

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT**

**FIRST SESSION**

**Thursday, 12 June 2014**

**(Extract from book 8)**

**Internet: [www.parliament.vic.gov.au/downloadhansard](http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/downloadhansard)**

**By authority of the Victorian Government Printer**



## **The Governor**

The Honourable ALEX CHERNOV, AC, QC

## **The Lieutenant-Governor**

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

## **The ministry**

(from 17 March 2014)

|   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Premier, Minister for Regional Cities and Minister for Racing . . . . .   | The Hon. D. V. Napthine, MP       |
| Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, and Minister for<br>Regional and Rural Development . . . . .              | The Hon. P. J. Ryan, MP           |
| Treasurer . . . . .   | The Hon. M. A. O'Brien, MP        |
| Minister for Innovation, Minister for Tourism and Major Events, and<br>Minister for Employment and Trade . . . . .        | The Hon. Louise Asher, MP         |
| Minister for Local Government and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. . . . .  | The Hon. T. O. Bull, MP           |
| Attorney-General, Minister for Finance and Minister for Industrial<br>Relations. . . . .                                  | The Hon. R. W. Clark, MP          |
| Minister for Health and Minister for Ageing . . . . .   | The Hon. D. M. Davis, MLC         |
| Minister for Education . . . . .  | The Hon. M. F. Dixon, MP          |
| Minister for Sport and Recreation, and Minister for Veterans' Affairs . . . . .   | The Hon. D. K. Drum, MLC          |
| Minister for Planning, and Minister for Multicultural Affairs and<br>Citizenship . . . . .                                | The Hon. M. J. Guy, MLC           |
| Minister for Ports, Minister for Major Projects and Minister for<br>Manufacturing . . . . .                               | The Hon. D. J. Hodgett, MP        |
| Minister for Housing, and Minister for Children and Early Childhood<br>Development . . . . .                              | The Hon. W. A. Lovell, MLC        |
| Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Roads . . . . .  | The Hon. T. W. Mulder, MP         |
| Minister for Energy and Resources, and Minister for Small Business. . . . .   | The Hon. R. J. Northe, MP         |
| Minister for Liquor and Gaming Regulation, Minister for Corrections<br>and Minister for Crime Prevention . . . . .        | The Hon. E. J. O'Donohue, MLC     |
| Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Technology and Minister responsible<br>for the Aviation Industry . . . . .              | The Hon. G. K. Rich-Phillips, MLC |
| Minister for Environment and Climate Change, and Minister for Youth<br>Affairs. . . . .                                   | The Hon. R. Smith, MP             |
| Minister for the Arts, Minister for Women's Affairs and Minister for<br>Consumer Affairs . . . . .                        | The Hon. H. Victoria, MP          |
| Minister for Higher Education and Skills . . . . .  | The Hon. N. Wakeling, MP          |
| Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, and Minister for Water. . . . .   | The Hon. P. L. Walsh, MP          |
| Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and Minister for Bushfire<br>Response . . . . .                               | The Hon. K. A. Wells, MP          |
| Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Community Services, and<br>Minister for Disability Services and Reform . . . . . | The Hon. M. L. N. Wooldridge, MP  |
| Cabinet Secretary . . . . .   | Mrs I. Peulich, MLC               |

## Legislative Assembly committees

**Privileges Committee** — Ms Barker, Mr Clark, Ms Green, Mr Hodgett, Mr Morris, Mr Nardella, Mr O'Brien, Mr Pandazopoulos and Mr Walsh.

**Standing Orders Committee** — The Speaker, Ms Allan, Ms Asher, Ms Barker, Mr Hodgett, Ms Kairouz, Mr O'Brien and Mrs Powell.

## Joint committees

**Accountability and Oversight Committee** — (*Assembly*): Ms Kanis, Mr McIntosh and Ms Neville.  
(*Council*): Mr D. R. J. O'Brien and Mr Ronalds.

**Dispute Resolution Committee** — (*Assembly*): Ms Allan, Ms Asher, Mr Clark, Ms Hennessy, Mr Merlino, Mr O'Brien and Mr Walsh. (*Council*): Mr D. Davis, Mr Drum, Mr Lenders, Ms Lovell and Ms Pennicuik.

**Economic Development, Infrastructure and Outer Suburban/Interface Services Committee** — (*Assembly*): Mr Burgess and Mr McGuire. (*Council*): Mrs Millar and Mr Ronalds.

**Education and Training Committee** — (*Assembly*): Mr Brooks and Mr Crisp. (*Council*): Mr Elasmarr and Mrs Kronberg.

**Electoral Matters Committee** — (*Assembly*): Mr Delahunty. (*Council*): Mr Finn, Mrs Peulich, Mr Somyurek and Mr Tarlamis.

**Environment and Natural Resources Committee** — (*Assembly*): Ms Duncan, Mr Pandazopoulos and Ms Wreford. (*Council*): Mr Koch and Mr D. D. O'Brien.

**Family and Community Development Committee** — (*Assembly*): Ms Halfpenny, Mr Madden, Mrs Powell and Ms Ryall. (*Council*): Mrs Coote.

**House Committee** — (*Assembly*): The Speaker (*ex officio*), Ms Beattie, Mr Blackwood, Mr Burgess, Ms Campbell, Ms Thomson and Mr Weller. (*Council*): The President (*ex officio*), Mr Eideh, Mr Finn, Ms Hartland, Mr D. R. J. O'Brien and Mrs Peulich.

**Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee** — (*Assembly*): Ms Kanis, Mr Kotsiras, Mr McIntosh and Mr Weller. (*Council*): Mr Viney.

**Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee** — (*Assembly*): Mr Carroll, Mr McCurdy and Mr Southwick. (*Council*): Mr Ramsay and Mr Scheffer.

**Public Accounts and Estimates Committee** — (*Assembly*): Mr Angus, Ms Garrett, Mr Morris, Mr Pakula and Mr Scott. (*Council*): Mr O'Brien and Mr Ondarchie.

**Road Safety Committee** — (*Assembly*): Mr Languiller, Mr Perera, Mr Tilley and Mr Thompson. (*Council*): Mr Elsbury.

**Rural and Regional Committee** — (*Assembly*): Mr Howard, Mr Katos, Mr Trezise and Mr Weller. (*Council*): Mr D. R. J. O'Brien.

**Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee** — (*Assembly*): Ms Barker, Ms Campbell, Mr Gidley, Mr Nardella, Dr Sykes and Mr Watt. (*Council*): Mr Dalla-Riva.

## Heads of parliamentary departments

*Assembly* — Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Mr R. W. Purdey

*Council* — Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr W. R. Tunnecliffe

*Parliamentary Services* — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

**MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION**

**Speaker:**

The Hon. CHRISTINE. FYFFE (from 4 February 2014)

The Hon. K. M. SMITH (to 4 February 2014)

**Deputy Speaker:**

Mr P. WELLER (from 4 February 2014)

Mrs C. A. FYFFE (to 4 February 2014)

**Acting Speakers:**

Mr Angus, Ms Beattie, Mr Blackwood, Mr Burgess, Ms Campbell, Mr Languiller, Mr McCurdy, Mr McGuire, Mr McIntosh, Ms McLeish, Mr Morris, Mr Nardella, Mr Northe, Mr Pandazopoulos, Ms Ryall, Dr Sykes and Mr Thompson. (to 2 April 2014)

Mr Angus, Mr Blackwood, Mr Burgess, Mr Crisp, Mr McCurdy, Mr McIntosh, Ms McLeish, Mr Morris, Ms Ryall, Dr Sykes and Mr Thompson. (from 3 April 2014)

**Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Premier:**

The Hon. D. V. NAPHTHINE (from 6 March 2013)

The Hon. E. N. BAILLIEU (to 6 March 2013)

**Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party:**

The Hon. LOUISE ASHER

**Leader of The Nationals and Deputy Premier:**

The Hon. P. J. RYAN

**Deputy Leader of The Nationals:**

The Hon. P. L. WALSH

**Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Leader of the Opposition:**

The Hon. D. M. ANDREWS

**Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Leader of the Opposition:**

The Hon. J. A. MERLINO

| Member                                 | District           | Party | Member                                | District         | Party |
|--|--------------------|-------|---------------------------------------|------------------|-------|
| Allan, Ms Jacinta Marie                | Bendigo East       | ALP   | Languiller, Mr Telmo Ramon            | Derrimut         | ALP   |
| Andrews, Mr Daniel Michael             | Mulgrave           | ALP   | Lim, Mr Muy Hong                      | Clayton          | ALP   |
| Angus, Mr Neil Andrew Warwick          | Forest Hill        | LP    | McCurdy, Mr Timothy Logan             | Murray Valley    | Nats  |
| Asher, Ms Louise                       | Brighton           | LP    | McGuire, Mr Frank <sup>6</sup>        | Broadmeadows     | ALP   |
| Baillieu, Mr Edward Norman             | Hawthorn           | LP    | McIntosh, Mr Andrew John              | Kew              | LP    |
| Barker, Ms Ann Patricia                | Oakleigh           | ALP   | McLeish, Ms Lucinda Gaye              | Seymour          | LP    |
| Battin, Mr Bradley William             | Gembrook           | LP    | Madden, Mr Justin Mark                | Essendon         | ALP   |
| Bauer, Mrs Donna Jane                  | Carrum             | LP    | Merlino, Mr James Anthony             | Monbulk          | ALP   |
| Beattie, Ms Elizabeth Jean             | Yuroke             | ALP   | Miller, Ms Elizabeth Eileen           | Bentleigh        | LP    |
| Blackwood, Mr Gary John                | Narracan           | LP    | Morris, Mr David Charles              | Mornington       | LP    |
| Brooks, Mr Colin William               | Bundoora           | ALP   | Mulder, Mr Terence Wynn               | Polwarth         | LP    |
| Brumby, Mr John Mansfield <sup>1</sup> | Broadmeadows       | ALP   | Naphtine, Dr Denis Vincent            | South-West Coast | LP    |
| Bull, Mr Timothy Owen                  | Gippsland East     | Nats  | Nardella, Mr Donato Antonio           | Melton           | ALP   |
| Burgess, Mr Neale Ronald               | Hastings           | LP    | Neville, Ms Lisa Mary                 | Bellarine        | ALP   |
| Campbell, Ms Christine Mary            | Pascoe Vale        | ALP   | Newton-Brown, Mr Clement Arundel      | Prahran          | LP    |
| Carbines, Mr Anthony Richard           | Ivanhoe            | ALP   | Noonan, Mr Wade Mathew                | Williamstown     | ALP   |
| Carroll, Mr Benjamin Alan <sup>2</sup> | Niddrie            | ALP   | Northe, Mr Russell John               | Morwell          | Nats  |
| Clark, Mr Robert William               | Box Hill           | LP    | O'Brien, Mr Michael Anthony           | Malvern          | LP    |
| Crisp, Mr Peter Laurence               | Mildura            | Nats  | Pakula, Mr Martin Philip <sup>7</sup> | Lyndhurst        | ALP   |
| D'Ambrosio, Ms Liliana                 | Mill Park          | ALP   | Pallas, Mr Timothy Hugh               | Tarneit          | ALP   |
| Delahunty, Mr Hugh Francis             | Lowan              | Nats  | Pandazopoulos, Mr John                | Dandenong        | ALP   |
| Dixon, Mr Martin Francis               | Nepean             | LP    | Perera, Mr Jude                       | Cranbourne       | ALP   |
| Donnellan, Mr Luke Anthony             | Narre Warren North | ALP   | Pike, Ms Bronwyn Jane <sup>8</sup>    | Melbourne        | ALP   |
| Duncan, Ms Joanne Therese              | Macedon            | ALP   | Powell, Mrs Elizabeth Jeanette        | Shepparton       | Nats  |
| Edwards, Ms Janice Maree               | Bendigo West       | ALP   | Richardson, Ms Fiona Catherine Alison | Northcote        | ALP   |
| Eren, Mr John Hamdi                    | Lara               | ALP   | Ryall, Ms Deanne Sharon               | Mitcham          | LP    |
| Foley, Mr Martin Peter                 | Albert Park        | ALP   | Ryan, Mr Peter Julian                 | Gippsland South  | Nats  |
| Fyffe, Mrs Christine Ann               | Evelyn             | LP    | Scott, Mr Robin David                 | Preston          | ALP   |
| Garrett, Ms Jane Furneaux              | Brunswick          | ALP   | Shaw, Mr Geoffrey Page <sup>9</sup>   | Frankston        | Ind   |
| Gidley, Mr Michael Xavier Charles      | Mount Waverley     | LP    | Smith, Mr Kenneth Maurice             | Bass             | LP    |
| Graley, Ms Judith Ann                  | Narre Warren South | ALP   | Smith, Mr Ryan                        | Warrandyte       | LP    |
| Green, Ms Danielle Louise              | Yan Yean           | ALP   | Southwick, Mr David James             | Caulfield        | LP    |
| Halfpenny, Ms Bronwyn                  | Thomastown         | ALP   | Sykes, Dr William Everett             | Benalla          | Nats  |
| Helper, Mr Jochen                      | Ripon              | ALP   | Thompson, Mr Murray Hamilton Ross     | Sandringham      | LP    |
| Hennessy, Ms Jill                      | Altona             | ALP   | Thomson, Ms Marsha Rose               | Footscray        | ALP   |
| Herbert, Mr Steven Ralph               | Eltham             | ALP   | Tilley, Mr William John               | Benambra         | LP    |
| Hodgett, Mr David John                 | Kilsyth            | LP    | Trezise, Mr Ian Douglas               | Geelong          | ALP   |
| Holding, Mr Timothy James <sup>3</sup> | Lyndhurst          | ALP   | Victoria, Ms Heidi                    | Bayswater        | LP    |
| Howard, Mr Geoffrey Kemp               | Ballarat East      | ALP   | Wakeling, Mr Nicholas                 | Ferntree Gully   | LP    |
| Hulls, Mr Rob Justin <sup>4</sup>      | Niddrie            | ALP   | Walsh, Mr Peter Lindsay               | Swan Hill        | Nats  |
| Hutchins, Ms Natalie Maree Sykes       | Keilor             | ALP   | Watt, Mr Graham Travis                | Burwood          | LP    |
| Kairouz, Ms Marlene                    | Kororoit           | ALP   | Weller, Mr Paul                       | Rodney           | Nats  |
| Kanis, Ms Jennifer <sup>5</sup>        | Melbourne          | ALP   | Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur            | Scoresby         | LP    |
| Katos, Mr Andrew                       | South Barwon       | LP    | Wooldridge, Ms Mary Louise Newling    | Doncaster        | LP    |
| Knight, Ms Sharon Patricia             | Ballarat West      | ALP   | Wreford, Ms Lorraine Joan             | Mordialloc       | LP    |
| Kotsiras, Mr Nicholas                  | Bulleen            | LP    | Wynne, Mr Richard William             | Richmond         | ALP   |

<sup>1</sup> Resigned 21 December 2010

<sup>2</sup> Elected 24 March 2012

<sup>3</sup> Resigned 18 February 2013

<sup>4</sup> Resigned 27 January 2012

<sup>5</sup> Elected 21 July 2012

<sup>6</sup> Elected 19 February 2011

<sup>7</sup> Elected 27 April 2013

<sup>8</sup> Resigned 7 May 2012

<sup>9</sup> LP until 6 March 2013



# CONTENTS

## THURSDAY, 12 JUNE 2014

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| NOTICES OF MOTION .....  | 2097       |
| BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE  |            |
| <i>Notices of motion</i> .....   | 2097       |
| <i>Adjournment</i> .....   | 2098       |
| PETITIONS  |            |
| <i>Daylesford Secondary College</i> .....                              | 2097       |
| <i>South Castlemaine Kindergarten</i> .....                            | 2097       |
| <i>Sunshine Hospital children's multidisciplinary assessment</i> ..... | 2097       |
| <i>Melton Highway level crossing</i> .....                             | 2097       |
| PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE                                |            |
| <i>Budget estimates 2014–15 (part 1)</i> .....                         | 2098       |
| DOCUMENTS .....  | 2098       |
| MEMBERS STATEMENTS   |            |
| <i>Teacher performance and development</i> .....                       | 2098       |
| <i>The Greens</i> .....  | 2098       |
| <i>Hastings Legacy Widows Club</i> .....                               | 2099       |
| <i>Mornington Special Developmental School</i> .....                   | 2099       |
| <i>Frankston Hospital</i> .....  | 2099       |
| <i>Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria</i> .....                        | 2099       |
| <i>Queen's Birthday honours</i> .....                                  | 2099, 2104 |
| <i>Bell Street–Elm Grove, Coburg, pedestrian safety</i> .....          | 2100       |
| <i>Multiple and complex needs care</i> .....                           | 2100       |
| <i>Hawthorn Community Education Centre</i> .....                       | 2100       |
| <i>Korea Festival</i> .....  | 2100       |
| <i>The Wild and Exciting Adventures of Edward</i> .....                | 2100       |
| <i>Whittlesea U3A</i> .....  | 2101       |
| <i>Epping road safety</i> .....  | 2101       |
| <i>Member for Bendigo East</i> .....                                   | 2101       |
| <i>Maribyrnong River precinct height limits</i> .....                  | 2101       |
| <i>The Basin Football Club</i> .....                                   | 2102       |
| <i>Betty Amsden</i> .....  | 2102       |
| <i>Paul Grabowsky</i> .....  | 2102       |
| <i>Pamela Warrender</i> .....  | 2102       |
| <i>Terry Atkinson</i> .....  | 2102       |
| <i>Chris Babatsias</i> .....   | 2102       |
| <i>Joy Ross-Edwards</i> .....  | 2102       |
| <i>Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE</i> .....                      | 2103       |
| <i>Narracan electorate infrastructure</i> .....                        | 2103       |
| <i>John So</i> .....   | 2104       |
| <i>King Valley events</i> .....  | 2104       |
| <i>Rutherglen Winery Walkabout</i> .....                               | 2104       |
| <i>Barbara Wells and Allan Kendall</i> .....                           | 2104       |
| <i>Anglican Church of the Ascension</i> .....                          | 2105       |
| <i>Sameway Magazine Charity Fun Walk</i> .....                         | 2105       |
| <i>Forest Hill electorate youth forum</i> .....                        | 2105       |
| <i>Forest Hill College</i> .....                                       | 2105       |
| <i>Box Hill Hospital redevelopment</i> .....                           | 2105       |
| <i>Eltham Redbacks Football Club</i> .....                             | 2105       |
| <i>Malvern Primary School</i> .....                                    | 2106       |
| PRIVACY AND DATA PROTECTION BILL 2014                                  |            |
| <i>Statement of compatibility</i> .....                                | 2106       |
| <i>Second reading</i> .....  | 2107       |
| CRIME STATISTICS BILL 2014   |            |
| <i>Second reading</i> .....  | 2109, 2144 |

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

|   |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| <i>Federal funding</i> .....                                      | 2133, 2141, 2142       |
| <i>Infrastructure delivery</i> .....                              | 2134, 2135             |
| <i>Health funding</i> .....                                       | 2135, 2136, 2137, 2139 |
| <i>Regional Growth Fund</i> .....                                 | 2136                   |
| <i>Building industry</i> .....                                    | 2138, 2139             |
| <i>Transport infrastructure</i> .....                             | 2140                   |
| <i>Employment</i> .....   | 2143                   |
| DISTINGUISHED VISITORS.....                                       | 2133                   |
| SUSPENSION OF MEMBERS   |                        |
| <i>Member for Essendon</i> .....                                  | 2135                   |
| <i>Member for Keilor</i> .....                                    | 2135                   |
| <i>Member for Bundoora</i> .....                                  | 2136                   |
| <i>Member for Lyndhurst</i> .....                                 | 2139                   |
| <i>Member for Narre Warren South</i> .....                        | 2141                   |
| <i>Member for Lara</i> .....                                      | 2142                   |
| ADJOURNMENT   |                        |
| <i>Wales Street Primary School</i> .....                          | 2152                   |
| <i>Planning zone reform</i> .....                                 | 2153                   |
| <i>Northern Hospital</i> .....                                    | 2154                   |
| <i>Travel Compensation Fund</i> .....                             | 2154                   |
| <i>Qube Ports &amp; Bulk</i> .....                                | 2155                   |
| <i>Mildura electorate ministerial visit</i> .....                 | 2155                   |
| <i>Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network</i> ..... | 2156                   |
| <i>Nepean Highway, Edithvale, pedestrian safety</i> .....         | 2156                   |
| <i>Rosanna Primary School</i> .....                               | 2157                   |
| <i>Ringwood Library, Learning and Cultural Centre</i> .....       | 2157                   |
| <i>Responses</i> .....  | 2158                   |



**Thursday, 12 June 2014**

**The SPEAKER (Hon. Christine Fyffe) took the chair at 9.33 a.m. and read the prayer.**

### NOTICES OF MOTION

**Notices of motion given.**

**Mr PAKULA giving notice of motion:**

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Yesterday I ruled that no adjectives could be applied to a member's name.

**Mr PAKULA continued giving notice of motion.**

**Further notices of motion given.**

### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

#### Notices of motion

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Notices of motion 9 to 18 will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their notice to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 2.00 p.m. today.

### PETITIONS

**Following petitions presented to house:**

#### Daylesford Secondary College

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the house the Napthine government's failure to fund the upgrade of Daylesford Secondary College.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly urges the Napthine government to fund the upgrade of Daylesford Secondary College.

**By Mr HOWARD (Ballarat East) (595 signatures).**

#### South Castlemaine Kindergarten

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of residents of Castlemaine draws to the attention of the house that the South Castlemaine Kindergarten community is being denied the opportunity to maximise the potential of their department of education funding allocated for the placement of a new learning centre for their kindergarten.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria immediately call on the Mount Alexander Shire Council to postpone any further advancement of the current proposal regarding the inappropriate placement of the new learning centre until

further investigation has been conducted into the alternative adjacent site.

**By Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) (438 signatures).**

#### Sunshine Hospital children's multidisciplinary assessment

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the following residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the house that:

1. the Children's Allied Health Service (CAHS) at Sunshine Hospital is no longer accepting multidisciplinary assessment referrals for preschool children with disabilities starting school in 2014;
2. multidisciplinary assessments are vital to ensure children with disabilities receive the appropriate support they need to participate fully in life and society. It is especially vital prior to entry to school so that children can get the most out of their education;
3. families in the western suburbs who are now unable to have this multidisciplinary assessment conducted by Sunshine Hospital will need to access private assessments costing about \$1500.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria urgently calls on the Napthine government to urgently restore multidisciplinary assessments at Sunshine Hospital for children beginning school in 2014.

**By Ms HUTCHINS (Keilor) (16 signatures).**

#### Melton Highway level crossing

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the house the Napthine state government's failure to properly manage the Melton Highway level crossing.

In particular, we note that:

1. the boom gates are down for 52 minutes every 2 hours during peak times;
2. during peak hours journey times are 20 minutes longer;
3. there is an increased risk for children crossing Melton Highway to get to school.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly urges the Napthine state government to guarantee that they will urgently fix the Melton Highway level crossing so that the issues noted above are addressed.

**By Ms HUTCHINS (Keilor) (339 signatures).**

**Tabled.**

**Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Ballarat East be considered next day on motion of Mr HOWARD (Ballarat East).**

**Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Bendigo West be considered next day on motion of Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West).**

**Ordered that petitions presented by honourable member for Keilor be considered next day on motion of Ms HUTCHINS (Keilor).**

## PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

### Budget estimates 2014–15 (part 1)

**Mr MORRIS (Mornington) presented report, together with appendices and transcripts of evidence.**

**Tabled.**

**Ordered that report and appendices be printed.**

## DOCUMENTS

**Tabled by Clerk:**

Auditor-General — Managing Consultants and Contractors — Ordered to be printed

*Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984* — Notice under s 32(3)(a)(iii) in relation to Statutory Rule 37 (*Gazette G23, 5 June 2014*)

*Subordinate Legislation Act 1994* — Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 45, 47, 48

*Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001* — Report on the Marine Investigation.

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Adjournment

**Ms ASHER (Minister for Innovation) — I move:**

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until Tuesday, 24 June 2014.

**Motion agreed to.**

## MEMBERS STATEMENTS

### Teacher performance and development

**Mr DIXON (Minister for Education) —** On 8 May the Victorian coalition government launched a new performance and development framework for

government school staff. The government strongly believes that, as a plethora of evidence suggests, the quality of classroom teaching is the most important factor in student learning outcomes and improvement in those outcomes. That is why I am proud to say that teachers and principals will be assessed with a balanced scorecard on a range of criteria, including the learning outcomes of their students as part of this framework, at the class and school levels respectively.

These outcomes will rightly be assessed with a range of qualitative and quantitative data and will comprise no less than 20 per cent of a teacher's or a principal's total performance outcomes. I believe this is a fair balance, given that student outcomes are what we are all on about for education. Crucially, for the first time this framework will give teachers and principals meaningful feedback with a view to assisting them in improving their skills and performance, a process in which our students are the biggest winners.

I am conscious that some schools have been doing performance and development well to date, and that is great, and we would certainly not seek to disrupt that. The simple fact is that performance and development can be better at many schools, and this framework will ensure a consistent and rigorous approach to performance and development across the system. This new model was developed after an extensive consultation process with key educational stakeholders. Early feedback that I have received from the department is that the framework has been largely well received by schools. I look forward to working with principals and teachers as they continue to both implement and adapt to this model.

## The Greens

**Ms RICHARDSON (Northcote) —** Members of the Greens political party have shown us all once again what a pack of hypocrites they are. In fact they have hit an all-time high with their latest stunt on the Victorian community. They have been out there calling on Labor to block supply no matter what the cost to our teachers, firefighters, police and all the hardworking public servants who serve on our behalf.

Their own federal leader, Christine Milne, has described such antics as Tea Party tactics. Nonetheless there they were with petitions and their wannabe leader, Adam Bandt, demanding that Labor block supply by voting down the state budget. As always, it is Labor they have in their sights, never the Liberals.

Then we come to the Victorian Greens MPs. What did they do last Tuesday when faced with the prospect of

making good on their words — empty words, as it turned out — about the Victorian budget? Did they vote against it? Did they even manage to speak against it at that stage? Of course they did not. Those champions of hypocrisy once again squibbed it, saying one thing as part of their ongoing campaign against Labor and working people and doing something quite different when it matters. That is their way of doing business in Victoria. If there is a stunt, they rush to it. If there is a way to criticise the Liberals, they rush from it. If there is a way to undermine Labor and its chance to govern in the interests of working people, they are always up for that. No wonder Victorians are getting sick and tired of such Tea Party antics and this tired, old outfit, the Victorian Greens political party.

### Hastings Legacy Widows Club

**Mr BURGESS** (Hastings) — I was pleased to be invited to speak at the Hastings Legacy Widows Club on 1 May. It is a wonderful group of people who provide support and social activities for widows of ex-servicemen who live in the area and are registered with Legacy. On behalf of my community, I commend the organisation on the important role it plays in our local area.

### Mornington Special Developmental School

**Mr BURGESS** — I was delighted to be invited to attend an open day at the Mornington Special Developmental School on 21 May to celebrate Education Week. The theme for the morning was a science exhibition followed by a morning tea. The Mornington Special Developmental School is a specialist school that prides itself on being a welcoming and friendly school that caters for children and young people who have a moderate to severe intellectual disability. This school is special in many ways. I commend the staff, parents and students on the wonderful learning environments they have provided. This and other special schools play a critical role in preparing some of the state's most vulnerable children to lead happy, engaged, productive and satisfying lives.

### Frankston Hospital

**Mr BURGESS** — I was pleased to join the Minister for Health on 21 May on a tour of the Napthine government's \$81 million development of Frankston Hospital. This redevelopment, which has created 240 jobs, will double the size of Frankston Hospital's emergency department. The hospital's emergency department is one of the busiest in the state, catering for nearly 60 000 attendees per year. This major expansion will help satisfy this growing demand. This important

project will expand the intensive care unit. A new four-level building on the site includes a new and expanded emergency department, two new 32-bed wards to increase surgical and medical multi-day inpatient bed capacity, 24 additional short-stay beds, two additional intensive care beds, two additional special care nursery cots — —

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

### Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria

**Ms NEVILLE** (Bellarine) — Mental health services are crucial to the wellbeing of many Victorians. Unfortunately in Geelong we are seeing some of these services being cut back. The Collins Place psychiatric disability rehabilitation and support (PDRS) facility, run by Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria, has provided vital support and care for up to 10 young people 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It has been their home and a place where they have received support and care from dedicated staff. Unfortunately since before Easter it has not been fully staffed. Full-time care began to be dropped from the beginning of May, with overnight staff being cut and concerns being raised that the young people were seriously put at risk by this action. The facility has been funded until the end of June, but jobs have been spilt, with five or six staff taking redundancies. This has been a difficult time for the staff and the agency. My main concern is that there are now young people living in a PDRS facility with no staff at all. Staff now only visit to deal with specific issues or situations.

I have been a big supporter of the establishment of the national disability insurance scheme, which will give an increased level of dignity and independence to many people with a disability. Unfortunately concerns that some of these young people will only qualify for fee-for-service care, such as 2 hours of support a week, has led to a knee-jerk reaction to cut back the PDRS services. The withdrawal of full-time care and support for these young people is potentially devastating. It is vital that the government provide agencies like Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria with sufficient funding to ensure that vulnerable young people are not put at risk.

### Queen's Birthday honours

**Mr McINTOSH** (Kew) — I congratulate and thank the following constituents who were awarded honours on the Queen's Birthday list for their significant service to our community: Dr Megan Elizabeth Clark, AC, for service to scientific research and development, her leadership roles in science administration and the

development of public policy; Ms Betty Amsden, AO, for her philanthropic contributions and support of the arts; and Mr John So, AO, former Lord Mayor of Melbourne, for his service to local government and community relations.

Honours were also awarded to Dr Jonathan Burdon, AM, for service to respiratory medicine; my good friend the Honourable Philip Cummins, AM, for his fabulous service to the judiciary, the law and legal education; Mr Ian Ferres, AM, for service to the financial sector; and Professor Derek Prinsley, AM, for service to medicine. Further constituents to be awarded honours were Mr Peter Blundell, OAM, for service to the community, particularly support for Indigenous students; Wing Commander John Grierson, OAM, for service to veterans and their families; Dr Andrew Pattison, OAM, for service to medicine; Dr Peter Stewart, OAM, for service to the international community; Mr Robert Stewart, OAM, commonly called Bob, for service to the community — and I thank him for clothing my son in school uniforms over a number of years. On behalf of our community, I thank them all for their great and dedicated service.

### **Bell Street–Elm Grove, Coburg, pedestrian safety**

**Ms CAMPBELL** (Pascoe Vale) — The children, parents and staff of Coburg Primary School submitted a petition to the Parliament calling on the Minister for Roads to provide a safe crossing for children by installing safety cameras at the pedestrian crossing on the corner of Elm Grove and Bell Street to monitor vehicles speeding and using the designated bus lane along the southern side of Bell Street. Unfortunately the petition was not in the correct form, but I have forwarded it to the minister. The petitioners are concerned that currently schoolchildren and others have inadequate protection from motorists who speed and illegally use the designated bus lane along Bell Street. I commend the school community on being proactive and trust that the minister will take their concerns seriously.

### **Multiple and complex needs care**

**Ms CAMPBELL** — I want to pass on a very special thankyou. The parents of ‘C’, one of my constituents, express their thanks to ambulance officers, police and hospitals — numerous hospitals, but especially St Vincent’s addiction medicine group and DePaul House — for assisting their daughter. They say:

... we know without you people, we would not have ‘C’ physically in our lives, and she would be just another statistic.

Occasionally this Parliament rises to the challenge and does wonderful things, with ministers putting in place great initiatives in a bipartisan way. Thankfully wonderful families like this one have the option to apply to the courts for detention treatment orders for family members and then, if they are fortunate, they can later be placed in care under the Multiple and Complex Needs Initiative.

### **Hawthorn Community Education Centre**

**Mr BAILLIEU** (Hawthorn) — The Hawthorn Community Education Centre in Glenferrie Road provides important services for the elderly and the wider community. Hawthorn is one of the most diverse communities in the state, and the Hawthorn Community Education Centre provides training, community and living-alone support for those in need. The community centre has been seeking funding under the neighbourhood house coordination program. Unfortunately it has not received that funding. I have raised this matter with the Minister for Community Services, and the neighbourhood house coordination program is fully committed. The community centre is now seeking support from the Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres, and I encourage the minister to consider additional support for the neighbourhood house coordination program.

### **Korea Festival**

**Mr BAILLIEU** — I congratulate the Korean community in Victoria for the inaugural Korea Festival held on Saturday, 17 May. This festival was the very first Korea Festival in Melbourne. It was a great success, and I am pleased, as is the Consul General, that so many Victorians were able to experience Korean culture. The Korean community has been able to contribute, as it still does, whether it be through the multicultural base of this state, dancing, singing, the choirs or Taekwondo. I congratulate the community on what will now be an annual event.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member’s time has expired.

### ***The Wild and Exciting Adventures of Edward***

**Ms HALFPENNY** (Thomastown) — I was very pleased to attend the launch of *The Wild and Exciting Adventures of Edward*, an amusing novel written by Betty Harvey, a most talented woman and active member of the Whittlesea U3A. I am part way through reading the book and have to say that it is very enjoyable and a great read for young and old alike. I highly recommend it. As a member of Parliament

representing residents of the northern suburbs, I am in a very privileged position. I am given the chance, which very few get, to experience, share and celebrate the great talent, creativity, warmth and selflessness that define so many of the residents of the north.

### **Whittlesea U3A**

**Ms HALFPENNY** — Only a few days after the book launch I attended the monthly meeting of the Whittlesea U3A and shared tea and cakes with its members, who run on a voluntary basis various classes from Tai Chi to embroidery, technology, round dancing — whatever that is — and Mandarin. Some classes are conducted at members' homes, others in parks and public venues. President Joe Felice and the committee of management do a great job. I particularly like the way Joe chairs a meeting, with his funny comments that had us all rolling around laughing. He certainly knows how to keep the attention of the crowd.

### **Epping road safety**

**Ms HALFPENNY** — On a more serious note, I heard the concerns of many people about the terrible state of the road networks in the northern suburbs, particularly around Epping Road, Epping, and to the north and further east. Residents are concerned for the safety and wellbeing of their families, friends and neighbours, who are forced to navigate unsafe congested roads. No funding has been allocated by this current government to fix any of the problems it promised to fix.

### **Member for Bendigo East**

**Mr WELLER** (Rodney) — In light of the latest financial blunder by Labor's regional spokesperson, the shadow Minister for Regional and Rural Development, the member for Bendigo East, regarding funding for Echuca hospital, I wish to set the record straight. The member for Bendigo East's claims in the *Riverine Herald* last week that the Victorian coalition government has cut funding to Echuca Regional Health are wrong. The coalition government has increased funding to Echuca Regional Health by \$5.8 million. This is on top of the \$40 million of funding the government has provided for the redevelopment and expansion of the health service. This funding is delivering new purpose-built acute facilities, including an expanded emergency department, new inpatient accommodation and a new front entry to the hospital. The final hospital budgets will be calculated when the full commonwealth funding for 2014–15 is known, and those figures have not yet been finalised. Labor has simply made them up.

The member for Bendigo East is fast developing a reputation as a sloppy mathematician who is too lazy to check her facts. Last month she humiliated herself when she claimed there was no money in the budget for the Regional Growth Fund. She was outrageously wrong. Prior to that she bungled her facts and figures when she accused the coalition government of blowing a quarter of a million dollars designing a stall to promote regional living at the Royal Melbourne Show.

The member for Bendigo East has repeatedly failed to learn from her mistakes and check her facts before making public statements, which are based on complete fiction. She is so desperate that she will say and do anything to advance her cause, and she is prepared to mislead the public in the process. This is another embarrassing error from Labor's regional spokesperson, who cannot bear to let the truth stand in the way of a good headline.

### **Maribyrnong River precinct height limits**

**Ms THOMSON** (Footscray) — The people of Footscray are angry. They are angry at the Minister for Planning for blatantly ignoring his own height limits along the Maribyrnong River in the Joseph Road precinct. They are angry with him because he does not care about the Maribyrnong River, even though he gave a commitment that he would protect not only the Yarra River but also the Maribyrnong. He has done no such thing.

The minister set height limits at 12 storeys and 8 storeys, which were higher than those that had originally been established. He has now ignored even his own height limits and approved buildings of 28, 25 and 18 storeys. Not only has he done this without the support of the City of Maribyrnong, but also even the professionals disagree with the height limits that have been set. These buildings will overshadow the Maribyrnong River and a nearby school. This is a total overdevelopment of the Joseph Road precinct, which will cause congestion and destroy livability in the area. The Minister for Planning has total disregard for the people of the west.

The minister should immediately revoke his decision on these buildings, consult with the City of Maribyrnong or give the powers that were given to him back to the City of Maribyrnong so that decisions can be made that will improve the living standards of people who live there now and will live there in the future.

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

### The Basin Football Club

**Ms VICTORIA** (Minister for the Arts) — Recently I had the privilege of being asked to attend a lunch at the Basin Football Club. This was no ordinary lunch — the club was raising funds for headspace, the National Youth Mental Health Foundation. Through the tragedy of losing one of their own earlier this year the club has found great unity, as was shown by those who spoke. I want to recognise the family of the young man, who showed amazing strength, and his friend and teammate, who spoke openly and eloquently of his own challenges, gaining the admiration of all those in attendance.

The loss of any young life is tragic and devastating, but when those affected use the experience to help others, they need to be congratulated for being so selfless and strong.

### Betty Amsden

**Ms VICTORIA** — Betty Amsden has just been recognised as an Officer of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday honours. Betty is a tireless advocate in the areas of the arts, Guide Dogs Australia and especially providing educational opportunities for young Australians. I dubbed Betty 'Fairy Godmother of the Arts in Victoria' several years ago, and that title says it all. Congratulations to a very special lady. She deserves every accolade bestowed upon her.

### Paul Grabowsky

**Ms VICTORIA** — Paul Grabowsky has been recognised as an Officer of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday honours. Paul is best known as a jazz pianist, arranger, composer and conductor, as founder of the Australian Art Orchestra and for his professional fellowship at the Monash University school of music conservatorium. Congratulations to Paul on this accolade. It is greatly deserved after a lifetime dedicated to excellence in music.

### Pamela Warrender

**Ms VICTORIA** — The Queen's Birthday honours list included Pamela Warrender, who was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia. Pamela is a passionate and dedicated worker. This accolade was bestowed upon her for service to the community of Melbourne and to the arts. Congratulations to Pamela. This is well deserved.

### Terry Atkinson

**Ms BARKER** (Oakleigh) — I was very pleased recently to meet with Terry Atkinson, a young man from Hughesdale, who is one of the Victorian representatives at the National Indigenous Youth Parliament 2014, which is held in Canberra. Terry and I discussed at length a bill that he was to speak on regarding the granting of voting rights to 16-year-olds. We also discussed the subject of his adjournment matter, which was education, and the vital importance of education in the lives of our young Indigenous people. He is a very impressive and intelligent young man with a passion for social issues. In addition to the importance of education, he is also very interested in mental health issues. I am sure Terry did very well in the debates he participated in. I am also sure that his determination to be actively involved in the political process and to encourage other young people to also actively participate will continue and grow. I wish him well for the future.

### Chris Babatsias

**Ms BARKER** — I also thank Chris Babatsias and radio station Rythmos 1656 for organising a successful fundraising event to help Dimitris Moras, a young Greek man who, on his first holiday to Australia, fell ill and has been diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia. The Alfred hospital advised Dimitris not to fly home but to begin treatment immediately, which he has done. The funds needed to pay for this treatment are very high, and the Greek communities of Oakleigh and Melbourne have rallied to support Dimitris and ensure that he can obtain this vital treatment.

Chris is a very nice man who is dedicated to his family and to his community. He got the fundraising for Dimitris's treatment off to a great start with an evening of great food and entertainment at the Oakleigh Greek Orthodox Community Centre. Chris established and funded radio station Rythmos 1656, which is based in Oakleigh, to work with and cater for the very large Greek community of Oakleigh and Melbourne. He simply wants to give back to the community, and his efforts to support the community are greatly appreciated.

### Joy Ross-Edwards

**Mrs POWELL** (Shepparton) — I would like to pay tribute to a very special lady, Mrs Joy Elizabeth Ross-Edwards, who passed away on 27 May at age 83 years. Joy was a loving mother to five children, and a loving and supportive wife of the late Peter Ross-Edwards, the former member for Shepparton,

who became Leader of the Victorian Country Party in 1970 — the same year their daughter Sarah was born. My husband, Ian, and I joined many hundreds of people at her funeral at St Augustine's Church in Shepparton on 6 June, including the Leader of The Nationals, Peter Ryan, and his wife, Trish, a former Leader of The Nationals, Pat McNamara and Merryl, one of the members for Northern Victoria Region in the other place, Wendy Lovell, and other MPs and former MPs.

We heard wonderful tributes from her sons David and Richard, who spoke of a hardworking, loving and community-minded mother, who during Peter's years as a solicitor in Shepparton was raising four boys under 6 years of age mainly on her own. There were also special reflections from Sarah and Amy. When Peter Ross-Edwards entered Parliament, life became even busier for Joy. She was involved in school committees, the Shepparton Tennis Club, the Shepparton United Football Netball Club, St Augustine's Church, the Goulburn Valley Base Hospital ladies auxiliary and the Red Cross. As part of her involvement she attended many functions, conferences and branch meetings.

Joy was still attending National Party functions only weeks before she died, including The Nationals state conference in Benalla. Joy was a strong woman who had to cope with the loss of two sons — John and Tim — and also her wonderful husband of 60 years, Peter, only 20 months ago. Joy was a great role model to me, to her family, to her friends and to her community. I extend condolences to her children David, Richard and Sarah, to their partners Amanda and Sharan, and to her five grandchildren: Amy, Emma, Samantha, Tim and Andrew. Joy's achievements are a legacy of which she could be proud.

### **Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE**

**Mr CARBINES** (Ivanhoe) — I rise to express my disappointment on behalf of Heidelberg West residents at the fact that because of government cuts the Heidelberg West campus of the Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE (NMIT) is introducing parking fees for TAFE students from 1 July. TAFE students will now be paying up to \$5 a day — something like \$1000 a year — to park their cars at the campus.

Many students completing apprenticeships drive vans or utes, making their vehicles mobile workplaces. Some students attend courses during their work hours and public transport is not an option for them. It is obvious that students will try to avoid these fees by parking in The Mall shopping centre car park or in local and suburban streets. Of further concern is that there are many public housing double-storey flats near NMIT

and free parking is at a premium in the nearby streets. Public housing tenants cannot afford up to \$165 a year in parking and visitor permits, and even a family buying a single permit and a visitor permit would be up for \$65 a year.

What is very clear is that the NMIT campus in Heidelberg West, which made a \$30 million loss this year, has suffered over \$28 million in cuts from the government and is now having to sting students \$5 a day for parking. As a result, students will park in nearby streets, forcing Banyule council to introduce parking permits and sting local residents and public housing tenants if they wish to park on their local streets. Everyone will pay, including students and tenants, because of this government's cuts to TAFE funding.

### **Narracan electorate infrastructure**

**Mr BLACKWOOD** (Narracan) — Last week I had the pleasure of hosting a visit to my electorate by the Minister for Public Transport, who is also the Minister for Roads. During the visit we had the opportunity to meet with the residents of Longwarry at the site of the now-funded Sand Road interchange. This major infrastructure project is now funded by both the state and federal governments. The \$30 million upgrade of this dangerous intersection will go to tender mid-2015, with construction to commence in late 2015 with a completion date late in 2017.

We also took the opportunity to look at the progress of the Warragul railway station precinct project and meet on site with the Baw Baw shire CEO and councillors and representatives from Thiess construction. This \$26 million project, fully funded in last year's budget, comprises a 200-space car park and a railway underpass. Construction of the car park is very well advanced and may see completion ahead of schedule later this year. The early works on the underpass have been completed, with the installation of the concrete supports for the rail track lifted into place two weeks ago by a massive 450-tonne crane — easily the largest crane ever seen in Warragul. Completion of this part of the project is on track for mid-2015.

These two projects are fantastic examples of the outcomes that are being delivered in regional Victoria due to the ability of the coalition government to manage our economy. That is in stark contrast to the Labor years of expenditure outstripping revenue, of waste and of mismanagement, which is Labor's hallmark of project delivery.

## John So

**Mr LIM** (Clayton) — It is my great pleasure to advise the house that Mr John So, the former Lord Mayor of Melbourne, has been awarded an AO — Officer of the Order of Australia — for distinguished service to local government and community relations, as an ambassador for cultural diversity, and to the promotion of Melbourne as a tourist and investment destination.

John So, the longest serving Lord Mayor of Melbourne, was the first Lord Mayor to be directly elected by the people. He was a councillor for 17 years and Lord Mayor for 7½ of those years. Unlike the administrations before and after him, his mayorship was highly respected for being incorruptible and free of scandal and maladministration. He won the World Mayor award in 2006. There was even a popular song written in his honour.

I particularly recall John So receiving the longest and loudest ovation of all the dignitaries in attendance at the opening of the 2006 Commonwealth Games, which was a true recognition of his efforts and vision. I was especially proud to be part of a state Labor government that worked in partnership with him and the City of Melbourne to achieve the most successful sporting event showcasing Melbourne and Victoria to the world since the 1956 Melbourne Olympics. This award is official recognition of his efforts and his vision for Melbourne.

## King Valley events

**Mr McCURDY** (Murray Valley) — The King Valley was buzzing on the weekend with many activities held as part of the Weekend Fit for a King celebrations, alongside the King Valley Art Show. The art show featured the work of local artists, and local landscapes were depicted in some of the works on display. There were many visitors enjoying a long weekend in this beautiful part of the state. As the candidate for the seat of Ovens Valley, which will include the King Valley, it was an absolute pleasure to be there.

## Queen's Birthday honours

**Mr McCURDY** — The Murray Valley electorate was well represented in the Queen's Birthday honours list. I congratulate the recipients, who have given so much of themselves to make the region where we live a better place for all.

Graham Kerr received an Order of Australia Medal for his involvement with UnitingCare, Apex, Wangaratta council, the Wangaratta arts centre and Wangaratta GOTAFE, as well as with cricket, football and basketball.

Professor Richard McLean, a consultant at Northeast Health Wangaratta, has been appointed as a member of the general division of the Order of Australia for his service to medicine, particularly in the fields of rural health and nuclear medicine.

Lorna Martin, 85, received an Order of Australia Medal for her involvement with the Yarrowonga-Mulwala RSL women's auxiliary, the Yarrowonga Legacy Widows Club, the Yarrowonga senior citizens club and sporting clubs.

Adrian Noel Loughnan was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to print media in the Yarrowonga-Mulwala community. Noel was editor of the *Yarrowonga Chronicle* for 53 years and a member of the Rotary Club of Yarrowonga-Mulwala for 40 years.

Des O'Meara, the Yarrowonga State Emergency Service unit controller, was awarded the Emergency Services Medal. Des was recognised for providing exceptional leadership during response and recovery operations, as well as building relationships between other agencies and the community.

## Rutherglen Winery Walkabout

**Mr McCURDY** — Thousands of visitors and locals again enjoyed the Rutherglen Winery Walkabout. People enjoyed the great food and wine in beautiful weather and a party atmosphere.

## Barbara Wells and Allan Kendall

**Mr PALLAS** (Tarneit) — I congratulate two members of my local community, Barbara Wells and Allan Kendall, who recently celebrated 45 years of service to the Werribee Country Fire Authority (CFA). It was a great pleasure to see their hard work publicly recognised by the Werribee CFA at its annual dinner on 24 May.

Barbara Wells began her service to the Werribee CFA in the ladies auxiliary and then in the auxiliary, working in administration, organisation and fundraising for the Werribee CFA. I have spoken to local members of the brigade who tell me that the most valued aspect of Barbara's work has been ensuring the welfare of local brigade members.

Allan Kendall has worked for the CFA as an operational firefighter and has also made a valuable contribution to the running of the organisation, transferring his business skills to strengthen the local brigade. In the 1950s and 1960s Allan was instrumental in lobbying to bring a rescue truck and the jaws of life to Werribee.

One of the most heartening aspects of the long service of both Barbara and Allan is that it has inspired their families to follow them into CFA service, including Barbara's son Michael, who is now the local brigade captain. The families have contributed over 200 years of combined service to the CFA. CFA volunteers provide an invaluable service to our local community, often for very little thanks, and it is a credit to both of these members not only that they have served for so long but that they have inspired others to do so.

### **Anglican Church of the Ascension**

**Mr ANGUS** (Forest Hill) — I recently had the pleasure of attending the 50th anniversary celebration at the Anglican Church of the Ascension in Burwood East. It was a very memorable service, followed by a sumptuous supper and time of fellowship. I congratulate the leadership and parishioners of the church, both past and present, on this great milestone, thank them for their service to the local community over the last 50 years and wish them well for the future.

### **Sameway Magazine Charity Fun Walk**

**Mr ANGUS** — Last Monday I had the great pleasure of attending and participating in the inaugural Sameway Magazine Charity Fun Walk. The walk raised funds for the Salvation Army and was supported by many enthusiastic participants keen for a walk on a beautiful sunny Melbourne winter day. I congratulate all those involved in this event, in particular Mr Raymond Chow and his team for organising it, as well as the many other volunteers who assisted in making the event such a success.

### **Forest Hill electorate youth forum**

**Mr ANGUS** — Last week I was delighted to host the Minister for Youth Affairs at a youth forum in the electorate of Forest Hill. Also in attendance were students from local secondary schools, local council representatives, police and numerous sporting group, church and other community group representatives. A wide range of issues affecting youth were discussed, with the minister providing information on the extensive range of programs and services available to young people and taking questions from the floor. I

thank the minister and all present for their attendance at this event.

### **Forest Hill College**

**Mr ANGUS** — I recently had the great pleasure of attending the Forest Hill College annual school production. This year's production was written and directed by two year 11 students, Natalie Pantou and Jason Ekonomides. It was an excellent production and included more than 50 cast and crew members. I congratulate all the staff and students involved in the production, in particular Natalie and Jason.

### **Box Hill Hospital redevelopment**

**Mr ANGUS** — It was a pleasure to join with parliamentary colleagues recently to visit the Box Hill Hospital to view the construction works that are nearing completion. In particular we inspected the emergency department and operating theatre area. This is a wonderful coalition government project for the residents of the Forest Hill electorate, which is on time and under budget. Good management has resulted in the original nine-storey —

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

### **Eltham Redbacks Football Club**

**Mr HERBERT** (Eltham) — I rise to invite members of the house and the local community to a wonderful local event: the Eltham Redbacks Football Club annual charity breast cancer women's soccer match. This annual fundraiser began in 2010 in conjunction with the women's health campaign I conducted that year. This will be the fifth time the Redbacks have run this special event, which has raised awareness and much-needed funds for Cancer Council Victoria. This year the mighty Redbacks women have selected Friday, 20 June, as the night for this significant event, a game against the Darebin Falcons. I invite everyone to don their pink colours and support the tremendous effort the Redbacks have gone to in making this evening a wonderful success.

The Redbacks are one of Eltham's most successful family sporting clubs, with 1000 members, strong youth development teams, great senior teams and an increasingly successful women's team. The great thing about the Redbacks is that they match success on the field with success in the community, and the annual health match is a great example of strong community spirit. Once again there will be pink baked goods to munch on and a wonderful raffle will be conducted.

I hope that by Friday, 20 June, the Redbacks will be inspired by the Socceroos' performance in Brazil against Chile and the Netherlands and that the Redbacks women's state league 2 team can reach the top spot on the ladder, whilst the state league 3 team can cap off the breast cancer charity night with a glorious win. It is a great club, it is a great event and I hope everyone who is available can attend.

### Malvern Primary School

**Mr O'BRIEN** (Treasurer) — Last Friday I was pleased to join with the Minister for Education to visit Malvern Primary School in Toorong Road in my electorate. Malvern Primary School is a fabulous school, very well led by principal Richard Bennetts and school council president Jodi Fullarton-Healey. However, the school did not receive any capital funding from the state government during the entire 11 years of the Labor government. That is absolutely appalling. That is why it is so good that we could deliver \$3.9 million in this 2014–15 budget.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The time for making statements by members has now expired.

## PRIVACY AND DATA PROTECTION BILL 2014

### *Statement of compatibility*

#### **Mr CLARK (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 act'), I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Privacy and Data Protection Bill 2014 (the bill).

In my opinion, the Privacy and Data Protection Bill 2014, as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with human rights as set out in the charter act. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

#### **Overview**

The key purposes of the bill are to:

combine the provisions of the Information Privacy Act 2000 (IP act) and the Commissioner for Law Enforcement Data Security Act 2005 (CLEDS act), modified as necessary to create the new office of the Privacy and Data Protection Commissioner;

introduce legislative provisions that fulfil the government's announced commitment to the implementation of a new Victorian protective data security regime; and

introduce two mechanisms (public interest determinations and information usage arrangements

(IUAs) to provide some limited flexibility in the application of certain of the existing information privacy principles (IPPs) and (in the case of IUAs) certain information handling provisions in other acts.

#### **Human rights issues**

##### *Relevant charter act rights*

Section 13 — a person has the right not to have his or her privacy unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with.

The explanatory memorandum to the charter act stated that it was that act's intention that the right to privacy it contained be interpreted consistently with the existing information privacy and health records framework in Victoria to the extent that it protects against arbitrary interference.

In *WBM v. Chief Commissioner of Police* [2012] VSCA 159 (WBM), the Victorian Court of Appeal considered but did not need to choose between two competing interpretations of 'arbitrary' for the purposes of this right. The first was the 'ordinary' or dictionary meaning: a decision or action, which is not based on any relevant identifiable criterion, but which stems from an act of caprice or whim (WBM, [99]).

The second interpretation of 'arbitrary' was broader and was described by Bell J in *PJB v. Melbourne Health* [2011] VSC 327 [84] as follows:

"[arbitrary]...extends to interferences which, in the particular circumstances applying to the individual, are capricious, unpredictable or unjust and also to interferences which, in those circumstances, are unreasonable in the sense of not being proportionate to a legitimate aim sought".

In *WBM*, the Court of Appeal did not decide which interpretation was correct, but the broader meaning was preferred in obiter dicta by Warren CJ ([104] and Hansen JA [133] and adopted by Bell AJA).

In my opinion, nothing in this bill creates an arbitrary interference with privacy on either interpretation of the word.

The right to privacy is enhanced by the bill's substantive provisions in relation to:

protective data security (in part 4);

law enforcement data security (in part 5) (based on the CLEDS act); and

the information privacy provisions (in part 3) which are unchanged from the IP act, including:

its scope of application in respect of privacy to public sector organisations;

the IPPs set out in schedule 1 of the bill; and

the exemptions for certain organisations, such as courts and tribunals and law enforcement agencies in specified circumstances, from the application of some or all of the IPPs, on public interest grounds.

A table of re-enacted provisions is included in part 9 — Consequential Amendments.

Part 3 of the bill introduces two new mechanisms not contained in the IP act:

public interest determinations;  
information usage arrangements (IUAs);

which allow for dispensations from the IPPs or approved codes of practice and (in the case of IUAs) allow for specified practices to be treated as authorised by information handling provisions in other acts.

**Public interest determinations**

The PDP commissioner can make public interest determinations (and temporary public interest determinations) (PIDs and TPIDs), and in part 3 division 6 — Information usage arrangements (IUAs), allow for any IPP (except for IPP4 on data security and IPP6 on access and correction) or an approved code of practice to be departed from in respect of relevant organisations' proposed handling of personal information.

The authorisation by a PID or TPID or an IUA or a certification of an act or practice which may contravene an IPP need not constitute an interference with privacy under the charter act.

If a PID or TPID did authorise an interference with the privacy of an individual, such authorisation will be lawful and not arbitrary because:

persons whose interests would be affected by a PID are afforded an opportunity to be heard before a PID is made;

the PDP commissioner may only make a PID or TPID if satisfied that the public interest in the organisation engaging in the act or practice substantially outweighs the public interest in complying with the relevant IPP;

for transparency, PIDs and TPIDs must be published on the PDP commissioner's website;

an organisation subject to a PID must report on it to the commissioner at least annually and the PDP commissioner must revoke a PID or TPID where the public interest grounds are no longer met, and may revoke it if the reasons set out in the application no longer apply;

a PID and TPID may be disallowed by Parliament.

**Information usage arrangements**

IUAs are designed to address many aspects of information handling between the parties, not just the IPPs. Subject to commissioner's satisfaction that relevant public interest tests have been met and the approval of relevant ministers, an IUA may authorise a departure from the IPPs (except IPPs 4 and 6) or an approved code of practice and may determine that an information handling practice is permitted for the purpose of an 'information handling provision' which is a provision of an act that permits handling of personal information as required or authorised by law or by or under an act.

If an IUA did authorise an interference with privacy, such authorisation will be lawful and not arbitrary because:

an IUA must be initiated by a Victorian government organisation and must set out practices for handling personal information to be undertaken in relation to one

or more public purposes including the provision of services in the public interest;

an IUA must be submitted for approval by the commissioner and relevant ministers;

the information to be provided to the PDP commissioner and ministers in a IUA for consideration is extensive, including identification of any adverse actions that may be taken by organisations as a result of the operation of the IUA;

the PDP commissioner must consider and certify that the acts and practices described in the IUA satisfy a net public interest test before any authorisation to depart from an IPP or approved code of practice or any permission for the purposes of an information handling provision is given;

the PDP commissioner must report on a draft IUA to the responsible minister/s and the report may consider the appropriateness of any aspects of the IUA;

the IUA must be approved by the responsible minister/s; and

the IUA must be published on the PDP commissioner's website (redacted or summarised as necessary) and the lead party must report on the IUA to the commissioner at least annually.

In addition, the PDP commissioner may issue compliance notices in respect of IUAs under part 3 division 9 if the terms of an IUA are not complied with by the organisations involved. Further, the responsible minister/s must revoke an IUA if the public interest tests are no longer met, or may revoke it if the reasons for application no longer apply.

**Certifications by the PDP commissioner**

The commissioner may also certify that a specified act or practice of an organisation is consistent with an IPP or an information handling provision or an approved code of practice. The certification process is not a means for authorising a departure from an IPP or information handling provision or an approved code of practice, but a means of providing an independent view that an act or practice is consistent with them. A person who acts in good faith in reliance on a current certificate does not contravene the relevant IPP or information handling provision or approved code of practice. Any person whose interests are affected by a certificate may seek review of the decision to issue the certificate in VCAT. VCAT or a court may set aside a certificate. Certificates must be published on the commissioner's website. In my opinion, the provision of a certificate of consistency by the commissioner, which is reviewable by a court or VCAT, does not limit the right to be free from arbitrary interferences with privacy.

Robert Clark, MP  
Attorney-General

*Second reading*

**Mr CLARK** (Attorney-General) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Speech as follows incorporated into *Hansard* in accordance with resolution of house:**

The reforms introduced by the Privacy and Data Protection Bill 2014 will strengthen the protection of citizens' private information that is held by the Victorian public sector.

For the first time in Victoria, the bill requires the development of a protective data security framework for monitoring and assuring the security of data held by the public sector.

The framework will address a number of the data security issues identified by the Victorian Auditor-General in his 2009 report on *Maintaining the Integrity and Confidentiality of Personal Information*.

The framework will include protective data security standards, protective data security plans prepared by public sector bodies to implement the standards, and law enforcement data security standards relating specifically to law enforcement data and crime statistics.

Alongside clear standards for ensuring the security of data, the bill will establish clear avenues for departments and agencies to seek a determination about whether a particular use of personal information that it holds is authorised or required by law.

The bill will also allow public sector organisations to apply to enter into arrangements allowing them to handle or share personal information in ways that vary the application of certain information privacy principles, if that use of the information is clearly in the public interest.

The bill also merges the existing roles of Privacy Commissioner and the Commissioner for Law Enforcement Data Security to create a single Privacy and Data Protection Commissioner with responsibility for the oversight of the privacy regime in Victoria.

The bill otherwise re-enacts, or re-enacts with clearer wording, many key provisions of the Information Privacy Act, notably the information privacy principles. The 'organisations' to which that act applied remain subject to the privacy provisions of this bill.

I will now outline the main provisions of the bill.

***Use of public sector information***

The bill provides two new avenues for a public sector agency to determine whether a particular use of personal information is authorised or required by law. [IUA as to handling provisions and certification]

The bill also provides two avenues for a public sector agency to seek to vary the application of, or not comply with, an information privacy principle, except for principles 4 and 6 relating to the security of data and access to or correction of it respectively. [IUA as to IPPs and PIDs]

PIDs and TPIDs empower the commissioner to determine that specified actions in respect of personal information that do or may contravene an IPP (other than IPPs 4 (data security) or 6 (access and correction)) or a code of conduct are not unlawful. They will not be regarded as interferences with privacy while the determination is in force.

The key functions of an IUA are to facilitate:

- compliance with a law;
- the performance of the functions of any Australian government agency (federal, state, territory); or
- a provision of a service in the public interest to the public or a section of the public.

Victorian public sector entities may seek approval of an IUA involving as parties other Victorian public sector entities or external organisations including contracted service providers, commonwealth, state or territory government sector bodies, or private sector bodies including non-government organisations and overseas entities. External organisations will remain bound by whatever privacy obligations they have under the laws of other jurisdictions.

Significantly, an IUA is also permitted, subject to safeguards, in circumstances where: a provision in a statute or regulation other than this bill permits such collection, use or disclosure where it is 'required or authorised by law'.

The public interest in the protection of personal privacy is carefully safeguarded in respect of PIDs, TPIDs and IUAs in various ways.

Among these is the bill's specification of grounds on which PIDs and TPIDs may be revoked by the PDP commissioner. PIDs and TPIDs are also subject to being disallowed by Parliament.

For IUAs, the bill specifies in detail the procedure to apply to the PDP commissioner, parties and content, together with notification where adverse actions may be taken in consequence of the IUA, and provides for review of IUAs' operation. The PDP commissioner may issue compliance notices in respect of an IUA, and the relevant minister or ministers must revoke the IUA on specified grounds.

The most significant safeguard of the public interest is that both these mechanisms require a public interest test to be met — that the public interest in the applicant doing the acts or engaging in the practices specified in the application substantially outweighs the public interest in adhering to IPPs 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9 or 10. For example, if an IUA provides for an organisation to transfer personal information out of Victoria, the organisation must either comply with IPP 9 (transborder data flows) or seek dispensation from IPP 9 pursuant to the IUA. Dispensation requires the PDP commissioner to certify that any such dispensation is justified on the public interest test, and the relevant minister or ministers to approve the dispensation after considering the PDP commissioner's report.

The third new mechanism is certification by the PDP commissioner that a particular act or practice is consistent with the provisions of the IP act, this bill or the IPPs. This mechanism is intended to provide certainty to organisations where there may be doubt as to the legality of a proposed action, and to afford statutory protection to persons who act in good faith in reliance on the PDP commissioner's certification while it remains in force. An individual or organisation whose interests are affected by the decision to issue the certificate may apply to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) for review of the decision.

The availability of these mechanisms is expected to significantly assist in the delivery of public services in the public interest, in particular in areas such as the implementation of child protection programs where multiple agencies hold information, the performance of various land management functions, and the control of organised crime.

#### *Protective data security*

Aggregating the responsibility for oversight of the Victorian privacy and law enforcement data security regimes, as well as for the implementation of a new Victorian protective data security regime, is expected to reap the benefits of consistency and coordination in this fast-moving sphere.

Part 4, Protective Data Security, is applicable to the entities set out in division 1. While the intention is that the whole of government will be covered by this regime, there are exceptions. Notable among these is the health services within the meaning of the Health Services Act 1988 that are specified in division 1 and which are governed by separate legislation.

The key protective data security provisions in the bill concern development by the PDP commissioner of the Victorian protective data security framework, and protective data security standards. These standards may be either general or customised, and must be approved by the Attorney-General and the minister responsible for whole-of-government ICT.

Within two (2) years of the issue of the standards applying to an agency or body to which part 4 applies, it must ensure that:

a security risk profile assessment is undertaken for the agency or body; and

a protective data security plan is developed that addresses the standards applicable to that agency or body.

These plans will not be subject to the Freedom of Information Act 1982.

There is provision for review of a plan if an agency or body's circumstances change, or otherwise every two years.

Because it is recognised that not all agencies or bodies subject to part 4 will have equal capacity or resources to meet their obligations under this part, the bill's regulations provision will enable differential application as required.

#### *Law enforcement data security*

The law enforcement data security provisions in part 4 apply to both Victoria Police and the new chief statistician. They are largely based on the provisions of the CLEDS act, and the bill provides for continuity between the two regimes, including the 'Standards for Victoria Police law enforcement data security' issued in 2007. It should be noted that if a law enforcement data security standard is inconsistent with a protective data security standard, the law enforcement security standard prevails to the extent of the inconsistency.

The reforms embodied in this bill create a more streamlined system that will have broader and more comprehensive oversight of the privacy and information security regime for the Victorian public sector. The bill also introduces flexibility in relation to handling of personal information held by the public sector where appropriate in the public interest. At the

same time, the Victorian government is responding to trends worldwide towards more open access to information, which the government has endorsed through its DataVic Access Policy.

#### *PDP commissioner's functions*

In light of the scope of the bill, the PDP commissioner will be responsible for a broad range of functions. In respect of privacy these include:

promoting an understanding of and acceptance of the IPPs and of the objects of those principles;

examining the practices of organisations with respect to personal information they maintain;

receiving complaints about the acts or practices of organisations that do or may contravene IPPs or adversely affect individuals' privacy;

conducting or commissioning audits of organisations in respect of their handling of personal information;

issuing compliance notices to organisations; and

issuing guidelines and other materials in relation to the IPPs.

In respect of protective data security and law enforcement data security, the PDP commissioner's functions include:

issuing protective data security standards and law enforcement data security standards;

developing the Victorian protective data security framework and promoting the uptake of protective data security standards by the public sector;

conducting monitoring and assurance activities, including audits, to ascertain compliance with data security standards, and referring findings;

undertaking reviews of matters relating to data security and crime statistics data security; and

making reports and recommendations.

I commend the bill to the house.

**Debate adjourned on motion of Mr NOONAN (Williamstown).**

**Debate adjourned until Thursday, 26 June.**

## **CRIME STATISTICS BILL 2014**

### *Second reading*

**Debate resumed from 11 June; motion of Mr WELLS (Minister for Police and Emergency Services).**

**Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows)** — I will continue my contribution to this debate following its adjournment last night. Accurate, reliable and accessible crime statistics are in the public interest.

They inform debate about crime and how to address it, as well as alerting Victorians to crime and safety issues.

Under the Napthine government crime has increased in every period compared to the 10 years of reduction under Labor. Crime statistics reveal offences have jumped in most categories across the state. The justice system under this government is in disarray. Prisons are overcrowded, and up to 500 police have been taken off front-line duties to be employed in caring for prisoners housed in police cells. An Auditor-General's report tabled this week found prison overcrowding is wasting police time and resources and is making our communities unsafe. This conclusion is an indictment of the state government's policies, and it goes to exactly why we need to have a statistician to bring these stats together.

The bottom line at the moment is that the crime rate in Victoria is up 7.1 per cent. This is where we are; this is the reality of the evidence based on the facts of the matter. We now have a government whose key election promise to get tough on crime has failed. This is what happens when a government ignores the causes of crimes and fails to put in place any measures to prevent crime. Victorians saw 10 years of reduced crime rates under Labor, and the Napthine coalition managed to unravel much of that good work by cutting the Victorian police budget by \$100 million and slashing more than 800 Victoria Police and Department of Justice staff.

It is important that the community has confidence in the crime statistics. This confidence may be enhanced if the agency being established is able to audit the recording of crime statistics and examine the police's crime recording practices. The accuracy and quality of the analysis of the statistics depends predominantly on the statistics being provided. It would certainly be appreciated if the government could outline the reasons the agency will not be equipped with this ability suggested by the Ombudsman. It is in the public interest for that issue to be addressed and answered in the course of further contributions from government MPs.

It is not just the cuts that have occurred in the police sector that are important. There are other cuts that are critical — cuts to pathways to education, jobs and better life opportunities — because these are the underlying issues that must be confronted when you address the reasons for crime. This is particularly important in my electorate of Broadmeadows, which has a combination of different issues that must be confronted, including people predominantly coming from poor backgrounds with low incomes and a large number of people who

have English as a second language. Many of them are facing the issue of the demise of the manufacturing industry, highlighted most significantly by the Ford Motor Company — and I remind the house that Ford has brought forward 300 redundancies in Broadmeadows and Geelong to this month. Then what happens is we have the Victorian government axing \$25 million from the Kangan Institute, the critical TAFE — —

**Mr O'Brien** — On a point of order, Speaker, on even the broadest definition the member for Broadmeadows discussing higher education funding policies is straying well beyond the bounds of what is a very narrow bill about crime statistics and the establishment of the Crime Statistics Agency. I ask you to bring him back to the bill.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Blackwood)** — Order! I advise the Treasurer that I have just assumed the chair, so I am not aware of the comments of the member for Broadmeadows. However, I ask the member to come back to the bill.

**Mr Noonan** — On a further point of order, Acting Speaker, the role of the chief statistician will be to undertake research into and analyse crime and the trends associated with crime. That is what the member for Broadmeadows is going through. I put it to you that this is totally relevant to the debate.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Blackwood)** — Order! I do not uphold the point of order. As I said to the Treasurer, I have just assumed the chair. I will certainly take note of the comments of the member for Broadmeadows. I ask him to come back to the bill.

**Mr MCGUIRE** — Trying to gag the debate on the causes of crime goes to the critical issue: those statistics will help develop policy and programs for crime prevention. That is the issue that is missing from this government's policy.

**Mr TILLEY (Benambra)** — I rise today to make a contribution on the Crime Statistics Bill 2014. The bill creates the Crime Statistics Agency (CSA), headed up by the chief statistician. The CSA will take over the annual and quarterly reporting of crime statistics from Victoria Police. In doing so it will strip Victoria Police of its ability to release crime statistical data. Given the recent appalling behaviour by senior police officers and their aiding and abetting of former political masters in manipulating and distorting crime figures for political expediency, such an initiative cannot come too soon. With the advent of the CSA we will hopefully see the

potential for gross abuses of the public trust consigned to the dustbin of history.

I recently read a book by well-known British commentator Peter Hitchens on the history of crime in the UK. Hitchens makes a salient point in this book as he discusses crime statistics and the risks that abuse of this data brings when he states:

... forces under pressure to produce results for their political masters may be far less diligent —

in recording crime —

and might even be tempted to 'combine' ... or ... reclassify —

crime. Does this sound familiar to anyone in the house? Manipulation of crime statistics for political gain has a long history in Australia and overseas. Some years ago in New South Wales we saw police statistics being distorted to the point where the heroin-ravaged, crime-ridden, gun-toting, gang-infested streets of Cabramatta were safer, statistically, than those of the leafy affluent streets of Double Bay.

We have recently seen the commissioner of the Metropolitan Police in the United Kingdom forced to admit that corrupt manipulation of crime statistics in the UK raises serious doubts as to their reliability. This manipulation was exposed by the courage of a junior police officer concerned about the practice of selective and underquoting of crime figures.

Some members of this house may be aware of the shameful treatment of Detective Sergeant Phillip Arantz, who, in 1971, after discovering that NSW Police had been systematically manipulating crime statistics for years, blew the whistle on what was a shameful and corrupt practice by the NSW police force. For his efforts Sergeant Arantz was arrested, certified insane by the NSW Police medical officer and remanded to a mental institution before being thrown out of the police force. His only crime was having the courage to stand up against corrupt men and practices for what was right. It took until 1989 for his name to be cleared, but ultimately Sergeant Arantz was cleared and compensated. I hope it will not take as long for good men — former police officers who have stood up against those who engaged in similar conduct in this state — to clear their names and have their dignity and reputations restored.

The origins of this bill are mired in and brought about via a shameful period of Victoria Police history — a time that saw wanton and deliberate releasing of misleading and unsettled crime statistics that on paper claimed a 27 per cent reduction in street crime

conveniently just before the last election. Many in this house will recall the member for Monbulk, the very person who at the time was the minister responsible for these matters, trumpeting the mantra, 'Street crime is down 27 per cent' in the lead-up to the last election. That would have been great news if it were true, but sadly it was not. It was a concocted figure, stretched and distorted beyond all comprehension. It was a lie, a damn lie or, even worse, a statistic, and a patently untruthful one at that. Thankfully the Ombudsman saw through it, and those responsible for peddling such untruths are no longer members of Victoria Police, although those in this house who seized upon such convenient figures still sit here warming a piece of green leather. They sanctimoniously continue to wave their finger around this place; one of these days I should bloody break it off and stick it in their bum. It is said that those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat it.

**Mr Noonan** — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, clearly that language is unparliamentary, and I ask you to take issue with the member in relation to his use of that language.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Blackwood)** — Order! I uphold the point of order. I think the language was a little unparliamentary. I ask the member for Benambra to take that into account with the rest of his contribution.

**Mr TILLEY** — Thank you, Acting Speaker, I will control myself in these matters. It is said that those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat it. How did such a blatant abuse of statistical data come about, apart from the obvious in that an election was coming up and the Australian Labor Party was desperate to conceal its failings and cling to power?

Let me look a bit deeper into the issue and examine the 2008 police bid to the expenditure review committee for funding to establish the Safe Streets Taskforce. The first line of the executive summary states:

Public safety in public places has deteriorated significantly over the last five years.

This was during the term of the Labor government, so it is five years under a Labor government. That is an inconvenient truth if ever there was one, and one that must be concealed at all costs. The document makes for fascinating reading. For example, it says:

Recent research, events and data has highlighted that public order and antisocial-related crime in Victoria has significantly increased over this period and shows no sign of abating.

... It appears that the true extent of the rising rate of crimes committed in the 'public domain' may have been hidden or masked ...

This does not sound like a 27 per cent drop in crime to me. The member for Monbulk was the Minister for Police and Emergency Services at the time and responsible for these matters.

I refer to an executive memo, no. DB/10/7210, written to the Justice Executive Committee on 19 August 2010, which is just one month after the former government released its figures about street crime being down 27 per cent. We should remember that it was just one month before it released its dodgy crime figures, when the need to alter public perceptions of crime was discussed. That is in Labor's DNA. It tries to make perception a reality. The solution was the formation of a committee comprising Department of Justice and Victoria Police personnel, led by the now Chief Commissioner of Police, Ken Lay, which was tasked to come up with solutions to address public perceptions of safety. Two months later the most rubbery set of crime statistics ever suddenly appeared, conveniently just before the last election.

Was that a coincidence or not? That is a question only those on the other side of the house can answer. If you hold your hand on your heart in these matters, you have to be able to sleep at night. Whilst we are asking questions of ourselves, I often ask myself why Ken Lay, the road traffic commissioner at the time, was appointed to the crime committee and not Sir Ken Jones, who was at the time the deputy commissioner of police and responsible for crime. Those on the benches opposite might like to enlighten me at some time. I have every confidence that as time goes on the truth will have a way of surfacing, and I am confident that someday the truth will come out.

The bill allocates \$8.4 million to put a stop to such reprehensible practices. In establishing the CSA this government puts an end to the rorts and distortions that we saw take place under Labor. Finally we will have independence and apolitical objectivity in crime reporting and not be subjected to the distorted dogma previously spewed forth by pliable lap-dogs and sycophantic toads.

I commend this bill to the house. I dedicate my contribution to Sir Ken Jones, as I did once before in the house on another bill concerning parole. I am quite proud of the efforts and work done in the past. Sir Ken Jones is a decent and absolutely honourable man who stood up to the lies and untruths on behalf of all Victorians and paid dearly for his courage and integrity.

**Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe)** — I am pleased to follow a former Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services who is particularly familiar with interventions in high-level police command matters. In making my contribution to debate on the Crime Statistics Bill 2014 I note that the Labor Party has previously touched on these matters. The Leader of the Opposition and Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party believes that this plan has merit and is long overdue.

What is particularly interesting is that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services was reported in October last year as stating:

There has been too much controversy over crime statistics in recent years ...

These statistics have been criticised for their accuracy, integrity and accessibility. The chief statistician will play a major role in achieving the government's intention to turn this around.

It is interesting that the police minister and the government are not interested in turning around any unreliable police crime statistics that continue to be published until after the November 2014 state election. It is of concern that after four years in office the government wants to clean up police crime statistics and the way in which they are reported but does not seek to do so before the election.

What is also of concern to the Labor Party is the \$8.4 million that is required to set up the proposed agency to bring some integrity to police crime statistics. Given the \$100 million in cuts to the police budget, how can Victorians have any confidence that the government will appropriately fund the chief statistician's office and implement these integrity measures in relation to police crime statistics? The government is cutting \$100 million from the police budget and at the same time needs to find \$8.4 million to appoint a chief statistician to manage and publish police crime statistics. Where is the government going to find that money, and how can Victorians have confidence that it will deliver on the proposal?

Speaking of crime statistics, I thought it would be useful to have a look at some recent crime statistics in my electorate of Ivanhoe. I point out that there are fewer front-line police officers in Ivanhoe today than there were three years ago. In fact in a recent media release I issued in my electorate I said:

In Ivanhoe front-line police numbers have been cut from 114 at November 2010 to 108 at 31 January 2014. This is a reduction of over 5 per cent.

In particular I pointed out that:

In Ivanhoe, criminal offences have increased under the Napthine government by 12.02 per cent, or 771 extra offences. From 6415 offences in 2010–11 to 7186 offences 2012–13.

What we know is that the closure of the Heidelberg West police station under this government's watch and the scrapping of the burglary unit that operates at the Heidelberg 24-hour police station has meant that crime has increased in the Ivanhoe electorate and that there are fewer officers to keep my community safe. In the collection of crime statistics the government needs to pay a bit of attention to how those statistics will be recorded accurately when you take into account that there is no police station operating in Heidelberg West, that there are fewer police and that one of the most critical services that is required in making sure police statistics are accurate, the burglary unit that operates from the 24-hour Heidelberg police station in my electorate, has been scrapped, closed down by the government.

I have written to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in relation to those matters with particular reference to what has happened to the burglary unit, which is critical in keeping the community safe. One of the key concerns members of local communities have is about someone breaking into their home. It is one of the greatest fears that people have. My letter to the minister of 2 October states:

During the 2012–13 financial year ...

Local media, including the *Heidelberg Leader*, has reported on several burglary sprees across Banyule in 2013, including 20 in Bellfield and Ivanhoe between late May and early June. There was also a series of seven burglaries in one day across Heidelberg Heights on 11 July.

...

If extra police have been allocated to Heidelberg police complex, why is the burglary team being shut down? Operational decisions of Victoria Police do not absolve your government or yourself, as the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, from holding your departments accountable for their decisions and their expenditure of taxpayers funds.

How are the government and chief statistician going to monitor the police statistics in the Ivanhoe electorate when the government is scrapping the units that are there to arrest offenders and keep the community safe? How are these statistics going to be managed? I would like some detail about the closure of the burglary unit which has been able to provide a range of statistics about the increase in crime in the Ivanhoe electorate under this government's watch. These are the great

concerns we have. Despite our protestations and the numerous times we have raised this matter — I still have an outstanding adjournment matter from April this year in relation to police statistics, in particular the reopening of the Heidelberg West police station — we have not yet had a response from the police minister in relation to the ongoing closure of that police station.

We also note that there have been recent homicides in the Ivanhoe electorate. Funnily enough they happened in Heidelberg West, the area where the police station was closed by this government. I raised these matters with the police minister on 1 April, but I have had no response after two months. I have also previously raised in Parliament very serious concerns about homicides in the Ivanhoe electorate. I said::

The *Age* reported that Mr Michael Jones, 47, was gunned down on the corner of Blackwood and Ebony parades in West Heidelberg shortly before 7.30 a.m. He was found bloodied and dying on the road by a passing truck driver, who desperately tried to resuscitate him. Detective Senior Sergeant Stuart Bailey described the killing as brazen and high risk, given it occurred in a suburban area while children would have been leaving for school.

These are the day-to-day critical policing issues that are happening on our doorstep in Heidelberg West — a couple of blocks from my electorate office and a couple of blocks from the closed police station in Altona Street, Heidelberg West. People are being gunned down in my electorate, and more than two months on from when I raised these matters in the adjournment debate the Minister for Police and Emergency Services has refused to respond. He has not responded to those particular matters as he is required to do under the standing orders.

If we want to talk about police statistics, let us look at the increasing homicide rate in the Ivanhoe electorate. As outlined, back in late May people were being gunned down at 7.30 a.m. in my electorate, just blocks from the Heidelberg West police station. The government can add those homicide statistics to the increasing crime rate in the Ivanhoe electorate, where since this government was elected there are fewer police stations and a burglary unit has been closed while there is a burglary spree in Heidelberg West. I have touched on those figures here again for the government. I note also that according to the increasing studies and surveys being done by the RACV, Heidelberg West and the 3081 postcode now top the list of crime and burglary rates in metropolitan Melbourne. That again is reflective of why the government needs to reopen the Heidelberg West police station and stop treating the local community in Heidelberg West with contempt.

On 17 May 2012 I received a letter from Dean Stevenson, superintendent and divisional commander at the time of the north-west metro region, which covers the Heidelberg West area. The letter reads:

... as you are aware the Heidelberg West police station is currently under review and until a decision is made as to its future, the directional signage will remain in place.

That was in May 2012. We are now in June 2014. I do not know what has happened to the review Victoria Police was undertaking in relation to the Heidelberg West police station, but over two years on we continue to see people being gunned down in my electorate in Heidelberg West, just up the road from this closed police station. Some two years later Victoria Police claims it is still conducting a review into this police station's future, and in the meantime we have signs up the road directing people to a local police station that is closed. How does that make any sense? It is dishonest on the part of Victoria Police and the government to claim that that police station is operating when clearly it is not.

Burglary rates in Heidelberg West are now amongst the highest in metropolitan Melbourne, as reported in the RACV's recent surveys. We have seen the burglary unit closed, and there has been no determination from the government to have it reopened and no explanation as to why, if there are more police as the government claims, police services in my electorate are being closed down. We can have no confidence in the government's decision to implement this initiative. It wants to hide it until after the election because it knows that crime is going up. There are more prison beds than hospital beds in Victoria under this government.

**Mr WATT (Burwood)** — I take great delight in rising to speak on the Crime Statistics Bill 2014. At the outset I would like to say to those opposite that no-one believes them. The people of Victoria could not believe them before the last election, and they do not believe them now.

I would like to recount a story about crime statistics, as I have done a number of times in this house. Before the last election I went to one of my local train stations, as I do regularly, to speak to my local constituents, and it just so happened that the previous member for Burwood was also at the train station on that particular day. A constituent came over and asked the former member for Burwood, 'What are you going to do about crime in the area?'. Interestingly, the former member for Burwood made the comment that crime had gone down in the area — 'No need to worry; crime has gone down'. Obviously he was looking at his dodgy police statistics, because the constituent then said to him, 'You

can tell me crime has gone down as much as you like, but my house has been broken into three times in the past two years'.

If you use dodgy crime statistics, you are going to be caught out eventually, because people are not mugs. They can see it, they can smell it and they know that they cannot trust the Labor Party. When we say there are more police catching more criminals more often, that is what there is: more police detecting more crime more often and police being more effective. The point is that if you put more police on the beat, you are going to catch more criminals. It is a natural consequence.

I can also recount a story from last year, I think, or maybe late the year before, when I was having a conversation with esteemed members of the media. It was just after some crime statistics came out, and I asked them, 'Why aren't you reporting these crime stats?'. The answer was put to me very plainly by these members of the media: 'We didn't believe the crime stats before, so how can we believe that crime has gone up now?'. They did not believe it. They said, 'We know the stats were dodgy; we know the Labor Party fudged the figures. We know that's the truth, so how can we go and report that crime has gone up?'. The only people who think crime has gone up in this state are those people on the other side with blindfolds on, who are willing to accept from their leadership the dodgy figures and the fudged numbers about crime. They are the only ones who could possibly believe that crime has gone up. Crime has not gone up.

**Mr Noonan** — You are delusional. Look at the Victoria Police statistics.

**Mr WATT** — I know it is disorderly to take up interjections, so I will not take up the interjection from the member for Williamstown. I will just reiterate what I have said over the last 3 minutes: no-one believes Labor Party members. They cannot be trusted, with their dodgy stats and fudged numbers. No one believes them. The people of Victoria do not believe them, and the people of Burwood do not believe them. The people of Burwood know that it is safer out there. They can get on and off a train and get in their car, and they know that it is safe. We are deciding not to discount a whole bunch of things and fudge the figures so we can say, 'Crime on train stations has gone down; there is no crime on train stations'. We accept that there has been crime on train stations, and we are going to catch the criminals, and they are going to pay for their crimes. We are not going to fudge the figures like the Labor Party did.

Our policy is to provide 1700 extra police, and that is what we will do. We said we would put 940 protective services officers (PSOs) on train stations, and that is what we will do. We currently have PSOs on the Burwood train station. We currently have PSOs on the Holmesglen train station — and I see the member for Malvern in here. We have PSOs on the Camberwell and Jordanville train stations. PSOs are on train stations protecting the people of my electorate by detecting the crime that was there before they arrived. Let us be clear: the crime was already happening, but now the criminals are getting caught for it.

Now we do not have to fudge the figures. This bill makes it clear that the figures cannot be fudged. Members of this government are not going to lie to the people of Victoria. We are going to tell them what is happening. They crime statistics are put out by the chief statistician, the people will know that they can believe those figures. The people of Victoria could not believe the Labor Party at the last election, and that is why they tossed Labor members out on their ears. They could not believe members of the Labor Party, and they still do not believe them, because they know that what Labor says is not true.

On the front page of the newspapers every Monday there are no longer stories about people having the crap beaten out of them on King Street. I am not saying that those incidents do not happen, but I am noting that the stories are not plastered all over the newspapers because those incidents do not happen as much as they did previously. This government has more police catching more criminals, detecting more crime, more often.

**Mr Angus** — Safer streets.

**Mr WATT** — Safer streets, as the member for Forest Hill says. I will not spend too much longer on this bill, but I will repeat what I said earlier about talking to constituents at the Alamein train station. Although the former member for Burwood said crime was not a problem and was not happening, I accepted that it was, and I also accepted that this government needed to do something about it — and it is doing something about it. We are putting more police out on the beat. We are making sure that there is a police presence in my electorate in Ashburton, unlike the previous government, the members of which decided that they were going to close the Ashburton police station. There are now protective services officers on train stations and more people, feeling more safe, more often. I commend the bill to the house.

**Ms HALFPENNY** (Thomastown) — What can I say? It would be good if this government could do something important and significant, and then we would not have to hear all this drivel about what Labor did in government. Coalition government members do not have anything to talk about in terms of what their own government has done.

The introduction to the Parliament of the Crime Statistics Bill 2014 has arisen from a recent Ombudsman's report which recommends that there ought to be independence in the gathering and monitoring of crime data. This bill creates the office of the chief statistician and the agency in which the data on crime will be collected and monitored independently, separate from the police force. The legislation is in a number of parts and deals with such matters as the employment details of the chief statistician, who will oversee this agency, and other staff, as well as provisions around how such data will be accessed by law enforcement agencies and the conditions on which access to the data will be given.

It is very important to separate publication of crime statistics from the police, because it is important to ensure that this information is independent and that there is no conflict of interest. We all know that law enforcement agencies and the police carry a great deal of responsibility. Members of the police force not only have extraordinary powers but also extraordinary obligations, so they should be overseen by independent bodies to make sure that everything proceeds in accordance with the law and in accordance with human rights and other policies and rights that people have. Hopefully this piece of legislation is one step in the process of ensuring the independence of crime statistics so that the community in general can have confidence that those statistics are independent, accurate, correct and tell us about the actual situation without any vested interests being involved to muddy the waters.

The Ombudsman's report not only looked at crime statistics but also police numbers. There is great concern in the community about the level of police numbers and the fact that crime is increasing. I am looking at the figures in front of me. The previous speaker seemed to suggest that his statistics could be gathered by listening to one or two people at a train station who informed him of the overall Victorian statistics to be used to guide government policy. But the actual statistics show increases in the crime rate.

In the city of Whittlesea, within which most of the electorate of Thomastown falls, over recent years there have been increases in crimes related to people such as assault and increases in crime related to drug trafficking

and manufacture. As the member for Ivanhoe said in his contribution, in recent times there have also been some shocking public shootings and killings in suburban residential areas, some in front of people's homes. This is a frightening and very scary situation, and residents of the Thomastown electorate are very concerned about it and do not feel that there has been any change or that anything has been done in response to make them feel safer.

A number of people have come to see me to express concerns about how safe they feel. One concern is that they do not see enough police around and about. I notice that in a recent article in the *Age* there were comments around the blue paper that was released by the Chief Commissioner of Police, Ken Lay. One of those comments was from Senior Sergeant Ron Iddles, who says while the blue paper was all very well and good, there are some really urgent issues where there are many more officers required at stations, such as those in Epping and Mill Park. These stations in the northern suburbs are in areas with fast-growing populations.

There is need for more police, particularly in some of the new estates, where I am told that many people have experienced theft. Because there are a lot of vacant blocks and vacant homes, some of which are only half built, a lot of theft is happening there. In fact, when people call the police after discovering a theft, it takes a long time for the police to get there, if they arrive at all, because of the underresourcing of Epping police station.

Also, it is well known that the family violence rate in the city of Whittlesea is one of the highest in the state. Again there is a need for more police to ensure that family violence is reduced, that women and their children, who are in the main the subject of family violence, are protected and that a strategy is put in place to prevent violence in the home, not just stop it or deal with it after the event. The police have a big role to play in preventing situations where women are being assaulted, in ensuring that families are safe and in ensuring that things such as intervention orders are abided by and there are penalties if such orders are breached.

Labor does not oppose the Crime Statistics Bill 2014. It is something that is needed and important, but that does not take away from the fact that there is also a great need to increase the number of police and to restore police funding. As we know, this government has cut funding to policing by over \$100 million, and you cannot do that and then think things are going to go well and crime rates are going to go down. People need

and want to see police around and about. They want police to have a high-profile presence to prevent crime, not just to do something about it after the event.

Another area of great concern that is not always reflected in the crime statistics is the concerning and growing problem of hoon driving and dangerous driving. Again particularly in some of the newer areas of the Thomastown electorate there are huge problems with roads and congestion. When I recently rang the highway patrol based out at Epping to report some road construction leading to a dangerous situation on a single-lane, 80-kilometre-per-hour road — workers were just standing in the middle of the road trying to stop cars without any warning, go-slow signs or anything else — I was told everyone was too busy or not around, and they could not do anything about it.

These sorts of things show that there is a real lack of resources, particularly in growing areas, and that yet again this government, as has always been the case, is not only neglecting the northern suburbs and the people who live there but actually attacking them. This can be seen not only from the state Liberal government but also from the federal Liberal government. People are getting sick and tired of being treated as second-class citizens. As previously mentioned, the Crime Statistics Bill 2014 is not opposed by Labor. We see this as important and necessary legislation, and we will not be opposing it.

**Ms McLEISH** (Seymour) — I am pleased to be able to contribute to the debate on the Crime Statistics Bill 2014. As members of the government would be aware, this was a pre-election commitment of the coalition. We were intent on improving access to crime statistics. I want to take the house back to that time, 2010. There was much contention about the statistics around crime and what the police were reporting. The Labor government was presenting fudged statistics. There was much talk that the police data was being misused and distorted for political purposes. The public perception of what was going on through this process — through the clouding and distortion and the debate that was going on at the time — was quite confused as to what exactly was happening and whether the statistics were being presented in a way so as to hide the true figures.

The coalition decided to look for a more open and transparent process for the accurate and reliable reporting of crime statistics. It was very much about taking the politics out of it. When I listen to members opposite, it seems at times they are very keen to rewrite history and forget there was a lot of negativity around the way they handled and misused crime statistics.

However, I am pleased to note that they are not opposing the bill.

The purpose of the bill is to provide for the publication of crime statistics and for the employment of a chief statistician who will have carriage of that function. The idea of an independent reporting body for crime statistics is not new — it has been raised in various reports since the 1990s — but it is something the former government did not pursue. You would think that it might have pursued it, because this was a pre-election commitment for a reason.

If you look at the 2009 and 2011 Ombudsman's reports, you see that the Ombudsman recommended that an agency independent of police be responsible for the reporting of crime statistics. In 2011 the Ombudsman suggested that the publication of crime statistics was a key reason for the resignation of the former Chief Commissioner of Police. There was a lot of debate about this, and it was a matter of great concern to the public and the government.

We know that the crime statistics — and this was in an Ombudsman's report — taken to the last state election were misleading. Despite what the opposition speakers have said during debate on this bill, we need to keep that in mind. At the time, the opposition was presenting misleading statistics willingly and knowingly for its own political purpose and gain. It seems as though the opposition would like to forget and rewrite some of that history, but I am sure we will continue to remind it of its failure in that area.

The Ombudsman believed that the establishment of an independent body was well overdue, and it was not only the Ombudsman but also the former Office of Police Integrity that recommended that consideration be given to establishing a crime statistics agency. That is what we are doing here. It is clear from a reading of the bill that the Crime Statistics Agency will be a new, independent agency which will commence operations on 1 January 2015 with a budget of \$8.4 million. Importantly, and this is a key element, the agency will be independent of both the government and Victoria Police, and it will publish quarterly and annual reports on crime statistics. Although the agency will take over responsibility for high-level reporting, Victoria Police will continue to have its own internal statistics function to support operational decisions and the managing of resources.

Towards the end of last year the government began the process of recruiting a chief statistician. It has appointed Ms Fiona Dowsley to the position. The functions of the chief statistician include publishing and

releasing statistical information relating to crime in Victoria, undertaking research into and analysis of crime and criminal justice issues and trends in Victoria, and any other functions conferred on the chief statistician under this or any other the act. It is important that these functions are clearly laid out, because in the past it has been apparent that government agencies have forgotten and lost sight of their purpose or reason for being and have headed in other directions. However, the bill clearly sets out the intent in and purpose for establishing the agency. The bill makes other consequential and related amendments to a number of acts.

When you set up a new agency you need to get the framework right. We need to make sure that our streets are safe and that we can access the right statistics so that the decisions that are made by police and the government are based on fact and that the underlying factors are robust, accurate and reliable.

Many members in this place have studied statistics, and I recall reading a book at a particular point by Darrell Huff called *How to Lie with Statistics*. It is often said that you can get statistics to do what you want and to say what you want them to say, so I am confident that, with the establishment of this independent agency and its reporting mechanisms, we will put the focus back on the reliability, accuracy and robustness of the statistics that are put forward. That will mean not only safer streets but also safer communities, and we will have confidence in the decisions being made and the information being given to us as community members. I commend the bill to the house.

**Mr LANGUILLER** (Derrimut) — I rise to speak on the Crime Statistics Bill 2014. At the outset I indicate that the opposition will not be opposing the bill, but there are a range of issues that the opposition feels are pertinent to the bill and need to be raised. I will be endeavouring to do some of that. Importantly one should place on the record that the Ombudsman has tabled a report entitled *Crime Statistics and Police Numbers*, in which he recommended that the government consider establishing an independent unit that develops and maintains statistical databases on crime, that monitors trends in crime and publishes regular reports on crime trends and that has a capacity to audit crime statistics and crime recording practices.

Generally — and generically, if I may say, as it applies to other jurisdictions including road safety — it is very important that the metrics be right and that this sort of agency or body is open and transparent. I concur with the proposition that it ought to be independent, but the opposition believes that in addition to that it ought to

have the capacity to do some auditing in order for there to be confidence in crime statistics. That confidence may be enhanced if the agency were able to audit the recording of crime statistics and examine police crime recording practices. That is an important procedure in the management of databases by any agency, in this case to collect crime statistics. We would appreciate the minister and the government outlining the reasons this agency will not be equipped to do what was suggested by the Ombudsman.

We know that Victoria Police crime statistics confirm that the incidence of crime has increased each and every year under this government. It is a matter of fact, as submitted by the Victoria Police crime data. We also know that this government is not addressing the real causes of crime and that it is making it harder for Victoria Police. In passing, I put the following on the record. If one looks at the state budget and concurrently at the federal budget, one can see that the coalition is slashing funding for and taking away jobs from the public sector. This will lead to greater problems that impact on law and order.

The government has done the same to education. It has ripped apart the TAFE colleges in areas such as the western and northern suburbs of Melbourne, which has proved to be wrong. I put this on the record because the very industries that are growing, such as financial services and services generally, are saying through their industry bodies in the western and northern regions that the TAFE cutbacks, which have led to courses being cut or destroyed, have affected the very courses that need to be offered. I will come back to the bill, but I insist that not dealing with the cutbacks to TAFE colleges and education will, in due course, lead to greater problems in terms of community safety and/or law and order.

What we also know is that under this government there has been an explosion in family violence and drug offences, and there have been similar numbers of crimes against the person as there were under the previous government. Let me refer to the data, speaking of Ovid and the importance of having the metrics right, so that governments and oppositions can develop policies that are evidence-based. I believe this ought to be done by this government, and if Labor is given the opportunity to govern, it will certainly do so.

Let me refer to the member for Burwood. As I understand it, his electorate is in the municipality of Boroondara. According to the data, the member for Burwood was wrong when he indicated in his contribution that the crime rate in his electorate has not increased. In his region the crime rate has gone up. I

will refer to police staff numbers in the Boroondara region. According to data provided by Victoria Police, in November 2010 there were 127.1 police staff in Boroondara. As of 31 January 2014 the number was 132.32. The member proudly indicated that the citizens of his electorate and his municipality could walk safely in the streets and not be worried because, as he alleged, the government was doing everything it could to reduce crime. I suggest to the member that that is a poor contribution that he has made because it is not based on evidence. In the member's electorate, in 2009–10 the municipality of Boroondara recorded 6246 offences. The number of offences recorded in 2012–13 was 6688. Therefore the member's contribution is wrong. He should not make the allegation that offences in his electorate have decreased, because in fact they have increased.

If one looks at the rate of offences in 2009–10 during the previous Labor government, as compared to those in 2012–13, as recorded in Victoria Police data, one sees that there is an increase in the member for Burwood's electorate of 442 offences. It is important to be accurate about this because understanding the metrics of crime rates leads to developing the right policies. I am all for accuracy, openness and dealing with data in a straight and decent way. We do not do ourselves or the community any good if we do anything but that.

I will now refer to Derrimut, the electorate I represent. In terms of police staff numbers, in Brimbank there were 172.16 staff. In 2013 that had gone down to 164. Unfortunately the crime numbers had also gone up, from 14 567 offences to 18 866 in 2013, which represented an increase of 2515 offences. We know that under this government there has been an increase in offences. The figures provided by Victoria Police clearly show that crime in Victoria has increased overall by 7.1 per cent. Drug offences have gone up by 17.8 per cent, family violence has increased in the order of 6 per cent, and assault is up by 2.3 per cent. Crimes against the person increased across the board by 2.7 per cent.

I come back to the point that if we do not increase job creation, and if we do not support industry to expand and grow the economy, this will affect crime statistics. That will also occur if we cut back on TAFE colleges, and particularly if this is done generally across the state without looking at the specific needs of regions, whether it in the western suburbs or rural areas. As you would know, Acting Speaker, farmers need kids with skills. These are not the programs that we should be cutting back. I take this opportunity to say again that if we do not invest in training, education and

employment, inevitably, sooner or later, crime data will rise. I call on the government to indeed establish the agency but also give it the capacity to do auditing and to be able to examine its own data. With those comments, I indicate that the opposition will not oppose the bill.

**Ms GARRETT** (Brunswick) — The subject matter of this bill is crime statistics, and an analysis of the bill provides a very clear illustration of one of this government's most significant and serious failings. The Baillieu government came to office with a purported 'tough on crime' agenda and with law and order as the central plank of its election campaign in many ways.

Since day one this portfolio has been absolutely plagued by scandal, mismanagement and an extraordinary lack of performance. I do not need to remind members of the history, but I think it is apt to do so as we lead into how long it has taken to set up this body and the date it will start. This term of government, the Baillieu term, began with the Deputy Premier as the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and of course we had that extraordinarily long, protracted, disastrous relationship with the then Chief Commissioner of Police, Simon Overland; with the adviser, Tristan Weston; with leaked tapes — with all of those issues.

**Mr Tilley** interjected.

**Ms GARRETT** — I understand the member for Benambra is upset, and I accept that, but this was the central plank of the government's election agenda on which it came to office. We then had a change of minister. We had Minister Wells, who seemed to enjoy the sights of Ayers Rock rather than addressing some of the issues that were really plaguing — —

**Mr Northe** — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, in terms of relevance, I am not sure the member for Brunswick is addressing any of the matters that pertain to the Crime Statistics Bill 2014, and I ask that you direct her back to the bill.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Dr Sykes)** — Order! I ask the member for Brunswick to stick to the bill.

**Ms GARRETT** — Absolutely. I think it was appropriate in that I was talking about the current Minister for Police and Emergency Services in relation to the crime statistics, but I shall move on to the crime statistics themselves because this is, of itself, another massive area of failing by the now Napthine government. In most measures, crime — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Ms GARRETT** — I understand why those opposite feel very upset by the statistics.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Dr Sykes)** — Order! The member for Brunswick, without the assistance of the member for Burwood. I am actually enjoying this presentation by the member for Brunswick, and I would like to be able to hear it.

**Ms GARRETT** — I say to those opposite, whose cheeks are flushing nicely and who are getting very excited and agitated and animated: I understand. Opposition members understand that level of emotion and agitation, because every time those crime statistics have come out under this government, where have they gone? They have gone up and up and up. We are now hearing of more crime more often, and there is a sense of absolute denial, measured only — —

**Mr Watt** interjected.

**Ms GARRETT** — To the member for Burwood, again I say that I know crimes in his area are going up like they are across Victoria, so well might he express concern.

**Mr Watt** — Nobody believes you.

**Ms GARRETT** — These are published statistics from Victoria Police. So we move now — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Ms GARRETT** — Again they are screaming at me, but disorderly behaviour by the rabble on the other side does not make the crime statistics better than they are for the government. They can shout as much as they like, but it would be much more helpful if they directed some of that energy into actually governing this state and working hard to do what they promised, which was to bring crime down. We make that very clear distinction with the previous Bracks and Brumby governments where year on year there was a significant reduction in crime. That was because those Labor governments understood the complexity around the causes of crime, they understood that we need to invest heavily in education and in social services for those who are vulnerable and at risk and in diversion through youth justice, where we are trying to take people away from a lifelong pursuit of crime and direct them into more productive modes of working within the community.

Therefore there was a comprehensive and well-resourced strategy by the previous governments to not only respond when crimes were committed with a well-resourced police force and a functioning prison

system but also to invest in those key services needed to ensure that people are not attracted to crime. By contrast, the prison system now is in absolute chaos. Prisoners are crowding the police cells, which has caused a huge amount of consternation within Victoria Police. Crime is up, and then on top of that the government is hacking into TAFE and into the Victorian certificate of applied learning and into all of those programs that give a pathway to kids who may come from the wrong side of the tracks or who have had a difficult or disadvantaged upbringing.

Then they got their federal mates on board — and haven't they finished the job and swung that axe, with \$80 billion taken out of health and education? People who are unemployed now have to wait six months to get any form of benefit, and all around Australia they are saying, 'That will contribute to the crime rate, won't it?'. It is almost as if the government wants that crime rate to go up and up, because when it slashes services and when it does not provide properly for such important things as ensuring that every kid gets a decent education and a place to go in this community that is respected, it does end up with increasing crime rates.

The government has not provided any resources or policy programs to deal with those issues. A scathing Auditor-General's report was tabled this week about prison overcrowding and how this wastes police resources, which also then contributes to making our community more unsafe. Prisoners are being held in suburban police lockups for longer than the 14-day maximum because prisons are too crowded, and the government has stripped 400 jobs out of Victoria Police, which then puts even more pressure on front-line police and their capacity to keep this community safe.

Victorians are angry about this government's very significant failings in the one area that it thought was its strong suit. It has all been window-dressing and easy stuff; it has been a matter of saying, 'Let's have another bill introduced by the Attorney-General'. That is all well and good, but that is the front end. These people who do not have access to proper services and who then enter into the law and order system are getting stuck in this pipe which does not come out anywhere, because the government has not properly resourced the system.

I cannot conclude without commenting on the Victoria Legal Aid crisis. The courts are now absolutely stretched. It is a disaster, and the crime rates, would you believe, are going up and up. While we have this bill which establishes the Crime Statistics Agency, the operative date for it to commence is 1 January 2015. Is

that six weeks after the election? It is quite an extraordinary start date. This body will not even start in this term of government, because the government does not want independent crime statistics coming out before 29 November. That is because the track record is so woeful. It is a disgrace.

**Ms DUNCAN** (Macedon) — I am pleased to rise to speak on the Crime Statistics Bill 2014. I support the comments made by the previous member in terms of the start date for this probably much-needed agency. In opposition government members were crowing about the need for it, and it was obviously so critical that this occur that it could wait nearly five years from that time. We have heard a lot of talk about it from the government, but we have seen very little action on it.

This bill will introduce a process that provides much more detailed of evidence in terms of crime and a greater ability to drill down into some of the crime statistics that we currently have. We support the bill for that reason. It provides for the appointment of a chief statistician and allows for the publication of crime statistics postcode by postcode. We support the measures that will allow that to happen. This bill will enable all of us in the future to provide better evidence about crime and detail in terms of crime statistics. I find that ironic because as a general rule this government is a complete evidence-free zone. It almost never looks for evidence on anything. It does not matter whether you are talking about renewable energy, cattle grazing in the high country or general water policy, evidence will never stand in the way of this government doing what it wants to do.

If the government wants to introduce cattle grazing, it will do that — and it does not matter what the evidence shows. It will structure its whole so-called crime prevention policy completely devoid of any evidence. When we see crime statistics going up, that does not cause this government to rethink its policy at all. In every area in my electorate crime is rising. We have had a 13 per cent rise in crime in the Macedon Ranges, including a rise of over 50 per cent in drug offences and a rise of over 25 per cent in theft from motor vehicles. These are massive increases in crime. If they occurred on our watch, the other side would be screaming their heads off, but when it is the government's crime statistics that are going through the roof, somehow having more crime is about being tough on crime.

Some of the interjections from government members are very telling. It is very telling when they say things like 'Jail means jail', and, 'We are tough on crime'. Each of those is a mantra that means nothing. In fact it does the opposite to what the government tries to sell to

the community. When it says it will get tough on crime what it means is that it will make some people stay in jail longer and some people ineligible for parole, but that does not make our community safer. That is the rort and the lie that this government is selling our community — that somehow measures like building more prison beds will make us all safer, when all the evidence shows that that is a lie and that in fact it is going backwards.

This government might build more prison beds than hospital beds, and it will scream at us and say, 'But you didn't build any prison beds', but we did not build more prison beds because we were trying, through a whole range of measures, to keep the crime rate down and keep the recidivism rate down. Doing those things kept our prison population fairly static. There was a small increase in the prison population, but we were trying to deal with that in an evidence-based way. Our primary concern was not to repeat a mantra like 'tough on crime'; what we wanted to do was keep the community safe. That was our no. 1, no. 2 and no. 3 priority.

**Ms McLeish** interjected.

**Ms DUNCAN** — The evidence — and I know the member for Seymour does not want to be bothered with evidence — showed that that was working. But when the other side came into government it dismantled so many of the measures that were in place to try to stop the crime occurring in the first place.

You can throw someone in jail for 50 years, but eventually they will come out. Parolees will eventually be off their parole. What do we want to see occur when that happens? We want to see them no longer committing crimes. What does the Magistrates Court do every single day, along with the County and Supreme courts? They try to structure sentences in a way that will reduce the chance of reoffending. Whether that means long parole periods and shorter prison sentences or a whole range of programs needing to be put in place for when a prisoner is released, all these measures are designed to assist in reducing crime and keeping our community safer.

Instead what we do, and the previous speaker highlighted these things, is cut all the support services that really assist in keeping people from following a criminal pathway. People end up being disconnected from their communities and from schools. We know that if young people are disconnected from schools, it is more difficult for them to get a good job and have a good life. We see what happens in that space when those constructive alternative pathways are not

provided. This government has done everything it can to destroy alternative pathways for students.

Turning to cuts to the funding of legal aid, not as much has been made of this as should have been made. I urge all government members to spend a day in the Magistrates Court to see how many people are unrepresented. I would like them to see how the magistrates struggle with dealing with unrepresented people. It does not double the time it takes; it quadruples the time involved in a case because the magistrate has to also act as an advocate. Everything has to be explained to people who are not represented, and it takes forever. Our court lists are blowing out. Prisoners are in prison, waiting to have their day in court, and I ask the Attorney-General to explain to the house how much money has been spent by the justice system in paying costs that have been awarded against the state because prisoners cannot be brought to court in time. They are not appearing on court lists, and when prisoners are called to appear in court, they are not showing up because the authorities cannot get them from the prisons into the court system.

All the while the government is very happy and smug and arrogant about its flawed system. We are seeing it all here in the crime statistics. That is why it has taken five years to put this in place. Those opposite do not care about crime statistics; they do not care about statistics full stop. They do not care about evidence. They do not care what people tell them. They do not care about the advice they are given. They will simply follow their ideology. They will continue to espouse their mantra. They all come in here pulling their little faces because they all know better than all of the judges — they know better than every person to a person. Every person who works in the criminal justice system is telling them that what they are doing is wrong. The evidence is showing them that what they are doing is wrong, but in their arrogant, elitist way they think they know better.

We even have a few government members who were barristers. I do not know whether they have ever worked in crime, but if they have, I cannot believe for one moment that they think having unrepresented people in courts is a good thing for the court system. Perhaps barristers do, because they are going to get paid — and these guys bring in the big bucks. However, I urge them all to go to the Magistrates Court for a day — just one day, and any day — and see how their flawed system is blowing out court lists, increasing the crime rate and making all their policies an absolute fraud on the people of Victoria. I hope they will see the error of their ways.

**Mr Noonan** — I draw the Acting Chair's attention to the state of the house.

**Quorum formed.**

**Mr PALLAS** (Tarneit) — I rise to speak on the Crime Statistics Bill 2014. Whilst it is clear that the opposition does not oppose this bill, and various speakers prior to me have outlined that view, I want to restate both our concerns about this government's handling of the police portfolio issues in general and the general perspective of this bill and also the impact the government's policies are having specifically in respect of my electorate, which is one of the fastest growing communities and local government areas in Australia.

I will talk about the adverse impact the policing strategies used until now have been having on my community, in terms of both rising crime and falling capacity for policing. These are matters of grave concern to the community, and they continue to be restated by local police in local media, by members of the community, by local government representatives and, might I say, by me and other members in the local government area of Wyndham, as being a clear demonstration of the failure of this government to deal adequately with issues of community protection.

We know that in this bill the government is committed to establishing an independent Crime Statistics Agency, a commitment that dates back to 2011, and to the allocation of \$8.4 million in the 2013–14 budget. That is a valuable contribution towards an informed statistical basis upon which policing is reviewed. It will enable intelligence-led policing and enable appropriate levels of police performance, resourcing decisions and policies and programs to deal with crime prevention. All of that may provide us with an informed statistical underpinning for our decision making, but our fundamental proposition and concern is that the Napthine government has seen crime increase in each and every reporting period for which it has been in government, and that has followed 10 years of reduction under the previous government. In our view the justice system under this government is in crisis and is a demonstration of this government's failure. Our prisons are overcrowded, and the taking of up to 500 police officers off front-line duties has had a very clear and demonstrably adverse impact upon community welfare, safety and perceptions of safety.

It is not just me saying this, the Auditor-General was scathing in a report tabled this week in which he found that prison overcrowding is wasting police time and resources and making our community unsafe. That glaring statement of failure and omission by this

government really does bring into context not only the need for informed and unimpeachable statistical information around policing, policing needs and crime statistics but also that this government has a problem — a problem of its own making and a problem that it needs to fundamentally address.

If we turn directly to my own community, as recently as 22 May this year front-line police numbers in the city of Wyndham had been reduced. There are in fact fewer police on the beat in Wyndham now than there were four years ago, according to figures we were able to obtain and publicly release. That effectively means that, despite criminal offences increasing by 14 per cent in Wyndham, the number of front-line police in the area has actually fallen by more than 20 per cent. As crime increases, police presence on the beat declines. If there is any more glaring a demonstration as to why we need a policing presence in our communities on the front line, it is what is happening in my community of Wyndham as a consequence of this government's failure to put in place adequate policing policies, as we see an increase in crime and a reduction of front-line police officers. The documents we have obtained through Victoria Police under freedom of information show that the number of front-line police has dropped from 106 in 2010 to 84 today. That really does demonstrate that government funding cuts imposed on the police are requiring more clerical functions to be performed, in effect, by front-line police. I think that in itself is a demonstration of failure.

When you cut funds to Victoria Police by \$100 million and also cut the number of officers on the beat, you effectively give succour to those who would cause harm in the community. The members of my community deserve better than a government that is too dysfunctional to even concern itself with their welfare and wellbeing. We know that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services said in a statement that there are an extra 1525 police in Victoria since Labor left office in November 2010. However, the Victorian Police Association's Mr Ron Iddles announced that his members would be holding a rally to draw attention to the lack of police in Geelong and surrounding areas — and of course the neighbouring local government area to the city of Greater Geelong is the city of Wyndham, which resides in my electorate. Mr Iddles said:

Members have been telling us loud and clear for some time about the poor state of front-line numbers all over the state ...

The point I make is that if you want to find out what is going on with policing, you ask police. I know there are members on the other side who have expressed concern about a strategy that seems intent upon reducing the

number of front-line police in order to have a greater effort directed to, and greater resourcing of, the analysis of crime — and all that is good — but it should not be at the expense of adequate policing or ensuring that the emphasis of our policing effort remains focused upon the wellbeing of the community.

Quite frankly, we are talking about a statistical base. If we are talking about being able to inform the community about what is happening in respect of crime, there is one clear and unambiguous message that my community, the community of Wyndham, has: there are 22 fewer staff today compared to November 2010, and there has been a 21 per cent drop from 106 police officers on the beat down to 84, and therein lies the problem. It is all well and good to talk about all the police you have put into the community, but if they are behind desks and not providing front-line policing, they are not dealing with crime and the causes of crime in a clear and demonstrable way that affects the concerns of the community. Those concerns go not only to the views that politicians and community members may hold but also to those held by police officers within Wyndham, some of whom have gone on the public record. For example, in the *Wyndham Leader* of 5 June a police officer broke ranks to speak out about the lack of front-line policing and what that means to the community. According to the article the police officer, identified as 'John' by the newspaper, said:

... police based at Werribee and Wyndham North police stations were frustrated about being underresourced as it led to them rushing through jobs, not showing up at some and being forced to attend violent offences with little to no backup.

That is a worrying admission. That is a front-line police officer saying, 'We're not doing our job. We're not getting to jobs. We're late to jobs, and quite frankly we are not having the backup and support we need', which is an occupational health and safety risk in a very real and transparent way. These matters need to be properly resourced and researched, but we need never make research the ultimate end. The end should be community safety and protection of the community, together with an acknowledgement that the community requires more police on the front line in order to assure its safety.

**Mr PAKULA** (Lyndhurst) — It gives me pleasure to speak on the Crime Statistics Bill 2014. Like the members for Williamstown and Tarneit and other speakers, I indicate that the opposition will not be opposing the bill.

It would be right to observe that the new Crime Statistics Agency will need to be housed in a very large

building, given the rapid increase in the crime rate since the Baillieu and Napthine governments came to office. It goes to the question of what we as a community judge to be success in terms of dealing with matters of law and order and community safety. There are two very different philosophical approaches to community safety in this state. There is the one propagated by the government in which it indicates that the way to demonstrate that you are tough on crime is to have ever-increasing penalties and an ever-increasing prison population as a consequence of an ever-increasing crime rate.

When there are more criminals committing more crimes, being locked up in more prisons for longer and reoffending at a faster rate than ever before, that is a demonstration of success. That is what is occurring under this government, and rather than being embarrassed by it, the government is crowing about it. Rather than being embarrassed by the fact that there are more criminals committing more crime than ever before, being locked up in more prisons for longer and reoffending at a higher rate than ever before, the government — —

**Mr Burgess** interjected.

**Mr PAKULA** — The member for Hastings says 'being caught'. Let us take up that point. I would have thought that the point of being tough on crime was to see the rate of crime and the incidence of crime in the community go down. The member for Hastings seems to think being tough on crime means that it does not matter if there are more criminals committing more offences and making the community less safe, so long as we are catching them and locking them up.

There is another way we could measure success in terms of dealing with community safety, and that would be having less crime committed. Would that not be a good thing? The community would be safer because fewer crimes would be committed and when offenders got out of prison they would not reoffend. Let me say to the member for Hastings, through you, Acting Speaker, that the government is at least consistent. It is not as if the increase in reoffending rates is happening by accident; it has actually been planned for by the government. If members look at the government's budget papers — not just this year but in the last two budgets — they will see not only that the recidivism rate is rising but also that the government budgets for it to continue to rise, not just this year but over the forward estimates. This government has not only acknowledged that reoffending rates are going up but it has also given up trying to do anything about them. The budget papers indicate not just that the rate of

reoffending is going up but also that its continued increase is budgeted for.

**Mr Northe** interjected.

**Mr PAKULA** — ‘More police more active more often’, says the Minister for Energy and Resources, who is at the table. The fact that there are more police on the beat is not seen by government members as something that might deter crime, which was their mantra a few years ago — having more police on the beat will deter crime and actually bring the rate of crime down. It does not matter if the crime rate goes up, says the government, so long as we are arresting the criminals. Crime is up in most categories — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr PAKULA** — Let me say to members opposite that we had 11 years of the crime rate going down. For all the government’s posturing, chest thumping and self-congratulation, the fact of the matter, which is indisputable in all of the figures, is that the crime rate fell for 11 years under the previous government and that under a so-called tough on crime government the crime rate just goes up.

In the budget this year we see that family violence rates are up across all categories, and we see the government’s pitiful response to that. This response has been called out not just by the opposition but also by all the domestic violence groups in the state, who said that the government’s senior ministers ought to hand back their white ribbons. We in opposition indicated that in order to get to the bottom of this most serious community safety problem we would create a royal commission into family violence. We had government members not just pooh-poohing this initiative but also calling it a waste of money, a waste of time and an exercise that would give us answers to questions we already know the answers to. If government members already know the answers to dealing with family violence, why do they not implement them? Why do they not do something about them?

We have seen some 400 public service roles taken out of Victoria Police and \$100 million stripped from the Victoria Police budget, meaning that we now have police, who ought to be out on the beat, in back-office roles doing important clerical jobs that cannot be done because of the cuts to the Victoria Police budget. They cannot be done by white-collar workers. There are police who could otherwise be out on the streets looking after the community doing back-office jobs.

That situation is only likely to be exacerbated by the government’s holus-bolus acceptance of the blue paper

which will close regional police stations. Nationals members in this place ought to be ashamed of their craven acceptance of this approach without a word of contradiction. This is the approach of the current government.

**Mr Burgess** interjected.

**Mr PAKULA** — The member for Hastings should take note of the fact that he has been in government now for four years, and continuing to duckshove responsibility just does not work anymore. We saw yesterday a scathing report from the Victorian Auditor-General’s Office about prisoner transportation. The government talks about the keeping of crime statistics in this new agency, which will need to be housed in the Taj Mahal given the absolute welter of crime that is going on in the community these days.

However, we see in regard to the current keeping of statistics that neither Corrections Victoria nor Victoria Police collects information about the total number and cost of prisoner movements across the justice system, so they cannot assess whether current contractual arrangements minimise the cost and maximise the efficiency of prisoner transportation. Neither Victoria Police nor Corrections Victoria is keeping the statistics it needs to keep right now in order to ascertain whether the way that prisoners are being transported across the system is in any way efficient and in the interests of Victorian taxpayers or the Victorian community more generally. There is an enormous job to do.

We saw in the budget not an extra dollar for legal aid funding over the forward estimates period, despite almost \$11 billion in surpluses being estimated over that period, nor was there an extra dollar for court funding. We have a government that likes to talk tough but will not put the dollars behind its commitments. It will not deal with the dearth of resources for Victoria Police, legal aid or the courts. We have a government that sees a rising rate of crime and recidivism as somehow being a triumph.

**Ms KAIROUZ** (Kororoit) — I rise to speak on the Crime Statistics Bill 2014. In doing so I say that it is sad to see that members of the government are not speaking on this bill, because it is a very important bill about which each and every single member of this house should be concerned. They should also be concerned about the crime statistics in their electorates.

**Mr Watt** interjected.

**Ms KAIROUZ** — The member for Burwood is talking about members not speaking. I heard his contribution earlier, and it was quite interesting because

he omitted to talk about crime statistics in his electorate. Referring to crime statistics in the member for Burwood's seat, particularly in the Victoria Police — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr Wynne** — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I am very interested in hearing the contribution of my colleague, and the interruptions from members opposite are most unparliamentary. I ask you to draw those members back to listening to the contribution of my colleague.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Dr Sykes)** — Order! I thank the member for Richmond. I am sure we will all listen quietly and respectfully to the member for Kororoit.

**Ms KAIROUZ** — The Acting Speaker and the member for Burwood would be quite interested in staff numbers at the Boroondara police station in the Boroondara region. In November 2010 there were 127.1 staff members at that station. As of 31 January 2014 there were 103.32 staff members, a decrease of 23.78.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Ms KAIROUZ** — That is right; it is equivalent to almost 20 per cent. Let us look at the offences that were recorded. In 2009–10 there were 6246 offences recorded. The difference to date is 995, which is an increase to 6688 offences. An increase of 995 is over 17 per cent.

**Mr Watt** interjected.

**Ms KAIROUZ** — The member for Burwood is interjecting. I was quite interested to hear his contribution, in which he did not touch on any of these important statistics.

The opposition does not oppose the bill; however, my colleagues have raised a few issues about the bill and repeated our grave concerns about this government's handling of the police portfolio in general. The Ombudsman's report *Crime Statistics and Police Numbers* recommends that we consider establishing an independent unit to develop and maintain statistical databases on crime, to monitor and publish reports on crime trends and with the capacity to audit crime statistics and crime recording practices.

The government committed to establishing an independent crime statistics agency in 2011, which is great. Finally, after four years and four budgets it has

allocated \$8.4 million to establish this agency. I question why the government decided to do this now. It is clear that the reason it has done it is that we are going into an election. It did not do this beforehand, because we are going into an election.

Crime statistics are very important to each member of Parliament because they can inform them and tell them about what is going on in their electorates.

It is a very important tool for policing, and particularly for intelligence-led policing. It is a very important tool for a certain level of police performance, for resourcing decisions and for crime prevention policies and programs.

Basically, this bill will provide for the employment of a chief statistician. I would like to congratulate Fiona Dowsley, who has been appointed chief statistician of the Crime Statistics Agency. We on this side of the house certainly welcome her appointment. The bill also provides for the Chief Commissioner of Police to provide law enforcement data to the chief statistician — —

**Mr Watt** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Dr Sykes)** — Order! The member for Burwood will listen to the member's presentation without interrupting.

**Ms KAIROUZ** — The bill provides for the publication of crime statistics, it creates an offence of unauthorised disclosure of information and it also provides for the commissioner for law enforcement data security to collect crime data held by the Crime Statistics Agency.

This government's centrepiece policy is around law and order, but all we have seen under the government is an increase in crime rates. Under Labor we saw an increase in police numbers, and each and every year crime rates were brought down. Under this government crime rates have gone up, and gone up significantly, and police numbers have gone down. I refer members to recent crime statistics in my electorate of Kororoit. Let us look at the north-western region in total. These are not good figures; in fact they are terrible figures. Let us look at the city of Brimbank. In November 2010 there were 172.16 police staff members in Brimbank. Under this government that number has gone down to 164.89 — a decrease of 7.27 or over 4 per cent. Looking at crime rates, 14 567 offences were recorded at Brimbank in 2009–10; in 2012–13 there were 18 864. That is an increase of 15.38 per cent. These figures clearly demonstrate that there has been an

increase in crime, and in particular an increase in crime in my electorate.

This is out of control, but what can we expect when this government has been so busy dealing with its own issues? It has been plagued by one crisis after another and has been too busy sorting out its own mess rather than looking at the mess it has created out in the electorates through its cutbacks.

**Mr Donnellan** — Criminal cutbacks.

**Ms KAIROUZ** — They are indeed criminal. There has been one cutback after another. The government has slashed police funding to \$113 million and it has cut 500 staff. This government has been too dysfunctional to even think about making our community safer. It has been too busy dealing with one crisis after another, whether it be in education, in the TAFE system or in health. Unfortunately the community has had to bear the brunt of all this. We have seen overcrowded prisons and an increase in the workload of front-line police, an increase in family violence and an increase in drug offences. Unfortunately our front-line officers have been too busy doing work behind the scenes, and they have not been able to go out and deal with issues — —

**Mr Donnellan** — Community policing.

**Ms KAIROUZ** — That is right — they have been too busy dealing with issues behind the scenes to do community policing. They have not been able to get out there promptly and help make members of our communities feel safe. This is a very sad state of affairs. The members of this Liberal-Nationals coalition should stand up and take responsibility for all the problems they have created since taking office.

**Ms KNIGHT** (Ballarat West) — I welcome the opportunity to talk on the Crime Statistics Bill 2014, and I note that the opposition does not oppose it. We think it is incredibly important that we collect information — accurate information — to inform our practice, procedures and policies in all areas, so we will not oppose this bill. I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate Ms Fiona Dowsley, who has been appointed as the chief statistician and who will set up the Crime Statistics Agency. Obviously we welcome that appointment. I think it is incredibly important that we have strong evidence informing what we do.

I find the date of the chief statistician's appointment interesting. It is from 1 January 2015, which clearly is after the next election. I find that intriguing. I question why it has taken this long for the government, which purports to be all for law and order, to make this

appointment and have this bill come before the house. If this was so important to the government, I would have thought it would have been done a couple of years ago. But no, we will not see this agency established and we will not see these crime statistics until well after the next election. That is probably a handy thing for the government. I think it is very brave of the government to introduce this bill now, considering that crime has gone up.

I would like to refer to the electorate that I represent, the electorate of Ballarat, and talk about how crime rates have increased in Ballarat since this government was elected. Crime has soared in Ballarat, and I am sure we are not unique in that. Crimes against the person have increased by 50 percent and drug offences have increased by 132 per cent. We have also seen the rate of assaults rise by 12 percent. Again, I am intrigued as to the government's response to the increase in those figures. I do not believe there has been an adequate response to that. I would also like to make the point that Sebastopol is still waiting for its police station, which was promised at the last election.

In terms of crime, and in particular the increase of crime in my electorate, I want to talk specifically about family violence and the increase in the rate of family violence that is being reported. Family violence is an insidious crime that costs our economy \$3.4 billion a year, takes up 40 per cent of police work and is the leading cause of death and disability in Australian women aged under 45 years. Three-quarters of all assaults against women happen in the home, and one woman is murdered by her current or former partner every single week. Everybody in this house would say that that is not good enough and is unacceptable, and that is why I am incredibly proud that Labor will establish a royal commission into family violence.

Family violence causes a very large number of crimes, most of which are perpetrated on women. I was deeply affected when the Leader of the Opposition announced that Labor intends to establish such a royal commission. I worked in the field of family violence for about 30 years, and over recent months I had been thinking about the increase in the rates of reported family violence. I had felt a real sense of frustration and disempowerment because nothing seemed to have changed since I started working at a centre against sexual assault 28 or 30 years ago. We are still seeing the same rates; they have not changed. Importantly a royal commission will undertake an investigation of why violence against women and children occurs — why it occurs in the home, why it occurs in our community and why its incidence does not seem to have been reduced.

I refer to the work done by service providers in my area, including the Women's Resource Information and Support Centre, the Ballarat Centre Against Sexual Assault and all the agencies that support women and children who are the victims, survivors and witnesses of violence and sexual assault. I commend all those people not only on the incredible work they do but also for the information and feedback they provide on why family violence occurs. I very much look forward to the participation of these workers and other people who are on the ground and who provide immediate support, including the people who work at rape crisis centres. Such people are often with victims minutes, hours, days and months after an assault. They listen to women and children and get a sense of what impacts there are, which informs the development of better practice.

I am a great believer in doing the best you can with what you know, and that when you know better, you do better. I acknowledge that agencies such as the ones I have mentioned will help us to do better in reducing the crime rates, but I believe a royal commission into family violence will help us to do better in this area, which has seen limited progress and where the numbers are still the same. I have already referred to the cost of family violence to the community in economic terms. It is a great cost, and I say again that family violence costs our economy about \$3.4 billion a year, but there is also the cost to families and communities because family violence impacts on absolutely everyone.

If anyone is serious about crime prevention, they do not go about cutting services such as education. It is incredibly important that we provide not only young people but all people with pathways to education, which in turn lead to pathways to jobs. We need to keep our community engaged. Crime prevention is really important. I absolutely believe that the cuts to TAFE, the cuts to education and the cuts to services that have supported those who are vulnerable in our community do absolutely nothing to reduce crime; in fact they do the absolute opposite. This Liberal-Nationals coalition government will stand condemned for its cuts. While those impacts are in place, and if there are further cuts by this government, I absolutely believe that we will see an increase in crime.

I do not oppose this bill. As I have said, it provides for the employment of a chief statistician, who will provide and publish crime statistics, and of other staff. The bill will support everyone — members of the community and parliamentarians — having that knowledge about where crime occurs and why it occurs. To that effect, opposition members do not oppose this bill.

**Ms GRALEY** (Narre Warren South) — I rise to speak on the Crime Statistics Bill 2014. At the outset I say that Labor does not oppose the bill. As a member of Parliament and a citizen of the Victorian community, I think it is important that all citizens have confidence and trust in our police force and in police command. We should be able to trust what policemen and politicians alike say. People also need to have a government that can be trusted and does not just chant and rant about being tough on crime but actually does something to make sure that communities are safer, not less safe — that less crime takes place in our local areas, not more crime takes place in our local communities and in our homes.

**Mr Watt** interjected.

**Ms GRALEY** — The member for Burwood is interjecting already. I know I should not respond to his interjections, but I have been listening to the debate so far, and I cannot help but comment on the things he said. The member for Burwood is delusional on a couple of matters. He thinks he knows best and that the community is safer since the Liberal Party came to power, but we know that is not true. If we look at the statistics, which I believe are government statistics and are correct, we can see that the comments the member made are quite false.

What I find really curious about some of the commentary of the member for Burwood is that he still talks about his predecessor. I know Bob Stensholt's shoes are big shoes to fill; they are gigantic, because he was a man who worked his guts out for the local community. He was a terrific local member, so I can understand why the member for Burwood is still going around talking about him, but I will tell the member for Burwood what: the more he talks about his predecessor means the less he has to say about the government he is a member of and what he is doing as a government member. We know that this government does not have the confidence to speak honestly about what it is doing. As we have seen this week here in the house, the reason is that government members are not doing much. In fact what we see over and over, week after week in this house is a dysfunctional government that cannot do much now. In fact nearly everything it does is stuffed up, is watered down, is late or is not what the government said it was going to do.

This bill has come about as a result of a recommendation in an Ombudsman's report. The Ombudsman recommended the establishment of the chief statistician, but my notes tell me that members of the government made an election promise to do this in 2010. They started thinking about it in 2011, and today

we are in June 2014. It is nearly four years since government members said they would do something about crime. They said they were tough on crime and that crime statistics could not be trusted, yet four years later they are only now bringing a bill into the house.

After all of yesterday's shenanigans, where the government showed it cannot do anything right, we now have a bill which tells us the office of the chief statistician will not be established until 2015. That is after the coming election. The agency was promised before an election, that election was held and there will be another election, and then we will get the agency.

As we know — but I will say it again for the member for Burwood — crime is up in Burwood, and it is up in Casey too. I dearly hope this agency is well resourced and well led, and I believe the person the government appointed as the chief statistician, Ms Fiona Dowsley, will do a good job. However, if crime continues to increase, as it has every year under this government, as the member for Lyndhurst said, in stark contrast to what happened under the Bracks and Brumby governments, when we had 11 years of declining crime rates, and if criminals, after they have been shoved into all these new prison pens — and let us put on the record again that this government is creating more prison beds than hospital beds — come out of prison and reoffend at greater and more frequent rates than ever before, then that will be a reflection on the government. It will be a sad indictment of a government which said it was tough on crime. What it is doing is creating more and more crime — more and more criminals — and the community is not safer.

I know the community is not safer, because when I attend street stalls in my electorate one of the things people talk to me about is the fact that they have cars roaring around their neighbourhoods, people screaming at each other in houses and people breaking into homes, looking for money and flipping out because they are taking drugs. The same people tell me that when they ring the local police, who I know to be hardworking and dedicated people, the police do not have the time, the cars or the resources to deal with these problems. Thankfully these people come to me, and often I contact the police on their behalf. I write to them, and they often run a patrol or two around these busy, congested streets — and I put on the record that they are congested because this government has spent no money on roads in my electorate since it came to power — and try to reassure the residents. I know that when I attend a street stall at Hampton Park on 21 June there will be more people there telling me exactly the same thing because they will have got the same answer from the police on duty.

I will finish my contribution by referring to an important program in my local area, Operation Newstart, which was designed to prevent crime. There is an idea for the government: trying to prevent crime. It is a fantastic youth program that the police were actively engaged in. If you watch TV or read the newspaper, you know that police not only were actively engaged in the program but enthusiastically supported it because they believed it worked. The program put often disengaged young people, who may have been considered to be off to join the growing queue of criminals in Victoria, in contact with skilled educators and police officers who tried to divert their attention, empower them and give them new skills, guidance and counselling and a new way of approaching their education and getting a job. In other words, it tried to keep kids on the straight and narrow and out of jail.

The fact that the police were so enthusiastically engaged with this and did such a fantastic, professional job meant that at the end of the program the kids looked at the police in a different light. They looked at them as esteemed professionals who were there not to bludgeon them or put them in jail — and I am all for throwing the book at somebody if they do the wrong thing — but to look after the community and keep it safe and to guide these young people to a better future. That program is going under this government. It is a sad day when governments cannot help young people, with police support, to stay out of jail. As I said, Labor members will not be opposing the bill, but we hope the agency is given the resources it needs to do its job properly and that the crime rates do not continue to rise.

**Ms BEATTIE (Yuroke)** — It gives me great pleasure to speak on the Crime Statistics Bill 2014. I am disappointed that the member for Burwood has left the chamber, because we can always take some ill-informed interjections from him, but perhaps we will get some anyway. The opposition is not opposing this bill, but I want to raise a few issues about the bill and repeat Labor's concern about the Napthine government's handling of the police portfolio in general.

I was alarmed to watch a television show the other night and learn that the massive injection of police into the system will mean that in a couple of years time a quarter of the police in the force will have less than four years experience. People are coming into the force, but we have to do more to maintain retention. The government has to make policing a great career for people. Is it any wonder that people are leaving the police force when this government, despite its rhetoric about being tough on crime, does not support the police in general?

The Chief Commissioner of Police, Ken Lay, recently produced a blue paper that talked about bringing some retired police officers back into the force on special duties to head up task forces. A member on the other side of the house has said publicly that the blue paper is absolute drivel. Here we have somebody undermining the attempts of the Chief Commissioner of Police, somebody appointed by the government — and a very good appointment, if I might say so — to do the policing that is so vitally required. Is it any wonder that the more experienced police officers are going out the other end of the police force? We know that government members talk about being tough on crime — they stand there and beat their chests as though there are marauding packs of criminals walking down every street — but when incidents of crime occur, and if they involve somebody who is supported by the government, they go soft on those crimes.

I turn now to a subject that other speakers have spoken about, and that is the provision of prison beds in the government's tough-on-crime stance. We know that more prison beds have been put into the system than hospital beds. Soon it will be the case that, if you go to hospital, you will have to go down to Barwon Prison to get a bed, which is disgraceful. Another matter that people are talking about is the provision of containers — dongas, as they are called — to accommodate prisoners. At various sites around Australia you can see the appalling conditions in which prisoners were held in the past. The containers are not that much better. It is disgraceful that shipping containers are being used to house prisoners. The government should be putting more effort into fixing the causes of crime than into building more prisons so that it can give the impression of being tough on crime.

The government, under pressure from this side of the house, has finally allocated \$8.4 million over four years to establish the independent Crime Statistics Agency, and that independent body will be responsible for the publication of crime statistics. The bill also provides for the employment of a chief statistician and for the Chief Commissioner of Police to provide law enforcement data to the chief statistician. For many reasons we do not oppose the bill, and we wish Ms Fiona Dowsley, the new chief statistician, well. However, it is alarming to see that she does not take up her position until 1 January 2015.

As I said, we do not oppose the bill. We know that front-line policing has been stretched with the cuts that this government has made. It says it is putting more police on the streets and then it cuts funding to Victoria Police; indeed, it is putting more police behind desks. Victorians have a right to be angry with this

government because its actions do not match the tough rhetoric that it has espoused. The Baillieu government — I am sorry, I forgot about the rotation of premiers at the hands of the member for Frankston, and there was a rotation of the ministers for police and emergency services as well — now the Napthine government, has failed in its efforts to reduce crime, one of its key election commitments. Its tough-on-crime policies have failed. The only growth industry in this state is the manufacture and supply of prison beds. The government has closed down Toyota and closed down Ford. Jobs were cut at Qantas without anyone lifting a finger to save them. The only industries that are doing well are the making of prison beds and the shifting of dongas from one area to another to house prisoners.

What is the government doing about reducing crime? It is taking in people for minor misdemeanours and turning them out as hardened criminals. This is something that is happening worldwide, I might say. I am glad the member for Burwood has come back into the chamber. He makes the rest of the house look like intellectual giants the moment he steps into the chamber. He is the only member I know with a shoe size bigger than his IQ.

Under Labor Victoria saw 10 years of reduced crime rates. The Napthine government has managed to unwind that. Members opposite running around saying the chief commissioner in his efforts to improve policing in the state is talking drivel says a lot about those on the other side of the house. Labor is not opposing this bill, but it opposes the objections of government members to what the chief commissioner is doing. The chief commissioner ought to be the one who has the say on operational matters, not members on that side of the house.

With those few words I will end my contribution. I wish the bill a speedy passage, but apparently people on the other side are not even contributing to debate on the bill. Labor members will continue to carry the business of this house. Labor members will continue to do the heavy lifting in this house. With those few remarks I shall close.

**Mr WYNNE** (Richmond) — I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Crime Statistics Bill 2014 and note it is the opposition that is making all the contributions today. The cheap shots by the government members last night in the chaos — —

**Mr Watt** — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member for Richmond is being misleading inasmuch as I have already made a contribution to the

debate on this bill. To say that opposition members are the only ones contributing is not true.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Morris)** — Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr WYNNE** — I rise to make my contribution — —

**Mr Watt** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Morris)** — Order! The member for Burwood will desist, or he will be out of the chamber.

**Mr WYNNE** — Thank you, Acting Speaker, for the protection. The opposition does not oppose this bill; however, opposition speakers will raise a number of issues in their contributions. The first point is that the Ombudsman recommended in his report entitled *Crime Statistics and Police Numbers* that the government consider establishing an independent unit to develop and maintain statistical databases on crime and to monitor and publish reports on crime trends, with the capacity to audit crime statistics and crime recording practices. As we know, there are a range of these independent statistical data collection agencies across Australia. The most developed of those is the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, which has been engaged in this activity for many years. It has been at the forefront of this important work.

We acknowledge that it was a commitment of this government in 2011 to establish the independent Crime Statistics Agency, but it is only now, three and a half years after it came to office, that this bill is before the house. What is particularly curious about it from our point of view is that this Crime Statistics Agency will not commence operation until 2015.

**An honourable member** — Rubbish. Come on!

**Mr WYNNE** — My colleagues say this cannot be the case, but it is the case that this agency will not commence operations until next year, and we know this will be well after the state election on 29 November. The best application I can put on this is that it is a curious decision by this government, because it comes after the chief statistician, Ms Fiona Dowsley, has already been appointed.

**Ms Beattie** — How does that go?

**Mr WYNNE** — Indeed. As the member for Yuroke rightly points out, ‘How does that go?’. It is a very curious proposition; that is all I can say. The chief statistician has been appointed, but this important new

independent bureau will not be implemented until 2015, with a commitment of \$8.4 million over four years.

In that context, it is important to reflect on the current trends, as reflected in statistical data. The most recent Victoria Police figures show that crime in Victoria has increased by 7.1 per cent, with drug offences up a massive 17.8 per cent. I know from commentary on the radio that community seminars will be held on this issue. I note that a joint investigatory committee of this Parliament — it is no longer called the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee — is investigating the scourge of ice use in this state. There is no doubt that this insidious drug is having a significant impact on crime in our state. Family violence has increased by 6 per cent, and assaults are up 2.3 per cent.

I pause to reflect on family violence. I have to confess to the house that, although I try to keep abreast of many social policy issues, until I had spoken to good folk such as Fiona McCormack from Domestic Violence Victoria, I had not fully understood the scope of how completely family violence has permeated our society. Police call-outs and activity in the family violence area comprise 40 per cent of all police work. Twenty-seven women and children were killed last year as a result of family violence.

**Mr Bull** — Horrendous.

**Mr WYNNE** — As the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Minister for Local Government indicates, this is horrendous. Indeed this is a state scandal and a national scandal. This is not just the Victorian situation — it is reflected right across the nation.

I was immensely proud of my leader at our state conference a few weeks ago when he stood and gave an extraordinary, electric speech. What he had to say about his commitment and the commitment of the Australian Labor Party to establish a royal commission on family violence held our people in awe. Think about those statistics: 27 women and children were killed in this state last year, and 40 per cent of all police work is in the area of family violence. This is a matter of top priority and a matter of import for this Parliament and this state; I cannot think of any other social issue that is more important.

The Leader of the Opposition, who is my colleague and friend, showed extraordinary leadership by affirming that the Australian Labor Party will put family violence front and centre through the appropriate processes of a judicial inquiry — a royal commission. More than that, the Leader of the Opposition said the ALP will commit to all of the recommendations that came from that royal

commission and will implement them. This not only shows extraordinary leadership but also reveals the deep insight my leader has into this insidious issue of family violence. He should be commended for his stance, not derided, as sadly he was by some members of the current government, who implied that this was a stunt and a political exercise. It was one of his finest moments in public life, and I applaud the Leader of the Opposition for his magnificent leadership on this most insidious area of family violence.

We know that there is a correlation between police numbers and the crime rate. I have already indicated the challenging issues in my electorate around ice and heroin trafficking. Therefore it is a serious concern that police staff numbers have decreased from 161 to 115 in the city of Yarra, which is effectively a cut of 45 members. This government says it is increasing police numbers; however, we know that there has been a reallocation of police members. Indeed the current Premier has slashed front-line policing by \$113 million and 500 staff. To have a cut of 45 front-line staff in my own area is a massive reduction; it is a 28 per cent reduction in staff. This will directly impact upon crime rates in my area, which are already challenging.

I commend my local police. Detective Inspector Bernie Edwards does a fantastic job as our local district inspector and his people do a fantastic job, but there are enormous challenges in the city of Yarra, particularly around crime issues. We seek the support of this government to support our men and women on the front line who do so much for community safety in Yarra.

**Mr MADDEN** (Essendon) — I am very concerned about what is going on with crime statistics at the moment. I welcome these initiatives, but it needs to be noted that the government has delayed their implementation for a very long time. This is one of the issues it has campaigned on strongly, but we will not hear what the ‘real’ statistics are — because the government has made out there is something wrong with the current ones — until the beginning of next year — in other words, until after the election. I am disappointed about that on a number of fronts, and I shall speak firstly about domestic violence, as did the member for Richmond.

In terms of statistics and how they work in this state, depending on the area of crime and the incidents occurring, there is a link between the way crime is reported and accounted for and the money that governments apply to that area. If we are dealing with road safety, there is a direct link between crime incidence, the cost to the community, insurance and the cost of roads, and then because that nexus exists

between those factors the government funds areas accordingly. In other words, because there is a link between cause, effect and cost, the government invests accordingly.

Furthermore, when there is a revenue stream associated not only with cause and effect but with the occurrence of incidents on the road, then of course it is in the government’s interests to invest heavily in that area and to increase revenue to make things happen. That is not necessarily a bad thing, but what is not a great thing is that when you have an area in which the crime is hidden, such as domestic violence — when it is obscured and the cost to the community is not clearly known — it affects government allocations to that area. Domestic violence, as the member for Richmond mentioned, is insidious. It happens behind closed doors, away from the public eye and away from the news, and it is reported very differently. Because of those factors we do not know the full impact of it or the cost of it to the community, but when it comes to road safety, we do.

Unfortunately we regularly see images on television of what has occurred on our roads. We see examples of the cost to family lives and individuals. We see the police out there in front of the cameras talking about it. In fact Assistant Commissioner Bob Hill is sometimes known as Hollywood Bob Hill because he is in front of the cameras so often. That is not necessarily a bad thing, but if there were an assistant commissioner who was specifically responsible for domestic violence, would the public know who that person was? Would we see that individual on the television? No, we would not. We hear that the statistics in relation to family violence amount to 40 per cent of all call-outs and 27 deaths in any one year, yet the nexus between the statistics, the way they are reported, the way the police take action and the way that is followed up in prevention issues does not lead to a sound body of work which encapsulates the problem.

It is a case of a lack of resourcing, along with the fact that there is no direct link between the crime and revenue raising, and hence resources do not go into that insidious area. In Moonee Valley, while the rates of domestic violence are not clear, I suspect the rates of crime associated with domestic violence have increased substantially because people in Moonee Valley suffer a high degree of mortgage stress. The level of defaults on mortgages in Moonee Valley is among the highest in the country. I assume that people who invest in big mortgages come under personal, professional and employment strain, and whilst it is no excuse, we can see what that means in relation to domestic violence.

It is increasingly important to have people on the front line to deal with these concerns. They have to be well trained and resourced. It may be reasonable for the Chief Commissioner of Police, Ken Lay, to say that we need training and skills in the area of domestic violence, but I would strongly question any consideration of taking officers away from police stations in the community.

Moonee Valley has seen a significant increase in crime and a decrease in the number of police at the Moonee Ponds police station in particular, which deals with local residents. In 2010 staff numbers were 129, but in January 2014 there were 99 police officers. That is a reduction of 30 police officers, which comes with an accompanying significant increase in crime. Offences recorded increased from 6882 in 2010–11 to 7671 in 2012–13 — an increase of 789 reported offences, while at the same time there was a decrease in police numbers.

I refer to Inspector Geoff Kedge — a great man, whom I have known for many years and who coordinates the police station at Moonee Ponds and does an outstanding job. He is quoted in the *Herald Sun* in May this year as defending the reduction in police numbers. I feel very sorry for Inspector Kedge because he has a very hard task defending the reduction in police numbers at the coalface, particularly with the increase in reported offences, yet he has to defend this position because that is the position of the chief commissioner. I question the policy of the chief commissioner who says he wants to change policing and take police away from the front line, particularly in Moonee Ponds and the Moonee Valley area. It is particularly disappointing because although we may need to change the model — we might need special taskforces — more than ever we still need police at the coalface.

There is no better example of that fact than a report this morning of an incident that occurred in Ascot Vale last Sunday night. An *Age* article written by Patrick Hatch, linked to the *Weekly Review — Moonee Valley*, states that a Mercedes was car-jacked at 3.00 a.m. in Ascot Vale. A man was dragged out of his car, beaten up and three assailants apparently took the car and drove off. In this type of case the police need to follow up almost immediately. They did find the car some hours later in another part of the world, but of course it was completely burnt out with all evidence destroyed, so it is very unlikely that the police will catch the assailants for some time, if at all. The resources that will now go into this matter could have gone into it up-front very early on if the police had been at the front line and able to be called out very quickly. We might then have seen a different result. It is highly likely that because we did

not have the front-line police there when we needed them, following up almost immediately as a deterrent, these three men may well do something like this again. My concern is that if you take police away from the front line, and likely criminals know it, it gives the criminals the opportunity to use that lag time, which leads to an increase in crime in the community.

The lack of resources associated with the government will not be obvious until after the election when the new statistics are published, and that only reinforces the scepticism we see in the community about this government and the way it treats the public. Government members think we are all dills. I know they might have views about what I am, but I would hope they would not treat the rest of the community that way. We have seen this week that they do, and we will see it happen until November, when hopefully the government will change hands.

**Ms KANIS (Melbourne)** — I rise to speak on the Crime Statistics Bill 2014. I say from the outset that the opposition does not oppose this bill. However, there are some issues in relation to the bill that we do wish to raise. This bill provides for the Secretary of the Department of Justice to employ a chief statistician, and the employees necessary to establish the Crime Statistics Agency. Its function will be to publish and release statistical information relating to crime in Victoria. We welcome the appointment of Fiona Dowsley as the chief statistician and the setting up of the Crime Statistics Agency. I do not think there is any disagreement from either side of the house about the need for reliable crime statistics. The question that really needs to be asked is: what is the value of crime statistics and why are they important? There is no value in statistics as numbers if you do not use them in a meaningful way. We need to use crime statistics to look at how we can reduce crime and improve the lives of Victorians.

An interesting statistic in relation to my electorate of Melbourne is that the staff numbers for police were 442.37 in November 2010 and 316.11 on 31 January 2014. That is a reduction in police numbers of 126.26 or, in percentage terms, of 28.54 per cent. When you look at those numbers compared with the offences recorded in Melbourne, you see that offences have gone from 28 894 in 2009–10 to 30 537 in 2012–13. That is a difference in percentage terms of 17.71 per cent. You cannot but see the clear correlation between the number of police members and the increase in crime in Melbourne.

Part of what makes Melbourne such a dynamic place is the CBD, and unfortunately the CBD is a place where a

lot of street crime occurs. One very disappointing thing we have seen in the state and federal budgets is that many of the measures that have been put in place are not going to result in a reduction in crime in Melbourne. One of the causes of crime is people's health, and indeed their mental health. It is well known that often people commit a crime because of health issues and their inability to deal with some of those issues. I am very concerned to see some of the front-line mental health services being scaled back; I am concerned about what might happen to people's mental health and the correlating increase in crime in Victoria. Certainly in Melbourne a lot of street crime occurs because people have inadequate access to mental health services, and we see those issues being played out on our streets.

One very important area in relation to reducing crime — I do not think that there is any argument about this — is education. If we give our children and adults a quality education and access to training, we will see a correlating reduction in crime. Unfortunately what we have seen from this government is the complete devastation and destruction of TAFE in Victoria. TAFE plays a great role in educating people and providing them with the job skills that they need in order to lead fulfilling and meaningful lives. This government has not been prepared to back the TAFE sector. We have seen TAFEs and many courses closed or fees being increased. That is discouraging people from getting the education and skills that they need to be able to get a job, and we have seen increases in crime as a result. What we have seen with this government is more prison beds than hospital beds.

This is a government which that talks about being tough on crime but which is weak on reducing crime and its causes. Of course people who commit crimes need to be punished for that, but what we should be doing, as any caring society should do, is working with our community to reduce crime. That is one of the most important things that we can do.

Many members have spoken about domestic violence and how it is often called the hidden crime in Victoria. Indeed it is often hidden because it happens behind closed doors and we do not see it played out on our streets, but unfortunately in recent times we have seen domestic violence being played out on our streets, and very sad events have occurred. I think the one good thing that has come of those crimes is that they have brought great awareness to the community of domestic violence and have garnered people's resolve to deal with domestic violence. I was fortunate enough recently to take part in a fundraiser for a domestic violence service in Victoria. What I saw through my

participation in that fundraiser was the devastating impact that domestic violence has on not only the victims but also the victim's extended family, local schools and services as well. We need to be doing more in that area.

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

**Business interrupted under standing orders.**

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Before calling for questions I would like to advise the house that following numerous inquiries received this morning I have chosen to donate the moneys from the member for Frankston's payment, as decided by the house yesterday, to bowel cancer research. I am advised that this amount will be \$4200. When that is added to the contributions already made by the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Monbulk and the member for Bendigo East of \$5793, it will result in just under \$10 000 being given to bowel cancer research.

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Federal funding

**Mr ANDREWS** (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. I refer to the Premier's comment of 7 September last year:

Tony Abbott will be an outstanding Prime Minister.

I ask: does the Premier stand by this glowing endorsement of Tony Abbott?

**Questions interrupted.**

## DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Before calling the Premier I would like to welcome to the gallery Dr Duncan McFetridge, the member for Morphett in the South Australian Parliament.

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Federal funding

**Questions resumed.**

**Dr NAPTHINE** (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. We have a good working relationship with the federal government. I am very pleased to advise the house that the federal coalition government is working with the coalition government here to deliver \$3 billion for the east-west link stage 1 and stage 2. This is a project that will

significantly reduce congestion in Melbourne and Victoria.

We saw a report tabled in the house yesterday highlighting the issue of congestion in Melbourne and the effect it has on productivity, the effect it has on the economy of this state and the effect it has on the quality of life of people in Victoria. Indeed it highlighted the decline in the average speed of traffic in Melbourne and Victoria, which is not surprising, given that we had 11 years of neglect of investment in key infrastructure under the Labor government.

**Mr Andrews** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Leader of the Opposition! I know I am a bit of a Pollyanna, but I had really hoped that yesterday's performance in question time would have been carried over today and that we would have had more professionalism.

**Dr NAPTHINE** — That is why we on this side of the house are very pleased to have received \$3 billion from the federal coalition government so we can get on with the job of building the east–west link stage 1 and stage 2. The east–west link stage 1 was announced in last year's state budget, and in this year's state budget — which was endorsed this week by the Labor Party in voting for the budget because it is such a great budget for the people of Victoria; it endorsed the state budget because it recognised the value to Melbourne and Victoria — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Stop the clock.

**Mr Trezise** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Geelong! The Speaker had called for the clock to be stopped, which means members do not interject. Members will cease interjecting in that manner. I will not be issuing warnings.

**Dr NAPTHINE** — We were able in this year's budget to get on with the western section of the east–west link, critically — that absolutely vital second crossing that so many Labor members over the years have been calling for. It is an outstanding result that we have funding from the federal coalition government to fix the east–west link stage 1 and the western section, delivering that vital second crossing.

I am also pleased that the federal coalition government is partnering with the state government on the \$500 million Western Highway duplication, the

\$500 million Princes Highway west duplication and the \$86 million Calder interchange at Ravenswood.

**Ms Hutchins** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Keilor!

**Dr NAPTHINE** — It is the most dangerous intersection in Victoria, ignored for 11 years under a Labor government. For 11 years the Labor members for Bendigo ignored the most dangerous intersection in their own backyard, but with an Abbott government, working with a coalition government here in Victoria, we will fix that intersection. There is \$50 million for the Great Ocean Road. We do not always agree with the — —

**Mr Andrews** — On a point of order, Speaker, with 14 seconds left: is Tony Abbott an outstanding Prime Minister or not?

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Leader of the Opposition knows very well that that is not a point of order.

**Dr NAPTHINE** — We do not always agree with Tony Abbott and the federal government, and that is why will stand up for Victoria first, second and third. Every time we will stand up for Victoria, but we are getting good funding for the east–west link and other key projects for this state.

### Infrastructure delivery

**Mr BATTIN** (Gembrook) — My question is to the Premier. How will a coalition government's record level of investment in infrastructure in the 2014–15 budget create more jobs and economic benefits for Victoria, and are there any threats to this?

**Dr NAPTHINE** (Premier) — I thank the member for Gembrook for his interest in key infrastructure and jobs in this state. I congratulate and thank the house, both sides of the house, for passing the outstanding 2014–15 budget, and it certainly is an outstanding budget. The budget builds on the strong infrastructure agenda of the coalition government that is no doubt building a better Victoria.

Previous budgets have funded our commitment to key infrastructure projects such as the regional rail link, port capacity projects at the ports of Melbourne and Hastings, and stage 1 of the east–west link. This outstanding budget delivers a further \$27 billion for even more vital infrastructure to meet the growing needs of our population and our economy.

In the area of public transport we see commitments to and genuine funding in this year's budget for the Melbourne rail link and the airport rail link. For over 40 years Melbourne and Victoria have waited for an airport rail link, and it is a coalition government that will deliver that link. The upgrade to the Cranbourne-Pakenham rail corridor, the busiest rail corridor in Melbourne — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Dr NAPTHINE** — We have delivered, and are delivering, 40 grade separations and level crossing removals across Melbourne and Victoria. In the budget this year we provided funding for the absolutely essential second stage of the east–west link. The second stage of the east–west link, the western stage, is that vital second river crossing that will not only benefit the growing western suburbs but will also have enormous benefits for Geelong, Ballarat and western Victoria. Of course there are also the CityLink-Tullamarine Freeway widening and the Dingley bypass projects.

In regional and rural Victoria, not only will they get the benefits of the regional rail link project; they will get the massive benefits of the long-awaited Murray Basin rail project. We remember that rail standardisation in Mildura was promised by the Labor government, but not 1 metre of track was standardised. It was an absolute failure by the Labor government, but it will be delivered by this government. There are upgrades to the Princes Highway west and east, including that vital duplication between Winchelsea and Colac that is building on the work that is going on now duplicating the section between Geelong and Winchelsea. The \$500 000 Western Highway duplication — —

**Mr Madden** interjected.

**Questions interrupted.**

### SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

#### Member for Essendon

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Essendon will leave the chamber for an hour under standing order 124.

**Honourable member for Essendon withdrew from chamber.**

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

#### Infrastructure delivery

**Questions resumed.**

**Dr NAPTHINE** (Premier) — There are the Calder interchange project and the \$50 million upgrade to the Great Ocean Road, which is a vital road for locals, for tourism and for the growing dairy industry, which is driving exports. These key projects will deliver 26 000 new jobs. We are committed as a government to getting on with the job of delivering these key infrastructure projects for Victoria, delivering these 26 000 jobs and delivering these game-changing projects that will decongest Melbourne, boost productivity and efficiency and grow our state's economy. That is what we are on about.

**Ms Hutchins** interjected.

**Questions interrupted.**

### SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

#### Member for Keilor

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Keilor will leave the chamber for an hour.

**Honourable member for Keilor withdrew from chamber.**

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

**Questions resumed.**

#### Health funding

**Mr MERLINO** (Monbulk) — My question is to the Premier. Almost 50 000 Victorians are now waiting in pain for their surgery. Now federal Liberal cuts mean that on 1 July more than 330 hospital beds will close across Victoria, including 34 beds in my community. I ask: is it still the Premier's position that Tony Abbott is an outstanding Prime Minister?

**Dr NAPTHINE** (Premier) — I thank the honourable member for his question. His question relates to health funding. I can advise that in the 2014–15 budget this government is providing a record \$14.9 billion in health funding. I can also advise that the most recent Victorian statistics in the March 2014 quarter show that in our emergency departments 100 per cent of category 1 emergency patients are seen immediately. I can advise that ambulance transfers to

hospitals within the specified time of 40 minutes have improved by 9.7 per cent.

**Mr Brooks** interjected.

**Questions interrupted.**

## SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

### Member for Bundoora

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Bundoora will leave the chamber for half an hour.

**Honourable member for Bundoora withdrew from chamber.**

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Health funding

**Questions resumed.**

**Dr NAPHTHINE** (Premier) — I can advise that the number of elective surgeries increased by 18.1 per cent in the March quarter. I can advise that the number of people on elective surgery waiting lists was reduced by 7.4 per cent. I also advise that of those people on the urgent elective surgery waiting list — category 1 patients waiting for lifesaving surgery — 100 per cent are treated within 30 days under this government.

I also advise that there is additional funding in this year's budget to deal with the expected extra demand for health services during winter. There is additional funding to target those on category 2 and category 3 elective surgery waiting lists. I can also advise that this government has a record \$4.8 billion capital works program for health that includes the \$1 billion Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre.

We are also funding the \$630 million Bendigo hospital, something that was not delivered under the Labor government but is being delivered by this government. There is a \$448 million rebuild of the Box Hill Hospital. There will be a Monash Children's hospital and a rebuild of the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital, the Echuca hospital — —

**Mr Merlino** — On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier has been speaking for more than 3 minutes. He is not being relevant to the question. Not once has he referred to the federal government cuts. If he is not brave enough to stand up to Geoff Shaw — —

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Monbulk will resume his seat.

**Dr NAPHTHINE** — As I am explaining to the house, and for the information of the member for Monbulk, we are spending more money and providing a record level of funding — \$14.9 billion. That is more money, not less money. I am explaining that we are spending \$4.8 billion rebuilding the hospital system that was neglected by the previous health minister.

**Mr Andrews** — On a point of order, Speaker, the question related to federal Liberal cuts and whether the Premier still thinks Tony Abbott is outstanding. That is what the question was about, and I put it to you respectfully that that is what the answer ought to be about. The fact that it mentioned the word 'health' does not allow the Premier to talk about every single part of the health system.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Leader of the Opposition knows very well not to enter into debate when raising a point of order. He knows extremely well how to take a point of order.

**Dr NAPHTHINE** — As I was outlining to the house, under this government there is increased funding for health. There is a record level of funding for health, both in a recurrent sense and in a capital sense. I was going through the hospitals that are being rebuilt under this government. They include Geelong Hospital, Ballarat hospital, Northern Hospital, Werribee Mercy Hospital, Echuca hospital, Latrobe Regional Hospital, Barwon Health North, Boort hospital, Moyne Health Services and many more across the state.

### Regional Growth Fund

**Mrs POWELL** (Shepparton) — My question is to the Minister for Regional and Rural Development. How is the coalition government's Regional Growth Fund leveraging more investment and growing jobs across regional and rural Victoria, and is he aware of any alternative policies?

**Mr RYAN** (Minister for Regional and Rural Development) — I thank the member for her question. It is a very pertinent question, the answer to which the whole house has an enormous interest in. I am pleased to provide that answer. June marks the third anniversary of the establishment of the Regional Growth Fund. Communities across the regions of our state are celebrating that third anniversary because it marks the establishment of the \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund. The fund has by any standard been a spectacular success.

As at the end of April, 1475 projects had commenced, were in the stage of being completed or had been

completed over the course of those three years. They are magnificent projects for regional and rural Victoria. We have seen the investment of just over \$404 million. Those investments have in turn leveraged just over \$1.6 billion of growth through regional Victoria.

As the house knows, the fund is split into different segments, and \$100 million is for the Energy for the Regions project. That is to do with the enhancement of natural gas across Victoria, an issue that was completely abandoned by the Labor government, which not only ignored these communities but also made it clear in the lead-up to the election in 2010 that it would never again spend money on this important initiative. We are doing it, and it is progressing very well to the great benefit of many of those communities.

Another \$100 million is going to the Putting Locals First program. About \$68 million has been invested in about 400 projects. These are driven by local communities. They are brought to the government by these local communities through the regions, and they are doing wonderful things in a range of areas which are going to be of ongoing benefit to the people who live in rural and regional parts of the state. Another \$100 million is going to local government via the fund we have established for the benefit of local government. Local governments are sharing in that money according to a formula on which they have been in complete agreement and took part in developing. Those projects will receive \$100 million, and there are now about 93 of them through rural and regional Victoria.

Finally, the last \$200 million is going into the economic infrastructure program, where we have something like 85 projects that are in the process of being developed or which have been concluded. Taken in concert, all of this is going to result in the employment of about an additional 5000 people through the regions of Victoria. Many other jobs will be created in the course of construction, and many jobs will be created in the supply chain that will be developed as a result of these investments being made. It is a fantastic outcome for rural and regional Victoria.

What are the other alternatives? I can tell the house that they are very troubling alternatives. Were it to be that another party that occupies this place returned to the Treasury benches, its intention would be to destroy the Regional Growth Fund and bring back the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund. That program provided funding to the tune of about \$61 million over a period of 10 years — about \$610 million or \$630 million, of that order. Over the course of our first almost four years we have put \$500 million into our projects. We have a \$1 billion fund over the course of

eight years, which is far in excess of what Labor ever did and far more than it will do if it ever has the reins of government again.

Communities across the regions are celebrating the Regional Growth Fund, and so they should. They will despair if Labor ever assumes the Treasury benches.

### Health funding

**Ms GRALEY** (Narre Warren South) — My question is to the Premier. In the last year 1012 Victorians waited for more than 24 hours on hospital trolleys. Now federal Liberal cuts mean that on 1 July more than 330 hospital beds will close across Victoria, including 30 beds in my community. I ask: is it still the Premier's position that Tony Abbott is an outstanding Prime Minister?

**Dr NAPHTHINE** (Premier) — I thank the honourable member for her question, but I need to correct the record with respect to the imputation in the question. The facts are that as of 1 July in Victoria there will be more money for health and more money for hospitals, not less. Clearly the member has been misled by misinformation circulated by the Labor Party and its fellow travellers, because the facts are that in the 2014–15 Victorian budget, which funds hospitals in Victoria, there is \$14.9 billion allocated for health services. There is more money for our hospitals, not less.

In the acute health component there is \$10.3 billion for our hospitals. That is \$1.9 billion or 22.6 per cent more than under the Labor government. There is more money for health and more money for hospitals, not less. Let me make that very clear. There is also \$1.25 billion for mental health services, which is a 25 per cent increase since we came to government. In this year's budget in addition to that funding there is \$190 million over four years to treat elective surgery patients to help reduce the waiting lists even further.

We had a significant reduction in elective surgery waiting lists in the March quarter, and there is money in this year's budget for further reductions in the elective surgery waiting lists. Let me remind the house that if you live in Victoria and you have a life-threatening category 1 need for elective surgery, you do not wait more than 30 days — 100 per cent are treated within 30 days. That is a proud record for our health service. It is a great credit to the hardworking doctors, nurses and allied health people in our hospitals around the state.

In addition to our record level of funding there is \$190 million over four years for additional elective

surgery plus in this year's budget an additional \$60 million for the winter funding package, which is to meet the additional demand — —

**Ms Graley** — On a point of order, Speaker, under standing order 58, on the matter of relevance, I would like the Premier to advise my community whether the 30 beds are going to close on 1 July.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I ask the member not to repeat the question. Taking a point of order is not an opportunity to repeat the question.

**Dr NAPHTHINE** — As I was saying, under this government there is more money for health and more money for hospitals, not less. I was also particularly highlighting the budget announcements of the \$190 million in the elective surgery package and the \$60 million winter funding package.

**Mr Andrews** — On a point of order, Speaker, the question related to Victorians waiting on trolleys in emergency departments; it did not relate to elective surgery. The answer is not relevant to the question asked, and I ask you to draw the Premier back to emergency departments and bed closures. That is what he was asked about.

**Ms Asher** — On the point of order, Speaker, the question asked related to many things in the preamble, from federal funding to a broad range of health matters. I draw the attention of the house to *Rulings from the Chair — 1920–2013* dated December 2013 and in particular a ruling from Speaker Lindell — —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Ms Asher** — No, I did not draft her ruling. It is that:

If a question comes with a preamble, that preamble does form part of the question and the answer can be relevant to the question by being relevant to the preamble.

The preamble was a long one and the Premier was being relevant to the question asked, and I ask that you rule the point of order out of order.

**Mr Merlino** — On the point of order, Speaker, the preamble was very short. The substance of the question was in relation to federal government cuts and Tony Abbott. We are almost at the end of the third opposition question and the Premier has not once mentioned Tony Abbott.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Monbulk!

**Mr Merlino** — If he does not have the courage, he should sit down.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Monbulk will resume his seat. Every member in this house is entitled to take a point of order, but they are expected to follow the precedents for points of order. Making a point in debate or repeating a question is not permitted.

**Dr NAPHTHINE** — In summary, the question asked about health funding and hospital funding, and I am outlining that under this government in this year's budget there is more money for health and more money for hospitals, plus \$190 million for the elective surgery package and \$60 million for the winter funding package to deal with the peak demand during wintertime — more money, not less.

### Building industry

**Mr THOMPSON** (Sandringham) — My question is to the Minister for Industrial Relations. How is the coalition government's construction code compliance unit helping to build a better Victoria, and are there any threats to this important work?

**Mr CLARK** (Minister for Industrial Relations) — I thank the honourable member for Sandringham for his question. The honourable member asked about the work of the construction code compliance unit (CCCU) and, as the house would be aware, that unit was established to fill the gap created by the Gillard government abolishing the Australian building and construction commission in order to seek to secure productive, law-abiding and safe workplaces here in Victoria.

Previously I have informed the house of the various aspects of the work of that unit, most recently in relation to the announcement by the government in February this year that we would be introducing under the CCCU two further measures to improve safety and security on Victorian government construction sites by extending the coverage of the implementation guidelines for the code of practice for the building and construction industry in order to require companies that win Victorian government tenders to work, firstly, to implement drug and alcohol screening measures on their sites and, secondly, to implement measures to ensure the security of their sites.

I am pleased to be able to inform the honourable member and the house that this work has made good progress, that the CCCU has undertaken the consultation I mentioned to the house previously, that it

has received the results of that consultation and that these extensions to the guidelines are due to be promulgated soon.

The work of the CCCU is very important to this state and to the future of our building and construction industry. It is particularly important given the long history of disruption and criminal activity associated with building industry unions and certain of their key officials. I refer in support of that proposition in particular to some of the record as it is reported in public media reports of Mr John Setka, the Victorian division secretary of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU). Those reports indicate that Mr Setka was fined in 2003 for threatening a Grocon manager, Frank Bortoletto. He was fined in 2010 for threatening two Lend Lease managers. In August 2012 he was accused of driving his car into a Grocon manager.

Mr Setka's criminal record shows that he has been convicted five times for assaulting police. His record between 1982 and 1991 contains 60 charges and dozens of police convictions and fines, including for theft, assault by kicking, criminal damage and assaulting police, leading to 40 convictions for crimes. It shows that Mr Setka has been jailed twice in the past after being found in contempt of court, separate to his criminal record.

We may well ask what else is relevant in relation to Mr Setka and the organisation he heads. One particularly relevant factor is that the CFMEU has donated more than \$9.1 million to the Australian Labor Party since the start of the Cole royal commission.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Questions interrupted.**

## SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

### Member for Lyndhurst

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Lyndhurst will leave the chamber for an hour.

**Honourable member for Lyndhurst withdrew from chamber.**

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Building industry

**Questions resumed.**

**Mr CLARK** (Minister for Industrial Relations) — These are not just matters in the past. Just today, Mr Setka and the CFMEU were prominent in the rally that assembled outside this Parliament, and they were greeted upon their arrival and welcomed to this house by more than 40 members of this Parliament from the opposite side of this chamber.

We have heard a lot of talk in recent times about standards, conduct and expulsion in relation to this Parliament, but we have not heard much from the people who have been talking big on that subject inside this chamber about expelling another organisation, headed by someone with a long list of criminal convictions, and a union that has been one of the biggest single threats to Victoria's future infrastructure and jobs in the building and construction industry. The biggest threat to the CCCU is if those opposite ever came to power. They were prepared to talk big about expulsion in the house yesterday, but they do not have the ticker to talk big about expulsion at their party conference.

### Health funding

**Mr FOLEY** (Albert Park) — My question is to the Premier. Federal Liberal cuts mean that on 1 July more than 330 hospital beds will close across Victoria, including 60 beds in my community. I ask: is it still the Premier's position that Tony Abbott is an outstanding Prime Minister?

**Dr NAPHTHINE** (Premier) — I thank the honourable member for his question and for his interest in health and hospital services in the state of Victoria. Let me make it clear to the house and to the honourable member that under this government there is an increase in funding for health. Our budget delivers \$14.9 billion for health services. That is a record level of funding. It is a significant increase in funding on last year's budget and a massive increase in funding since we came to office and took over from the previous Minister for Health, who presided over a system that was underinvested in capital and underfunded in terms of recurrent funding.

We are providing a record level of funding for health in this state — \$14.9 billion. That means that our hospitals will have more money to treat more patients, not less money. There will be \$10.2 billion for acute health in

2014–15. On top of that there is funding of \$190 million in the budget for four years of additional elective surgery treatment to deal with people on elective surgery waiting lists, as well as the \$60 million winter package.

What we are seeing when we look at the March 2014 health performance figures for Victoria is the benefit of this coalition government putting more money into health services. The number of patients treated in March 2014 compared to 12 months earlier was 8.2 per cent higher. The number of emergency patients admitted was 11.8 per cent higher. The number of emergency department attendances was 3.9 per cent higher. The number of emergency patients treated in time across all categories improved by 1.4 per cent. Ambulance transfers within 40 minutes improved by 9.7 per cent.

**Mr Foley** — On a point of order, Speaker, on the issue of relevance, the question was very narrow in its delivery; there was no preamble. The question dealt with bed closures, and I ask that you bring the Premier back to dealing with the issue of bed closures in the community that I represent.

**Ms Asher** — On the point of order, Speaker, the Premier's answer was relevant to the question that was asked. The question related to hospitals and therefore to hospital beds and therefore to hospital funding. The Premier was being relevant to the question asked by the member for Albert Park. I ask that you rule the point of order out of order.

**Mr Andrews** — On the point of order, Speaker, a general discussion about health is not relevant to this question. There was no preamble, it was a very narrow question and I would ask, out of respect for those patients who are waiting, that you ask the Premier to respectfully address the question. It was a very narrow question with no preamble at all. A general discussion is simply not relevant to the question that was asked.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The question related to federal cuts, to the closing of beds and to the hospital system. Anyone would assume that a question about beds relates to the hospital system. The Premier was outlining —

**Mr Merlino** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Monbulk! The Premier to continue answering the question.

**Dr NAPHTHINE** — I am advising the house, contrary to the assertions in the question posed, that

there is increased money for health under this government — more money, not less money. There are more patients being treated, there is more elective surgery being done and there has been a reduction in the elective surgery waiting list. The most recent health performance data shows that the amount of elective surgery performed from March to March has increased by 18 percent, the elective surgery waiting list has reduced by 7.4 per cent and waiting times have reduced. I advise the member for Albert Park that there is more money, not less.

**Mr Foley** — On a point of order, Speaker, which goes to relevance, perhaps in the last 23 seconds the Premier would like to address the question. If there are no bed cuts, let him say so.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Premier to finish answering the question.

**Dr NAPHTHINE** — Let me reiterate what I am saying: there are record levels of funding, \$14.9 billion — more money, not less.

### Transport infrastructure

**Mr BLACKWOOD** (Narracan) — My question is to the Minister for Public Transport. How will the coalition government's record investment in transport in the 2014–15 budget benefit Victorian families and businesses, and are there any threats to this?

**Mr MULDER** (Minister for Public Transport) — I thank the member for Narracan, my hardworking parliamentary secretary, for his question. As the member for Narracan would be aware, the government has a record infrastructure agenda. We have a record level of funding for infrastructure, with \$24 billion to be invested in both public transport and road infrastructure going forward. This includes the Melbourne Airport rail link, which will be delivered as part of the Melbourne rail link project — a far superior project to the old Melbourne Metro rail project put forward by the former Labor government — and the full east–west link, which includes the eastern and western sections of that project, the vital second crossing that Melbourne has been calling for over a long period of time. Members opposite have also been calling for that very important piece of road infrastructure.

Of course our infrastructure program is underpinned by Plan Melbourne and regional growth plans, our blueprint for our city and our regions. We are all about building a better Victoria. We are building a better Victoria, and we are building the infrastructure to take

Victoria forward. We have the plans, we have the money, we have the projects and we are advancing.

What a great project the Melbourne Airport rail link is. It is a project that has captured the imagination of all Victorians, because all Victorians will benefit from it. At the moment there are 30 million passenger movements a year, and that number is expected to double by around 2030. I am sure members who would have looked at the Auditor-General's report tabled yesterday that talks about congestion in Melbourne and the need to move and move quickly on congestion would understand very clearly that having the Melbourne Airport rail link will go a hell of a long way towards improving the way people get to and through Melbourne Airport.

Along with that there is the widening of the Tullamarine Freeway, which has been announced as an unsolicited bid project and taken up by Transurban. It will provide an extra lane in each direction. We will have trains departing from Southern Cross station and heading out to Melbourne Airport every 10 minutes. That is the sort of service that the community would want. Indeed the community would expect a service like that going forward. We know very well the cost of long-term car parking and the inconvenience it causes when there is even a slight breakdown on that road. It means that we need a Melbourne Airport rail link.

My call has been and will always be that your holiday starts when you get to a train station anywhere around Victoria, whether it be in Melbourne or in rural and regional Victoria. We have had great support from the tourism and transport forum. In fact if you go to the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 28 June 2010, you will see that the former transport minister in the Victorian Labor government, now the member for Lyndhurst, said that the rail link would be looked at again. It was committed to in 1999 but fell away as soon as a Labor government was elected. But the member for Lyndhurst certainly indicated that this is a worthwhile project that should be looked at again.

However, an alternative point of view held by a prominent Victorian was reported on ABC News online on 14 April under the headline 'Melbourne Airport rail link plan attacked'.

The east-west link project is a vitally needed project for Melbourne as well. Once again we have got a separation in terms of support. The member for Lyndhurst said:

Car drivers in the west are to be punished, sacrificed on the altar of green ideology.

The Leader of the Opposition yesterday announced he was still opposed to both stages of the road.

### Federal funding

**Mr ANDREWS** (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. I refer the Premier to the fact that on four occasions today he has failed to confirm his earlier commentary that Tony Abbott is an outstanding Prime Minister, and I provide him with a fifth opportunity by asking: does the Premier stand by his comment that Tony Abbott is an outstanding Prime Minister, yes or no?

**Dr NAPHTHINE** (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. As Premier of Victoria I continue to work in a positive and constructive way with the Australian government and with the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott. I was very pleased that the federal coalition government has provided \$3 billion to enable Victoria to build the absolutely vital east-west link.

We saw earlier this week in this house a report to this Parliament which highlighted the significant cost of increasing congestion to Melbourne and Victoria, to the quality of life of individuals, to businesses and to the economy. It is imperative that we as a government accept the responsibility to fix the congestion problems in this state.

There is no doubt that the major congestion hot spots in our state consist of where the Eastern Freeway meets Hoddle Street and where the Bolte Bridge runs into the Tullamarine Freeway. Those significant congestion hot spots are added to by the people who are waiting to get onto the West Gate Bridge each and every morning, whether they are travelling from Werribee, whether they are travelling from Geelong — —

**Ms Graley** interjected.

**Questions interrupted.**

### SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

#### Member for Narre Warren South

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Narre Warren South can leave the chamber for an hour.

**Honourable member for Narre Warren South withdrew from chamber.**

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**Federal funding**

**Questions resumed.**

**Mr Andrews** — On a point of order, Speaker, the answer ought to be related to the question. The Premier was asked very narrowly, for the fifth time today: is Tony Abbott an outstanding Prime Minister, yes or no? Very simple, and all of us in this chamber, and indeed all Victorians, are entitled to an answer. Outstanding or not?

**Ms Asher** — On the point of order, Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is not entitled to desire the Premier to answer with a yes or no answer. I refer to Speakers rulings on the issue of relevance by Speakers Delzoppo, Plowman and Maddigan as referred to in *Rulings from the Chair — 1920–2013* of December 2013 at page 163. The ruling is:

A minister may answer questions as he or she sees fit provided the answers are relevant.

The Premier is being relevant to the question that was asked, and I urge that you rule the point of order out of order.

**Mr Merlino** — On the point of order, Speaker, the question was a very, very simple one that only went to comments that the Premier made about the Prime Minister. It is about whether the Premier stands by those comments. Is he equally proud of the 330 beds that Tony Abbott — —

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Points of order are not an opportunity for entering into debate. I do not uphold the point of order raised by the Leader of the Opposition.

**Dr NAPHTHINE** (Premier) — As I said, the east–west link is an important project for Melbourne and Victoria. It will massively reduce congestion. It will improve productivity and efficiency. It will improve the quality of life of Victorian families, and it will deliver over 6000 jobs. That is why Tim Piper of the Australian Industry Group said — —

**Mr Eren** interjected.

**Questions interrupted.**

**SUSPENSION OF MEMBER**

**Member for Lara**

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Lara will leave the chamber for an hour.

**Honourable member for Lara withdrew from chamber.**

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**Federal funding**

**Questions resumed.**

**Mr Andrews** — On a point of order, Speaker, the question did not relate to what Mr Piper might have said or other commentators or any other Victorian. The question was about what the Premier said and whether he stands by those comments. I will not repeat them, because you would — —

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Yes, I would sit you down.

**Mr Andrews** — You do not want me to do that — you might even sit me down — but the question was not about the clippings that the Premier has got in front of him and lots of other quotes. It was his own quote. Does he stand by it or not?

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Leader of the Opposition knows very well I cannot direct the Premier or any minister how to answer a question.

**Mr Noonan** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Williamstown!

**Dr NAPHTHINE** — Tim Piper said:

The state government’s announcement regarding the western section of the new east–west link is an exciting project for Victorian industry.

There is no doubt that the east–west link is an outstanding project, and we are pleased at the outstanding contribution by the federal government, and I am sure the member for Williamstown appreciates the outstanding second crossing. I am sure the member for Tarneit — —

**Mr Trezise** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Geelong knows very well that when the Speaker is on her feet members will remain silent. I know it is Thursday, but I ask members to quieten down.

**Dr NAPHTHINE** — The point I am making is that the western section of the east–west link is an outstanding project to produce outstanding results for the western suburbs of Melbourne, for the city of Wyndham and for Geelong and Ballarat. This is an

outstanding project that will deliver benefits to the western suburbs. It is a project that was widely supported by LeadWest, by councils in the western suburbs and in the past — —

**Mr Andrews** — On a point of order, Speaker, I simply renew my point of order. The question was whether the Prime Minister is an outstanding Prime Minister. That is what the question was about, nothing else. I ask you to respectfully request of the Premier that he might in the 22 seconds remaining for the fifth occasion today answer the question.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

**Dr NAPHTHINE** — As I was saying, the Labor members across the western suburbs have been calling for the second crossing for a decade, so I am very pleased to deliver this outstanding project with outstanding support from the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott.

### Employment

**Mr K. SMITH** — My question is to the Treasurer. How is the coalition government's responsible management of Victoria's economy helping to create more jobs and build a better Victoria, and are there any threats to this?

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! When the house is ready, I will call the Treasurer.

**Mr O'BRIEN** (Treasurer) — I thank the member for Bass for his question and note that today, as yesterday, there is always a lot of attention when the member for Bass gets to his feet in this chamber. He always speaks a lot of sense, and I thank him for his important question.

I have been asked about jobs in Victoria, and I am pleased to advise the house that the Australian Bureau of Statistics released its employment data for May this morning and in that data Victoria recorded the largest job growth of anywhere in Australia. Victoria recorded an extra 19 500 jobs in the month of May. Our unemployment rate has fallen to 6.2 per cent, despite the participation rate rising. So we had a rising participation rate and a falling jobless rate.

Since the coalition government took office in December 2010, 77 200 more Victorians have been employed thanks to the government's strong economic management. This is unmitigated good news for

Victoria. Having such strong job growth, leading the nation, simply builds on what we announced and what was passed by the Parliament this week in the 2014–15 budget — a budget with \$27 billion worth of infrastructure, a budget with payroll tax cuts, a budget that is strongly in surplus and will deliver tens of thousands of new jobs in Victoria.

I was asked about threats to jobs in the economy, and as I have outlined on a number of occasions, militant unionism on building sites is a serious issue and a very serious threat to job creation in this state. There was another example recently of how this plague of militant unionism is affecting building sites not just in Victoria but right across Australia. I am referring to none other than the notorious rogue union, the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU). Members should remember that this is a union that was convicted of criminal contempt of court in the Supreme Court of Victoria this year. What did we hear from the other side? Nothing. That union was fined over \$1 million. What did we hear from the other side? Nothing. Apparently that is okay.

**Mr Ryan** interjected.

**Mr O'BRIEN** — As the Deputy Premier pointed out, there might have been less money in donations to the Labor Party. Yesterday there was a story by the AAP headed 'Former CFMEU official Matthew Balde fined for obstructing a commonwealth public official'.

**Ms Allan** interjected.

**Mr O'BRIEN** — It has been said in the newspapers. Perhaps, like the member for Tarneit, the member for Bendigo East does not read newspapers. We have another example where the CFMEU has disrupted work on a building site — and not just any building site but the Perth Children's Hospital. It was criminal behaviour by the rogue union, the CFMEU, disrupting work on the Perth Children's Hospital.

We are investing over a quarter of a billion dollars in the Monash Children's hospital here in Victoria. We cannot afford to see this rogue militant behaviour by the CFMEU. Those people who are happy to take its money, take its votes and take its orders should grow a backbone. If they want to start expelling people, they should expel John Setka and expel the CFMEU from the Labor Party.

**CRIME STATISTICS BILL 2014***Second reading***Debate resumed.**

**Ms KANIS** (Melbourne) — Before the break I was talking about the importance of crime statistics and why they should not become something that sits on a bookshelf, looks nice and is quoted every now and again. The real power of statistics is in how they are used to inform good policy. I was discussing the tragic statistics in relation to domestic violence and how those statistics show the crisis we have with domestic violence in Victoria.

One of the terrific things that has come out of the publicity around domestic violence in Victoria is the seriousness with which it is being taken. I acknowledge and congratulate the Leader of the Opposition on his announcement that Labor will establish a royal commission into domestic violence. From the crime statistics we know that in Victoria domestic violence is at a crisis point, but we do not know the best way to resolve the crisis. There are some measures that we can take in the areas of education, housing and safe places to be. However, as a society we need to openly consider all the issues around domestic violence so that the statistics do not become something that is just used to decorate our bookshelves.

In the time remaining, I also want to mention the concerns I have in relation to young people in our community, and in particular the concerns I have in relation to the cuts to Newstart allowance and the requirement for young people to be unemployed for six months before they qualify for Newstart benefits. In my view, these changes will leave the state with a huge problem to deal with in relation to crime and tragedies within our young community.

**Mr PERERA** (Cranbourne) — I wish to make a brief contribution to the debate on the Crime Statistics Bill 2014. The opposition does not oppose the bill, because establishing an independent Crime Statistics Agency is a positive step in the right direction. The Ombudsman report entitled *Crime Statistics and Police Numbers* recommends that the government consider establishing an independent unit. The government committed to it early in 2011; however, after dragging its feet in the last budget it allocated \$8.4 million over four years to establish this unit.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Ms Fiona Dowsley on her appointment as chief statistician. When the Crime Statistics Agency is established on 1 January

2015 I am hopeful that Victoria Police resources can be diverted into meaningful police tasks on a day-to-day basis. We are in a situation today where the crime rate is up, funding is down and police are not getting the support they need. Front-line police resources have been stretched due to the Napthine government's \$100 million cut in funding to Victoria Police and the stripping of 400 Victorian public service roles from Victoria Police.

The collection and analyses of crime statistics is an important tool in effective policing. However, the establishment of a crime statistics unit in itself will not bring down the incidence of crime unless the government of the day takes a number of other measures, such as increasing front-line police and other police resources and taking a long-term view on broader education. Taking up to 500 police off the front line to babysit criminals held in police cells is not going to help. It should be noted that the stance the government took at the 2010 election with its slogan 'Tough on crime' is in tatters. The incidence of crime has increased in each and every reporting period. When it comes to statistics, in my electorate of Cranbourne, for example, front-line police numbers in the city of Casey have been cut from 195 staff members in November 2010 to 160 in 2014–15. That is a reduction of 35 police in the Casey area alone. Recent police data shows us that crime has risen 7.7 per cent in the area, with theft from motor vehicle crime up by 19 per cent, drug-related crime up by 16.4 per cent, burglary other than residential up by 15.1 per cent, burglary up by 10.2 per cent and theft of motor vehicles up by 9.2 per cent.

Recent police statistics show that family violence continues to increase, with an astounding 1286 incidents in my local area, which is the highest rate in the state of Victoria. What the Napthine government has to understand is that running away from the issue of domestic violence is not the way to support the community. A royal commission into family violence will provide answers and repair the broken system from the ground up. I congratulate the Leader of the Opposition on this visionary move. Locally, staff from our community legal centre attend the local Magistrates Court three times a week, instead of making a visit once a week, to assist residents who are victims of domestic violence and are required to formally lodge with the court relevant intervention orders for the safety of themselves and their families.

On the Sunday before Christmas 2013 our local police station had five cars and a roving sixth car all attending domestic violence situations at the one time, leaving no car available for any other urgent responses. We are

seeing the principals of our schools now managing intervention orders — —

**Mr Foley** — Acting Speaker, I direct your attention to the state of the house.

**Quorum formed.**

**Mr PERERA** — I was speaking of how school principals are managing intervention orders. Schools have to make sure that the parent on whom the intervention order has been served does not come near their child while the child is at school. Locally we are seeing young mothers with their children seeking state government assistance with Office of Housing accommodation because they have had the guts to take their children and leave the domestic violence situation at home. Many have no family contacts or friends, as they have let go such contact because of their violent relationships. What happens to them, given the long Office of Housing waiting lists for accommodation, which have skyrocketed over the last three years, especially in my region? Surely the government is seeing this unfortunate pattern in community safety. It is no use government members sitting on their hands anymore. This is a real-life problem that unfortunately has had an explosive rate of growth in all electorates over the last three years and is continuing to grow.

Domestic violence is a crime, and it ought to be treated as such. The government's key promise to get tough on crime has failed. This is what happens when you ignore the causes of crime and fail to put in any measures to prevent crime.

Under Labor Victorians saw 10 years of reduced crime rates, and the Napthine Liberal-Nationals government has managed to unravel that good work by cutting the Victoria Police budget by \$100 million and slashing more than 800 Victoria Police and Department of Justice staff. This direction has to be changed. The Napthine government has to understand that its direction is wrong.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Angus)** — Order! Government members!

**Mr PERERA** — I know it is hard for government backbenchers to understand this, but these are public statistics that we are talking about. Government members have to wake up to the reality, otherwise they will get a shock on 29 November.

**Mr CARROLL (Niddrie)** — It is my pleasure to rise and speak on the Crime Statistics Bill 2014. As

mentioned at the outset, the opposition does not oppose the bill. However, we have some concerns in relation to the transparency of crime statistics, and we hope some of our suggestions will be adopted in the future, after November.

The Ombudsman's report *Crime Statistics and Police Numbers* recommends that the government consider establishing an independent unit to develop and maintain statistical databases on crime, to monitor and publish reports on crime trends and that has the capacity to audit crime statistics. The member for Caulfield and I both sit on the Parliament's Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee, which is currently undertaking an inquiry into the drug ice. Throughout our inquiry, in our sessions all over the state, data has been revealed to be a key issue. This legislation will go some way to addressing what needs to be addressed in relation to crime statistics and where police resources are most needed.

A key component of this bill is the employment of a chief statistician. The Chief Commissioner of Police will be able to provide law enforcement data to this chief statistician. The publication of crime statistics will be a very transparent process, which we welcome, and there will be offences for unauthorised disclosure. The commissioner for law enforcement data security will monitor crime data held by the Crime Statistics Agency.

The Napthine government has recently passed reforms in the police area, and many members will be aware that a lot of these reforms were initiated by the inquiry into the command, management and functions of the senior structure of Victoria Police, which is often referred to as the Rush inquiry. I was having a look at the report of the Rush inquiry a bit earlier today. The terms of reference of the inquiry were:

To inquire into the following matters relating to the structure, operations and administration of the senior command of Victoria Police:

1. The effectiveness and functions of the senior structure of Victoria Police command.
2. The extent to which the senior command structure of Victoria Police provide the future capabilities to deliver best practice policing.

And the key component concerning crime statistics was:

3. The extent to which Victoria Police has the command management structures to deliver major IT and administrative functions.

On page 77 of the Rush inquiry report, there is a section on information management and information security. The commissioner for law enforcement data security, as members would be aware, is a statutory office established by the Commissioner for Law Enforcement and Data Security Act 2005. The report of the inquiry states that the role of the commissioner is to:

... promote the use of appropriate and secure law enforcement data management practices by Victoria Police, thus enhancing community confidence in Victoria Police's ability to securely manage confidential information.

The report shows what Mr David Watts, who was appointed as commissioner in November 2008 under the previous administration, had to say about the functions of his office. It states:

Mr Watts quickly became concerned about the poor information governance within Victoria Police, the lack of any information management strategy and the fact that no-one appeared to have responsibility for information management. At the request of the minister, he undertook a review of information governance within Victoria Police.

Members would be aware that KPMG was engaged to do an audit of the internal management of police statistics and police data. The community has a lot of interest in and concern about police data. It welcomes the reforms on statistics and the new transparency. The Office of Police Integrity document entitled *Report of Investigation into Victoria Police Crime Records and Statistical Reporting* has also been released. It is alarming what Mr Strong, the director of the OPI, had to say in that report:

Victoria Police is unable to produce accurate crime clearance statistics to the Victorian government, the Australian bureau of crime statistics and the Victorian community.

However, what was most concerning was that Mr Strong found during the investigation that, out of a total average of 380 000 crimes each year, up to 15 000 could have been wrongly classified as solved. When it comes to the statistics you can see that there has been a lot of concern and that a lot of oversight has been required. The Rush inquiry also considered what needs to happen in this area.

The opposition has put on the record that it welcomes Fiona Dowsley's appointment as the chief statistician. It is great that she will be involved in setting up the Crime Statistics Agency. However, we must be mindful that the agency will not operate until after the election, and it will not come into force until 1 January 2015. Some of the commentary on Fiona's appointment has revealed that she has a background in criminology, so she is obviously well briefed and has a good track record. This is a welcome appointment for both sides of

the aisle. On the ABC recently she said her aim was to make information more accessible and to present it in a way that people really understand.

In my electorate of Niddrie we have two major police stations: one at Moonee Ponds, overseen by Inspector Kedge; and a smaller one in Avondale Heights.

In Moonee Valley we have challenges, without a doubt, and I think the police do a wonderful job. They also do a wonderful job with our local legal services, including the Moonee Valley Legal Service. Later tonight our law enforcement agencies will be coming together for a forum on ice at the Wingate Avenue Community Centre in Ascot Vale. It will be a great forum, but what would have enhanced tonight's forum is some accurate data and statistics on the drug ice and its impacts in our municipality.

We welcome what the government is doing, and it is supported. As I highlighted earlier, the previous government organised KPMG to do its own investigations into the IT management systems of Victoria Police. As someone who has worked at the Department of Justice and spent some time at the Victoria Police centre I know, as do most people, about the history of the law enforcement assistance program database. It has been plagued by problems. Governments have invested in it, but even today what is really needed is a third-party, transparent, independent body in which the community can have confidence, in terms of the statistics that are being issued by the government.

As former Office of Police Integrity director Mr Strong and even former police chief commissioner Simon Overland have said, there are statistics but it is about what spin is put on them. Having statistics that are locally based and done by postcode is something that is very welcome and something that the community will appreciate and understand. What has been concerning, though, since we have had the change of government is that following 10 years of crime reduction under Labor statistics do show — and we have the statistics — that crime has been on the increase. That is something that needs to be addressed.

I welcome the government putting money aside in the recent budget to address the harms of the drug ice. When members were driving to Parliament House today they may have heard morning radio host Neil Mitchell — one of the highest rating radio commentators today — saying he is about to embark on his own drugs forum on the issue of ice. I have come to see this problem as being probably the biggest scourge

throughout the state right now, whether it be in the suburbs, in the inner city or even in country Victoria. Until we get the relevant data and know exactly what the position is, we cannot know where to most appropriately use the government's money to address it. We must realise that just putting people into prison will not solve anything.

We welcome the statistics, we welcome the legislation and we wish it a speedy passage, but that will not be the end of it. We will be revisiting this measure, although we will not see any teething problems at the moment because it does not come into effect until next year — let us wait and see. I wish the bill a speedy passage.

**Mr BROOKS** (Bundoora) — It is a pleasure to follow my colleague and his considered contribution to the debate. It is a great shame that the debate on this important bill has been squibbed by those gutless wonders on the other side of the house. They want to talk tough on crime before an election, but once they introduce a bill into the house they spend all day hiding from the debate. The Minister for Education is at the table today, and he has missed the opportunity to participate in the debate. I would have thought he would have had an interest, as Minister for Education, in participating in a debate around statistics and the ways in which we can reduce crime in the state.

The member for Niddrie just spoke about the inquiry into the drug ice and its impact on the Victorian community. A key part of that report would no doubt be about the value of educating young people about the dangers of drugs like ice. Therefore it is amazing that at no time today has any member of the Liberal Party or The Nationals been willing to stand up and contribute to the debate. There are only four government members in the chamber. We have to call quorums to get them into the house to participate in a debate on their own bill. What a disgrace. It shows the level of interest they have, after what has been a shocking week for the Liberal Party and The Nationals in this place. There has been weak leadership from the Premier concerning the member for Frankston, then today the rest of the government members have disappeared from the chamber during this important debate. It is an absolute disgrace. This will go down on the record as being the week the government gave up the ghost. I say to government members: 'If you don't want to govern, throw the keys to us. We would cherish the opportunity to make a difference for the Victorian people'.

Coming back to the theme I mentioned earlier about the importance of education in reducing crime, as has also been mentioned by our previous speakers we need to accurately measure crime and have that data. One of the

most short-sighted and stupid cuts the government has made in education has been removing the 18 dedicated drug education officers from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. What a stupid thing for any government to do. It was the Kennett government that introduced those staff. They were supported by the Kennett government and the Bracks and Brumby governments, but it took this government and the current Minister for Education to get rid of those staff. People I talk to in the education system cannot believe how short-sighted this government is in relation to drug education.

**Mr Dixon** — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member is so far away from the bill it is not funny. This is about crime statistics, not drug education, and I ask you to bring him back to the bill.

**Mr Noonan** — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, the explanatory memorandum on this bill states that the role of the chief statistician is to undertake research into and analysis of crime, and I put it to you that the issue of education is absolutely relevant to the issue of crime.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Angus)** — Order! I do not uphold the point of order, but I ask the member to come back to the bill.

**Mr BROOKS** — I refer to an article about crime statistics published in the *Age* of 27 February. The article, headed 'Drug, family violence offences drive up Victoria's crime rate', talks about the surge in the use of crystal methamphetamine, particularly in regional areas, and it states:

Police statistics show drug offences — including possession, manufacturing and trafficking — more than doubled in some parts of the west last year. Statewide, drug-related crimes rose by 12.3 per cent.

It is important when we are talking about crime statistics to talk about the massive spike in crime across this state and in particular, as has been mentioned in this place, the scourge of the drug ice. I was simply making the point — and I know the minister does not like being reminded of these cuts — that if you cut out of our education system the people who educate the public about the dangers of drugs like ice, you will see increased crime statistics and you will see rises in the level of crime. If you cut 800 staff out of the Department of Justice and Victoria Police, you will see increases in the crime statistics. If you cut police out of our local communities, you will see increases in the crime statistics. In my local community, which covers the municipalities of Banyule, Whittlesea and Darebin, each and every one of those municipalities has seen a

reduction in the number of front-line police under this government, and there has been an increase in crime in each of those three municipalities under this government.

The minister, who so objected to being reminded of his cuts to drug education in schools, also needs to be reminded that the Mornington Peninsula area, for his information, has lost 42 police over the term of his government and that has resulted in the number of offences increasing by more than 8 per cent. The very clear message here is: if you do not invest in education and police and if you pull those resources out, you will have an increase in the rate of crime. This is something the other side of the house just does not get. They are into slogans and short-term easy fixes instead of doing the hard work and investing in the policies that actually reduce crime.

One of the earlier speakers in this debate today spoke about the importance of TAFE in giving young people training opportunities to enable them to get jobs and in some cases go on to other training or educational opportunities. If you cut \$300 million a year out of TAFE, you will make it much harder for people to get jobs. With high unemployment people lose hope, and this leads to an increase in crime statistics. Cutting funding from education and TAFE, as this government has done, will result in increased crime. We have seen that happen over the term of this government. We have seen police taken out of local communities and, as a consequence, we have seen crime rise.

It is no wonder that members on the other side of the house do not want to participate in the debate. It is no wonder that they have run scared from this debate. They know that when they are put to the acid test of a careful and considered debate, when we put the blowtorch to them on these failed policies and on their cuts, they do not have the arguments to win the debate. They do not have the ability to hold the debate.

**Mr Noonan** — They are not even here.

**Mr BROOKS** — As I said before, and as the shadow minister for police reminds us, there are only four government members in the house at the moment. They care so much about crime and about this legislation getting through the house that they have vacated the space. It is symbolic of the week that government members have had in this place, when they have been shown to be a shambles and a rabble. They are not here to participate in this debate.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr BROOKS** — There are some interjections coming from the other side of the house, and I would welcome those people standing up at the end of my contribution and joining the debate. But I do not think we will see that.

Acting Speaker, I have here the crime statistics and police figures showing the damage that has been done and the increases in offences across Victoria. I seek leave to have these tabled for the benefit of members opposite.

**Leave refused.**

**Mr BROOKS** — It does not surprise me that the government does not want to see the statistics, because they tell a tale of a government that says one thing and does completely the opposite. I will not rest until every single person in my community knows about the fraudulent way this government has come to power on a promise of being tough on crime and then instituted policies and withdrawn funding from services so that we have actually had an increase in the number of offences in my community and a reduction in the number of police. That is a broken promise. This government has broken trust in this policy area with the people in my electorate.

**An honourable member** — It is a breach of trust.

**Mr BROOKS** — Exactly. It is a breach of the trust of the good people of Bundoora, who would expect much better.

The government has further squibbed this debate by indicating that this bill will not come into effect until 2015, well after the state election. We know why that is. It does not want crime statistics out ahead of the state election because they will expose this government's failed policies. They will expose this government for the fraud that it is when it comes to being tough on crime, because it has failed to acknowledge that to be tough on crime you need to be tough on the causes of crime.

**Mr TREZISE** (Geelong) — I am happy to rise to note that the opposition is not opposing the Crime Statistics Bill 2014. However, as the member for Bundoora has just pointed out — and he is a person who always contributes effectively in this house — while we are not opposing the bill, if we look at those on the other side of the house it seems that the government is not supporting it. Far from it. There are three members of the government in the house while we are talking about a bill that is important to the people of Victoria.

Issues such as crime and police numbers are important to my electorate of Geelong. I would have thought that members such as the member for South Barwon, who knows the importance of police numbers in Geelong, would be in the chamber, but there are three members of the government in the chamber debating this important bill. After three or four years of promises the government is now establishing a Crime Statistics Agency. We have before us tonight a bill that will finally see the employment of a chief statistician, the Chief Commissioner of Police providing law enforcement data to the chief statistician, the publication of crime statistics et cetera.

When it comes to crime in Geelong I have major concerns about what we have seen in the last three and half years under this government. Only a month ago I attended an extraordinary meeting of police at Johnstone Park. I say 'extraordinary' because it is very unusual for police members to hold a meeting of their association in a public space. I attended that meeting along with probably 200 or 300 other local people, and we heard very concerning figures in relation to police numbers in Geelong. Figures were quoted there — not by myself, not by other politicians, but by police members themselves and the Police Association — that in 2011 there were approximately 110 police in Geelong and today there are 84. If my maths is right, we have seen a reduction of police in Geelong by nearly 30 in that time. Police numbers have dwindled by something like 25 per cent over the last three years.

I hark back to 2010 in the lead-up to the last election when the then Leader of the Opposition, the member for Hawthorn, came to Geelong. I recall it very clearly; the event was held in the public mall. K-Rock, a local radio station, had a public debate on police numbers and crime in Geelong. The member for Hawthorn said — I can clearly remember it, and people still quote it to me — that you would have to have your head in the sand not to see that Geelong needed an extra 70 police. The then Leader of the Opposition talked about 70 extra police in 2010, the month before the election. Fast-forward to 2014 and the Police Association meeting in Johnstone Park a month ago, where we heard that police numbers in Geelong have dwindled from 110 to 84. When we talk about crime statistics in this house, I can assure members that the people of Geelong will not be hoodwinked. They will not have the wool pulled over their eyes in November. They will know well and truly that this government has failed to deliver on one of its key promises at the last election, and that was to increase police numbers in Geelong. In fact the government has reduced that number from 110 to 84, according to the Geelong police themselves.

We have some important issues in Geelong. I have two daughters. They are in their early 20s, and I know that they go out on a Saturday night. Once in a while I go and pick them up from a nightclub. I know that there have been major concerns over the years with regard to violence on our streets, especially on weekends. I have to say — and I genuinely say this — that under the former government we worked with the police, we worked with the nightclub association in Geelong, we worked with the City of Greater Geelong, we worked with the taxi industry in Geelong and we worked with other stakeholders to do our best to ensure that crime and violence on Geelong streets was reduced, especially on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights. The former government genuinely worked hand in hand with stakeholders to do something effective about violence on Geelong streets, especially on a weekend, when young people are vulnerable. Fast-forward to 2014. What has this government done? Its contribution to resolving the problem of crime in Geelong has been to reduce those police numbers.

As the member for Bundoora alluded to in his contribution, people in Geelong and other regional and country areas have expressed concern about the increased use of the drug ice and the violence that has been connected to that particular substance. It is important in regional areas and in small country towns throughout Victoria that we — not just the government but all of us as representatives in the Parliament — do something constructive to ensure that the scourge of that drug is effectively addressed. I say again that reducing the number of our crime fighters — by reducing police numbers in regional areas like Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo and smaller country areas — allows issues such as ice to become rampant throughout country Victoria. That is not to point the finger directly at the government, because there are other issues that come into play, but it is important that we have a strong police presence in regional centres like Geelong and in other country areas. We do not see that at the present time.

This is an important bill before us today. I am disappointed that we only have two or three members of the government in the house at the present time. Having mentioned the issues I am concerned with, I wish the legislation a speedy passage through the house. However, I also want to re-emphasise that it is important that as a Parliament we do what we can to fight those issues of crime in regional and country areas. I would like to ensure that this Parliament and this government — especially this government — ensure that we have adequate police numbers in regional areas such as Geelong. The reduction in the number of police from 110 to 84 is just wrong. It is a

disgrace. I call on the government to do something about those police numbers in my electorate of Geelong.

**Mr BATTIN** (Gembrook) — It gives me great pleasure to rise and support the Crime Statistics Bill 2014. It is a very interesting debate. I could talk about a few things that have been brought up by those on the other side. I am not sure if those opposite are thinking back far enough. I was in the police force from 2000 to 2007, and I recall many times waking up on a Sunday morning and seeing on the front page of the *Sunday Herald Sun* that another person had been assaulted, another person was in hospital or another person was stabbed. Nearly every Friday and Saturday night another person was in hospital following an assault that had happened on Chapel Street, King Street or on one of the other streets in the city area. I have to say that I have seen a lot less of those front pages of the *Herald Sun* in the last three years.

**Ms Green** — You should have stayed in the police force.

**Mr BATTIN** — The member for Yan Yean says that I should have stayed in the police force. Whilst I was in the police force I worked specifically in liquor licensing to ensure that we could get the people and work with those community groups and also work with the licensed venues to put the best practices in place. At that time, working on the street, we had to make those decisions by ourselves because we did not have a government that supported us.

Whilst we were out on the streets of Prahran, working in liquor licensing, we had a government that totally ignored the liquor licensing industry and totally ignored the violence on the streets that was there at the time. It took this government to come in to make changes, to put in reviews and to introduce bills to change the sentencing and to increase the penalties on crime to make people responsible for what they do. Alcohol is not responsible for assaults on the streets; it is the person who is responsible. We want to make sure that the individual is held accountable for that.

Members opposite have talked about crime statistics during the debate. It is very difficult to get an actual analysis of crime statistics. It was only in October 2010 when there were allegations out there in relation to those crime statistics. Questions were asked of the former government about them. How many were real? Where did they come from? Were they made up? It is really difficult for the community to trust the crime statistics.

The other issue raised was police numbers on our streets. Since coming to government the coalition has put more than 1500 extra police on the streets in Victoria, and it will deliver on its commitment of 1700 extra police on the roads and streets in Victoria. That is absolutely outstanding. It is what Victoria Police called for, it is what the community called for and it is what the coalition government will deliver. On top of that, we are delivering 940 protective services officers (PSOs) because another hot spot for crime is our public transport. People did not feel safe on our public transport in Victoria. We only need to look at surveys coming through now from the Minister for Public Transport. The perceptions of safety on our public transport system have improved so much. Why is that? It is because when people get off a train now between 6.00 p.m. and the last train at night we now have PSOs at most of our railway stations across metropolitan Victoria.

I note that the Minister for Public Transport is in the chamber, along with a few other members on this side of the house. I note that the member for Geelong said before that we only had two or three of us on this side of the house. He could not even count to four. He made that error twice, yet he wants to get up and talk about statistics being right or wrong. You have to work it out. There are four on this side. He has to get that right before he can worry about statistics!

The perception of public safety is one of the most important things. When I was first elected I had the pleasure of being on the former Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee, and one of the recommendations that came through in relation to this was the appointment of a crime statistician. That was based on a New South Wales model. It is an outstanding model, and that is what we are basing ours on. We can gather those statistics. It will not be the police doing it, or the government doing it, but it will be an independent person. Therefore we are going to have crime statistics in the future that the community can rely on to look at and actually see where the crimes are happening and what is happening. More importantly the police can then use those statistics in their analysis so they can work out where the best place is to put police.

The location of police in this state is not a decision that needs to be made by government; it is operational. We are exceptionally lucky in Victoria to have a Chief Commissioner of Police like Ken Lay. Ken is one of the most community-minded chief commissioners we have had in this state for a long time. He not only thinks about community activity — I know he is involved with the Special Olympics and other community groups

to keep that community presence with Victoria Police — but he understands that Victoria Police must also have a business model. It must have a model that is sustainable, and he knows that just because we did something one way forever does not mean we need to do it like that in the future. He has to look at the best ways he can work his way forward and the best ways he can get into some of these crime groups and prevent crime in the future. That is one of Victoria Police's key roles. It must not only detect crime now, but it must also try to work on positions to prevent crime in the future.

The Crime Statistics Bill 2014 will give the chief commissioner of today and chief commissioners in the future crime statistics data that is accurate and independently assessed so that they can work within the police department to allocate police resources where they are most required. As we have said, having a police officer on the street and in a uniform is a fantastic preventive measure. To have a police officer on the corner is a fantastic preventive measure. However, I do not know whether there are better models out there.

Does Ken Lay have a model that may be better for the future? I think the reason the blue paper recently came out is that it needs to be discussed. If there is a model out there that is better, a model that will prevent crime in the future, it needs to be discussed. There needs to be an opportunity for people to get out there and talk about it to make sure that Victoria Police has the best model going forward — the best model being one that takes into consideration community safety as its most important aspect. That means all of the elements within community safety, whether it be at the police station, in the home or at the licensed venues as we discussed before.

We will talk about police stations; I know the member for Albert Park spoke about police stations. We are very proud, particularly in the Gembrook electorate, to have opened up the Emerald police station. The Emerald police station is a station that is built for the future. It has not just been built for now; it has been built for the future growth throughout the area. The Pakenham police station is absolutely fantastic, and the growth in the number of police on the street and the extra vans on the road have been absolutely brilliant for that community, and I know it is very much supported. Crime prevention throughout the area and the youth resource officers working down there —

**Mr Kotsiras** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Angus)** — Order!  
The member for Bulleen!

**Mr BATTIN** — As I was saying, the youth resource officers give us an opportunity not only to work directly with the youth — obviously sometimes after they have committed a crime — but to work with their families as well to put preventatives in place for the future.

During the crime prevention committee's investigation we looked specifically at areas relating to crime statistics and how they are used in different states. In New South Wales one of the assistant commissioners — I cannot recall the name — spoke to the committee specifically about the importance of having crime statistics that are independently assessed and analysed so that they have the right staff in the right areas when they apply that data to their divisions. There is nothing worse than having a lot of staff in the area of fraud, say, if all of a sudden you have an increase in assaults. It is about putting the right people in the right place at the right time.

It is also about making sure those people have the right skills for those particular crimes. Looking at something like family violence, when you come out of the academy you have minimal training — you have 20 weeks of training at the academy — so it is very important that by the time you get out on the road you have had the best training possible to analyse these situations. When a young police recruit first goes into a family violence situation, they are not going in as a counsellor. However, by having crime statistics available to understand where the family violence is increasing, the management of Victoria Police has the opportunity to ensure that the staff in those areas receive the correct training. In Casey, for example, where there is a high rate of family violence, it will give the opportunity for management to plan for the future and to have the correct training and resources available as they see that increase in family violence.

I support this bill. I look forward to its speedy passage and the support it will give Victoria Police to ensure that we have a business model and a community model paramount to Victoria's future.

**Ms GREEN (Yan Yean)** — It gives me great pleasure to join the debate on the Crime Statistics Bill 2014, because we on this side of the house take crime and the causes of crime very seriously. We also take seriously the most recent statistics that have been published and the statistics published every year on this government's watch, which tell a very sorry tale about crime in this state. Regrettably crime has risen every year on this government's watch. After the release of

freedom of information figures in recent months we saw that all 56 police service areas in this state have seen a reduction in police, so if ever there was a need for some independence in relation to crime statistics, it is now with this bill before the house.

The bill provides for the employment of a chief statistician, for law enforcement data to be provided to the chief statistician by the Chief Commissioner of Police and for the publication of crime stats and other matters, but what it does not do is provide an audit function. This is really important as it is something the Ombudsman recommended in 2011 with the recommendation of the establishment of the Crime Statistics Agency, but it has taken another three years for the government to take crime seriously.

I am glad the member for Gembrook spoke before me, because he seems to have not received the memo from the government that it is not taking crime or misdemeanours seriously this week. He joined the debate, and he should be commended for joining with the many members of the opposition who have spoken on this bill. As a reason for the requirement of an audit function, police are currently no longer reporting on petrol drive-offs. This has an impact on larger businesses but also on the hardworking small business people who struggle in petrol retail. There are 5000 petrol drive-offs a year, yet the police are no longer investigating them. There is a need to investigate, and it should be within the power of the chief statistician to do so.

I want to report on the crime statistics in my community. When we left office in 2010 there were just short of 62 police officers in Nillumbik. As of this year there are only 50, an almost 20 per cent reduction. In the police service area of Mitchell there has been a 14 per cent reduction in police. In the city of Whittlesea we have had a 5.87 per cent reduction, which is a reduction of more than seven police officers in the face of huge population growth.

As I have said many times in this place, the postcode for Mernda and Doreen in Whittlesea, where I live, is as large as Shepparton. It is the fastest growing postcode in the state, and this minister will not build a police station there. He will not even speak in the area or so much as visit, despite it being in the top five areas for burglary in the state. I commend my colleague sitting next to me, the member for Williamstown and shadow minister for police, and his predecessor in that role, the member for Bendigo East, for visiting the area and talking to members of the community of Whittlesea, who are concerned about not having adequate policing and police hours. However, with the

release of the blue paper, they are worried about the closure of that police station, and the government will not rule it out. In Mernda we still do not have a police station. Tom Joseph and those on his Facebook page are pushing really hard, but the minister is not listening.

**Business interrupted under sessional orders.**

## ADJOURNMENT

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

**Mr Carbines** — On a point of order, Speaker, I draw your attention to the sessional orders adopted by this chamber that require ministers to provide a response to adjournment debate matters within 30 days. On 13 March 2014 I raised an urgent matter for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. The action I sought was for the minister to immediately provide the four extra peak services on the Hurstbridge line that were promised by the government after the Eltham stabling yard project was completed in 2013. I have raised this matter as a point of order in the adjournment debates of the past two sitting weeks, seeking assistance to get a response under the sessional orders of this house. As I have not yet received a response from the minister, I ask that you write to him to seek an explanation for this delay, which has now stretched out to three months, and a response to my adjournment matter.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I will write to the minister.

**Mr Carbines** — On a further point of order, Speaker, I again draw your attention to the sessional orders adopted by this chamber requiring ministers to provide a response to adjournment debate matters within 30 days. I note that on 1 April 2014 I raised a matter for the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. The action I sought was for the minister to immediately fund the reopening of the Heidelberg West police station in Altona Street and to staff it appropriately to keep my community safe. As I have not yet received a response from the minister, I ask that you write to him to seek an explanation for this delay in responding to my adjournment matter.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I will write to the minister.

## Wales Street Primary School

**Ms RICHARDSON** (Northcote) — The matter I raise is for the Minister for Education. It concerns

Wales Street Primary School in my community and the loss of its principal, Chris Sexton. The action I seek is Chris Sexton's immediate return.

Five months ago Chris Sexton was removed without notice following renovations at the school. Parents, teachers and the wider community, including me, were very concerned to learn of the possible breaches of safety standards which may have led to our kids at the school being exposed to asbestos during the renovations. The more I learn about this issue, however, the more I form the view that holding the principal, whose primary role is that of educator — he is not a renovator, a construction worker or a builder — wholly and apparently solely responsible for what is going on here, if that is what is happening, is simply outrageous. Moreover, the incident happened over five months ago. I have met with Philip Papas, who is an excellent school council president, and with other school council representatives, all of whom are very concerned about what has gone on at the school and about the fact that we are still waiting for action to be taken.

The minister's office has been very helpful. Darren Brown, the chief of staff, has been very informative and helpful. He organised for representatives of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to meet with the school council to talk about this issue directly. The school council members were concerned, however, that that meeting had to be held in secret and that they could not talk about it with the wider school community. The council decided to inform the education department that it would be having these discussions in a fulsome way. As a consequence, the meeting was cancelled. We are left back where we started: without a school principal and without any understanding of the real reasons this has happened or why we are not getting on with the job of providing a leader at Wales Street Primary School.

We all want to know the answer to the question of who is ultimately responsible for removing asbestos at schools. I do not believe responsibility lies only with the principal; I think it also lies with the education department. We all want to see this issue dealt with properly, promptly and in a way that keeps our kids safe every single step of the way.

Finally, I want to make the obvious point that clearly in this case natural justice has been denied to the principal. We know that schoolkids rely on having strong leadership at school, particularly this school, yet the school has not had a principal in place for five months. This situation needs to be turned around as a matter of urgency. I seek the minister's urgent response in respect of my concerns.

## Planning zone reform

**Mr NEWTON-BROWN** (Pahran) — My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Planning. The action I seek is that he ensure that the views of residents in South Yarra are properly considered prior to new planning zones being implemented. I start by commending the Minister for Planning. The proposed new zones are the biggest change in planning history and are aimed at protecting our heritage neighbourhoods in particular. All too often councils blame the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) or the government for inappropriate development. VCAT applies the local planning policies, and with these new zones the minister is giving councils the tools to say, 'Enough is enough'. He is giving them the tools to, in effect, preclude appropriate areas from intense development. Most councils have jumped at this opportunity.

Inexplicably, however, the first cut of the Melbourne City Council zones draft had not one precinct — not one street, not one house — as proposed to be in the neighbourhood residential zone, which is the toughest zone and limits development to no more than two storeys. As a result of an uprising by residents, particularly in my patch in South Yarra, the Melbourne City Council officers turned their minds to what areas may be appropriate for protection by the neighbourhood residential zone. In the inner ring of suburbs that are included in the city of Melbourne there are the historic areas of North Melbourne, Carlton, East Melbourne and South Yarra and plenty of precincts where there are those fine-grain patterns of workers cottages and terrace houses.

It was only on the second cut that the Melbourne City Council officers set out a new set of zones that included the neighbourhood residential zone. To their credit, the second cut has included areas for protection in the neighbourhood residential zone, and this information was provided to residents late in May. This second cut, however, was rubber-stamped by council early in June without any consideration being given to comments from the community. There were glaring omissions and errors in the second cut. There was no opportunity for officers to consider the views of residents, because only eight days after that second cut was released the final version was rubber-stamped by council.

I attended the meeting, and prior to the meeting I walked every street in my patch in South Yarra and I certainly noticed some omissions in terms of Leopold Street and Mason Street. Many other locals also had concerns about other areas within South Yarra, so it was an outrageous snub to people in this community —

my community — that their views were not considered. I call on the minister to find some mechanism whereby the views of my community can be properly considered prior to any final decision being made as to the new zones within South Yarra.

### Northern Hospital

**Ms D'AMBROSIO** (Mill Park) — The action I seek is for the Minister for Health to guarantee that the 20 subacute beds at the Northern Hospital targeted for closure from 1 July will be supported to continue beyond that date by either his government or the federal government. I say this because it has come to light and been confirmed by the chief executive officer of the Northern Hospital that my community will lose 20 subacute beds from that hospital from 1 July this year.

This is a critical issue for a number of reasons. One important reason is that the previous federal government recognised and acknowledged the need for additional support for the health services that are provided, certainly in Victoria, and assisted in the provision and funding of more than 300 additional subacute beds for Victoria, 20 of which were earmarked for and delivered to the Northern Hospital. That is an important acknowledgement of a partnership that is vital for a lot of the services that are fundamental to good living and good health for members of our community.

The other very important issue is the fact that the Northern Hospital services the city of Whittlesea catchment area in the outer north, which continues to be one of the fastest growing communities not just in Victoria but nationally. Population growth is moving very quickly, yet infrastructure and services continue to lag behind. That is not a problem unique to any particular government, state or federal, but it is important that governments acknowledge the need to not just keep up with growth but try to get ahead of the game. The reality is that the provision of health services is significantly insufficient, especially in regard to health care and hospital beds in the electorate of Mill Park and surrounds.

I ask the minister to consider this problem seriously and make some statements that will allay the concerns of people in my community. I ask that he prioritise those communities and their health needs as there is anxiety right across Victoria because of cuts to subacute hospital beds. Those communities need to feel that this government is on their side. Therefore I hope that the Minister for Health will come on board and deliver that commitment.

### Travel Compensation Fund

**Mr McINTOSH** (Kew) — I have a matter for the attention of the Minister for Consumer Affairs. The matter I wish to raise relates to the Travel Compensation Fund (TCF). The action I seek is for the minister meet with my travel agent constituents and explain to them why the government is terminating the Travel Compensation Fund, which will be wound up on 30 June this year.

The deregulation of the travel industry arose out of a Council of Australian Governments meeting in 2012. Unfortunately some key aspects of the information the proposed changes are based on are now either outdated or inaccurate. One of the reasons for arguing that we no longer need the same prudential arrangements is that credit card users can get compensation through chargebacks. But over the last two years the use of credit cards for travel purchases has declined, owing to the capping of loyalty scheme points and the increase in merchant surcharge fees.

Deregulation involves the termination of the Travel Compensation Fund, which has operated since 1986 and played a vital role in prudential oversight and regulation of travel agents, compensating consumers where agents have failed to provide services already paid for. One of the statements used to justify the termination of the TCF is that its running costs are higher than the amount it pays out in compensation. This may have been true in one or two years, but it certainly is not the rule.

Around 60 per cent of the travel industry is controlled by a couple of large companies. In Victoria there are 1300 licensed agents, two-thirds of which belong to either Flight Centre or helloworld. There are some 650 independent agents. Under the TCF all travel agents, big and small, have a level playing field. They pay around \$8000 to \$10000 annually, which covers them for air, land and other insolvency insurance issues. When the TCF ends, independents will have to pay around \$35 000 for the same insurance as there is one monopoly insurer in Australia that will provide that cover. The large players will insure themselves, leaving the minnows in the industry to bear the burden of these insurance premiums.

Regrettably, and most importantly, the travel industry is already very competitive. The margins are very small as there is no discounting by airlines to agents and the larger companies tend to just cover their costs. Where the large companies can move around money for their own use from their other assets, the small independents will have to take out very expensive travel insurance or

go under. Therefore I ask the minister to meet with my travel agent constituents and explain to them why the government is terminating the Travel Compensation Fund.

### **Qube Ports & Bulk**

**Ms CAMPBELL** (Pascoe Vale) — I raise a matter for the Assistant Treasurer, who is responsible for WorkSafe Victoria. The action I seek is that he carefully examine the WorkSafe response to failures by Qube stevedoring to protect its workers safety.

In June 2012 employees of Qube stevedoring unloaded steel on the midnight shift from the ship *Donaugracht*. When they awoke later that day they were shocked to discover that their bed sheets were covered in a powdery black substance. Employees on the following early-morning shift were also covered with the same substance and raised the alarm. The workers were told by the company's safety manager to keep working and that the substance was harmless. This substance was later found to be lead, which is toxic even in small quantities if ingested or inhaled. I have been advised that Qube management was aware that employees were being exposed to that lead concentrate.

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority inspector was called in as shocked employees learnt of their exposure. The inspector met with workers and told them he would be issuing Qube with a notice. WorkSafe Victoria was also informed. The employees were further alarmed to find that the crew members of the ship were instructed by the captain to clean up the mess using blower instruments to expel the lead concentrate over the side of the ship and into our bay.

Last week, some two years after the original offence, WorkSafe Victoria wrote to the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) and advised that it would not take any action against Qube. It provided no grounds for this astounding decision. The employees are disgusted that the very organisation meant to protect them is ignoring this serious safety breach. WorkSafe Victoria was criticised by the Chief Judge of the County Court in November last year for challenging the compensation claims of workers. In December it was revealed that WorkSafe is paying huge bonuses to law firms to minimise payouts to victims.

In this budget the government has taken \$600 million from WorkSafe over four years. Workers in the state of Victoria are paying the price for the failure of this government to address their occupational health and safety in a serious manner. The stevedoring industry has an appalling safety record. Just last month we learnt

the sad story of a 42-year-old father of three who was crushed to death on Melbourne's wharves. It is time for the safety and health of maritime workers to be taken seriously by Qube, as they have been by the marvellous man in my electorate who has consistently spoken up over safety issues in his workplace. The MUA requested that WorkSafe refer this matter to the Director of Public Prosecutions, and I am with the union on that. On behalf of my constituents and others I ask for safety.

### **Mildura electorate ministerial visit**

**Mr CRISP** (Mildura) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Regional and Rural Development. The action I seek is for the minister to visit Mildura. Mildura has led regional Victoria in Regional Growth Fund projects, with over \$35 million leveraging projects worth in excess of \$220 million and supporting over 200 jobs in the Mildura region.

There are a number of notable projects. The Olam Orchards Australia almond project has been supported by the Regional Growth Fund, as has Australian Tartaric Products. With Regional Growth Fund and commonwealth support, that business recently invested many millions of dollars in a cogeneration project, in which it burns its waste product once the tartaric acid has been removed to create steam both as a source of heat and to run an organic Rankine cycle turbine for electricity. It is a very interesting place to visit. Typical of these projects, Australian Tartaric Products has added six jobs. These jobs are very important to rural and regional Victoria.

Similarly, we have the Murray Basin rail project, which is a once-in-a-generation standardisation of railway lines in the north-west of the state. I am sure that many people would be anxious to meet with the minister to discuss that project. The project's business plan is being prepared, and there are a number of options as to how this program can be delivered. I am sure there will be considerable interest amongst the people of Mildura, in particular from businesses, to get an update from the minister about how this is progressing.

Of course another great project for Mildura is the Mildura riverfront. I am sure the Mildura Rural City Council would like to show the minister the progress on this huge opportunity for Mildura. For too long our city has been divided by a railway line and a significant embankment between the beautiful Murray River and our CBD. They are remarkably close together yet so far apart. This project has been supported by the government over the four years of its term, and I look forward to the minister seeing the progress for himself

and discussing future aspects of the project with the community. I look forward to his visit.

### **Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network**

**Mr EREN** (Lara) — I wish to raise an urgent matter for the attention of the Minister for Education. The action I seek from the minister is that he ensure that the educational needs of the Geelong community are met and in particular that the funding of the Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network is maintained. The network is a partnership organisation committed to improving the education, training and employment opportunities for young people between the ages of 10 and 19. It includes schools, businesses and community organisations in its scope.

Under the state and federal Labor governments the network remained well funded, with thousands of dollars being invested in it. Between 2001 and 2009, 100 per cent of the program's funding came from the state Labor government. The program was considered so important and so instrumental to the Geelong region that the federal government matched that funding. Now this effective, well-organised and extremely beneficial program has seen a severe cut to its funding. Under the Abbott government the network will lose all federal funding after December 2014. On the current funding projections the program is sure to close.

The Victorian coalition government is very good at cutting back on services, and it seems the Abbott government is taking a page out of its book. The state government has put forward the bare minimum amount of money, providing less than half of what the network needs. I have met with representatives of this very important organisation, who are rightfully concerned. They have informed me that it has been hard enough running the organisation on such limited funds, let alone on any less. There is no excuse the minister could provide to justify such drastic cuts to such a valuable organisation. The benefits of this organisation are many and varied. When the organisation assists a single person, it provides empowerment for a whole community.

When Labor funded the network, it flourished. We mobilised the youth of the community to make better choices, we enabled them to plan for their future and we supported the network with very healthy investments. It is a shame that this same support, enthusiasm and encouragement cannot be attributed to the current government. As the minister is well aware, Geelong faces challenges with regard to its jobs market. It is imperative that this government ensure that

Geelong is well prepared for the future, and that will only happen with investment in our youth. These young individuals are the future of our employment market. If the program were to cease, the government would need to find a substitute program as its replacement.

Quite frankly, with the way the current government has responded to other educational facilities, the prospects for this organisation do not look bright at all. To cut the funding to such a monumental and important program would be a disastrous mistake. Is it not in the best interests of the government to provide for the future of Geelong, to invest in the future of our young Victorians, to look after Victoria and especially to address the concerns of regional constituents, who are doing it tough at the moment in relation to employment? Again, the action I seek from the minister is to guarantee the future funding and support of the Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network.

### **Nepean Highway, Edithvale, pedestrian safety**

**Ms WREFORD** (Mordialloc) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Roads. The action I seek is for the minister to visit Edithvale to take a look at the dangerous way the pedestrian rail crossing intersects with the Nepean Highway with a view to fixing the problem. Since the redistribution of electoral boundaries was drafted, I have spent a lot of time listening to and working with people in new parts of my electorate, such as Edithvale. The member for Carrum has done a fantastic job of catching up on the things Labor failed to do in its 11 wasted years; however, no human can catch up on everything in just four years, so there is plenty to do.

One of the most talked about issues on the streets of Edithvale is the way the pedestrian rail crossing intersects with the Nepean Highway. Like many suburbs in my electorate, Edithvale is split by the Frankston rail line. On one side is the beach, shopping strip and the Nepean Highway, and on the other is most of the suburb's housing. In order to walk from their homes to the shops people have to cross the rail line. The only two crossings are at Edithvale Road and at the pedestrian crossing near Denman Avenue. Lochiel Avenue is not so close to the shops. The crossing near Denman Avenue is a stand-alone pedestrian crossing.

Once people cross the train line, they hit a barrier and have to go left or right to the edge of the busy Nepean Highway. It is approximately 300 metres to the nearest designated crossing. Mind you, there is no footpath, so people have to walk around the cars parked near the station. People are forced to cross the busy Nepean

Highway there and then. It is hard enough for a fit young person to find a safe break in the traffic to get across, but we have an increasing number of elderly people, and members can imagine what it is like doing it with a walker; it is just too risky. At the very least, signalised pedestrian crossings need to be installed.

In line with the Victorian road safety strategy, it would be worth an investigation of whether the shopping strip requires a change of speed limit. The whole of the strip is currently a 60-kilometre-an-hour zone. In comparison, Chelsea, the next suburb along, has a 40-kilometre-an-hour zone in its shopping strip. It is true that Edithvale is smaller than Chelsea and less active at night, but at this point in time it has a 500-metre to 600-metre shopping strip with just one designated crossing. My constituents and I are hoping for two. There is parking on the railway side of the highway, primarily for people using the station, but shoppers use it too and then cross the Nepean Highway. I hope the minister can join me to visit the Edithvale shopping strip and look at the traffic conditions, particularly around the crossing near the Denman Avenue intersection. I look forward to a positive response.

### **Rosanna Primary School**

**Mr CARBINES** (Ivanhoe) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education. The action I seek is for the minister to direct his Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to remove the old, empty, redundant and dilapidated classroom building at Rosanna Primary School which the school council has determined is unsafe for students. I have previously raised this matter with the regional office of the department — this was back in 2011 and in 2012, with regional director Wayne Craig — only to be told that the department did not have the funds available to pay for the demolition of this no-longer-used classroom building.

I will read from a letter, dated 3 June, from Rosanna Primary School council president Marie Alafaci:

Our school was very grateful to receive a new, six-classroom building from the former federal government as part of the BER program. This resource has been put to good use, serving the needs of our students in the middle and upper school — grades 3 to 6.

These classrooms were built on our asphalt oval, a significant play space for our children, on the understanding that the building it was replacing would be removed and the area made into play space.

...

The old building is quite unsafe for the students as the floors slope badly and the windows and doors don't open and close properly. It is being used for storage, but the school would like to return it to play area as was part of the initial plan.

Further, we are concerned that if it is left uninhabited for much longer ... it will be a magnet for vandals who may then damage the rest of the school as well.

Council has investigated the cost of removing the old, derelict building and making good the area, but this is beyond what we can afford as a school. We have had estimates of up to \$100 000 to bring the area back into use.

We have plans to raise local funds to re-establish the area for a number of uses, but to simply demolish the building is out of our reach financially.

The school council is obviously keen to engage both me and the government in seeking to have those facilities removed to improve the other facilities for children and for future generations of children at Rosanna Primary.

Rosanna Primary is a great school and, as Rosanna residents, my wife and I know it is one of the schools of choice for local families. Our daughter Ava is a likely future student, as Rosanna Primary is our closest local school. You can get a great education at the school, and we have great facilities there to match. Increasing enrolments, however, further highlight the critical need to maximise play space for student wellbeing. Given the education department has been a multibillion-dollar department these past few years, we hope there is an opportunity to pursue the school's request to remove these unsafe and redundant buildings, which would return significant play space to the school for the future wellbeing of the students.

I encourage the minister to make inquiries into the matter. It is a longstanding issue and one I look forward to a positive response on. The school council and the assistant principal, Mr Jeff Jackson, are also keen to further discuss those matters. It is hopefully something the minister can take some action on. I look forward to a positive response on this matter on behalf of the Rosanna Primary School and that school community.

### **Ringwood Library, Learning and Cultural Centre**

**Ms RYALL** (Mitcham) — My matter is for the attention of the Minister for Local Government. My requested action is that the minister come out and visit Maroondah City Council to hear about its plans for a new library. The coalition government has provided \$900 000 to the City of Maroondah — \$400 000 through the Living Libraries Infrastructure program and \$500 000 through the Community Support Fund. Given

that level of investment, I would like the minister to come out and look at the plans — —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Ms RYALL** — Two? Absolutely. I would like the minister to look at those plans and to hear directly from the council and councillors in relation to their aspirations.

With rapid changes in technology we are seeing innovation in our libraries, and certainly the City of Maroondah has captured that innovation. It has developed designs for a very modern and innovative library precinct. The plans show the precinct will lead out to the new town square. What the council is developing is called a library, learning and cultural centre. The town square in itself is a large open area that is strategically designed as a meeting place, where there is alfresco dining and which opens onto the new Eastland development, which we are all very excited about. It will certainly be a place people can meet and socialise, whether before or after shopping, or simply to catch up.

The library, learning and cultural centre is also designed to include a performance space that opens out onto the town square, a multimedia entertainment area, an art gallery and a cafe. There will be the full array of books for borrowing, but there will also be informal reading areas, a large media and entertainment area and adaptable rooms for learning and meeting.

Maroondah City Council has worked positively and constructively in a can-do way with the Napthine government and with the company constructing the new Eastland shopping centre to set a vision and plan for Ringwood that local residents and those of surrounding communities can enjoy into the future. I look forward to hearing from the minister as to whether he can visit the city of Maroondah to look at the council's plans for the library, learning and cultural centre.

### Responses

**Mr DIXON** (Minister for Education) — The member for Northcote raised with me an issue regarding Wales Street Primary School, its principal and some asbestos issues. She has been working closely with my office on this, and I share her wish for a speedy resolution of the issue. We are working with her on this, and also obviously through the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and WorkSafe. It is important that all parties are talking, and it is most important that the school gets the

opportunity to settle down as quickly as possible. That is my aim. I am after that speedy resolution. I will continue to work with the member and everyone involved regarding this issue. We are actively doing that.

The member for Lara raised with me an issue regarding the funding of local learning and employment networks (LLENs). Most of the funding for LLENs is a federal government responsibility, and as a result of this year's federal budget that funding will not be continuing after the end of this year. The Victorian government contributes about \$2.3 million a year to LLEN funding, and I can guarantee that that funding will remain in place. Last year we took on the task of providing funding certainty to workplace learning coordinators. They are very much involved in the work of LLENs and also in our schools and education institutions. They do a very important job in coordinating workplace learning, not just on a school basis but on a regional basis — they bring that sort of regional knowledge — in working with a number of schools, training providers and workplaces. We are funding them in the amount of \$5.1 million a year, and that funding will continue so that aspect of the work will continue.

In terms of next year, I have worked with the LLENs chairs, and I met with them in anticipation of the federal budget. We are working with them and obviously with the LLENs themselves about what the transitional arrangements might be leading up to next year. It is important that those LLENs are aware of what those transitional arrangements might be well before the end of the year because it may have an effect on staffing and future funding, and I am very aware of the timing of that.

The member for Ivanhoe raised with me an issue regarding an excess classroom building at Rosanna Primary School. As a result of the Building the Education Revolution (BER) classrooms that were constructed at the school, the school now has an excess entitlement. The building that was replaced by BER classrooms is not suitable for use.

Unfortunately there are a lot of these cases. Because the BER program was not managed well there were a lot of cost overruns and schools had to cut back on what they had in their projects in relation to what was actually in the BER buildings. One of the casualties was funding for demolition works. It was one of the first things that had to be taken away so schools could actually finish building their projects, let alone make good on them and do the landscaping. Unfortunately, because the BER buildings were template designs and schools just had to take them, they were often put on the only flat bit

of land available, which was often a basketball court or a good bit of playground. Once again, because of the massive cost overruns, schools could not make good on those works.

Since coming to government we have absorbed about \$70 million in these cost overruns on the BER project. A number of demolition projects have not occurred, and for that reason some schools have excess facilities. I will look at the particular project here, but unfortunately Rosanna Primary School is one of many schools that have been landed with this issue due to the cost overruns of the BER project.

**Mr MULDER** (Minister for Public Transport) — The member for Mordialloc has raised an issue with me in relation to Edithvale. She has asked that I visit and inspect the pedestrian access point on the Nepean Highway near the Edithvale railway station. The station is a 1919 building, and it services the people in that area very well in relation to public transport.

As the member for Mordialloc would be aware, the visits I have paid to her electorate and to the member for Carrum's electorate have mostly related to the Frankston line and to all the great work the government is doing along that line. I would like to congratulate the member for Mordialloc and the member for Carrum, who is recovering at the moment. I congratulate them and thank them both for the amount of work they have done to get funding for the Frankston line and to improve public transport for their constituents.

The member for Mordialloc pointed out that she is concerned about the safety issues surrounding the pedestrian crossing on the Nepean Highway at this location. The member for Mordialloc has had representatives from VicRoads visit that location during busy periods of the day to point out to them the difficulty pedestrians have in trying to negotiate a safe passage across the road. As part of the discussions I have had with the member for Mordialloc in relation to this issue, the member has raised with me the possibilities of lowering the speed limit at that particular location and of providing an improved access point and crossing for pedestrians.

The member for Mordialloc would understand that the Victorian government, through the ministerial road safety council, has had a very strong focus on pedestrian safety. There were 553 serious injuries to pedestrians in 2013 compared to 558 in 2012. We have a number of programs across the state. One of those is the \$1 billion Safer Road Infrastructure program, which was established to allocate funding to improve infrastructure in black spot areas — that is, places at

which we understand there could be the risk of serious injury to either motorists or pedestrians. That is one avenue we could look at in terms of funding an upgrade at that particular location. There are mechanisms and means to resolve this problem, and we certainly place a very strong emphasis on providing safe pedestrian access. I will certainly look at that issue with the member for Mordialloc — the potential funding stream but also the location. I am prepared to visit the member's electorate and once again let her relay to me the problems and difficulties pedestrians have at this particular location.

In relation to speed zones, the Victorian government carried out a speed limit review over 2011–12, which attracted more than 600 submissions, and the recommendations in the report of that review are being progressively implemented. An example of that is the guidelines we now have in relation to the creation of 50-kilometre-per-hour speed zones in busy shopping centres and shopping strips. There may well be the possibility of a review of the speed limit at that location, but that it is up to VicRoads to determine, upon the development of these guidelines, whether or not it is possible to lower that speed limit.

I thank the member for Mordialloc for taking up the challenge following on from the great work carried out by the member for Carrum at that location. Under the redistribution of electoral boundaries this particular area will sit in the Mordialloc electorate. I can tell members now that the people of the Edithvale have a very active and strong representative in the member for Mordialloc, and I would be more than happy to visit that location with her.

**Mr BULL** (Minister for Local Government) — I thank the member for Mitcham for her invitation to head out and visit the Maroondah City Council to hear about its plans for the development of the Ringwood library, learning and cultural centre at the Eastland shopping centre. The member has outlined a very exciting and innovative project. As she pointed out, the project has been strongly supported by the Victorian coalition government, which has provided \$900 000 in funding, \$400 000 of which has been allocated through our very popular Living Libraries Infrastructure program, with the remaining \$500 000 having been provided through our Community Support Fund.

I am well aware that the member for Mitcham, along with the member for Warrandyte, has been a strong supporter of this project. It will be a state-of-the-art facility of great benefit to all community members. I commend the member on her commitment to the project, and I look forward to taking up her invitation

and heading out to visit the council. Perhaps if we have time, we can have a look at the site to see where this fantastic facility will prevail for the benefit of the wider community in that area.

**Ms ASHER** (Minister for Innovation) — The member for Prahran raised a matter for the Minister for Planning regarding South Yarra residents and the member's desire to have residents' views about new planning zones considered. I will pass that matter on to the Minister for Planning.

The member for Mill Park raised a matter for the Minister for Health in relation to subacute beds at Northern Hospital. I note the member is no longer in the chamber, but nevertheless I will pass that matter on to the Minister for Health.

The member for Kew raised a matter for the Minister for Consumer Affairs and invited her to meet with travel agents in his electorate in relation to the Travel Compensation Fund. I will pass that matter on to the Minister for Consumer Affairs.

The member for Pascoe Vale raised a matter for the Assistant Treasurer. Again I note the member for Pascoe Vale is no longer in the chamber. She raised the issue of a WorkSafe Victoria response to an alleged incident at Qube stevedoring. I will pass that matter on to the Assistant Treasurer, who has responsibility for WorkSafe.

The member for Mildura raised a matter for the Deputy Premier, who is also the Minister for Regional and Rural Development, and issued an invitation for him to visit Mildura. I will pass that matter on to the Minister for Regional and Rural Development. I am very familiar with the Mildura riverfront project. There are a range of projects being funded out of the Regional Growth Fund and a lot of exciting opportunities in Mildura. I am sure the Deputy Premier will say yes to the request from the member for Mildura.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The house is adjourned until the next day of sitting.

**House adjourned 4.42 p.m. until Tuesday, 24 June.**