having these move-on powers in place allows them to move these people on and ensure that they can effectively clean up streets and the problems we have had when these suspected transactions are taking place. I ask the Attorney-General what he would be able to offer up when these powers are removed in terms of ensuring that the police, without having to arrest someone, would have the power to continue to provide that our streets are kept clean and safe.

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — Let me say a few things in regard to this issue. The opposition, as we were at the time, was quite disbelieving that the government of the day had included this particular provision in regard to the procurement or supply of drugs of dependence amongst the rest of the move-on powers. It seemed to us then, and I think the application of these provisions since have demonstrated it to be the case, that that was really a fig leaf for a government that sought to use move-on powers to effectively deal with what would otherwise have been lawful types of industrial action. If the member for Caulfield believes that the appropriate response of a police officer who ascertains that there is someone hanging about ready to supply people with a drug of dependence is to say, 'Mister drug dealer, move along, will you?', then he and I have a different opinion about that.

House divided on clause:

Ayes, 46

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

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

Noes, 35

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

Clause agreed to.

Clauses 5 and 6 agreed to.

Clause 7

Ms STALEY (Ripon) — Clause 7 repeals division 1B of part I of the Summary Offences Act 1966, which relates to exclusion orders. Exclusions orders allow police to apply for orders if a person given a direction to move on five or more times within a period of 12 months persists with that action. This clause is about public safety and order, and it prohibits a person from entering or remaining in a public place during the period of the order.

Exclusion orders are important for keeping women and their families safe when they are accessing abortion. Exclusion orders go to behaviour which is beyond a peaceful protest. Protests at abortion clinics are political protests, and political protests are exempted under these changes. Exclusion orders are particularly important to stop the ongoing harassment of women seeking abortion services. As members know, people who protest at abortion clinics do so explicitly to harass and intimidate women and to discourage them from accessing abortion.

This clause applies to these ongoing types of protests, not single, one-off industrial action protests. I submit that members opposite need to get off their self-declared high horses with their comments about our opposition to this clause being solely about trade unionism and union thuggery and instead address why members of a party with so many EMILY's List members in this place have not stood up for women's reproductive rights. That is what EMILY's List is about, and I count nearly 20 EMILY's List members in the chamber at the moment. Members of EMILY's List in this place were offered a clear choice between keeping the existing provisions in the act, which protect women choosing to have an abortion, and appeasing their union paymasters — and shame, they chose their union paymasters. The previous government protected abortion clinics from violent and offensive protests.

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member will be heard in silence.

Ms STALEY — We did it — yes, we did — and now the new Labor government is repealing the one clause that is directly applicable to excluding persistent pests at abortion clinics. I ask the Attorney-General why the Andrews Labor government is restricting police from excluding persistent protesters who impede or attempt to impede women from lawfully entering or leaving premises when accessing abortion services in Victoria?

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I thank the member for Ripon for her question. I simply make the point to her that at the fertility clinic in East Melbourne where there has been a protest every day for the last I do not know how many years, maybe 20, the move-on powers which she describes as the solution to those protests have not been used to deal with them. If, as the member for Ripon suggests, they are the solution, they have proven to be a wholly ineffective solution. The fact is that the move-on powers she describes are not the solution to that for which there are good reasons, but I do not think I can elaborate on them in the 47 seconds available to me.

It is also the case, as she knows, that that particular matter is currently before the courts. The clinic, having been joined by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, is taking action against the City of Melbourne because it believes the City of Melbourne has not used the by-laws available to it to deal with the matter. I simply suggest to her that the evidence demonstrates that the move-on powers and the exclusion orders have not been effective in supporting a

woman's right to access abortion, because they have not been used. In fact there have only been two exclusion orders sought since this legislation has been in place.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The time set down for the consideration of items on the government business program has arrived and I am required to put the following questions.

Clause agreed to; clauses 8 and 9 agreed to.

Bill agreed to without amendment.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES AND INQUIRIES ACTS AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Second reading

Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education); and Mr HIBBINS's amendment:

> That all the words after 'That' be omitted with the view of inserting in their place the words 'this house refuses to read this bill a second time until consultation has taken place with members of Parliament regarding the number, structure and functions of parliamentary committees'.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member for Prahran has moved a reasoned amendment to the motion before the house. The question is:

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

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

Ayes, 44

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

Noes, 37

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

Amendment defeated.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 46

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

Noes, 35

Angus, Mr
Battin, Mr
Blackwood, Mr
Bull, Mr T.
Burgess, Mr
Crisp, Mr
Dixon, Mr
Fyffe, Mrs
Gidley, Mr
Northe, Mr
O'Brien, Mr
Paynter, Mr
Pesutto, Mr
Ryall, Ms
Ryan, Ms
Smith, Mr R.
Smith, Mr T.
Southwick, Mr

Guy, Mr
Hodgett, Mr
Katos, Mr
Kealy, Ms
McCurdy, Mr
McLeish, Ms
Morris, Mr
Mulder, Mr
Napthine, Dr
Staley, Ms
Thompson, Mr
Tilley, Mr
Victoria, Ms
Wakeling, Mr
Walsh, Mr
Watt, Mr
Wells, Mr

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

CEMETERIES AND CREMATORIA AMENDMENT (VETERANS REFORM) BILL 2015

Second reading

Debate resumed from 25 February; motion of Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

INTERPRETATION OF LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Second reading

Debate resumed from 25 February; motion of Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Osborne Primary School

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — I raise a matter this afternoon for the Deputy Premier in his capacity as the Minister for Education. The action I seek is that the minister ensure that the $960 000 funding commitment proposed by the former Minister for Education, the member for Nepean, prior to the 2014 election for Osborne Primary School finds its way into the 2015 budget.

There are many excellent schools in the electorate of Mornington, and Osborne Primary School certainly is one of those excellent schools. Indeed I have had a long association with the school: I think I first presented prefects badges there back in 1993 as president of the Shire of Mornington Peninsula. The principal is an excellent principal. The school has dedicated and skilled staff who are very committed to the students. I have spoken before in this house about the terrific sense of community and community service that is engendered by the school.

However, like so many schools across the state, the fabric of the school buildings is not in exactly tiptop condition. If you searched in *Hansard*, you would find that, particularly in the 56th Parliament, this matter has been raised on many occasions. One of the reasons it was raised then was that this school, like so many others at the time, was promised a rebuild by the Bracks government and then by the Brumby government. That rebuild, like 200 others that were promised, never eventuated; those promises were never funded. The buildings were never constructed and the problem was never solved.

Upon coming to government the coalition commissioned a school maintenance audit and began to commence correcting the situation across the state. Osborne certainly benefited from that, as did a number of other schools in my electorate. Most recently I think some $281 000 went to Osborne for works on the Hawker and Dava blocks. More work is needed, and that is why I am seeking that the minister support this proposition.

It is interesting to note that Labor made virtually no commitments in the electorate of Mornington at all. I think there was one school — Moorooduc Primary School — where $1 million was promised. Subsequent to that promise there has been some $759 000 in works,

a $650 000 upgrade to the water and septic system, and $76 000 in maintenance undertaken at Moorooduc. I hope that $1 million is still on the table; certainly I will be seeking it, but we will see.

Of course Moorooduc is not the only school that needs some attention. Osborne needs this $960 000, at a minimum, and I urge the minister to run the case hard in the run-up to the budget and provide some good news for the school on budget day.

Regional rail link

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) — I ask the Minister for Public Transport why the regional rail link has been delayed. The regional rail link was planned and funded under the previous Labor government. Geelong constituents have been expecting this improved rail service. Anyone who travels the Geelong line will be aware of the current problems with overcrowding on our peak Geelong services, and as a regular user of our public transport system I am very aware of them. Once the regional rail link opens, Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong line passengers will have a more reliable journey to and from Melbourne, with Geelong and Ballarat having dedicated V/Line tracks all the way to Southern Cross station and additional peak-hour services.

What did the previous government do? Why is it that we now have a situation where Geelong commuters face delays in the completion of this important regional rail link? The previous government had four years to deliver this project. The infrastructure has been ready to go since last year. The previous government was responsible for the April time lines set down for this year. My constituents are now asking: why is there a delay, and why does Labor have to fix this mess?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I will be very lenient on this. The honourable member for Geelong has not asked for an action. She asked a question, and I did not stop her there, but she needs to ask for an action when raising a matter on the adjournment. I ask the honourable member to place before the house what action she seeks of the Minister for Public Transport.

Ms COUZENS — I ask the minister to meet with me and my community to explain the time line changes.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — I thank the honourable member, and I thank the house for its indulgence.

Melba College

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) — I raise a very important matter for the attention of the Minister for Education. It relates to the $10 million promised by his government during the election campaign to commence a full rebuild of Melba College, and the action I seek is for the minister to meet with the principal, Terry Bennett, and members of the school community to provide a time line for the rebuild of Melba College on their preferred site.

On 15 July 2014 the then shadow Minister for Education visited Melba College with the ALP candidates for Croydon and Ringwood to make this announcement alongside teachers and students. This much-needed funding was also promised by the coalition government, which made it a win-win for the college as far as parents and students were concerned, as the funding for the rebuild was secure regardless of the result of the state election. It was a tremendous outcome for the school community to be in this position.

Melba College is a year 7–12 government secondary school that was formed from the merger of the Croydon and Maroondah secondary colleges in 2012. Melba College has a junior and senior campus, both of which are located in my electorate of Croydon, and has a total enrolment of approximately 800 students. The $10 million rebuild will see the amalgamation of both campuses into one on the preferred site. There may be some cost recovery from this project as the vacated school site may be surplus to the education department's needs and the department will realise a return on the potential sale of such land.

Melba College has a vibrant school community. Over the years I have come to know Terry Bennett, the foundation principal of Melba, and many of the teachers and members of the school council who have campaigned and lobbied hard for a new state-of-the-art educational facility they all deserve. Late last year I met with Mr Bennett and the president of the school council, and they presented me with many letters from the school community calling for a rebuild of the school on one campus, which I presented to the then Minister for Education for consideration.

I request that the Minister for Education provide teachers, parents, students, other members of the broader school community and me with a time line to which his government will adhere to in order to deliver its election promise to build a brand-new facility for Melba College. Again the action I seek is for the minister to meet with the college principal, Terry

Bennett, and members of the school community to provide a time line for the rebuild of Melba College on their preferred site.

Holmesglen TAFE

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) — My adjournment matter tonight is for the attention of the Minister for Training and Skills, and it concerns the Andrews government's $8 million commitment to the student hub at the Moorabbin campus of Holmesglen. The action I seek is that the minister visit the Moorabbin campus to discuss this project with staff and students.

Under the former government Victoria faced a jobs crisis with the highest unemployment rate in Victoria in 13 years — the highest unemployment rate on the mainland — and with youth unemployment through the roof. The response of the former government to this jobs crisis was to cut $1.2 billion from TAFE, which had a devastating impact across Victoria. For the Holmesglen campus, which is of particular significance to my electorate, it meant the loss of a third of its government funding, the loss of 100 staff, larger class sizes and the doubling, and in some cases tripling, of course fees. It had a devastating impact indeed.

Many people in the community were saying they could not believe that the response to the jobs crisis from the government was to make it that much harder for people to gain the skills they needed to transition to a new job. As I said, it had a devastating effect, but what a difference a change of government makes — indeed what a difference the defeat of the Liberal government makes. The Andrews Labor government has announced a TAFE rescue package and, as part of that package, Holmesglen will benefit from the construction of an $8 million student hub. It will provide greater amenities for students, and it will provide more spaces for teaching, learning and administration.

There are exciting things happening at Holmesglen. It has a state-of-the-art nursing facility and 40 bachelor of nursing places. It now has a partnership with Healthscope, which is building a 150-bed hospital on the Holmesglen site. It will mean that the nurses who are training at Holmesglen will be able to get graduate positions at the new hospital on site. It will mean it will be able to assist in addressing the anticipated shortage of 109 000 nurses that this country will have by 2025. This government is working in partnership with Holmesglen to deliver for students, and I invite the Minister for Training and Skills to visit the Bentleigh electorate to talk to the staff and students at Holmesglen.

Lowan electorate public transport

Ms KEALY (Lowan) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. The action I seek is for the minister to urgently announce a review of all public transport services in western Victoria, including the feasibility of expanding passenger rail services to the Wimmera and south-west Victoria. Our reliance on public transport to access key services such as medical appointments depends heavily on an ability to access it. For some people, driving themselves for an hour to a critical appointment is simply not an option. Some are forgoing their health and welfare needs because they simply cannot travel to appointments under the current public transport framework. Further, access to fast, reliable and regular public transport options is a known driver of economic growth, giving people more opportunities for commuting to work, school, sport and social activities and, importantly, connecting with family and friends.

A broadranging review is required to look at passenger rail and bus services, and it should evaluate other opportunities for public transport connections across western Victoria, such as a Horsham to Hamilton bus route. Part of this requirement is to undertake a feasibility study into passenger rail services to the Wimmera and south-west Victoria. The benefits of access to regular passenger rail services are well known, and I commend the work of eight councils across western Victoria, led by Horsham Rural City Council, that have been calling for this review with a united voice for over 12 months. Their commitment to this project is evidenced by their willingness to contribute $34 000 to a passenger rail feasibility study. Clearly access to public transport, in particular passenger rail, is an important issue for locals, and the councils in the Lowan electorate are to be congratulated for their united efforts in lobbying for this major review.

To ensure fairness and equity for rural people, we need to maximise public transport connections, times of service and frequency of service so that we are meeting the needs of our people. We must recognise that access to public transport is a right not only the people of Melbourne but also of the people of rural Victoria. I note the recent announcements of the Andrews Labor government in splashing the cash around Melbourne, including $11 billion for the Melbourne Metro rail project, $8 billion to remove Melbourne level crossings and $100 million for a new ballroom at Melbourne's Flinders Street station. Surely the minister can understand that rural people need access to public transport too. Our request is tiny in comparison with these Melbourne projects.

I call on the minister to match the pre-election commitment of the former government and urgently announce a review of all public transport services in western Victoria, including the feasibility of expanding passenger rail services to the Wimmera and south-western Victoria, to ensure that people in the Lowan electorate have fair and equitable access to public transport.

Robinson Street–Princes Highway, Dandenong

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I ask the minister to investigate the prioritisation of installing appropriate signage at the intersection of Robinson Street and Princes Highway, Dandenong. I understand it is an intersection the minister knows well from his frequent travels throughout the south-east. This intersection is a hazard. For traffic seeking to turn right from Princes Highway into Robinson Street, it is extremely difficult to predict the movements of oncoming traffic. While there are traffic lights directed towards that oncoming traffic, they are not visible to turning traffic and there is nothing to indicate whether oncoming traffic is facing a red or green light — so nothing to indicate whether it is continuing or stopping. It leads to some dangerous guessing games.

Furthermore, the intersection poses a great danger to pedestrians seeking to cross Robinson Street, many of whom will be attempting to get to the Vision Australia building near the corner. Many of those people will themselves be vision impaired, which only increases the risk factor. Drivers trying to turn into Robinson Street are often and justifiably preoccupied with negotiating the uncertainty of oncoming traffic and are therefore less likely to notice pedestrians crossing Robinson Street until they have made the dash and it is too late. I am frequently approached by locals about this intersection, and I believe the City of Greater Dandenong shares my concern. I call on the minister to make rectification of the problem at this intersection in Dandenong a priority and in doing so help to avoid unnecessary tragedy.

East–west link

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) — I raise a matter of importance for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek is for the minister to provide to me in writing an explanation for the residents in my electorate of Forest Hill as to how the Labor government is going to address the dreadful traffic congestion issues at the city end of the Eastern Freeway, along Alexandra Parade, around Melbourne General Cemetery and through Royal Park. Many residents in my electorate of Forest Hill have spoken to me both before and since the election about their enthusiasm for the previous government's east–west link project. They are now expressing to me their despair at the decision of the Labor government not to proceed with this vital transport infrastructure project. They despair because they will no longer have the option of bypassing more than 20 sets of traffic lights on their way to the airport. There is despair because many residents in my electorate either run a small business or work for one that has to use the Eastern Freeway on a regular basis as part of their work. They are all too familiar with the dreadful traffic congestion that occurs at the city end of the Eastern Freeway.

Before the last state election I had many people stop me in the street to talk about the importance of the construction of the east–west link, as it impacted on their businesses. Many tradesmen lamented to me as they told their stories of being stuck in traffic jams on Alexandra Parade and surrounding areas whilst trying to traverse the city to attend a job on the other side of town. Several tradesmen spoke to me before the election about trying to get supplies and equipment across the city and through the traffic bottleneck that exists at the end of the Eastern Freeway with minimal delay. Failing to address this chronic traffic problem is costing businesses and residents time and money on a daily basis. It is a serious traffic problem that will not magically resolve itself. I look forward to hearing from the Minister for Roads and Road Safety regarding this very important issue for the residents in the Forest Hill electorate.

Pascoe Vale Football Club

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) — I appreciate the opportunity to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Sport. The action I seek is that the minister meet with the Pascoe Vale Football Club to inspect the inadequate facilities that the female members of the club are expected to endure. I remind the minister that he met some of the inspiring members of the Pascoe Vale women's football teams last September when he and the Premier announced Labor's plan for upgrading women's change rooms and facilities.

In 2008 the Pascoe Vale Panthers entered an inaugural female team in the statewide AFL Victoria under-18 youth competition. The team enjoyed great success, and female participation at the club grew considerably. In 2012 the club established its first senior women's team, which competes in the Essendon District Football League. This was the culmination of tireless efforts by dedicated volunteers and club members, including

Terriann Seath, the secretary of the Pascoe Vale Football Club. The senior women's team has already claimed two premierships.

Despite the on-field success, the women continue to be forced into using substandard facilities off the field. Currently female players are required to share change room facilities with the male club members. This is entirely unsatisfactory. It is without doubt a significant deterrent for women wishing to join the club. It also means that some women from some cultural backgrounds are simply unable to participate in the club at all. This is an absolute disgrace. The Pascoe Vale community is inclusive of women from every corner of the globe, and all of them should be able to participate in local sport if they want to. They should not be excluded simply because facilities do not accommodate them. As a matter of justice, it is imperative that female players be provided with their own change room facilities. Encouraging female participation in sport, from the grassroots level to the elite, greatly benefits the individual and indeed the community as a whole. For these reasons, barriers to female participation must be overcome through the provision of fit-for-purpose change rooms.

Pascoe Vale Panthers is a flourishing community club boasting an array of both junior and senior male and female teams. The club is run by a group of extremely dedicated and hardworking volunteers who toil around the clock throughout the year to ensure that all club members have access to the best programs and facilities that can be offered within their limited financial resources. I ask the minister to meet with the women of Pascoe Vale Football Club to inspect its inadequate facilities and discuss possible solutions.

Murray-Darling Basin plan

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) — I have a matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water. The action I seek is that the minister meet with a delegation of business owners and landowners between Eildon and Seymour to discuss the potential implications of the Murray-Darling Basin plan and in particular the constraints management strategy. At this point I put on the record that my family owns land in that immediate vicinity.

As the minister for water in one of the Murray-Darling Basin states, the minister will from time to time be asked to make decisions about particular elements of the plan. The decisions she makes will affect Victorians. It is important that the decisions be made having the full information and all the facts. There is no denying that the Murray-Darling Basin plan is extremely complex. The minister is new in the role, and some decisions might have to be made as early as June. There is not a lot of time between now and then, so there are reasons for my heightened sense of urgency, and that of the local community, that the minister be fully across the elements of and the potential risks associated with one of the proposals in the plan.

Recently I attended a meeting of business owners and landowners in Yea with the shadow minister for water. At the meeting 70 concerned residents considered a number of matters and had the opportunity to raise their concerns about elements of the proposal. In particular, under the plan it is intended to send large releases of water downstream to the Lower Goulburn flood plain. We are talking about 12 000, 15 000 or 20 000 megalitres per day. These are the environmental flows for Lake Eildon. Specifically around the Goulburn Broken catchment and in particular the Goulburn River and its tributaries — the Yea, Murrindindi, Acheron and Rubicon rivers and Home Creek — these volumes will have significant impacts. We know that during heavy rains and flood events releases from Lake Eildon are already causing problems. Around 18 months ago some land in this area was under water for months. I saw it constantly.

Andrew and Karen Williamson of Molesworth put together and provided me with a copy of the community impact statement and environmental impact statement of the plan on Molesworth. They say at 10 000 megalitres per day the river is in flood, while 20 000 megalitres a day covers farmland, roads, caravan parks and towns. Considering the fact that the Goulburn River channel capacity is only 9500 megalitres a day, there is significant angst in the community.

The flood plain landowners association has been convened, and I understand that the Victorian Caravan Parks Association is also extremely interested in the matter. I know the flood plain landowners association has been in contact with the minister's office, but I want to add that degree of urgency and ask that she meet with the delegation sooner rather than later.

Sunbury College

Mr J. BULL (Sunbury) — I rise to speak on the adjournment debate tonight to raise with the Minister for Education the matter of funding for a science wing at Sunbury College. The action I seek is confirmation of the Andrews Labor government's commitment of $3 million for a new science wing at the college. The Andrews Labor government is committed to making Victoria the education state and ensuring that every

child receives the very best possible education. We are focused on improving student outcomes, but this does not happen in isolation. We need to give teachers and principals the tools to develop and enhance their performance in the classroom.

As a former science teacher, I have a strong passion for quality learning environments that allow students and teachers to be the best they can be. We all know that great facilities assist lessons and help students and staff gain a world-class education so that they can go on and get the skills they need for the job they want. Students deserve the best classroom science equipment for the many experiments and practical exercises they do while they complete their coursework. As a former student, from 1997 to 2002, Sunbury College is a special place for me. I can recall doing year 12 physics and chemistry in the current science wing, and I am extremely determined to see this project delivered.

Members will recall that during the election campaign Labor committed $3 million to restore the science wing at Sunbury College, which is in desperate need of repair. I thank the former member for Macedon for her strong advocacy for the school and her strong representation in the area over many years. In August I joined the Premier to tour Sunbury College, and it was wonderful to see many of my former teachers still working hard to ensure that students can achieve their best. However, it was clear that the science buildings were in great need of repair. Teachers showed the Premier and me numerous examples of structural damage caused by sinking foundations under the science wing.

I am certain that principal Stephen Smith; assistant principals Geoff Dillon, Margaret Bates and Cecilia Hoey; and students, parents and friends of the college will warmly welcome this project. I am determined to see this commitment delivered in full. Today I ask the minister for an update on this project.

Responses

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — I will begin by responding to the member for Sunbury. I thank him for raising the issue of Sunbury College. I acknowledge straight up the needs of the school, particularly regarding the science wing, which is in dire need of repair and upgrade. I also acknowledge that as a former student this must be a very special project for the member. I thank him for his strong advocacy for the project in his time as the new member for Sunbury and also as a candidate last year. I want to make it clear to the member, principal Stephen Smith and the Sunbury College community that this is a priority for the government. We will absolutely deliver this commitment in full. It is a project of high priority for me.

Having talked about Sunbury specifically, let me again commit the government to delivering in full on all the commitments we made in the lead-up to the election. I thank the member for Sunbury for raising this important project with me. I look forward to delivering the new science wing so that the member can talk to the students there. It is a very good project.

The member for Croydon raised the issue of Melba College. This is a project close to my heart. It is close to my neck of the woods; Croydon borders my electorate of Monbulk. I have also known principal Terry Bennett for many years. This is a great project — not only the Melba College upgrade but the whole Maroondah education plan. Labor made a commitment last year to deliver $19.5 million for schools across Maroondah, and that includes the $10 million for Melba College. As the member said, the school is the result of a merger of two schools. This commitment will deliver stage 1 funding for the building of the new school on one campus. As the member for Croydon outlined, it is up to the school to determine which of these two campuses is the best option. That is a decision for the school community.

The plan also includes $4.5 million for Norwood Secondary College and Mullum Primary School. The schools border each other, so there is $4.5 million between them. There is $5 million for Ringwood Secondary College. These great projects are part of the $19.5 million Maroondah education plan. We also made a commitment to Mullauna Secondary College, which is also in that neck of the woods.

The member for Croydon asked that I meet with principal Terry Bennett and discuss the project and its time lines. I would be very happy to meet with the Melba Secondary College community. I have been engaging with it over a long period of time. This was a regeneration project under the former government, but the Maroondah regeneration project stalled. I am thankful that both sides of politics committed to Melba in the lead-up to the election, but I note that this project had been stalled for quite some time. I was absolutely determined that we deliver for this school community.

I want to pay tribute to Terry Bennett, who is a great principal and advocate for his community. I look forward to meeting with the school community. I inform the member for Croydon that I am pretty certain I have received correspondence from the school in relation to meeting with school representatives. I think

it is in my diary already, but I will double-check. I am certainly pleased to meet with the college, and I thank the member for raising that with me.

The member for Mornington raised the matter of Osborne Primary School and a $960 000 commitment the former government made in the lead-up to the last election. I acknowledge the remarks of the member for Mornington, the praise for the school leadership at Osborne Primary School and the good things people are doing there. I gently take up the member for Mornington's claim that the former government corrected the situation through the audit process of 2012. I acknowledge the work of the audit, but we cannot escape the relevant facts. If you look at the capital budget — and this is in black and white; this is not a political point-scoring exercise — and if you look at the four budgets of the Liberal-Nationals coalition government, you see that the capital program was cut in half. The needs of Osborne Primary School and of so many other schools were therefore ignored for four years. We went from an average capital allocation of $467 million in the last four years of the Bracks and Brumby governments to an allocation of around $200 million in the first three budgets of the last government.

We are dealing with the impact of that underfunding of education capital right now. There has been a 500 per cent increase in portables being ripped out of schools right across the state because the former government simply did not build new schools or upgrade existing schools to the standard required. Because of the former government, portables are being ripped out. Between the last school year and the beginning of this school year 260 portables were moved to cater for enrolment growth of 13 000 students. That is because under the former government there was not the funding in education capital that was required.

We have committed an initial package of $530 million for education capital, and we will be doing more. That initial $530 million includes, as the member for Mornington said, Moorooduc Primary School. A member cannot seek more than one action in an adjournment item — —

Mr Morris interjected.

Mr MERLINO — The member did not do so, but he did mention Moorooduc. I take this opportunity to confirm the $1 million commitment that we made to Moorooduc Primary School.

I acknowledge the member for raising the issue of Osborne Primary School. I will get further information from the department with respect to that school. We made an initial commitment of $530 million, and as the member would appreciate, in the first budget of a new government the focus is on implementing election commitments. However, I will ensure that Osborne is on my radar.

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — I am delighted that we have a fantastic member for Geelong, although I am not so delighted at having to provide some background before I do, certainly, agree to the action she sought from me. The action she requested was for me to meet with her and members of the community to explain some of the changes around the planned regional rail link rollout.

This was a very difficult decision, announced last week, that the government had to take — that there would be an eight-week delay in the planned regional rail link timetable. It was a difficult decision, but it was taken based on Public Transport Victoria's advice that it could not guarantee there would not be problems with the opening of the regional rail link because the former government had failed to ensure that there was an adequate supply of rolling stock for the opening of the regional rail link project.

I live in Bendigo, and like members who represent the Geelong area, I know just how keenly anticipated the opening of the regional rail link is, so this was very disappointing. We are currently running on a bare minimum of rolling stock across our regional rail system, which is again a consequence of the fact that for two years the former government sat on its hands and did not place a rolling stock order for the regional rail network. We all know that it takes a little while to build trains and that if those opposite had put the order in when they should have, we would have had the trains coming off the production line right now. That did not happen, and we are having to work through the consequences of yet another public transport bungle made by the Liberal-Nationals government. That is some background for the member for Geelong.

I have also been speaking to the member for Geelong about further bus timetable consultation that will go on during this period of the delayed timetable, and she has been a strong advocate for public transport improvements for her community. I look forward to working with her to deliver on those commitments, particularly the 20-minute frequency for rail services to Geelong, which is an exciting initiative. I hope that provides further information for the member, and I look forward to following up the action she requested.

The member for Lowan also raised for my attention a matter regarding regional rail services. She asked the government to match an election commitment for a review into public transport services in her community. For four years the Liberal Party and The Nationals were in government and The Nationals held the seat of Lowan, and for four years the local community was asking for something to be done on this front, and I know this because, as the shadow Minister for Regional and Rural Development, I met on a few occasions with representatives of the Horsham and Wimmera communities, the councils and the Wimmera Development Association, and they kept telling me how keen they were to see improved public transport services. They kept telling me how those calls were falling on deaf ears, but it is a funny thing what an election will do, and they finally got some traction on the eve of the election.

I understand incredibly well just how important public transport is to regional and rural communities, whether it is bus services connecting rural towns to larger regional centres or those larger regional centres connecting to metropolitan Melbourne. I understand that well; that is why Labor has always been the party of regional rail services. I am happy to have a look at this request from the member for Lowan. I am pleased to see her giving voice to these issues, and I hope she continues to give voice to these issues and reminds her community of and apologises for the inaction over the last four years, when some of this could have been done. I will have a look at this request for a review.

Public Transport Victoria is undertaking a broader piece of work on a regional network development plan, which will include consideration of some of this activity around connectedness between rural towns and regional centres and the provision of public transport for the whole of the state. No doubt the work the member has mentioned will be picked up as part of that. I hope that we can have a more productive relationship on these matters with the member for Lowan, because as I said, I understand well how important it is to connect rural and regional communities to each other and to the metropolitan centre. I suggest that we have a way to go to work forward on these matters.

The member for Bentleigh raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Training and Skills.

The member for Dandenong raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety.

The member for Forest Hill raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety.

The member for Pascoe Vale raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Sport.

The member for Eildon raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water.

All these matters will be referred for the respective minister's attention and response.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The house is now adjourned.

House adjourned 5.49 p.m. until Tuesday, 17 March.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers to the following questions on notice were circulated on the date shown.
Questions have been incorporated from the notice paper of the Legislative Assembly.
Answers have been incorporated in the form supplied by the departments on behalf of the appropriate ministers.
The portfolio of the minister answering the question on notice starts each heading.

Tuesday, 24 February 2015

Roads and road safety

7. **Ms VICTORIA** to ask the Minister for Roads and Road Safety — with reference to the removal of level crossings at Mountain Highway and Scoresby Road in Bayswater:

(1) When will removal works commence.

(2) Will the overall outcome include the relocation of the maintenance sheds and sidings.

ANSWER:

I am informed that, as at the date the question was raised:

As the question you ask falls within the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Public Transport, the Hon Jacinta Allan MP, you may wish to raise this question with her in Parliament.

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