

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT  
FIRST SESSION**

**Thursday, 19 March 2015**

**(Extract from book 4)**

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**Deputy Speaker:**

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Mr Thompson, Ms Thomson, Ms Ward and Mr Watt.

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

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The Hon. M. J. GUY

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

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**Leader of The Nationals:**

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Ms S. RYAN

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

*Parliamentary Services* — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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**FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION**

<b>Member</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Party</b>
Allan, Ms Jacinta Marie	Bendigo East	ALP	McLeish, Ms Lucinda Gaye	Eildon	LP
Andrews, Mr Daniel Michael	Mulgrave	ALP	Merlino, Mr James Anthony	Monbulk	ALP
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Bull, Mr Timothy Owen	Gippsland East	Nats	O'Brien, Mr Daniel David <sup>2</sup>	Gippsland South	Nats
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McCurdy, Mr Timothy Logan	Ovens Valley	Nats	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP
McGuire, Mr Frank	Broadmeadows	ALP			

<sup>1</sup> Resigned 2 February 2015

<sup>2</sup> Elected 14 March 2015

**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**

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

### **Joint committees**

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

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



# CONTENTS

## THURSDAY, 19 MARCH 2015

SWEARING IN OF MEMBERS	
<i>Member for Gippsland South</i> .....	779
DOCUMENTS .....	779
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	
<i>Adjournment</i> .....	779
<i>Division lists</i> .....	794
MEMBERS STATEMENTS	
<i>Mooroolbark ambulance station</i> .....	779
<i>Mooroolbark railway station</i> .....	779
<i>Bellarine Agricultural Show</i> .....	779
<i>Barwon Heads Festival of the Sea</i> .....	780
<i>Public holidays</i> .....	780
<i>Ambulance services</i> .....	780
<i>Nagambie ambulance services</i> .....	781
<i>Highlands Community Residents Group</i> .....	781
<i>YFest</i> .....	781
<i>National Gem and Mineral Show</i> .....	781
<i>Interstate Dressage Festival</i> .....	781
<i>Horsham Easter egg hunt</i> .....	781
<i>Lowan electorate markets</i> .....	782
<i>Omar Jabir Omar</i> .....	782
<i>SheppARTon Festival</i> .....	782
<i>Shepparton Art Museum</i> .....	782
<i>Melbourne South Eastern Region Chinese</i>	
<i>Friendship Centre of Victoria</i> .....	782
<i>Rosie Batty</i> .....	783
<i>French Island ferry services</i> .....	783
<i>Carl Cowie</i> .....	783
<i>100 Poppies project</i> .....	783
<i>Chinese New Year</i> .....	784, 786
<i>Knox Fire Brigades Group</i> .....	784
<i>Clean Up Australia Day</i> .....	784, 786
<i>St Luke's Primary School, Wantirna</i> .....	784
<i>Ventana Fiesta</i> .....	784
<i>Emerald Anzac commemoration</i> .....	784
<i>Beaconsfield Anzac memorial</i> .....	784
<i>Victoria University Secondary College</i> .....	784
<i>Grovedale College</i> .....	785
<i>Geelong Trades Hall Council</i> .....	785
<i>Camelot Rise Primary School</i> .....	785
<i>World's Greatest Shave</i> .....	785
<i>Neighbours</i> .....	786
<i>Yan Yean electorate</i> .....	786
GOVERNOR'S SPEECH	
<i>Address-in-reply</i> .....	786, 804, 821
DISTINGUISHED VISITORS .....	794
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS	
STATEMENTS	
<i>Country Fire Authority credit cards</i> .....	794, 796
<i>Ministers statements: Berwick College</i> .....	796
<i>Fire services property levy</i> .....	797
<i>Ministers statements: Royal Commission into</i>	
<i>Family Violence</i> .....	797
<i>Fire services</i> .....	798
<i>Ministers statements: east-west link</i> .....	798, 800, 801
<i>Political donations</i> .....	799
<i>Country Fire Authority station upgrades</i> .....	801
<i>Ministers statements: ambulance services</i> .....	801
SUSPENSION OF MEMBER	
<i>Member for Hastings</i> .....	801
CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS	
<i>Croydon electorate</i> .....	802
<i>Niddrie electorate</i> .....	802
<i>Euroa electorate</i> .....	803
<i>Geelong electorate</i> .....	803
<i>Caulfield electorate</i> .....	803
<i>Yan Yean electorate</i> .....	803
<i>Polwarth electorate</i> .....	803
<i>Narre Warren South electorate</i> .....	804
<i>Ferntree Gully electorate</i> .....	804
<i>Oakleigh electorate</i> .....	804
LEGAL PROFESSION UNIFORM LAW APPLICATION	
AMENDMENT BILL 2015	
<i>Second reading</i> .....	804, 842
<i>Circulated amendment</i> .....	843
<i>Third reading</i> .....	843
RULINGS BY THE CHAIR	
<i>Offensive gestures</i> .....	821
EDUCATION AND TRAINING REFORM	
AMENDMENT (CHILD SAFE SCHOOLS) BILL	
2015	
<i>Second reading</i> .....	843
<i>Third reading</i> .....	843
LIMITATION OF ACTIONS AMENDMENT (CHILD	
ABUSE) BILL 2015	
<i>Second reading</i> .....	843
<i>Third reading</i> .....	843
PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELLBEING AMENDMENT	
(HAIRDRESSING REGISTRATION) BILL 2015	
<i>Second reading</i> .....	843
<i>Third reading</i> .....	843
VETERANS AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL	
2015	
<i>Second reading</i> .....	844
<i>Third reading</i> .....	844
ADJOURNMENT	
<i>Eastern Freeway</i> .....	844
<i>Western Ring Road sound barriers</i> .....	844
<i>The Dining Room Mission</i> .....	845
<i>Bentleigh West Primary School</i> .....	845
<i>Electric line clearance regulations</i> .....	846
<i>Apennine Gourmet Foods</i> .....	846
<i>Avalon Airport</i> .....	847
<i>Melbourne Metro rail project</i> .....	848
<i>Guide Dogs Victoria</i> .....	848
<i>Frankston railway station precinct</i> .....	849
<i>Responses</i> .....	849



**Thursday, 19 March 2015**

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

## **SWEARING IN OF MEMBERS**

### **Member for Gippsland South**

**The SPEAKER announced the election of Mr Daniel O'Brien as member for the electoral district of Gippsland South pursuant to writ issued on 17 February 2015.**

**Mr D. O'Brien introduced and sworn.**

## **DOCUMENTS**

### **Tabled by Clerk:**

Auditor-General — Emergency Service Response Times — Ordered to be published

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

*Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981* — SR 14

*Fisheries Act 1995* — SR 12

*Infringements Act 2006* — SR 13

*Surveying Act 2004* — SR 15

*Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:*

Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 12, 13, 14, 15

Documents under s 16B in relation to the *EastLink Project Act 2004*:

Order under s 7 varying the Project area

Order under s 7 varying the Extended Project area.

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Adjournment**

**Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — I move:**

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until Tuesday, 14 April 2015.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **MEMBERS STATEMENTS**

### **Mooroolbark ambulance station**

**Mr HODGETT (Croydon)** — I rise today to seek clarification or guidance from the Minister for Health in relation to a pocket of land in my electorate located at the five-way roundabout on Lincoln Road, Mooroolbark. The former Department of Health acquired this land in 2012 under the coalition government with the intention of building an ambulance station to house the team of paramedics then, and currently, working from their temporary base in Montrose. Last year, as the Liberal candidate for Croydon, I promised that if re-elected a Napthine government would spend \$1.4 million on a brand-new ambulance station to service the residents of Mooroolbark. I have been contacted by many concerned residents who want to see action on the construction of a new ambulance station to provide them with the peace of mind that they will no longer be relying on ambulance services provided by staff required to travel from Montrose. I call on the government to confirm whether or not it will fund this ambulance station and, if so, to provide me and residents in my electorate with a time line for when this is likely to occur.

### **Mooroolbark railway station**

**Mr HODGETT** — It is fantastic to see the newly completed upgrade to the Mooroolbark railway station. The former coalition government invested \$2.4 million to revitalise Mooroolbark railway station, which is now transformed into a safer, more accessible and vibrant precinct. I was pleased to see this project come to fruition. It followed on from the improvements made to the Mooroolbark railway station car park, which increased the number of parking spaces to 440. I congratulate and thank the Mooroolbark Traders and Community Group committee, the Mooroolbark Township Group and the community consultative committee for their work on this project. Well done to all involved.

### **Bellarine Agricultural Show**

**Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water)** — I once again had the pleasure of opening the annual Bellarine Agricultural Show, held over the Labour Day long weekend. In fact this is my 14th show in a row. The Bellarine show is a great event that every year allows local people, especially those who are from rural backgrounds, to display their wares and share their skills. In doing so they educate the wider

community, particularly children, who get a real hands-on agricultural experience.

There were many events and displays over the weekend of horses, cattle, poultry and dogs, trucks, vintage cars and farm machinery, as well as displays of flowers, china painting, photography and art. This year there was the great addition of school artwork. As always, the event showcased the Bellarine Peninsula's agricultural past, present and future, and I am sure that all participants and visitors had a great day.

I take this opportunity to thank and congratulate all volunteers, especially the committee and its president, Graeme Brown, as well as Kerry and Rick Peacock and all their family, who are part of this agricultural show.

### **Barwon Heads Festival of the Sea**

**Ms NEVILLE** — Last Sunday I had the pleasure of opening the Barwon Heads Festival of the Sea. The festival was first held in 2000 and celebrates Barwon Heads' unique link with the sea and natural landscapes, its environment, history and tranquil lifestyle. It brings together a huge array of community activity, with the highlight being the annual duck race. I congratulate all those volunteers and community groups on making the event the success it was. The event is a celebration of the great coastal community we live in. I especially acknowledge Mark Rodriguez and his committee, who put many hours into organising this event.

### **Public holidays**

**Ms RYALL** (Ringwood) — Yesterday in this house it became clear to all Victorians that the Andrews Labor government has absolutely no idea whatsoever about anything to do with business, and in particular small business. I was appalled to listen to government MPs attempt to portray some understanding of small business. Once again we see that what Labor MPs say is completely inconsistent with their actions and so we see their duplicity. We heard that small business should be Labor's natural constituency; that it needs to do what it can to help our small businesses get ahead; that small business owners work long hours and provide employment opportunities; that the Labor government fully supports and gets behind small businesses; and that small business is the engine room of our economy. We even heard the notion that Labor should encourage people to start a small business so that they can access equity and bank the profits. How insulting! If only it were that easy.

If the Labor government really understood businesses, such as those in my electorate of Ringwood, it would

realise that it has just introduced two more public holidays that those businesses will have to pay for. All we hear from government ministers is that the public holidays will give employees more pay but not one thing about where that the money comes from. Note to Labor: it does not grow on trees; it does not fall out of the air. Labor has no idea about the challenges small businesses face in having to find unbudgeted funds to pay for two more public holidays.

I call on the government to stop trying to break our small businesses and to provide a basis on which they can prosper and employ people, instead of their being weighed down and stomped on by a government hell-bent on putting them under more cost pressure from more public holidays.

### **Ambulance services**

**Mr BROOKS** (Bundoora) — I was concerned to learn recently that ambulance response times in my electorate blew out under the Liberal-Nationals government, putting my constituents at risk and reducing their chances of survival in life-threatening emergencies. Looking back, it is hard to comprehend the arrogant disregard those opposite had for the Victorian community, who were unwitting victims in both the coalition's war on ambulance paramedics and its failure to manage ambulance services properly.

Data that was kept secret by the Napthine government has now been made available to the Victorian people by the Andrews Labor government, and it shows just how badly ambulance response times deteriorated between 2008–09 under Labor and 2013–14 under the Liberals and Nationals. In the Banyule local government area the average code 1 response time, which is for the most serious emergencies, increased by 2 minutes and 22 seconds. Code 2 response times, where a patient's condition might not be considered life threatening but where they may still be in incredible pain, blew out to over half an hour, at 33 minutes and 44 seconds. Similarly, in the Whittlesea local government area code 1 response times blew out by over 4 minutes and the percentage of code 1 emergencies responded to within 15 minutes dropped from 85 per cent to below 65 per cent. This was an appalling betrayal of the Victorian public by the Liberals and Nationals.

In contrast, it is great to see Labor's new Minister for Health and her parliamentary secretary working closely with ambulance paramedics and experts in the field to fix the problems, backed by Labor's \$60 million commitment for a Response Time Rescue Fund.

### **Nagambie ambulance services**

**Ms RYAN** (Euroa) — This weekend the Victorian Head of the River regatta will take place in Nagambie. The regatta is the oldest continuous schoolboy rowing event in the world, dating back to 1868. Nagambie has almost everything one could wish for when hosting an event such as this: world-class rowing facilities, a constant water level, a temperate climate and great accommodation and food and wine offerings to accommodate the 15 000 people who will visit during the course of the event. But the town lacks one thing: an ambulance. Over the past week I have spoken to members of the Nagambie Ambulance Service Community Alliance and the CEO of Rowing Victoria, who hold serious concerns about this.

In 2004 Ambulance Victoria acknowledged there was a response time problem in the area surrounding Nagambie. A community emergency response team (CERT) was established as an interim solution. Since then CERT volunteers have given 200 000 hours of service. The CERT recorded a maximum of 242 call-outs in 2009, and in the 12-month period between July 2013 and June 2014 the CERT recorded 91 call-outs it was able to respond to. This represents a decline of 266 per cent.

With just one ambulance in the entire Strathbogie shire, what might be a routine call-out elsewhere has the potential to be a matter of life and death in Nagambie. The coalition recognised this. We gave the community a commitment that we would fund two full-time paramedics and an ambulance community support officer. Labor was very vocal about ambulances before the election, but now, when there is a real and pressing need, it has gone deathly silent.

### **Highlands Community Residents Group**

**Ms SPENCE** (Yuroke) — I acknowledge the fantastic work of the Highlands Community Residents Group following the success of last Friday's Highlands Movie Night, held in partnership with Mount Ridley College in Craigieburn. Over 400 locals braved a chilly night and turned out for a screening of *The Lego Movie*. This was the second movie event the residents group has held. The movie night included face painting, a graffiti wall, a jumping castle, sausage sizzles and many more activities to ensure a great family night out. Last year's movie night was such a success that the organisers were awarded the Hume City Council's 2015 Australia Day award for best community event, and they followed up this year with equal success.

My community shows over and over again that the difficulties associated with bringing neighbours together in growth areas are challenges it is completely capable of meeting. I acknowledge and thank the students and leadership team at Mount Ridley College, who played a significant role in helping to run the event. Stuart Hodgson, the president of the Highlands Community Residents Group, also deserves recognition for his leadership, as does the passion and dedication of all community members who are actively involved in the group. I also acknowledge Hume City Council's role in assisting with community celebrations through both grants and support, and I commend the council for ensuring that fantastic events like this can continue. Congratulations to all involved, and I look forward to next year's movie night.

### **YFest**

**Ms KEALY** (Lowan) — I invite all parliamentarians and the people of Victoria to visit western Victoria this Easter long weekend and enjoy the people and produce of our fabulous region. YFest in Warracknabeal incorporates an Easter Saturday street parade, a vintage machinery rally at the Wheatlands museum, which is fabulous — I visited it recently — a golf tournament, an art show, a Saturday race meeting, a busking in the park competition and a Sunday brass band concert. It will be a fantastic family weekend to enjoy the welcoming rural hospitality of Warracknabeal.

### **National Gem and Mineral Show**

**Ms KEALY** — The Horsham and District Lapidary Club will be hosting the 51st National Gem and Mineral Show at the Wimmera Events Centre during Easter 2015. Come and see beautiful minerals on display, along with a range of gems, fossils, jewellery, beads, meteorites, craft tools and equipment. There is sure to be something to bring a smile to everyone's face.

### **Interstate Dressage Festival**

**Ms KEALY** — Horsham will be hosting the Interstate Dressage Festival this Easter period. This fantastic event will provide a wonderful display of high-level equestrian competitions and entertainment for the whole family.

### **Horsham Easter egg hunt**

**Ms KEALY** — The Bendigo Bank Horsham branch Easter egg hunt began as an idea by a local staff member to raise funds for the Royal Children's

Hospital. It has grown into a major local event involving over 800 children from all over the district that raises in excess of \$24 000 for the Royal Children's Hospital Good Friday Appeal. I congratulate all organisers involved.

### **Lowan electorate markets**

**Ms KEALY** — Fantastic local markets feature across western Victoria this Easter, including the Balmoral Easter Market, Halls Gap Primary School Easter Market, Natimuk Farmer's Market and Haven Market. This is a great opportunity to sample the delicious local produce and take home a piece of beautiful locally made art. I look forward to seeing you in Lowan this Easter long weekend.

### **Omar Jabir Omar**

**Ms D'AMBROSIO** (Minister for Industry) — Today I pay tribute to Omar Jabir Omar was a friend of mine and a leader of the Eritrean people who passed away aged 69 on 19 December 2014. Omar was born in Ali Ghidir in 1945 and undertook medical studies and journalism. Omar was a leading member of the Revolutionary Leadership of the Eritrean Liberation Movement. Together with his wife, Dr Melika Sheik Eldin, he fought on the war front for the liberation of the country. He was a man of great principle and ethics. After independence, Omar helped in the reconstruction of Eritrea and was to become the communications minister in the new Eritrean government. Omar chose not to take part in the new government because he believed that the new regime had thrown out principles of democratic rule, instead opting for a one-party dictatorship.

Omar and his family left the country in exile. They finally found a home in Australia. From here he maintained his work for a democratic Eritrea, while he and Melika raised their three children, Yassin, Jaber and Yahya. Omar continued his advocacy for his people, particularly those who arrived in Australia as refugees. He also understood the human value of forming friendships with all Horn of African communities. He and Melika, together with Ethiopian friends Elleni Bereded and Terefe Aborete, established the Horn of African Communities Network in Victoria, which ran many successful programs aimed at promoting harmony among once-warring communities across the Horn of Africa.

Omar was a politician, an author, a journalist, a poet, a freedom fighter and an upholder of democratic values and cross-cultural dialogue and friendships. He was a

true leader. I was honoured to have known him, and I extend my condolences to his family.

### **SheppARTon Festival**

**Ms SHEED** (Shepparton) — I rise to congratulate all associated with the hugely successful SheppARTon Festival, now in its 20th year. Shepparton-born writer and satirist Anson Cameron was the keynote speaker at the festival's opening night, which the Minister for Creative Industries attended. I asked the parliamentary library to find out when an arts minister last visited Shepparton, but they could not find any record of such a visit, so I thank Minister Foley for making the trip.

On the opening weekend Opera in the Orchard was sold out, with huge crowds also reported at the family-friendly Aussie Art Class and the virtual forest. The Shepparton Theatre Arts Group's 10 in Ten performances sold out, and a zombie walk organised by youth group Word and Mouth attracted more than 500 people. This year the festival has been organised by a professional, Ros Abercrombie, in a position funded by the Victorian government. She has elevated the festival to new heights, engaged the whole community and opened up new locations for events across the greater Shepparton district. I hope the government recognises the importance of this role and continues to fund it.

### **Shepparton Art Museum**

**Ms SHEED** — On Sunday I opened Dream Machines — Drawings of the Great American Automobile, which is the Shepparton Art Museum's major exhibition and an Australian exclusive. The Greater Shepparton City Council recently released the business case for a new Shepparton Art Museum, a crucial project for our community, which will require commitments from philanthropics as well as from local, state and federal governments. I look forward to working with all interested parties and with the minister in taking this project through to completion.

### **Melbourne South Eastern Region Chinese Friendship Centre of Victoria**

**Mr DONNELLAN** (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — I congratulate Shirley Aolei and her team from Melbourne South Eastern Region Chinese Friendship Centre of Victoria Inc. on the centre's 10th anniversary. When this group started in 2004, it had 50 members, and with growth over time it now has 400 members. In 2008 it was invited by the City of Casey to set up a sister group, the Casey Chinese Senior Support Group, which it did. That group now has

160 members. In September 2010 it set up the Bentleigh Chinese Senior Support Group, another sister group, which now has 200 members.

Every Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday the friendship centre has its weekly activities in Doveton, Bentleigh and in the city of Greater Dandenong. The centre provides opportunities to its members to be involved in a range of activities. It conducts seminars on health, Centrelink, and immigration and legal issues. It also offers sessions on English studies, computer studies, cooking, photography, video, traditional brush painting, drawing and handicraft.

There are also healthy exercise activities at those venues every week, including square mall dancing, ballroom dancing, drum dancing, tai chi, mahjong, table tennis and badminton, at those venues every week. The centre does a marvellous job of keeping the community engaged, entertained and socialised. I also congratulate Shirley Aolei and her team on the export of Australian wines to China. They are doing a marvellous job of that.

### **Rosie Batty**

**Mr BURGESS** (Hastings) — On behalf of my community, I congratulate Tyabb resident Rosie Batty on her Australian of the Year award. The nation's top honour was presented to Rosie at Parliament House in Canberra by the Prime Minister. Rosie dedicated her award to her son, Luke, who lost his life to an act of domestic violence, and renewed her commitment to the fight against this insidious epidemic.

### **French Island ferry services**

**Mr BURGESS** — I ask the Minister for Public Transport to thoroughly investigate recent interruptions to the French Island ferry service, during which the majority of island residents were left stranded for extended periods of time. From mid-February to mid-March regular ferry services between Stony Point, French Island and Phillip Island suffered severe interruptions when engine problems put the main ferry, the *George Bass*, and its backup vessel, the *Schouten Passage*, out of action. The significant difference between the French Island ferry service and other parts of Victoria's public transport system is that if the ferry fails for any reason, residents have very little hope of being able to reach the mainland. Residents are unable to attend work, medical and other appointments and, critically, schoolchildren are unable to attend school, including those attempting to set up their futures through success in year 12.

The Napthine government consulted very closely with French Island residents and put in place a community-developed plan to dramatically improve the reliability and quality of the French Island ferry service. Several elements of the plan were implemented, and I now call on the government to commit to the implementation of the remaining aspects to ensure that recent ferry service interruptions cannot occur again.

### **Carl Cowie**

**Mr BURGESS** — I congratulate Carl Cowie on his appointment as CEO of the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council.

### **100 Poppies project**

**Ms HALFPENNY** (Thomastown) — Yesterday, 18 March, I had the honour of attending and speaking at the unveiling of the 100 Poppies project, a beautiful mosaic prominently located in High Street, Thomastown, to mark the centenary of Anzac and the Gallipoli campaign. The memorial, which is the result of tireless work by the Turkish Women's Recreational Group, shows 100 vibrant mosaic poppies at sunset framed by mosaics of Australian and Turkish indigenous flowers. Thomastown Primary School students, with the strong support of teachers and their principal, Jill Mitchell, also contributed.

Just as Australians pause to remember the fallen on 11 November, 18 March is the day when people of Turkish heritage stop to reflect on the sacrifices of their fallen soldiers. Known as Martyrs' Day, 18 March also commemorates a noted battle of the Gallipoli campaign. On one occasion the Turkish forces repelled the allied battleships. I am told that in Australia this battle is commemorated in the context of honouring all those who have fought and fallen in war. Soldiers do not make the decision to declare war, but they do make the decision to fight to protect and defend their families, their neighbours and their communities. In doing so they show great courage and selflessness and too often make the ultimate sacrifice and pay with their lives.

I give particular thanks to Nurcihan Ozturk, the president of the Turkish Women's Recreational Group, as well as Herb Mason, the president of the Epping RSL. Also in attendance was the Turkish Vice-Consul, Mr Ozdemir. This wonderful memorial is a timely reminder in the Anzac centenary year of the sacrifices made by both nations' serving men and women.

### Chinese New Year

**Mr WAKELING** (Ferntree Gully) — I was pleased to join members of the Knox Chinese Elderly Citizens Club for the lunar year of the goat spring festival celebration luncheon. The event was well attended and a tribute to the work of this important local community group, which is one of the biggest community groups in the Knox community. I would like to recognise the important contribution of William Wai, who continues to be a strong advocate for the Chinese community within Knox.

### Knox Fire Brigades Group

**Mr WAKELING** — It was an honour to attend, with the member for Dandenong, the Knox Fire Brigades Group torchlight parade. The parade is seen as a great opportunity for the community as a whole to thank the Country Fire Authority and recognise the fantastic job it does. The parade was well attended by many brigades. It was a shame that the rain and wind put a dampener on the celebrations.

### Clean Up Australia Day

**Mr WAKELING** — It was great to see a number of community groups involved in Clean Up Australia Day on 1 March. I was pleased to join Wantirna Lions Club members and their families in helping to clean up Blind Creek around Collier Reserve in Wantirna. Congratulations to all involved.

### St Luke's Primary School, Wantirna

**Mr WAKELING** — I thank the grade 5 and 6 students from St Luke's Primary School in Wantirna for allowing me to come to the school to discuss with them issues around leadership. We discussed the importance of decision-making processes when representing groups or being a leader. We talked about the workings of government, and it was fantastic to see the contributions of the many students involved in the day. It is a great school, and I congratulate all involved.

### Ventana Fiesta

**Mr EDBROOKE** (Frankston) — On Saturday, 14 March, I had the pleasure of officially opening the Ventana Fiesta, along with local councillors; the hard-working member for Carrum; the member for Tarneit, the Speaker; and Juan Carlos, Melbourne Consul-General of Spain.

The Ventana Fiesta is a celebration of Latin American culture and a chance for us to immerse ourselves in the diversity of our Frankston community. I congratulate

the organisers of this event, especially Carolina Aguilera de Snow. Next year will be the fiesta's 10th year in Frankston.

For me, the festival began with a wonderful parade full of dancing, music and lots of street stalls, and it ended with a beautiful meal of Argentinean barbecued meat with my family and friends, which is what it is all about. This parade attracts a reported 7000 people annually to the main street of Frankston and reinforces our multicultural values, which are our biggest strength. I thank Juan Carlos, who gave me a quick lesson in Spanish. *Bia Veneros. Como estan. Hola.*

### Emerald Anzac commemoration

**Mr BATTIN** (Gembrook) — I would like to start off by congratulating the Emerald community. With the centenary of Anzac coming up, it is important that we commemorate and remember what happened in the past. The Emerald community put in a fantastic effort in opening up Anzac Place and the Anzac Walk. They had the pleasure of having the Governor-General, Sir Peter Cosgrove, and Lady Cosgrove join Emerald RSL president, Peter Maloney; the federal Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of Anzac, Michael Ronaldson; the federal member for La Trobe, Jason Wood; students from Emerald Primary School; and students from Emerald Secondary College.

About 2000 people lined the street in Emerald, which is unheard of in an area like that. They celebrated our country, where we have come from, and recalled the sacrifice of those who lost their lives in war. Thirty-two people from the Emerald area lost their lives during World War I. Speaking plainly and for all to hear, the Governor-General said that the day was about those 32 people and that it was a day to remember. We were lucky to have 31 sets of relatives present.

### Beaconsfield Anzac memorial

**Mr BATTIN** — I also acknowledge the work of the Beaconsfield Progress Association in installing commemorative plaques at the Anzac memorial. A total of 65 members from the community went to the great war, and 8 made the ultimate sacrifice. Ann and Graham Taylor from the association have done a wonderful job. It has been a long, hard road to get the funding that was allocated last year to install the plaques to commemorate the area's Anzac history.

### Victoria University Secondary College

**Ms SULEYMAN** (St Albans) — I rise to acknowledge and congratulate the Victoria University

Secondary College in St Albans. Victoria University Secondary College has close to 1000 students. This school is an important part of the community and provides excellent education and opportunities to students. It was a privilege to attend the school together with local veterans last Friday, 13 March, to honour and commemorate the Anzac tradition and legacy. It is even more sentimental for me as an Australian who has Turkish heritage.

This year is the 100th anniversary of Gallipoli, and initiatives such as the Journey of Remembrance foster an understanding of the past and encourage students to research their own personal connections and also the special bond that Australia and Turkey have. Both nations will have many events during the year to commemorate the significance of World War I. I thank campus principal Neville Box and history teacher Pramila Devi and teachers and students of Victorian University Secondary College for a great event and for their warm welcome.

### Grovedale College

**Mr KATOS** (South Barwon) — I rise this morning to highlight the urgent need to upgrade Grovedale College. Grovedale College has 841 students this year, and its enrolment is predicted to grow to 940 by 2019, not factoring in the growth in Armstrong Creek. There is continued growth in Grovedale, Marshall, Waurn Ponds and Armstrong Creek. All these suburbs are serviced by Grovedale College. At the 2014 election the coalition pledged \$6.4 million to upgrade the college. This funding is desperately needed for the replacement of H and F portable blocks with permanent classrooms, along with other improvements at the school.

Labor has made no commitment to Grovedale College but instead has chosen to commit to buying a block of land for a new primary school in Armstrong Creek west. The coalition had already funded a new primary school and special school in Armstrong Creek as part of the \$223 million public-private partnership package announced in last year's state budget. This is another coalition project the minister is shamelessly trying to claim as Labor's. The need right now is increased capacity at Grovedale College, not another primary school. The Minister for Education has already cruelly ripped \$6.4 million from the Grovedale community, and I call on him to fund the Grovedale College upgrade in the 2015–16 state budget.

### Geelong Trades Hall Council

**Ms COUZENS** (Geelong) — On Friday, 13 March, I had the pleasure of attending the Geelong Trades Hall

Council Labour Day dinner with 250 Geelong unionists. This annual dinner is one of the biggest union events of the year. I want to congratulate the Geelong Trades Hall secretary, Tim Gooden; its president, David Ball; and Anne Morrison and Nada Iskra for another very successful dinner.

The dinner is also a significant event for women unionists, with the presentation of the annual Women Unionist Award. The many women who came before us have not always been recognised for their struggle and achievements. This award was initiated by the Geelong Trades Hall to ensure that the contribution made by women unionists is acknowledged and recorded in our history. This year the award was presented to my comrade Colleen Gibbs of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU). Colleen's outstanding contribution to Geelong Trades Hall, the Women's Unionist Network and the AMWU earned her this award.

I was also honoured to be acknowledged for my contribution to the local union movement. This acknowledgement was made with the presentation of Wathaurong glass, which signifies a meeting place. It has been a great privilege to have been part of the Geelong union movement over many years. Delegates, members and their unions have attended Labour Day dinners in Geelong for more than 100 years to celebrate the 8-hour day. There is no doubt that this event will continue to be a significant Geelong union movement tradition.

### Camelot Rise Primary School

**Mr ANGUS** (Forest Hill) — I recently had the great pleasure of attending Camelot Rise Primary School to address the students and present school leadership badges to the school captains, other captains and student representative council members. I congratulate all the school leaders on their appointments and wish them and their fellow students, the school principal, Mrs Kirrily George, and all the school staff well for the 2015 year.

### World's Greatest Shave

**Mr ANGUS** — Last Saturday I was delighted to attend a Leukaemia Foundation World's Greatest Shave event at the Just For Men hair salon located in Brentford Square, Forest Hill. This event raised money for the Leukaemia Foundation. I had the privilege of manning the comb and clippers and shaving the heads of two courageous volunteers, Liam and Travis. I congratulate salon proprietor Michelle and her team on

organising this event and thank all those who supported it, especially Liam and Travis.

### **Clean Up Australia Day**

**Mr ANGUS** — On Sunday, 1 March, I was pleased to once again organise a local site for Clean Up Australia Day, the Lookout Trail Park in Vermont South. As always it was a very successful time, resulting in lots of rubbish being collected and the area being left in pristine condition. My sincere thanks go to all the volunteers who came along and assisted in this most worthwhile exercise.

### ***Neighbours***

**Mr ANGUS** — I congratulate all those involved on the 30th anniversary of the electorate of Forest Hill's most famous international export, the television show *Neighbours*. Filmed within the Forest Hill electorate, this show has been an enduring success story and has played a key part in the careers of many well-known Australian actors. Well done to all the cast, crew and other personnel who have been involved with this very successful series over the last 30 years.

### **Chinese New Year**

**Mr ANGUS** — I congratulate the Monash Chinese Events Organising Committee for organising another fantastic Chinese New Year and Lantern Festival celebration in Glen Waverley earlier this month. As always it was a spectacular event with large crowds in attendance to watch the festival, especially the lion dancing. I congratulate committee president, Vincent Liu, committee members and all involved in putting on this great celebration.

### **Yan Yean electorate**

**Ms GREEN** (Yan Yean) — It is now just slightly more than 100 days since the Andrews government took office. The government has wasted no time in redressing the neglect of Melbourne's north over the four years of the Napthine Liberal government in the face of a burgeoning population growth. Members opposite did nothing in their time on the government benches.

I was pleased to host a visit by the Premier and the Deputy Premier to Hazel Glen College, where I was pleased to see that they announced that the much-needed Mernda central P-12 school will be fast-tracked. This land was purchased by the previous Labor government in 2009. Those who sit opposite did nothing to address the secondary needs of my community for four years.

I am pleased that the Minister for Police has indicated that the search for a site for a Mernda police station is well underway. Planning is also well underway for the train extension in the area. The government has also begun to redress the mess that is the school bus and conveyancing services, providing additional services on the 572 bus route after an incident where the doors burst open. There have been \$60 million worth of funding cuts to bus services in the electorate of Yan Yean over the past four years.

Yan Yean Road has had \$200 000 set aside for planning so the much-needed duplication can begin. In Wallan we are committed to the completion of the Wallan Secondary College, the children's centre and the structure plan for the town. And the ambulance crisis has been resolved.

## **GOVERNOR'S SPEECH**

### **Address-in-reply**

**Debate resumed from 18 March; motion of Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) for adoption of address-in-reply.**

**Mr CARBINES** (Ivanhoe) — In resuming my contribution on the address-in-reply debate, I again acknowledge the great work and contributions of volunteers, the union movement and the labour movement to secure a victory for the Labor Party in the Ivanhoe electorate. In particular I would like to note the 10 000 phone calls made and the 12 000 doors fronted by members of the labour movement and volunteers in the Ivanhoe electorate and the work they did in our community. Of course that work is reflected in the election result, as is our determination to put ourselves in front of voters in our local community to advocate our policy positions. Labor also made it clear that from the outset of its four-year term it was willing to engage as many local residents as possible across the Ivanhoe electorate in policy discussions and debate about affirming why a Labor government would be in the local community's best interests to deliver jobs and prosperity to people in the electorate.

I will touch on a couple of other aspects. I would also like to thank, from my office, Lindsay Knight, Alice Wade and the now member for St Albans, who has also worked with me in the past four years prior to her election to this place. Their leadership and work in the community, where they are much respected, and the assistance they have provided to people in my electorate is second to none. I thank them for their ongoing work. I also thank the Ivanhoe, Heidelberg, Greensborough and Watsonia branches for their

ongoing work. I also acknowledge the Jagajaga Federal Electoral Assembly and the Honourable Jenny Macklin, the member for Jagajaga. I acknowledge the members for Bundoora and Eltham and the former member for Eltham, now the Minister for Training and Skills. We work together as a very strong team, advocating for our fair share of services and resources in the northern suburbs.

I acknowledge my wife Anita and our young daughter Ava for their ongoing support and work, which as members know is always difficult for families, as are the sacrifices and expectations we place on them in our roles as candidates and members of Parliament. Speaking of candidates, I also want to acknowledge the work of the other candidates who put their names forward in seeking to win the Ivanhoe seat. Putting their name on a ballot paper to be judged by their peers and their community is not an easy thing to do. I acknowledge their contributions to the political and public debate in the Ivanhoe electorate and my determination to continue to work with everybody, whether or not they supported the Labor Party at the election, in delivering on our commitments.

I also acknowledge the unions that assisted in the campaign, but I particularly acknowledge the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, which I did not get a chance to mention yesterday in my contribution.

Lastly, I reflect on one of the most significant issues in the Ivanhoe electorate. I noticed in the *Age* today an article by Josh Gordon entitled 'Liberals are not better economic managers', in which he said:

But it's time to abandon the rhetoric from the Liberals that they are the better economic managers, certainly in Victoria, where the handling of the east-west link shows they exposed taxpayers to greater financial risk than they needed to, ostensibly for political reasons. That's not good economic management, that's economic sabotage.

As members on the other side of the house would know, of the 36 years in Victoria from 1982 to the next election year of 2018, 25 years have been presided over by Victorian Labor governments. That is because those on the other side have been part of the singularly most conservative party and the most unsuccessful conservative governments in Victoria since Federation. The member for Box Hill has been in this place long enough to know that, as has the member for South-West Coast.

Members opposite have been part of the singularly most unsuccessful conservative era in Victorian politics since Federation. That has been their legacy. While they continue to run down the labour movement, run

down unions and run down workers, they continue to show they have no understanding of how Victoria works or how the people of Victoria think. They do not acknowledge their election defeat; they do not understand that the people of Victoria always get it right. Victorians always get it right, and more often than not in modern Victoria they have chosen to put their faith and trust in Victorian Labor to manage their affairs and advocate and advance their interests not only in Victoria but nationally. That has been the record of Victorian Labor in this place. It is the determination of the union and labour movements to have a voice in this Parliament, and I am very pleased to be part of that. We do not shy away from that, and the more the labour movement is attacked by those opposite, the stronger becomes its resolve to continue to work in the best interests of Victorians.

**Mr CLARK** (Box Hill) — I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

In speaking to the motion that the debate be adjourned, I place on the record that the opposition believes it to be completely inappropriate that the address-in-reply be brought on for debate at this stage of the sitting week when there are bills on the notice paper that are yet to be debated. There are a number of bills the opposition has made clear it believes should be considered in detail, and the time for that is being reduced by the continuation of the address-in-reply debate. The address-in-reply is an important item of government business, but it is an item that will not be going to the guillotine this week. Meanwhile there are bills on the notice paper that will be guillotined at 5 o'clock, and if time is taken up by the address-in-reply debate, there will not be an opportunity for opposition members to put the points we wish to make before the house and the Victorian people in relation to these bills.

So far we have had no debate at all on the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Amendment Bill 2015. The opposition has also made it clear that we believe the Limitation of Actions Amendment (Child Abuse) Bill 2015 and the Veterans and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2015 in particular should be considered in detail, as there are matters that the shadow Attorney-General and the shadow Minister for Veterans wish to raise in relation to those two bills. It is important that the Limitation of Actions Amendment (Child Abuse) Bill 2015 be properly discussed before it passes from this place, because it is very important legislation. There are aspects of that bill that need to be considered in detail, and indeed there are aspects of the Veterans and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2015 that

should be considered in detail, particularly those relating to consumer debt and debt collection.

The Leader of the House has indicated her view that it is not worth resuming debate on another bill because we will be moving on to question time at 11 o'clock — but that means we still have some 40 minutes to devote to consideration in detail of bills. That should be plenty of time to deal with the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Amendment Bill 2015. She also says that debate on the address-in-reply is important — and certainly it is — but what we believe should happen is we deal properly with the bills before the house. Then, if time permits — and I suspect time will permit if we proceed expeditiously — we can return to the address-in-reply debate.

I remind the house that the Labor Party, when in opposition, said it would make the consideration-in-detail stage a standard part of the process of debate on bills that come to this house. We have had one bill considered in detail so far in this Parliament. We believe there are two bills that should be considered in detail this sitting week. We believe this should be done first. Let us finish these bills first. I do not believe the consideration-in-detail stage should take a great deal of time for either bill, but it is important that time be given and that there not be filibuster in regard to the business of the house. The government seems to be filibustering on its own bills in order to escape scrutiny by this house and to avoid being accountable to the community, despite its election commitment.

**Mr DONNELLAN** (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — I rise to oppose the motion moved by the manager of opposition business, the member for Box Hill. I find it interesting that the address-in-reply is not considered worthy of debate by the opposition and that it is somehow a second-rate proposition to consider the address-in-reply just because the opposition does not want to deal with it. It might be because the address-in-reply debate gives us freedom to point out the inadequacies of the opposition's time in government. The debate allows us to highlight that the former government did very little for four years but now wants somehow to cover that up. This is ridiculous. This group of people provided very limited opportunity for consideration in detail of bills, yet now in opposition it suddenly wants to provide more democracy to this house. We have brought more democracy to this house than you ever did when you were in government.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Thomson)** — Order! Through the Chair!

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr DONNELLAN** — You provided very limited opportunity for consideration in detail. We have provided many more opportunities than you ever provided to us.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Thomson)** — Order! Through the Chair!

**Mr DONNELLAN** — It is absolute drivel that you are going on with. That suddenly you believe in the importance of the house is an absolute joke. You need to look at yourselves and reflect for a little while and see what you provided when you were in government — no opportunities literally —

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Thomson)** — Order! Through the Chair!

**Mr DONNELLAN** — The change in attitude of the people on the other side of the house is amazing. They suddenly believe in the consideration-in-detail stage, even though they provided limited opportunity for it when we were in opposition. Now when we provide them with the opportunity to go into consideration in detail, they are suddenly screaming blue murder.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr DONNELLAN** — Absolutely.

**Mrs Fyffe** — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the minister is shouting so loudly that this is causing discomfort to the Hansard staff. I am serious. I am afraid that the ministers at the table do not understand that this is causing discomfort to Hansard —

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Thomson)** — Order! The point has been made, and I understand. The member can resume her seat. The minister to continue and to direct his comments through the Chair.

**Mr DONNELLAN** — I will very happily, Acting Speaker, but I do have grave concerns that we have such hypocrites on the other side who have suddenly found the importance of consideration in detail. They have suddenly decided that we have to provide them with the opportunity to go into consideration in detail, which we have. We have provided multiple opportunities, which is a lot more than they provided to the opposition when they were in government.

The utter hypocrisy of the group over there is amazing. They come into this house and suddenly suggest that they have forgotten what they did for four years. They closed down the house, they limited debate, and now

that we have opened up debate they are suddenly saying that that is not good enough. What an absolute joke of an opposition this is. The fact that we have provided more democratic opportunities for debate in this house than had been provided for many years highlights that we respect this institution and the importance of debate, as opposed to those in the opposition, who are literally opportunists of the highest level.

They forget we have memories. The whole of this house has a memory, and government members remember what a second-rate government members opposite were in. They provided such limited opportunities for proper debate in this house that they should be shamed — they really should be shamed. I do not know how the manager of opposition business can lie straight in bed when he knows what they used to do in relation to this house.

Now that we have provided opportunities for consideration-in-detail stages, this house is looking at these bills in fine detail, and that is important. So much hypocrisy exists on the other side of the house that opposition members should all lower their heads in shame. It is ridiculous that you are coming into this house —

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Thomson)** — Order! Through the Chair!

**Mr DONNELLAN** — and behaving like a pack of dingbats, to put it mildly, and suddenly suggesting that we are not providing the opportunity to debate bills. We are providing ample opportunity. The idea that the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech is unworthy of discussion in this house is quite concerning. The address-in-reply provides government members with the opportunity to shame you on your rotten record when you were in government — —

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Thomson)** — Order! Through the Chair!

**Mr DONNELLAN** — Yes, Acting Speaker. It is important that we point out the rotten record of the previous government and that we have the opportunity to do so, because the Victorian public wants to know what happened in the last four years. We need to point out that the answer is not much. Those opposite worked very hard at doing very little for four years.

**Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn)** — I am pleased to speak in support of the motion moved by the member for Box Hill. However, I will make a comment. The Minister for Roads and Road Safety's response to the motion moved by the member for Box Hill was over the top

and showed a total lack of regard not only for members in this house but also for the hardworking Hansard staff. Shouting and being so excited is not only detrimental to his health, but it is also not good for people who have earphones to have that volume of noise affecting their hearing. The minister should apologise to Hansard for his lack of courtesy.

I wholeheartedly support the motion to adjourn debate on the address-in-reply. The address-in-reply is not being guillotined this afternoon, but the bills before the house will be guillotined. The Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Amendment Bill 2015 has not even been debated. The opposition would like to go into consideration in detail on two bills, in particular on the Veterans and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2015. I support the changes in relation to the veterans, but concerns about some of the other amendments need to be gone into in more detail. For the government and the minister to say that the address-in-reply is far more important than these bills is utterly ridiculous. Every piece of legislation in this house affects individuals in this state. Everything we do here affects an individual and affects large numbers of people.

We should be staying with the legislation before the house. There is time in coming weeks for members to make their address-in-reply contributions. The government knows that, and the opposition knows that, but for some political reason the government refuses to let two bills go into consideration in detail. It refuses to let us start debate now. There is time now before question time to commence debate on the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Amendment Bill. It makes one ask the question: what has the government got to hide on these pieces of legislation that it will not allow them to be debated fully?

I have not made my address-in-reply contribution and am perfectly content to wait until the next sitting week if that is how it goes, but according to the changes under the new sessional orders the legislation goes to guillotine at 5 o'clock this afternoon. These bills should be debated fully and go into consideration in detail. I strongly support the manager of opposition business in his motion.

**Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport)** — In contributing to the debate on the adjournment of the address-in-reply, I will make clear to the house some facts and the reasons why the government is opposing the motion to adjourn debate on the address-in-reply. I spoke to the manager of opposition business earlier today and outlined the proposal for the operation of the house today. Given the limited period of time available between members statements concluding and the start

of question time at 11.00 a.m., which is roughly 45 minutes, I felt it was best to allow the member who was speaking on the address-in-reply to finish their contribution and to allow other members to contribute to the address-in-reply debate. This was largely because a significant number of people on both sides of the chamber would like to contribute to the address-in-reply debate.

I note the comments by the member for Evelyn around the address-in-reply, but I disagree that there is plenty of time available for this. This week and the next sitting week are available to the house for the address-in-reply debate, and in all likelihood that will probably be the last available week. That is likely to be the last week that will be available for the address-in-reply, given that the next sitting week after that is budget week. As we know, every member seeks to speak and make a contribution to the budget debate. So in all likelihood the next sitting week in April will be the last week in which the address-in-reply will be considered. Therefore I thought it made sense to allow the address-in-reply debate to continue.

I made it very clear to the manager of opposition business that I did not want to interrupt the flow of debate on the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Amendment Bill and that, following the conclusion of question time, the balance of the day would be made available to debate that bill, if required. It is nonsense to claim that there is a bill on the notice paper that will not be debated today.

I made it very clear that the house would debate the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Amendment Bill at the conclusion of question time today. Call me old-fashioned — —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Ms ALLAN** — Thank you. But I thought that was a pretty reasonable way to order the proceedings of the house. Those of us on this side of the house are striving to restore order to Parliament. That is exactly why we have reformed sessional orders to give the opposition more opportunities to hold the government to account. We have reformed the sessional orders in a way that those opposite never dared to. They promised to in the November 2010 election campaign. We all remember that grand promise made by the former failed Liberal Premier — the first failed Liberal Premier in that term, just to be clear. It has taken an Andrews Labor government to reform the standing orders to bring order to the Parliament, which was riven by chaos and crisis under the former Liberal-Nationals government.

If those opposite were genuinely interested in maximising the time available to the house for debate on the bills and the address-in-reply, they would not be going on with this nonsense of proposing to adjourn the address-in-reply debate; they would have let that orderly programming of the day's activities I outlined to the manager of opposition business proceed. Clearly they have rejected this approach because they are more comfortable with a chaos-ridden approach than a strong, orderly practice in this house. That is the approach we are taking and why we oppose this adjournment motion.

**Mr CARBINES** (Ivanhoe) — That was quite something coming from the member for Box Hill and manager of opposition business, who was enthusiastic in support for the government business program earlier this week. Now we get to later in the week, and he is unhappy with the way in which the debate has proceeded and with the way in which matters have been run in this place. Then we heard from the member for Evelyn that somehow the address-in-reply debate is not important. Having just concluded my contribution to the address-in-reply debate, which precipitated the matter that has been raised by the member for Box Hill, I think it is a bit rich when people on the other side of the house do not like the content of people's contribution to the address-in-reply debate. That is not reason enough to divert debate, which is what the opposition is seeking to do. Having achieved nothing in the previous four years, it now seeks to grind to a halt debate on bills in this house.

It has taken an Andrews Labor government in the bills being debated this week, including the Veterans and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2015, to pick up on the rooming house reforms that the member for Albert Park dealt with previously in task forces under the Brumby Labor government. After four years of inertia we have had to come back to government, with the support of the Victorian community, to see through those changes to rooming house obligations on slumlord landholders who do not meet their obligations to some of the most vulnerable people in the community, because a former Liberal Minister for Housing, who is still in the other place, ignored and refused to deal with those task force recommendations from the member for Albert Park. Now the member for Albert Park, as Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, will sort those matters out and continue to advocate for reform where the Brumby and Bracks governments left off.

The member for Box Hill seems to think that having supported the government business program, now later in the week when the address-in-reply debate does not go according to plan and members opposite do not like

what they are hearing in the debate and discussion of these issues this week, they will throw the toys out of the cot and determine that this is not the way in which we want to proceed.

**Mr Clark** — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I draw your attention to standing order 118, which prohibits imputation of improper motives and personal reflections on members. By misrepresenting what I said in the debate on the government business program the member is impugning my motives and is thus in breach of standing order 118. I ask you to ask him to desist.

**Ms Allan** — On the point of order, Deputy Speaker, this is a fairly robust debate, as debates often are in this place. People are contributing vigorously to the debate. If I had had more time, I would have indicated to the house that the member for Evelyn was verballing the Minister for Roads and Road Safety regarding his contribution.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! Just on the point of order.

**Ms Allan** — The manager of opposition business is being a little bit precious. I ask that you, Deputy Speaker, rule his point of order out of order.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! I will listen to the member more intently, and I request that he not verbal any other member of Parliament.

**Mr CARBINES** — Once we get to the year 2018 Victoria will have seen 25 years of Labor government representation in this state since 1982. It is not the Labor government's fault that those opposite have been part of the singularly most unsuccessful conservative party since Federation for these last 30-odd years. The Victorian people always get it right. The member for Box Hill in his contribution in support of the government business program on Tuesday suggested that this Labor government still had its training wheels on. That may well be the case in relation to his support for the government business program, but the rubber has well and truly hit the road in the government's first 100 days in office. I am quite happy to have the training wheels on over here.

The member for Box Hill might not have the training wheels on in opposition, because in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s he had a lot more experience as a member of the opposition than I ever intend to have. That may well be why he has led his party into supporting the government business program, but now as the week continues members opposite want to flip-flop around and avoid debate on these matters. They are wasting the Parliament's time as they wasted their past four years in

government. They are wasting the opportunity in the people's house to have a consistent debate on the matters they supported being on the business program earlier in the week.

The actions on the part of the member for Box Hill are absolutely ridiculous. They should be treated with the contempt they deserve — the contempt that this mob shows and showed in the last four years before they were thrown out of office.

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

**Mr HIBBINS (Pahran)** — In my remarks in the debate on the government business program motion earlier this week I talked about how this chamber can operate in an adversarial way that does not necessarily endear itself to the wider public, and I think this debate is indicative of that. We have been debating adjourning this item for about 20 minutes of the 45 minutes allocated and doing so with such passion that one would think the east-west link bills had already been introduced into the Parliament. I would suggest that the smooth running of this house requires cooperation on both sides of the Parliament, and I would hope that all sides — the opposition, the government and the crossbench — can cooperate a bit better in future so we can avoid having these needless debates.

**House divided on Mr Clark's motion:**

*Ayes, 37*

Angus, Mr	Northe, Mr
Battin, Mr	O'Brien, Mr D.
Blackwood, Mr	O'Brien, Mr M.
Bull, Mr T.	Paynter, Mr
Burgess, Mr	Pesutto, Mr
Clark, Mr	Ryall, Ms
Crisp, Mr	Ryan, Ms
Dixon, Mr	Smith, Mr R.
Fyffe, Mrs	Smith, Mr T.
Gidley, Mr	Southwick, Mr
Guy, Mr	Staley, Ms
Hodgett, Mr	Thompson, Mr
Katos, Mr	Tilley, Mr
Kealy, Ms	Victoria, Ms
McCurdy, Mr	Wakeling, Mr
McLeish, Ms	Walsh, Mr
Morris, Mr	Watt, Mr
Mulder, Mr	Wells, Mr
Napthine, Dr	

*Noes, 47*

Allan, Ms	Kilkenny, Ms
Andrews, Mr	Knight, Ms
Blandthorn, Ms	Lim, Mr
Brooks, Mr	McGuire, Mr
Bull, Mr J.	Merlino, Mr
Carbines, Mr	Neville, Ms
Carroll, Mr	Noonan, Mr

Couzens, Ms	Pakula, Mr
D'Ambrosio, Ms	Pallas, Mr
Dimopoulos, Mr	Pearson, Mr
Donnellan, Mr	Richardson, Mr
Edbrooke, Mr	Richardson, Ms
Edwards, Ms	Sandell, Ms
Eren, Mr	Scott, Mr
Foley, Mr	Sheed, Ms
Garrett, Ms	Spence, Ms
Graley, Ms	Staikos, Mr
Green, Ms	Suleyman, Ms
Halfpenny, Ms	Thomas, Ms
Hennessy, Ms	Thomson, Ms
Hibbins, Mr	Ward, Ms
Howard, Mr	Williams, Ms
Hutchins, Ms	Wynne, Mr
Kairouz, Ms	

### Motion defeated.

**Mr WELLS** (Rowville) — It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak on the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech. I congratulate the Governor of Victoria on his speech outlining the Andrews government's plans for Victoria over the next four years. I want to address a number of issues raised in the Governor's speech and also cover the commitments made in the Rowville electorate, to emergency services and to the east–west tunnel.

I am honoured to have been elected as the MP to represent the newly named seat of Rowville. It is truly a high honour and I am very proud of it. I thank the people of Rowville for placing their trust in me.

I take this opportunity to recommit to the commitments we made to the Rowville electorate in the run-up to the 2014 state election, including upgrades to Scoresby and Rowville secondary colleges and Park Ridge, Rowville and Karoo primary schools. These upgrades are well and truly overdue.

We also committed to a new Scoresby Country Fire Authority station and upgrades to the Scoresby and Lysterfield junior footy clubs. We made these commitments, and I am absolutely committed to making sure we get them delivered. I assure the Rowville electorate that I will be doing whatever it takes to make sure that we hold the Andrews government to account. We will be lobbying very hard to make sure that all those election commitments are delivered.

I also thank my campaign team for their incredible effort. I understand that it was very difficult for them, and I understand the commitment that is required by people in local campaigns, especially when your member is a minister with statewide commitments, which means the member is not always available locally. To the chair of the campaign team, David

Apelt; to the people on the campaign, such as Ev; to my campaign manager, Shan Blethyn, who was ably assisted by Lois Hutchings and Colleen Black; to Marg Briggs, Ron Tiesler, Ken Oaten and Terri Marley; to the Scoresby, Knoxfield and Rowville Liberal branches; and to all the volunteers and supporters who staffed polling booths and pre-poll mobile polling booths, I say a big thankyou. It was an incredible effort.

I thank the ministerial team headed up by Glenn Corey and my executive assistant, Chris Costello. I will always be truly indebted to these two brilliant, loyal and hard-working people, and we will remain lifelong friends.

To my family — Judy, Sam, Tom and Tahnee — I say thank you so much for your incredible support, tolerance and incredible patience over the last 22 years.

There are two particular issues I will address now. The first one is the east–west tunnel, and it is the biggest issue in my electorate and for the eastern suburbs. Most cities in the world would have a large ring road. Melbourne needs to be able to build the east–west tunnel to be able to link the Eastern Freeway with the Tullamarine Freeway to allow Victorians to have a Melbourne ring road. It is something that people in the eastern suburbs need so they can get to the airport or go to Bendigo or Ballarat. People in Ballarat and Bendigo who need to come into the city also need it so that they can head south to the port of Melbourne or access the West Gate Bridge. It is needed by people who have to get to work on time or who want to get home from work so that they can spend more time with their kids. It is needed so we can move products around Victoria more efficiently and cheaply and achieve a massive increase in productivity. That is what the Andrews government needs to get its head around: the issue of increasing productivity. It is an important issue in this state. We do not have the natural mineral resources of other states. We rely on improving productivity.

The Napthine government had the right as an executive power to sign the east–west link contract. There is no question about that. To say it did not have that right is nonsense and has been proved as such. It is just nonsense to say that. The genesis of the east–west link was in the Eddington report, which was an idea put forward by former premier John Brumby when the then government wanted Sir Rod Eddington to look at the infrastructure needs for Victoria. He was asked to look at the transport needs of Melbourne and Victoria and at what would be required for a growing city such as Melbourne. The east–west link would be good not just

for Melbourne but also for Victoria, for the economy, for productivity and for standards of living.

It is interesting to look at who supported the submissions to the Eddington investigation and what they said. One submission addressed to the East-West Transport Options Review says:

Attached please find our submission on the east-west link needs assessment study ... undertaken by Sir Rod Eddington.

...

The west needs modern transport services to catch up with other parts of the city, to benefit the community, and to boost jobs and industrial development.

The submission was signed by the Honourable Julia Gillard, MP, the then federal member for Lalor; the Honourable Nicola Roxon, the federal member for Gellibrand; the Honourable Brendan O'Connor, MP, the federal member for Gorton; and the Honourable Bill Shorten, MP, the federal member for Maribyrnong. They were local members in the federal Parliament representing the western suburbs who thought it was a good idea when they made their submission to the Eddington investigation on 15 July 2008 for the east-west link to be built.

The submission also said it had to be 'a balanced, integrated approach', and we all agree with that. It has to be a combination of rail, road and cycling projects and everything else that goes with it. I reiterate that there was strong support for it by those four Labor members of the federal Parliament representing the western suburbs. It is interesting to note that the submission states:

As part of an integrated transport solution, the —

four MPs —

... support a cross city road link from the western suburbs to the Eastern Freeway.

There was very clear support from Bill Shorten that this project should go ahead.

Also — and there has been much talk about this — the Australian Workers Union (AWU) made a submission, which was undertaken by Bill Shorten and Cesar Melhem, which made it very clear that the east-west road tunnel needed to be built. That submission says:

The Australian Workers Union (AWU) believes that the new east-west link is crucial to jobs and economic growth. A new transport link from Melbourne's booming west to the south-east and eastern suburbs has the AWU's strong support because the Victorian economy relies on the efficient movement of freight and people. Hundreds of thousands of Victorian jobs depend on good transport links so it is crucial

that the state continues to invest in new transport infrastructure.

Bill Shorten has been very quiet on this issue. He said one thing when he was a union leader, but he is not saying a lot now that he is the Labor federal Leader of the Opposition.

There have been other comments put forward on this issue. Former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd gave strong support — as did the former Premier John Brumby — when in a joint press release he said:

Let me say again, what we are also doing with the Premier today is confirming our combined investment, \$40 million from the commonwealth, in a final engineering and design study of the east-west tunnel — what would become the next link in the urban metro system for Melbourne.

Then we have the ridiculous situation where when in opposition the Labor Party said that taxpayers would not have to pay any compensation if the east-west link was scrapped. There is a signed document. The validity of signed contracts is backed by hundreds of years of legal precedent. That is why people sign contracts.

When we were elected to govern in 2010 it would have been easy for us to tear up contracts relating to the desalination plant or the north-south pipeline, which were projects that we did not like. We did not like those projects and we did not support them, but they had contracts. The Baillieu and Napthine governments supported those projects because they had contracts delivered on by the previous government.

After saying that the consortium would not be paid compensation, the Premier goes on in his press release to say:

These arrangements, including the secret side deal, aren't worth the paper they're written on.

That is a great concern. An even greater concern is if you bring in legislation to scrap the compensation available, who would want to invest in Victoria? An overseas company coming in and signing a contract with the government would never, ever know whether that contract would be delivered on or whether it was making an agreement with the government. This occurs in African countries. Foreign investment goes into those countries and companies are duded on those deals by governments that override contracts. That is why many companies will not invest in many African countries.

I am embarrassed to say that if the Labor government brings in legislation to stop compensation for a contract that has been signed, this state's reputation interstate and overseas will never recover. We will always be

remembered as the state which has overridden a legal contract through legislation. That is not right. We know that not everyone in the Labor Party is strongly behind this decision, especially those with a strong understanding of legal issues. This is something we believe is wrong. We believe contract law should be upheld at every opportunity.

The other issue I would like to raise as part of my address-in-reply contribution is Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteers. I have worked closely with them over the last 22 years, and they do an outstanding job. This is about keeping Victoria safe. I was amused during the election campaign that whenever an announcement was made about CFA volunteers or the CFA, the United Firefighters Union (UFU) was always present. I could never understand that. If it was such good news for the CFA, why not have 20 or 50 CFA volunteers present to make that announcement? When I saw the now Premier at a UFU conference making an announcement about how much he was going to improve the CFA while standing next to the Victorian secretary of the UFU, Peter Marshall, I thought that was not good for CFA volunteers — not in a million years.

Announcements regarding the CFA are now being made, and it is all about payback for the UFU. There has been no consultation with the CFA or CFA volunteers. The problem is that if you put more full-time firefighters into those CFA stations, then a lot of the volunteers are going to say, 'I am not needed anymore' and they will go. This is something on which we will need to hold the Andrews government to account.

This is an issue of surge capacity. Surge capacity is when you have 30 000 or 40 000 volunteers, there is a major fire, such as those which occurred on Black Saturday, and you are able to call up tens of thousands of CFA volunteers. If these volunteers say, 'I am no longer required because they have now got full-timers in the CFA stations', then those volunteers will go and spend more time with their kids at soccer, footy, netball, tennis or whatever it may be. You lose that surge capacity. Once you lose the surge capacity of those tens of thousands of CFA volunteers, they will never come back. They tried to do something similar in California — they were going to have more paid people. I am a strong supporter of being able to have volunteers and full-timers working at the same stations. However, if you try to push out the volunteers, it is going to be wrong.

The emergency management commissioner, Craig Lapsley, needs to have the ability to call up firefighters from Parks Victoria and the department formerly

known as the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) and also have CFA volunteers on stand-by to put out fires. This is about keeping Victoria safe. I hope the Andrews government takes into serious consideration this issue of being able to work with the volunteers to make sure we have that surge capacity. If you are just going to rely on the UFU and the full-time firefighters at the CFA, the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, Parks Victoria and what was DEPI, then we will be in all sorts of difficult situations during summertime and other high fire danger periods.

I thank and congratulate all volunteers in the emergency services, whether it be the Victoria State Emergency Service, the lifesavers, St John's Ambulance, the Australian Red Cross or the Victorian Council of Churches, who do an almighty job. They all play an important role in the emergency services. It is important that the Andrews government works closely with every single one of these volunteer groups. Victoria, along with California, is one of the highest fire danger areas in the world, and we need volunteers to work with us to keep us safe.

**Business interrupted under sessional orders.**

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Division lists

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I inform the house that in the division which took place earlier today on the question that the debate on the address-in-reply be adjourned, the Clerk has identified a discrepancy between the number of members present and the total number of votes cast as notified by the Government Whip. Upon investigation it was found that the government noes should have been 44 rather than 45. The Clerk will make the necessary corrections to the record of the division.

### DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Before calling for questions without notice, I wish to acknowledge in the gallery the former member for Macedon, Joanne Duncan. Welcome.

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

#### Country Fire Authority credit cards

**Mr BATTIN** (Gembrook) — My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services. Is the minister aware that as a consequence of her removal of Country Fire

Authority (CFA) credit cards CFA volunteers on strike teams will have to pay out of their own pockets to fuel CFA tankers?

**Ms GARRETT** (Minister for Emergency Services) — I thank the member for his question. This is brought to you by a member of the previous government that presided over a credit card system at the Country Fire Authority, and — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr Battin** — On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question would appear to be about the issue of credit cards — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Minister for Tourism and Major Events and other government members will come to order.

**Mr Battin** — The point of order is on relevance in relation to the question, which is about credit card issues and volunteers now, not referring back to the previous government. If government members have nothing to say about their government, they should just sit down.

**Ms Allan** — On the point of order, Speaker, I urge you to rule the point of order out of order. In *Rulings from the Chair* — —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Ms Allan** — I do, because it should be ruled out of order.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Leader of the House, through the Chair.

**Ms Allan** — In *Rulings from the Chair*, a ruling made by Speaker Maddigan states:

In answering questions, ministers can refer to the situation of the state when they took office ...

That is clearly what the minister was doing. She was very appropriately setting the context for this important issue.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! There is no point of order. The minister had just begun, but I do ask the minister to come to answering the question.

**Ms GARRETT** — There is a very important context as to how this credit card situation arose. Under the previous government hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent by senior managers of the CFA at

some of the finest restaurants in town, many on volunteers. It was the work of the then opposition through freedom of information and hard work that brought this to light. The former minister expressed his horror at these expenses — —

**Mr Andrews** — From Melbourne Park.

**Ms GARRETT** — From Melbourne Park. In expressing his horror at these expenses he called for those credit cards to be suspended while an investigation went on. The impression given was that those cards had been suspended, all 25 of them, from senior managers. Upon coming to government, when I asked some questions as the minister, I found out that there were 800 credit cards still floating around the system. No checks had been done on that and no review had been done of those cards. On top of that, we had hundreds of dollars spent on car parking, we had millions — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Government members will come to order. The Premier will come to order.

**Mr R. Smith** — My point of order, Speaker, is on relevance. The question was about CFA volunteers, not about the CFA executive. It is the CFA volunteers who are out there paying for these things out of their own pockets.

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

**Ms GARRETT** — Absolutely, Speaker, because upon becoming minister and discovering that the previous government had not advised the public that there were 800 of these credit cards — it went well beyond senior management — car parking, food, all of these issues, and — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr Battin** — On a point of order, Speaker, in relation to relevance yet again, we are talking about volunteers and not the executive. It is the volunteers, by the admission of the minister then, who are now paying for their own fuel and food. I think the minister needs to explain to the volunteers why she will not fix this situation to ensure that volunteers do not have to pay — —

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member has made his point of order. He would know that it is not necessary to repeat the question or to refer to the minister's response.

**Ms GARRETT** — I will continue answering the question, which is that we have absolutely — —

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I have not yet called the minister to continue answering the question. I ask the minister to come back to answering the question.

**Ms GARRETT** — This government has absolutely no intention of making volunteers pay for fuel or food. Proper expenses will be covered. You are wrong. You are absolutely wrong. At the end of the fire season, given the number of cards that were flying around, we made the very responsible and appropriate decision to cancel those cards while the CFA came up with a better system for dealing with reasonable and appropriate expenses.

But, yes, the party is over; 800 cards is far too many. The sorts of things that those cards were being spent on — the entertainment, the restaurants — did not accord with community opinion and did not accord with the appropriate use of taxpayers money. Of course we will make sure that volunteers expenses are covered appropriately, but having that many cards flying around the system is simply not appropriate.

*Supplementary question*

**Mr BATTIN** (Gembrook) — In reference to the answer given by the minister just then, I now ask the minister: does she believe it appropriate and fair that a volunteer is out of pocket for lunch and water whilst on a strike team for 90 days waiting for reimbursement from the CFA? Does she believe that is fair for volunteers protecting our state?

**Ms Allan** — On a point of order, Speaker, I am sure the minister would be pleased to dispatch with the supplementary question; however, the question does not accord with *Rulings from the Chair* that — —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Ms Allan** — In your opinion it might, but in *Rulings from the Chair* it states that questions should not seek opinion and should not seek a solution to a hypothetical proposition. You could be generous, Speaker, I am sure, and allow the member to reword his question, but as it stands, it does not accord with those rulings.

**Mr Clark** — On the point of order, Speaker, as I understood the honourable member's question, he was not talking about a hypothetical situation; he was talking about his understanding of how the current regime that has been put in place by the minister operates. Therefore the question is not hypothetical.

**Mr Merlino** — On the point of order, Speaker, the member for Gembrook asked the minister, 'Does she believe'. That is seeking an opinion and is out of order. The member should be provided the opportunity to rephrase his question, but asking if a minister believes in something or not is seeking an opinion.

**Mr R. Smith** — On the point of order, Speaker, I refer you to sessional order 6.1, which says:

At the conclusion of each answer to an oral question without notice, the questioning member may ask the responding minister a supplementary question to elucidate or clarify the answer.

It was very clear that the member for Gembrook was referring to the answer that the minister gave and in his supplementary question was seeking to elucidate or clarify the answer.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I ask the member for Gembrook to rephrase the question.

**Mr BATTIN** — How does the minister defend the policy, given that volunteers are now required to pay for their own food and water whilst on strike teams and wait 90 days for reimbursement? Why should volunteers be out of pocket for a 90-day period while defending the state?

**Ms GARRETT** (Minister for Emergency Services) — It is not our policy. You are wrong. You left an almighty mess that we had to — —

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The minister will sit down. It is Thursday, but I call on the minister to speak through the Chair and to resume answering the supplementary question as put to her.

**Ms GARRETT** — Through you, Speaker, those opposite left an almighty mess at senior management, career and volunteer levels. We are cleaning up that mess. We are cleaning up 800 credit cards that were flying around doing heaven knows what. We will make sure that there is a fair system in place that looks after our volunteers as opposed to the rorts that were going on on the other side.

**Ministers statements: Berwick College**

**Mr MERLINO** (Minister for Education) — I rise to inform the house of measures being taken to support students and families at Berwick College after serious charges were laid against a former teacher. Statements were issued this morning by Victoria Police and the Department of Education and Training regarding this matter. Victoria Police has stated that it has charged a man with a number of offences following an

investigation into allegations of upskirting and possession of child pornography.

Police have further stated that the 61-year-old man was charged on 70 counts of child sex-related offences. During the investigation police did not identify any contact offending and were unable to identify any individual victims. As this matter is now before the courts, I am not able to speak further about the details of the case.

This is deeply distressing news for the Berwick secondary college community. I am advised that this person has not been at the school since these allegations came to light two years ago; he was immediately suspended and subsequently terminated. I have spoken to the principal to assure her and the school community that they have the support of my department for as long as they need. I have also spoken to the local member, the member for Gembrook, regarding the matter.

As a father, I can understand how deeply distressing this news is for the past and present students of Berwick secondary college, their families and school staff. The welfare of students is our utmost priority, and we are taking every step to ensure that the students, families and school community are supported during this difficult time.

Dedicated allied health staff, including psychologists, social workers and counsellors, as well as departmental staff are on site at the school. I reiterate that support will remain in place as long as the school community requires it. A dedicated 1800 number has been established for students and parents, and I have shared that with the member for Gembrook on his request. I encourage students and families to seek out any help or support they need.

### **Fire services property levy**

**Mr BATTIN** (Gembrook) — My question is again to the Minister for Emergency Services. Can the minister inform the house whether the United Firefighters Union has approached the government seeking boundary changes between Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) and Country Fire Authority (CFA) areas?

**Ms GARRETT** (Minister for Emergency Services) — I thank the member for his question. I can inform the house that this issue has not been raised with me by the United Firefighters Union at all.

### *Supplementary question*

**Mr BATTIN** (Gembrook) — Will the minister absolutely rule out any boundary changes between MFB and CFA areas across Melbourne or creating MFB regions in regional cities?

**Ms GARRETT** (Minister for Emergency Services) — We are delivering on our election commitments, none of which involve boundary changes and none of which involve the amalgamation of the Country Fire Authority and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The minister has concluded her answer and government and opposition members will allow the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence to make a ministers statement.

### **Ministers statements: Royal Commission into Family Violence**

**Ms RICHARDSON** (Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence) — Victoria's first Royal Commission into Family Violence has been charged with the task of identifying practical solutions to eliminate the harm caused by family violence — a harm borne predominately by women and children. This critically important initiative has been given the broadest possible terms of reference as our Labor government wanted a root-and-branch examination of a system that has long been broken. One of the key features of the terms of reference is a call on the commission to establish a means to evaluate and measure the success of strategies, frameworks, policies, programs and services put in place to stop family violence.

The release today of the crime statistics as they pertain to family violence is a chilling reminder of the scale of the problem we face. Family-related incidents have continued to rise, up 8.2 per cent, an increase of 6.2 per cent from the previous year and a 70 per cent increase from 2010. That is 68 134 incidents that police attended over the last 12 months. But these statistics tell only part of the story. We know that family violence remains a significantly underreported crime. The crime statistics therefore give us an important indication of where we are from a police and crime perspective, but there are other measures that we need to understand, record and respond to if we are to tackle this terrible crime.

The royal commission provides us an opportunity to undertake this critically important work. We must remember too that the crime statistics can blur our vision of the true human toll that is paid as a

consequence of family violence. It is a toll often paid for over a lifetime. For children in particular, the consequences of family violence can be profound. I know every member in this house wants to see a different set of statistics, a different human outcome, a change in our society, a change in our culture and an end to family violence. The royal commission is a critically important step to this end.

### Fire services

**Ms RYAN** (Euroa) — My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services. Will the minister rule out any increase in the fire services levy to pay for the United Firefighters Union's log of claims?

**Ms Allan** — On a point of order, Speaker, I am sure the minister is very happy to dispatch the Dorothy Dixers coming from those opposite. However, the issue of the administration of the fire services property levy is the responsibility of the Treasurer, not the Minister for Emergency Services, and therefore the member for Euroa is asking the question of the wrong minister and it should be ruled out of order.

**Mr Clark** — On the point of order, Speaker, the minister has accepted responsibility in public comments already in relation to the handling of the log of claims by the United Firefighters Union (UFU). The minister is also the minister responsible for the framing of the budget of the Country Fire Authority, and therefore the minister is well in a position to know whether any change to that budget as a result of responding to the log of claims by the UFU will flow through to the fire services levy. It is therefore a question that is completely appropriate to be asked of the minister.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I ask the member for Euroa to refer the question to the Treasurer, who is, I understand, the responsible minister.

**Ms RYAN** — My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services. Will the minister — —

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I ask the member for Euroa to refer the question to the appropriate minister.

**Ms RYAN** — May I rephrase, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** — The member may rephrase the question but refer it to the appropriate minister. I am advising her that the appropriate minister is the Treasurer.

**Ms RYAN** — My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer rule out any increase in the fire services

levy to pay for the United Firefighters Union's log of claims?

**Mr PALLAS** (Treasurer) — I thank the member for her question and also for the opportunity to get myself prepared for this one. The government has no plans to make substantial alterations to the fire services property levy.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The opposition will allow the Treasurer to respond.

**Mr PALLAS** — But let us be very clear: the community needs to be confident that the burden of funding our fire services is fairly and equitably shared. We know that we are committed to ensuring that this process operates fairly and equitably. Those opposite might not have heard, but we have publicly indicated that a review is underway.

Why would there be a review? That would be because in opposition we introduced a bill into this place — no secret — that sought to make sure that the fire services property levy lived up to its so-called aspirations of being fairer and simpler, which of course the coalition voted against. The coalition members are against fairness. They are also against simplicity, which is surprising given how simple they are.

**Mr Clark** — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is debating the question. I ask you to bring him back to the question, which related to increases arising from the United Firefighters Union log of claims.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The minister has concluded his answer.

### *Supplementary question*

**Ms RYAN** (Euroa) — Will the Treasurer give a guarantee that there will be no reduction in capital expenditure for volunteer fire stations or the fire truck replacement program to pay for the United Firefighters Union log of claims?

**Mr PALLAS** (Treasurer) — Let me assure the member that those on this side of the house actually appreciate the quality job that our fire services perform. We will see, and members will see in the upcoming budget, as we promised at the last election, an improvement in fire services going forward.

### Ministers statements: east–west link

**Mr PALLAS** (Treasurer) — I rise to give the house new information and of course action around

developments concerning negotiations with the east–west consortium and the east–west link project. The government is negotiating in good faith, and it is important to note that it is making progress — and I want to be very clear to the house. Let me remind the house of the context of this project and the arrangements that were entered into. The project was a dud from the beginning. The project was shrouded in secrecy. The business case was a sham. Now it appears that the consortium wrote the first draft of the treacherous side letter. It wrote its own brief. It sought it, it drafted it and you squibbed it. You squibbed — —

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Treasurer will address his remarks through the Chair.

**Mr PALLAS** — Through the Chair, the side letter is an obscenity. It is a malfeasance of public office. We know it was an act of treachery against the Victorian people. It is a grotesque abuse of public office.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr PALLAS** — If arrogance consumed oxygen, those opposite would have sucked the life out of the Victorian economy years ago — and they gave it a red-hot go with this side letter.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Government members and opposition members will know that it is Thursday today. We all are looking forward to the end of it, but I need to be able to hear the Treasurer. If I am unable to hear the Treasurer, I will not be able to make any rulings when and if they are raised by the opposition. I ask the Treasurer to continue, and I ask the opposition, including the Leader of the Opposition, to allow the Treasurer to continue.

**Mr PALLAS** — Seemingly allowing the consortium to demand and then have a shot at drafting its own compensation side letter shows just how treacherous and cavalier those opposite were when it came to dealing with Victoria’s interests.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I can understand that the opposition may wish to silence the government on this issue, and I can understand that the government may wish to silence the opposition. But both should not silence the opportunity of the Treasurer to speak and the Chair to hear it. The Treasurer will continue in silence.

**Mr PALLAS** — Never again should party political considerations consume the public interest, as those opposite showed. This side letter will live in infamy. It sought to encumber the people of Victoria — —

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

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr Pallas** — On a point of order, Speaker, I understand the member for Malvern used unparliamentary language, and I ask him to withdraw.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Has the member for Malvern used unparliamentary language? I have not heard it. The member for Malvern has indicated that he has not used unparliamentary language. I accept that at this point, but I remind all members that unparliamentary language is not acceptable, nor will it be tolerated by the Chair.

### Political donations

**Ms SANDELL** (Melbourne) — My question is to the Minister for Planning. Given that Victoria’s political donation laws are some of the slackest in the Western world, with former Speaker Ken Coghill recently describing us as ‘lagging severely compared with most contemporary jurisdictions’, can the planning minister explain to the Victorian people why he recently told the Property Council of Victoria why he will not ban political donations from property developers?

**Mr WYNNE** (Minister for Planning) — I thank the member for Melbourne for her question. This question is not a matter for the Minister for Planning. It is in fact a matter for the Special Minister of State, who has direct responsibility for these matters. I will refer her question to the Special Minister of State for his consideration.

### Supplementary question

**Ms SANDELL** (Melbourne) — In that case, given that we will not know about the disclosure of political donations from property developers until next February, will the Minister for Planning tell us how much personally was received by himself for his campaign or others in the government from property developers?

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Government members! The Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing is warned. I rule the member’s question out of order.

**Ministers statements: east–west link**

**Mr PALLAS** (Treasurer) — I rise to update the house on further new action and developments on negotiations with the east–west link consortium and the financial close arrangements for the east–west link project. As I have previously stated, the government is negotiating and making progress in those negotiations. The member for Malvern and those opposite treated Victorians with contempt with the imposition of this — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I warn the member for Malvern. The opposition will come to order and so will government members. The Treasurer is entitled to make a statement in absolute silence. I ask the house to cooperate.

**Mr PALLAS** — This project was dealt with in obscene haste. The financiers — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr Clark** — On a point of order, Speaker, I raise with you sessional order 7, and again this is an issue that goes to the interpretation and application of new sessional orders. As I understand it, the statement the Treasurer is setting out to make is on substantially, if not exactly, the same topic as his previous statement. I raise with you for your consideration whether, in this circumstance, it falls within the definition of sessional order 7. Firstly, on the question of whether it is new or it has previously been canvassed by the minister, and secondly, because the sessional orders say that a minister may seek the call to make a statement of up to 2 minutes on a particular matter, which implies the minister is not at leave to make multiple statements on the same topic. Therefore I ask you to rule that the minister is not entitled to make a second statement on the same topic.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The minister is entitled to make a second statement provided that second statement is different from the first statement. I invite the minister to explain how the second statement is different from the first.

**Mr PALLAS** — The second statement relates to the financial close arrangement, not the side letter. These are two substantially different matters. Members opposite might not have heard about it because the financial close arrangement is new. They kept it secret from Victorians, but we have seen it broadcast live in the media today. This house has a right to know of their fraud and their obscenity.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I call the minister back to order and to continue making his statement.

**Mr PALLAS** — We know the financiers made it clear that financial close was not required until 5 December, well after Victorians had voted, but those opposite did not care.

**Mr Watt** — On a point of order, Speaker, I refer you to sessional order 7, particularly where it says:

... new government initiatives, projects and achievements.

The Treasurer is talking about something from 5 December, or potentially before then. That is clearly not new. He is talking about a date back in December and something that was signed under a previous government. It is not new business, so I say to you that the statement is out of order and I ask you to have him sit down.

**Mr Pearson** — On the point of order, Speaker, I draw your attention to a ruling by one of your predecessors from chapter 20, part 2 in *Rulings from the Chair 1920–2014*:

... Points of order must not be used to deliberately disrupt the proceedings ...

I ask you to consider that.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I do not uphold the point of order raised by the member for Burwood.

**Mr PALLAS** — These matters directly affect the efficient management of the negotiations, but more than that, they directly affect the wellbeing of the state of Victoria. The former government sped to financial close. It was an act of treachery. It was also a clear sign that members opposite refused to accept the views of the people of Victoria.

**Mr Clark** — On a point of order, Speaker, I draw your attention to the ruling you made on the first day when these ministers statements were introduced — namely, that it was in order for a minister to spend a short period setting the scene and explaining the context of the statement, but having done that the minister needed to come to outline what consisted of the new government initiatives, projects or achievements. There are now only 44 seconds remaining of the minister’s statement. I ask you to draw him to describing what the new government initiative or other matter is.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I uphold the point of order. The minister will come back to making his statement.

**Mr PALLAS** — What is new is that we will not be compromising the rights of the people of Victoria, as those opposite did every day they were in government. They ran up costs and expenses — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Questions and statements interrupted.**

## SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

### Member for Hastings

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Under standing order 124, the member for Hastings will remove himself from the chamber for half an hour.

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

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

### Ministers statements: east–west link

**Questions and statements resumed.**

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I call on the minister to come back and, in the spirit of sessional order 7 and in good faith, continue.

**Mr PALLAS** (Treasurer) — This action has materially affected the negotiations. Why has it materially affected them? Because they allowed an enormous drawdown of capital before the people of Victoria had an opportunity to express a view. It is an obscenity, and it was an act of treachery by those opposite.

### Country Fire Authority station upgrades

**Mr GUY** (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services — sadly, not to the Treasurer. Can the minister inform the house why she has halted works on fully funded upgrades to Country Fire Authority (CFA) stations at Narre Warren East, Labertouche and Yeungroon?

**Ms GARRETT** (Minister for Emergency Services) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. As the Leader of the Opposition would know, the way in which these fire stations are dealt with is that they are rolled out in consultation with the government and the CFA program, and we will be doing that in line with our election commitments.

### Supplementary question

**Mr GUY** (Leader of the Opposition) — Following on from the minister's answer, is this not just another example of a government cutting back CFA resources in order to pay back the United firefighters Union for its exorbitant log of claims?

**Ms GARRETT** (Minister for Emergency Services) — Fair dinkum! The Leader of the Opposition may have learnt something but clearly not that going to war with the firefighters did not work out too well for those opposite. The answer is no.

### Ministers statements: ambulance services

**Ms HENNESSY** (Minister for Health) — I rise to inform the house of the government's response to the Auditor-General's report that was tabled in this chamber this morning on emergency services response times. This report is damning of the previous government and particularly damning of its administration of emergency services. The Auditor-General found that Ambulance Victoria's statewide response times deteriorated from 19 minutes for 90 per cent of cases in July 2009 to 22 minutes in January 2012 and remained at that rate until 2014. This confirms the former Liberal government's absolute disregard for emergency services and ambulance services in this state because it did nothing.

Of course this is not news to us, because we listen to paramedics. Paramedics had been telling us about this crisis in our ambulance services for some time. We listened to the families that have been hurt by this crisis. The Auditor-General's report confirms what the ambulance policy interim report — which I was delighted to release with the Premier last Saturday — has been saying for some time.

The Auditor-General is particularly scathing about the lack of transparency in respect of response times, because the previous Liberal government refused to release the response time data. I was delighted that in December 2014 this government — the new government, a Labor government — released that data, and indeed the Auditor-General's report commends those steps.

I thank the Victorian Auditor-General for his work on this important issue. We will be taking this information back to our ambulance policy and performance committee. This government remains dedicated to improving the crisis in our ambulance services, improving response times, treating paramedics with respect and improving health services in this state.

**Mr Battin** — On a point of order, Speaker, in relation to one of the answers given by the Minister for Emergency Services earlier on, and the reference to payment for volunteers and their not being out of pocket, I believe in the answer — I ask for referral back to *Hansard* — saying that volunteers will not be out of pocket at all during the period of time. To ensure that this is not misleading the house I would like to refer back to the CFA policy, which states — —

**The SPEAKER** — Order! It is not a point of order. I have dealt with this issue.

**Mr Battin** — I am asking you to review *Hansard*.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Gembrook will very succinctly come to the specific point of order or I will sit him down.

**Mr Battin** — Thank you very much, Speaker. I ask you to review *Hansard* in relation to an answer given by the minister that could potentially be misleading considering the CFA policy states that volunteers will be out of pocket for 90 days during that period of time.

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

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I warn the member for Gembrook. He is not to reflect on the Chair and the Chair's rulings.

**Mr Wynne** — On a point of order, Speaker, I would like raise a matter for your attention. It relates to the question raised by the member for Melbourne. It has been brought to my attention that the member for Melbourne, through social media, has been tweeting about proceedings of the house messages which do not accurately reflect what in fact happened in the house today. I seek your advice particularly in relation to this matter, which I bring to your attention because the question was a serious question which potentially impugned my integrity. This is a matter that I take very seriously.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr Wynne** — The member for Melbourne can laugh. You might think it is funny.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Minister for Planning will continue or will sit down.

**Mr Wynne** — Speaker, I seek your investigation of this particular tweet, which does not accurately reflect the proceedings of this house.

**Mr Hibbins** — On a point of order, Speaker, I suggest that this matter would be resolved if the minister simply answered the question.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! That is not a point of order.

**Ms Thomson** — On a point of order, Speaker, it might be worthwhile at this point to remind new members that the tweets they send from this chamber do not have privilege protection and members should be careful about what they tweet.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I am informed by the Clerk that this matter has been dealt with by the Standing Orders Committee in the past. The member must be aware that whatever has been tweeted is not covered by parliamentary privilege. I caution the member. I will take this on notice, and I will come back with an appropriate statement from the Chair to the house in relation to this matter.

## CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

### Croydon electorate

**Mr HODGETT** (Croydon) — (Question 117) The constituency matter I wish to raise is for the attention of the Minister for Sport and is on behalf of the Croydon Rangers Gridiron Club. The Croydon Rangers is a terrific club that is continually recognised locally and statewide for its achievements. Last year, on the day of the Maroondah Festival, I was fortunate enough to join club players, coaches and members of the committee to announce the coalition's commitment to fund a renovation of the clubrooms to enable spectators to be able to view the games from inside during the colder seasons. I will be taking that up with the Minister for Sport as a separate issue in due course.

However, on that same day the ALP candidate for Croydon headed over to the club shortly after I departed to announce that if an Andrews government were elected, the Croydon Rangers Gridiron Club would receive a defibrillator. The information I seek from the minister is an update on the implementation of this important election promise or when the club is likely to receive its defibrillator, so I can inform the club.

### Niddrie electorate

**Mr CARROLL** (Niddrie) — (Question 118) My constituency question is for the Minister for Public Transport. Our taxi industry has experienced rapid change and lots of reform following the Fels inquiry and the former government's legislative reforms that were pushed through the Parliament. During the last

Parliament we saw a breakdown of communication between the taxi industry and the former government, with regular protests from industry participants, including wheelchair accessible taxi licence holders, drivers and general licence holders. By any measure, there was upheaval in the industry following the Fels inquiry and the legislative reforms pushed through by the former government.

In the lead-up to last year's state election Labor promised it would establish a taxi and hire car industry ministerial forum to restore confidence and cooperation across the industry, bringing together regulators, industry participants and consumers around one table. On behalf of local drivers and taxi licence holders in my electorate, I ask the minister to provide an update on the promised taxi stakeholder forum.

### **Euroa electorate**

**Ms RYAN** (Euroa) — (Question 119) My constituency question is for the Minister for Ambulance Services. Last week I met with Rushworth residents who are concerned about the lack of ambulance services in their region. Rushworth is currently serviced by an ambulance station in Murchison. However, the paramedics there are often called out to incidents on the Hume Highway or indeed, as I have previously informed the house, to Nagambie, which also does not have an ambulance. When this occurs, the closest ambulance is located 45 minutes away in Shepparton, Kyabram or Bendigo. The ambulance from Murchison often arrives with only one paramedic on board, which means the ambulance has to wait for another paramedic to arrive before it can transport a patient in serious circumstances. Will the minister advise me of how the government intends to fix this situation?

### **Geelong electorate**

**Ms COUZENS** (Geelong) — (Question 120) I have a constituency question for the Minister for Ambulance Services. The information I seek relates to the importance of the interim report undertaken by the Ambulance Performance and Policy Consultative Committee. The issues confronting our paramedics over the past four years have been considerable. Under the previous government Geelong paramedics raised many concerns about rosters, ramping, response times and of course the bitter pay dispute. The Andrews Labor government is now providing an opportunity for the community to have input into this report, and I invite the Minister for Ambulance Services to attend a consultation forum in Geelong in the future.

### **Caulfield electorate**

**Mr SOUTHWICK** (Caulfield) — (Question 121) My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. On 22 December last year I wrote to the minister on behalf of residents regarding their concerns over a local planning issue in my electorate involving VicRoads. I have not yet received a response from the minister, despite a follow-up email sent on 16 March requiring urgent attention as the matter will be heard in the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal next week. The residents live in a small court off Dandenong Road. A developer is proposing to build a four-storey childcare centre on the block. My constituents are objecting to the proposed development due to the impacts to road safety in the area. I am advised that both the local council and VicRoads objected to the proposed development as a part of the planning approval process. However, VicRoads has without explanation recently withdrawn its objection. My constituents are concerned that the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal may approve the development in the absence of an objection by VicRoads. On behalf of residents, I ask the minister for an explanation of why VicRoads is withdrawing its objection and a clarification of the current view on the proposed development at 470 Dandenong Road.

### **Yan Yean electorate**

**Ms GREEN** (Yan Yean) — (Question 122) My constituency question is to the Minister for Public Transport. The action I seek is that she urgently fund needed improvements to the car park at Wallan train station following four years of neglect of the needs of long-suffering Wallan commuters.

### **Polwarth electorate**

**Mr MULDER** (Polwarth) — (Question 123) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Will the minister ensure that funding is provided in this year's state budget to upgrade the Anglesea roundabout? Funding would ensure that the government continues the coalition's commitment to the upgrade of the Great Ocean Road, in particular the Anglesea roundabout. The Anglesea and greater Great Ocean Road community sees this roundabout as the final choke point on the Great Ocean Road. In particular, members of the Anglesea community are greatly inconvenienced when traffic volumes increase over the holidays. The former government jointly funded the \$50 million upgrade of the Great Ocean Road with the commonwealth and provided funding for the soon-to-commence Fairhaven underpass and a major roundabout to accommodate the chocolatier

tourism initiative between Jan Juc and Anglesea. In government I had VicRoads develop concepts for the roundabout. Drawings which included a trafficable apron and an additional lane were prepared. The project should now move forward. All the hard work has been done. All it needs is the go-ahead from the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to provide the funding for the roundabout.

### **Narre Warren South electorate**

**Ms GRALEY** (Narre Warren South) — (Question 124) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and it concerns Narre Warren-Cranbourne Road, a road that is only now being upgraded following a community campaign that forced the previous Liberal government to finally take action. It took years of campaigning and thousands of signatures from local residents, but we secured this much-needed upgrade — an upgrade that Labor had committed to in 2010. This project will significantly ease congestion and improve road safety for many local residents. It will also allow the expansion of Casey Central shopping centre to finally go ahead. I have been advocating on behalf of local residents for the provision of much-needed community facilities as part of the expansion, especially a library. I hope the City of Casey is hard at work ensuring that these facilities are included in the redeveloped shopping centre. There have been negotiations for many years, and it is now time to deliver for the local community. I know local residents are eagerly awaiting the completion of this vital road project. I ask the minister to provide an update on the expected completion date for the upgrade of Narre Warren-Cranbourne Road.

### **Ferntree Gully electorate**

**Mr WAKELING** (Ferntree Gully) — (Question 125) I raise a matter for the Minister for Education concerning Knox Gardens Primary School in Wantirna South. The school currently has 286 students. It has been established for over 30 years and is ably led by principal Tracy Bancroft, a great leader of the school. Given the age of the school, many buildings are outdated and require ongoing maintenance. In 2014 the former government allocated \$330 000 to repair one of the school buildings. This involved repainting, installing new carpet, fixing cracked walls, repairing moved bricks and a number of other measures. However, at an inspection six months after the works were done it was identified that water was pooling under the newly repaired building. This was causing bricks to start moving and cracks to appear in the newly painted walls. Upon further inspection it was discovered that the school's entire drainage system was

blocked. The school's drainage system is made up of old terracotta piping which is broken in multiple places, causing water to pool under many of the school buildings, the worst being the prep classroom, the school hall and gym and the art room. On behalf of the school, I ask the minister to address this issue by providing the school with \$200 000 of much-needed money.

### **Oakleigh electorate**

**Mr DIMOPOULOS** (Oakleigh) — (Question 126) My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Public Transport. The Huntingdale train station in the electorate of Oakleigh is a major transport hub in the south-east. Thousands of locals as well as Monash University students and staff use a bus service from this station every day. Prior to the 2010 election Labor committed to build a bus interchange at Huntingdale station to provide a safer and more accessible area for bus passengers. The current facilities are, quite frankly, appalling. This decision was incredibly popular with locals and Monash University, which has been campaigning for many years for appropriate public transport. The previous coalition government made no commitment to this area. Last year Labor again pledged to build this incredibly important bus interchange. I seek advice and an update from the minister on the government's commitment to build the Huntingdale bus interchange.

## **GOVERNOR'S SPEECH**

### **Address-in-reply**

**Debate resumed.**

**Debate adjourned on motion of Ms SPENCE (Yuroke).**

**Debate adjourned until later this day.**

## **LEGAL PROFESSION UNIFORM LAW APPLICATION AMENDMENT BILL 2015**

*Second reading*

**Debate resumed from 25 February; motion of Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).**

**Government amendment circulated by Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) under standing orders.**

**Mr PESUTTO** (Hawthorn) — I am pleased to speak on this bill today. I advise that the coalition will

not be opposing the bill or the house amendment that was circulated just a few moments ago.

Victoria's legal profession is one of Victoria's great strengths. Our great state has many fine attributes — its cultural diversity, its history of democracy and stable government, its health system and its school system. Victoria boasts many great strengths. Among those strengths is Victoria's reputation for integrity in government on the whole. No jurisdiction is free of imperfections, but compared with jurisdictions both domestically and internationally, Victoria's legal system is a standout for many reasons, not only because of its reputation for integrity but also its probity, stability and certainty with which justice can be secured. This is not always the case, but in most cases it is. The house has spoken about that in recent weeks during debate on the Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015, during which we had a very heated debate. On the whole, Victorians and those from elsewhere who come into contact with Victoria's judicial and legal system find it to be a system that can be relied upon to deliver justice in the best possible circumstances.

The law in Victoria remains as popular as ever for students of law. It is pleasing to see that in recent weeks Victoria welcomed its eighth law school, with the opening of Swinburne Law School. It will be taking around 70 students this financial year and have a focus on commercialisation of intellectual property and other related subjects. Swinburne University of Technology adds to the strong contingent of Victorian law schools, led by Melbourne and Monash universities and joined by others that have since commenced offering courses to law students. That is important.

As a lawyer and somebody who has spent many years in practice, it is pleasing to know that the law remains popular. Some people say that having increasing numbers of law students is a problem. I can understand that having more law students in our system is a challenge, but I take a totally different view. I think it is an endorsement of the law as a discipline, an endorsement of our law schools and an endorsement of the opportunities that beckon for graduates of our law schools. It should be something that we welcome and something that we promote on behalf of Victoria. As I mentioned a few moments ago, the fact that Victoria has welcomed its eighth new law school at Swinburne is a sign that there is a demand for studies in this discipline. This is something that we should welcome and not be frightened of. Those law schools each bring something unique to our system of law and our judicial system in general. I pay tribute to them.

I have had occasion to meet with the deans of some of those law schools in recent weeks. I met with Bryan Horrigan, the dean of Monash University's law school. We had a chat about its history and its centres for research and other studies. I met with Carolyn Evans, a contemporary of mine, who is the dean of Melbourne University's law school. Recently I also met with Dan Hunter, the dean of Swinburne Law School, who told me about his ambitious plans in its first year of providing studies. We have more graduates and more law schools. We have law schools in Victoria that are very distinguished, not only in the quality of the courses they provide but also in the additional work they do, including their research and involvement in other issues, including justice issues and political issues that bear on the law and the rights and obligations of our citizens.

In addition to having a legal profession which is growing, our legal profession faces challenges from an international environment where access to justice is more global. Clients will be looking for advice for activities that they are conducting on a global scale. They may not be wedded to the idea of working in one particular jurisdiction. Law firms in Victoria and elsewhere are competing not only with each other but also with an increasingly global marketplace. We have seen many of those large law firms amalgamate, chop and change and adjust to the competitive pressures that an international market imposes on them. This is very important and we have to respond to it. One of the things that Victoria has done in response is to join with New South Wales to create a common legal services market. That is very important because it enables practitioners and customers of legal services and clients to obtain legal services with obligations on the providers of legal services to disclose costs. For law firms it will provide benefits because the administrative burdens on practice will be alleviated.

This is very important because Victoria's legal profession makes a profound contribution to our community and society. It does so in a number of ways. It provides great impetus to the economic activity of the state. Law firms operate at various levels of economic activity, from large-scale infrastructure projects through to family law, commercial and conveyancing matters. They are important to the vibrancy of our economy. Our law schools, professional bodies, graduates, jurists and judges all contribute to the cause of justice and democracy not only at home but also around the world — for example, many distinguished jurists and academics have participated in the debate about the two Australian citizens, Mr Chan and Mr Sukumaran, who face the death penalty overseas, and that contribution is something of which I think Victorians can be very

proud. Our judges are well represented on federal court benches, which again is a testament to the fine work, traditions and quality of our law schools, graduates and judges. All of this is important to a harmonised legal system.

Today we are talking about a bill which for the most part makes technical and typographical changes — and I will talk about those in a moment — but which also complements a great deal of reform that has occurred particularly over the last 11 years. In 2004 the discussion around greater harmony between legal jurisdictions really kicked off through the Council of Australian Governments process. Over the next eight or nine years the discussions between jurisdictions continued and it was in late 2013 — after all that — that just two jurisdictions persisted with the harmonising of their legal systems. They were, of course, Victoria and New South Wales. For practical purposes, their harmonisation represents around 75 per cent of the legal profession around Australia. However, it is unfortunate that other jurisdictions have not yet signed on to harmonisation in the way that New South Wales and Victoria have. I call upon those jurisdictions, in particular Western Australia and Queensland, to seriously reconsider their position and join a common legal services market because it will help all of us. Yes, there are costs involved in the harmonisation of state systems, but on the whole — like a rising tide lifts all ships — greater harmony between them will help all legal services markets in Australia, for the reasons I explained at the outset.

We live in an internationally competitive legal services market, and so the idea that Victorian practitioners still have to comply with different conditions in Western Australia or South Australia just does not make sense today. Given that Victoria and New South Wales, the two largest jurisdictions, have joined, it makes sense that that should be the case for everybody. There are wins for all jurisdictions that participate in harmonisation, so today, on behalf of the coalition, I call on those other jurisdictions to join the common legal services market that currently exists between New South Wales and Victoria.

I am pleased to advise that the coalition does not oppose the bill before the house. For the most part it makes minor and technical changes to the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act, schedule 1 of which contains the Legal Profession Uniform Law, which contains all of the details that will apply to legal services providers, whether they ply their trade and profession in Victoria or New South Wales. Those amendments that go to the substance of the bill tend to

relate, for the most part, to cost issues and information sharing between agencies.

As I mentioned a few moments ago, the bill before us is part of a process that really took off in December 2013 when New South Wales and Victoria signed an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) on a legal profession uniform framework. I pay tribute to the honourable member for Box Hill, as then Attorney-General, who with his counterpart in New South Wales developed that agreement and signed it in December 2013. It is that IGA which has served as the basis for the legislation which has since been enacted.

Victoria, as we all recall, was the host jurisdiction for the uniform law, and members who served in the previous Parliament will recall the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014 being passed with mirror legislation in New South Wales being passed later that year. New South Wales will host a number of the administrative bodies to be established by that uniform law, but each jurisdiction will retain its own regulatory agencies to carry out various functions on a local basis. It is pleasing to note that the common legal services market is scheduled to commence on 1 July this year, which does not leave other jurisdictions much time to join, but hopefully it will add some impetus around that so that they will seriously reconsider their positions and join the common legal services market that we have created with New South Wales as soon as possible.

In the main the new arrangements will make it simpler for lawyers to do business within and across the two jurisdictions, it will strengthen the standing of Australian lawyers in the face of international clients, as I foreshadowed earlier, and it will improve protection for clients. The scheme slashes red tape. Many hundreds of pages of regulations will be abolished as part of our move to a common legal services market with New South Wales. Importantly, it will enable lawyers to operate under a single, seamless set of laws.

It is important to recap that in October last year the new Legal Services Council was established, with members drawn from New South Wales and Victoria. That council has a number of responsibilities, but for the most part its key responsibilities are recommending future changes to the uniform framework, particularly as it is bedded down; obviously, making uniform rules that will support the uniform law; and, along with the commissioner for uniform legal services regulation, it will be responsible for regulation and issuing guidelines under the new scheme in related matters. It will play a key role in the new uniform legal services scheme,

which aims to reduce the complexity of legal services regulation.

I note the good work of the council's inaugural chair, the Honourable Michael Black, AC, QC, former Chief Justice of the Federal Court, and his fellow council members Fiona Bennett, Kim Boettcher, Steven Stevens and Brett Walker, SC. They have been ably assisted by Dale Boucher, CEO for the Legal Services Council and commissioner for uniform legal services regulation. Those important appointments bring together a mix of regulatory, financial, legal and other related skills and experience to the council.

The uniform scheme also establishes an admissions committee which includes judicial representatives nominated by New South Wales and Victorian chief justices. It is responsible for developing the admission rules — which will be important, obviously, for people who want to practise in both jurisdictions — and advising the council on matters relating to admissions. Local regulatory bodies, including professional associations, and legal services commissioners will continue to carry on their functions, as I said a moment ago, but the principal role will be to apply the uniform laws, rules and policies in each jurisdiction.

What will clients experience? They will experience the benefits of greater cost disclosure and the overarching obligation on legal service providers to only charge legal costs that are fair and reasonable. Law firms will benefit, obviously, from a single set of rules governing matters such as the requirement for maintaining and auditing trust accounts, which can be very burdensome when operating in different jurisdictions; continuing professional development requirements; and billing requirements. Firms seeking to engage foreign lawyers to undertake specialised legal work will benefit from a simplified process for admitting those foreign lawyers, which I know from experience is a very important innovation for law firms in Victoria and elsewhere that often have to engage foreign lawyers for their particular expertise in a given transaction.

Smaller firms, which do not have the vast resources of larger firms, and sole practitioners will also benefit from shorter disclosure forms, which can be provided as an alternative to full costs disclosure in matters where total legal costs will not exceed \$3000, and no cost disclosure where legal costs were not expected to exceed \$750. The scheme also makes it clear that in-house practitioners can act for related entities. In large corporations it can often be a matter of some confusion as to whether in-house counsel can provide advice to, for example, other employees who might be employed by related entities, or directors and

executives of those other entities. This will clarify that issue for them, and as I said before, prospective lawyers will know that operating in different jurisdictions will be made far easier. For those considering a career in the law — and we always encourage young people to do that, and even older people if they are interested — the knowledge that they will find it easier to practise elsewhere is very important.

Turning to a few clauses in the bill in particular — I will address the house amendment in a moment — I note for the record that clause 5 provides that the Victorian Legal Admissions Board is a designated local regulatory authority in respect of section 436. It is important to ensure that all the new bodies under the scheme are appropriately authorised to share information and exchange details with other jurisdictions.

I note that clause 14 repeals item 93.3 of schedule 2 to the principal act. Item 93.3 and item 93.2 amend existing provisions of the Supreme Court Act 1986 that confer jurisdictions on the Costs Court to conduct cost assessments under the Legal Profession Act 2004; and for cost reviews under the now repealed Legal Practice Act 1996. The amendment will make it clearer that, in addition to the jurisdiction the Costs Court has under the uniform law, it will continue to possess all of its powers in relation to assessments under the Legal Profession Act 2004 and cost reviews under the Legal Practice Act 1996, which are both repealed under the uniform act.

Clause 19 amends section 174 of the uniform law to clarify the use of the term 'total legal costs', and that is important because there may be some uncertainty as to whether total legal costs include or exclude GST and disbursements. As someone who practised law for many years, I know that it is often a matter of great frustration for clients if they are represented by a law firm but are not told of the various components of total legal costs, and they can be quite substantial. If you spend \$100 000 in a long-running piece of litigation, 10 per cent is a significant amount of money. Disbursements, particularly when experts are involved, can also add up substantially, particularly if they are technical experts, who charge quite significantly for their preparatory work and attendance at court.

Clause 22 deals with public consultation on draft admission rules. The clause removes the requirement for the admissions committee to invite written submissions on draft admission rules to be made to the Law Council of Australia, the Australian Bar Association or both. It removes some unnecessary administrative work that the admissions committee

would otherwise have to do. Clause 26 relates to information sharing, much like the clause I mentioned a few moments ago, to enable the appropriate performance of regulatory functions. They are the main clauses I wished to note for the record.

We have no objection to the house amendment; it appears to make perfect sense. It shows that Victoria is a little more innovative in catering for the demands and wishes of legal service providers and their clients. The innovation around incorporated legal practices in Victoria does not appear to have been taken up in New South Wales, but I understand, on advice received in a briefing on this, that one of the reasons for this house amendment is that Victoria's definition of 'law firm' is far broader than New South Wales's definition of 'law firm'. If this amendment were not made, there would be a number of legal service providers — for example, partnerships of incorporated legal practices — that might not be able to provide legal services in accordance with the uniform act and therefore not provide them at all. We think there is good sense in the house amendment and do not have any objection to it.

This bill is important to ensure that the common legal services market can commence on 1 July. It will ensure that the system can take off and provide all of the benefits that at the outset of my remarks I said are possible. We need to understand that Victoria's legal profession — its judiciary, its law schools and the cohort of law students coming out of those law schools — is a real strength for Victoria. It is something we should talk up, it is important to our economy and it is important to our conceptions of justice and democracy and important for the other work our law schools and jurists perform. I pay tribute to the former Attorney-General, the member for Box Hill, for the terrific work he did. I also acknowledge the work of the government before 2010 for the work it did through the Council of Australian Governments to try to make this come about. I acknowledge that work. I welcome the bill being brought into this house by the Attorney-General, and I advise that the coalition will not be opposing it.

**Mr PEARSON** (Essendon) — I rise to join the debate on the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Amendment Bill 2015. As the member for Hawthorn has advised, there is a house amendment. It inserts new section 9A, which goes to the meaning of 'law firm', being:

... a partnership consisting only of—

- (a) Australian legal practitioners; or

- (b) one or more Australian legal practitioners and one or more Australian-registered foreign lawyers; or
- (c) incorporated legal practices; or
- (d) one or more incorporated legal practices and one or more Australian legal practitioners; or
- (e) one or more incorporated legal practices and one or more Australian-registered foreign lawyers; or
- (f) one or more incorporated legal practices, one or more Australian legal practitioners and one or more Australian-registered foreign lawyers ...

New section 9A(2) states:

For the purposes of this Act and the Legal Profession Uniform Law (Victoria), a principal of a law practice that is referred to in paragraph (c) to (f) of the definition of *law firm* in subsection (1) includes an Australian legal practitioner who is a principal of an incorporated legal practice that forms part — —

**Mr Wakeling** — Acting Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the house.

**Quorum formed.**

**Mr PEARSON** — I was advising the house of the house amendment, which has the support of the opposition. I recognise the contribution of the member for Hawthorn.

The bill is important because it requires a law practice to disclose to its clients its expected costs in each matter. This is important because it helps new companies work out what their cost base might be when they are establishing their business. Understanding your cost base is a fundamental aspect of business. If you decide you want to go into business, you need to work out what your cost base will be on day one because the reality is you will incur those costs before any revenue starts to hit your account. If you are trying to start a business and seeking some advice from a lawyer, it is important that you be clear as to what your cost base might be. Similarly, if you are looking at selling a business, it is important that you understand what the costs might be — for example, getting a term sheet drafted or looking at a share sale agreement.

Sometimes in business you do quite well for yourself. You might set up a successful small business with well-established cash flows that is profitable for many years, and in those circumstances your legal costs for the sale of that business might be quite small in proportion to your revenue and the profitability of the business, but that is not always the case. With some smaller businesses the valuation of the business is more like one times EBIT — being earnings before interest

and tax — rather than five and a half, six or seven times EBIT, so you are not looking at large sale proceeds from your asset. If you are selling a small business, you might be looking at a sale of only \$50 000 or \$100 000, so you want to make sure from the get-go that you are clear about how much of your profits you will have to allocate to legal expenses. It is important that you are better able to better estimate what your cost base will be.

The bill is also important because it looks at harmonising the system of regulation of the legal profession between Victoria and New South Wales. This is just common sense. We are now part of a global economy, and it makes enormous sense for the two most powerful commercial jurisdictions in the country to have a unified and harmonised system of regulation of the legal system. I often regard commonwealth-state relations as being like the three legs of a stool, with the federal government, Victoria and New South Wales. If you take two out of the three, you take the nation with you, so this is an important step to make sure that we have a uniform and consistent approach. It is a vital agreement for national consistency.

The member for Hawthorn talked about the fact that there is a global economy. He also talked about reducing complexity, which is important. The changes in the legal profession in Victoria over the last five years in particular have been quite profound. My wife studied law and went to work for Clayton Utz. At the time she was applying for articles there were law firms operating such as Freehill Hollingdale and Page, Mallesons Stephen Jaques, and Phillips Fox. Who would have thought that in 2015 there would not be a Mallesons or a Phillips Fox? What happened to Freehill Hollingdale and Page? You could make an argument that if you set up your own law firm these days, it might be called Hollingdale Jaques Fox, for example.

Creating this national scheme is important because it reduces red tape. It also reflects how the law as it is practised in Australia, and particularly Melbourne, has changed. We are seeing a stratification of the legal profession. You no longer see small legal firms operating in suburban shopping centres, which were a hallmark of the profession in the 70s and 80s. The top six big Australian law firms do not exist anymore. They are under pressure and siege. The old model of having nice swanky offices at the top end of Collins Street and having very profitable senior associates who work hard to underpin the points of the equity partners so they can draw down an equity payment of \$1.5 million a year, as well as the expectation of a growing escalation of hourly rates, no longer applies. We are seeing real changes. Instead more smaller, niche firms and

single-firm operators are appearing. That reflects the more diverse nature of our economy. The stratified economy of a small number of very large employers working in a number of discrete industries no longer exists. Instead we need to take a multilayered approach to the diverse and diffuse industries that exist, and the legal profession needs to reflect that. Therefore it is entirely appropriate to create a regulatory framework that takes into account those levels of difference.

Providing a national uniform approach to the legal profession is an important step so that when foreign capital comes in and foreign companies come to Australia to invest, they have some sense that we are a unified nation. The reality is that Australia is worth probably 1 per cent of global trade. It does not make a lot of sense to have a multilayered and diffuse regulatory regime in place. It makes far more sense to try to have a uniform, consistent approach so that we are seen as a desirable place to invest foreign capital and a desirable place to do business with. Anything we can do to reduce that regulatory burden and to cut red tape to make it easier for foreign companies to invest is a very good thing.

Another important function of this bill is to provide consumers of legal services with greater protection through the creation of nationwide best practice standards and regulatory frameworks. People often see a lawyer at times of stress, hardship or concern, and when businesses see their lawyer, it is usually because they are in trouble. Providing some degree of protection, to try to alleviate the anxieties and stresses that people experience, is an important step. From that point of view, this bill takes an important step in the right direction. It is part of our embracing of the global economy and reducing the regulatory burden. I commend the bill to the house.

**Mr McCURDY** (Ovens Valley) — I am delighted to rise to make a contribution to debate on the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Amendment Bill 2015. I endorse the comments of the member for Hawthorn regarding the integrity of the legal system, which is of paramount importance in both Victoria and Australia. As Victoria welcomes new law schools and encourages more graduates to enter the legal arena, it is important that the legal system ensures that integrity remains paramount.

This bill is essentially technical, but it is part of a reform of the legal profession that has been occurring for nearly 11 years. Harmony between Victoria and New South Wales in the legal industry delivers many benefits. It delivers benefits to clients, law firms and other firms seeking to engage specialists and foreign

lawyers. The member for Essendon spoke about foreign investment and ensuring that the laws of Victoria and New South Wales are in harmony so that people coming to Australia recognise that there are laws common to both states and they do not have to chop and change their approach. We encourage other states to come on board, as the member for Hawthorn suggested, ideally including Queensland and Western Australia, so that these laws can become more uniform. As the member for Hawthorn also said, we are not opposing the bill, and we have no concerns with the amendment.

The bill makes various minor and technical amendments to the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014. This is the start of a process that will lead to the commencement of the act, which is scheduled for 1 July this year. When this occurs the act, together with equivalent legislation in New South Wales, will create a coordinated system for the regulation of the legal profession in Victoria and New South Wales. Hallelujah! We will have systems in those two states in harmony. I live on the border between the two states. I wish I had a dollar for every person who raises with me the cross-border issues — and not just in the law, which this bill deals with. There are also cross-border problems in health, education, transport, and even for tradesmen. The list goes on in terms of the differences in regulations between the two states, so is terrific to see some harmony in the area of law reform.

I will provide an example of these cross-border issues, even if it does not relate to legal issues. Cobram and Yarrowonga have towns immediately across the border from them in Barooga and Mulwala respectively. In terms of health, if a New South Wales resident goes to a hospital in Cobram, it is very difficult for that person to then get home care in New South Wales. The same goes for Yarrowonga and Mulwala. Making sure our laws are reformed and we can get harmony with New South Wales will be a terrific step forward.

The beauty of the scheme is that it has the scope to be expanded to all other states and territories, which could ultimately create a national scheme for the regulation of the Australian legal profession. There is no doubt that ideally that is where we would like to be. There would then be the potential to deliver significant benefits not only to the legal profession through the removal of red tape but importantly also to consumers of legal services through the creation of a nationwide best practice standards regulatory framework.

I will touch on some of the main provisions in the bill. Clause 26 enables the disclosure by some Victorian

bodies of information obtained in administering the uniform law to bodies in states and territories where the uniform law does not apply. Clause 5 widens the range of bodies that in certain circumstances can share information with Australian or foreign authorities and courts. Clause 19 amends section 174 of the uniform law to clarify that ‘total legal costs’ exclude GST and disbursements and that uniform standard disclosure forms may require the disclosure of GST and disbursements.

To take that a little further, the amendment clarifies the use of the term ‘total legal costs’ so that the provisions, which are a critical consumer protection element of the act, are absolutely clear and can be understood by legal practitioners and their clients. Even more specifically, the amendment makes it clear that the term ‘total legal costs’ is intended to exclude GST and disbursements. This will help to resolve an inconsistency with the term ‘legal costs’ which is defined to always be inclusive of disbursements, which can create some confusion. Furthermore, a new uniform standard disclosure form will be introduced which can be used for inexpensive matters. It may require the disclosure of GST and disbursements. Although this form is currently under development by the Legal Services Council, it is planned to apply to matters under \$3000.

It is important to recognise the contribution of the member for Box Hill, because it was on his watch that the intergovernmental agreement with New South Wales was signed in order to get the ball rolling. It is important that we started the process, and I am delighted that we have made it to the stage we are at today. The intergovernmental agreement is intended to create a common legal services market across the two states, and between them the two states have almost 75 per cent of all lawyers. They are the two prime movers when it comes to lawyers. I do not know what that says about Victoria and New South Wales — whether we need more or less lawyers — but it certainly says we have the lion’s share of the lawyers in this country. The new arrangements will make it simpler for lawyers to do business within and across state borders. As I said, the scheme slashes red tape — hundreds of pages of legal regulations — and standardises consumer rights, complaint processes and new consumer remedies across the two states. We look forward to any changes that will assist us to operate across borders.

Other jurisdictions have been encouraged to join the scheme, and they will be able to do so without the need for changes to the framework or legislation. Obviously by doing this, lawyers and clients in New South Wales and Victoria will be able to operate under a single,

seamless set of laws, rules and policies, and that in itself is a cause for celebration.

The council's first chair is the Honourable Michael Black, AC, QC, a former Chief Justice of the Federal Court. With him are four council members: Fiona Bennett, a well-credentialed member of the Legal Services Board in Victoria since 2008 and chairperson of it since 2013; Kim Boettcher, a lawyer with experience in corporate governance, consumer advocacy and practice in both the UK and Australia; Steven Stevens, who was nominated by the Law Council of Australia and is a former president of the Law Institute of Victoria and director of the Law Council of Australia; and Bret Walker, SC, who was the nominee of the Australian Bar Association and is a former president of both the Law Council of Australia and the New South Wales Bar. These appointments bring an important mix of regulatory, financial, legal and leadership experience to the council.

Local regulatory bodies, including professional associations and legal services commissioners, will continue to carry out regulation in each jurisdiction in accordance with the uniform laws, rules and policies. Under the uniform arrangements clients will benefit from the new requirement that law firms can only charge legal costs that are fair and reasonable, and anyone who has ever needed a lawyer will see that as an important clarification. Law firms will benefit from a single set of rules governing matters such as the requirements for maintaining and auditing trust accounts, continuing professional development requirements and billing requirements. Firms seeking to engage foreign lawyers to undertake specialised legal work will benefit from a simplified process for admitting foreign lawyers to practise Australian law. The scheme clarifies that in-house practitioners may act for related entities. Prospective lawyers will benefit from a single set of admissions requirements. Each jurisdiction will fund a share of the ongoing and start-up costs of the scheme. The Law Society of New South Wales has also contributed to the start-up costs of the scheme.

I commend the work the member for Box Hill started. We are now concluding the process, and I am pleased to see that the bill brings together law reform for both Victoria and New South Wales. It is a very practical approach, and I commend the bill to the house.

**Mr CARROLL** (Niddrie) — It is my pleasure to rise to speak on the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Amendment Bill 2015 and to follow the members for Ovens Valley, Essendon and Hawthorn. It

is good that we have bipartisan support for the legislation.

The member for Ovens Valley said the process was commenced by the member for Box Hill. It actually commenced under the former member for Niddrie, Rob Hulls, and to be honest it stagnated under the member for Box Hill. To date only two states have signed up to this process, being Victoria and New South Wales. You have to ask: what was the member for Box Hill doing in the term of the former government? I understand Queensland nearly signed up but dropped out. This is important legislation, but it could have been a lot further advanced had we had more cooperation at the Council of Australian Governments level and a lot more interstate support to push these important laws through.

I want to talk a little bit about the legislation, what it seeks to achieve and its importance. The legal profession is changing very much. We have law firms today which are listed on the stock exchange. We have firms that are smaller. As local members of Parliament we all know how law firms are embedded in our electorates and what a great resource they are, particularly community legal centres. I am happy that the Attorney-General has made it his ambition to ensure that community legal centres are funded appropriately.

On the matter of legal services, I note that the Minister for Public Transport today announced that she is going to set up a taxi services ministerial forum, and I am happy that the Taxi Services Commission is also funding some community legal centres to assist some of our most vulnerable community members who bought taxi licences and who are now in financial strife.

The legal profession is important, and it is important in the community. The bill is quite thick, and I have not read it all, but it is not just generalist legislation; it has some quite specific components that deal with trusts, costs and definitions. When we think of the legal institutions in New South Wales and Victoria we have to remember the architecture that sits under them. We have legal admissions boards, the Legal Services Commissioner, the Legal Services Council, practising certificates and foreign lawyers. I studied for a law degree and was then admitted. I am happy to declare that I went through the disclosure requirements and got through the fit and proper person test. I feel for young students who are working hard. It is an important profession.

In the 21st century having uniform law legislation so that we have a common market in Australia is very important. It was the global financial crisis in the

United States of America in particular that saw a change in the way legal firms over there operated in terms of costs. Gone were the days when a law firm could bill in 1-minute or 6-minute increments. There was a transformation in how law firms billed. Now, rather like when you call a plumber, a law firm will quote you on what it believes the total cost of the work might be. This is the way the profession is moving. The global financial crisis has seen a lot of changes in the way law firms operate. It is an important step, and Victoria is leading the way. With the progressive Attorney-General we have today we are going to see a lot more reforms.

I was just having a look at my own copy of the *Law Institute Journal*, which came in the mail recently. The cover advertises an article headed 'A uniform to fit everyone', which states:

While some practitioners urge caution, the establishment of a nationwide set of rules is a step in the right direction.

This legislation is a step in the right direction, and I am sure that with the current Attorney-General we are going to see a lot more bipartisanship across the different states and territories to get Australia signed up to these important national uniform laws.

This legislation will make similar rules to what we have seen under the Legal Profession Act 2004. It is very important that we remember that Victoria is the host jurisdiction. As the host jurisdiction we are very much leading the way. This legislation will correct minor errors and anomalies in the act prior to its commencement, the most significant of which will be to clarify the phrase 'total legal costs', using the requirements of the uniform law to ensure that costs are disclosed adequately. Clarification of the term will also help ensure that consumers receive consistent and appropriate disclosure of legal costs.

In relation to disclosure, the new Legal Services Council, which has been established under the scheme, is currently working with the legal profession over standard disclosures. The amendments that we are making today will clarify the role of the Legal Services Council and ensure that we have appropriate standards going forward. I am proud to be serving under the Attorney-General as the Parliamentary Secretary for Justice. I was also proud to speak in the Parliament yesterday on some important consumer affairs legislation introduced by the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation.

Law firms play an important community role, but it is not just about the delivery of the services. It is about the community and giving people appropriate advice. It is

also important that when advice is given people know what the financial costs will be. Hopefully costs will come down as a result of this legislation. We are all about trying to get rid of red tape. It is great that the Andrews government is taking an axe to red tape. We want a seamless legal profession working in harmony with the Parliament, the courts and other state jurisdictions. The new statutory authorities, including the Legal Services Council and the commissioner for uniform legal services regulation, which have already been established under the scheme, are now preparing for full commencement. I am sure it will be a smooth transition.

Under this legislation we are going to see the roles of GST and disbursement made very clear in terms of legal costs. When should GST be applied? We often see that people do not understand when GST and disbursement are applicable and when they should be excluded. This can lead to financial trouble and can result in a hearing in the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. This legislation is very important in terms of clarifying disbursement and GST.

I also want to talk a bit about the amendment circulated by the Attorney-General today. He has proposed that a new clause be inserted after clause 4, inserting a new section 9A in the act, which will go to the heart and definition of a law firm. The amendment outlines the meaning of the term 'law firm', stating that it means a partnership consisting only of:

- (a) Australian legal practitioners; or
- (b) one or more Australian legal practitioners and one or more Australian-registered foreign lawyers; or
- (c) incorporated legal practices; or
- (d) one or more incorporated legal practices and one or more Australian legal practitioners; or
- (e) one or more incorporated legal practices and one or more Australian-registered foreign lawyers; or
- (f) one or more incorporated legal practices, one or more Australian legal practitioners and one or more Australian-registered foreign lawyers ...

As I was saying before, having the meaning of the term 'law firm' adequately defined in legislation is very important. We have seen the proliferation of service industries, and there is a lot of criticism of the previous government for not having a jobs plan. One thing that was happening under the previous government, however, was the proliferation of service industries, particularly around Docklands et cetera. Companies were moving in different directions off their own backs. This has also been the case in the legal profession.

Firms are becoming increasingly global in nature, and they are becoming service-industry-type companies. The Attorney-General's recommendation that we clarify the expanded definition of a law firm is an important one.

Finally, I want to congratulate the Attorney-General on following the footsteps of my predecessor in this seat, the former member for Niddrie, Rob Hulls. I think he, in a similar vein, will make sure that the legal profession does not just look after its lawyers but also consumers. It plays an important role in the community. This is an important piece of legislation. It will ensure that regulatory obligations and local performance go hand in hand.

**Mr HIBBINS (Prahran)** — I rise to speak on the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Amendment Bill 2015. First I will go into the details and the history of this bill. The bill makes a number of minor and technical amendments to the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014 in preparation for the full commencement of that act, which is planned for 1 July this year. This legislation was the result of a national process via the Council of Australian Governments and the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General in 2004 to create a regulation system for the legal profession. It is hoped that this system will be expanded into other states so it can truly be a national uniform law for the regulation of the legal profession.

As is mentioned in the minister's second-reading speech, new statutory authorities, including the Legal Services Council and the commissioner for uniform legal services regulation, have already been established under the scheme and are prepared for its full commencement. The key provisions in this bill relate to clause 19, which has amendments concerning costs disclosure. When the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Bill 2013 came up for debate in the other place last year, Sue Pennicuik, a member for Southern Metropolitan Region in the Council and the Greens spokesperson for justice, said that it remained to be seen whether the bill went far enough in addressing the issue of costs. This is often an area of dispute between legal practitioners and clients.

These amendments seek to clarify the meaning of total legal costs and when they do not include GST and disbursements. The new costs disclosure requirements aim to allow better early communication by legal practitioners to their clients about costs. Under the new requirements, if a legal matter is unlikely to cost more than \$750, excluding GST and disbursements, the legal practitioner is not obliged to give you a costs disclosure

document. Further, for matters costing between \$750 and \$3000 the legal practitioner will be able to provide a standard form instead of a full disclosure document. The Legal Services Council has produced a draft standard form and has been receiving feedback from law societies and consumer advocates on it.

While this bill seeks to make technical changes, this area of costs disclosure is quite complicated and stakeholders are not all in agreement about when total legal costs should be disclosed and include an estimate of disbursements and GST and when they should be excluded. There is some difference of opinion, particularly between consumer advocates and some law societies. I note that the Law Institute of Victoria has advised that it is often difficult for a legal practitioner to estimate at the beginning of a case what the disbursements will be in a matter. It has argued that the bill should say that it be a requirement for the legal practitioner to advise that GST and disbursements may be payable rather than requiring a disclosure of some precise amount. It is also difficult for legal practitioners to state at the beginning of the matter what the disbursements will be because costs disclosure is often an ongoing process, and depending on the development of a case, you may not necessarily know until later down the track about the assessments you may need and so forth.

However, on the consumer side of the argument, consumer advocates point out that simply advising that disbursements may be payable would not be good for consumers. For example, if a client receives an estimate of \$2000 from a lawyer and a statement that disbursements will be payable, but then the total bill ends up being say \$10 000 or \$20 000 because of the disbursements, this is very difficult for the client who would have had no warning of what the cost would really be. Further, we have been advised by the government that law practices are only required to provide an estimate of disbursements at the outset of the matter not an exact and unchanging assessment of what they will be. Indeed there are provisions in the act that set out the process to follow when the law practice becomes aware that costs are likely to exceed the amount originally estimated. Having considered this bill closely, the Greens will support it.

**Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc)** — It is a pleasure to speak on the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Amendment Bill 2015. The bill makes minor and technical amendments to the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014 in preparation for the full commencement of the act on 1 July, which will be a significant development and a significant reform for the legal profession. The bill

makes minor and technical amendments, ironing out some of the difficulties and making sure that the uniform laws are prepared. This will ensure the smooth operation of the act from its commencement on 1 July.

The bill will clarify the use of the term ‘total legal costs’ to ensure that the consumer protection elements of the act relating to the disclosure of legal costs are clear and effective. That is a key benefit for consumers. It is removing red tape and supporting the legal profession. I certainly welcome that minor amendment. It also corrects an anomaly in the drafting of a consequential amendment to ensure that the continued jurisdiction of the Victorian Costs Court in respect of matters initiated under previous legal profession legislation and makes minor and technical statutory law revisions and amendments.

I also acknowledge the new clause that has been inserted into the bill which provides greater definition of law firms, and particularly provides that a partnership consists of only one or more Australian legal practitioners; one or more incorporated legal practices and one or more Australian-registered foreign lawyers. That is minor technical clean-up before the bill comes into operation. The bill will help to ensure that there is a clean transition to the uniform law functions from the outset. It will minimise any disruption to local law practices and legal practitioners as a result of this significant reform that will bring interjurisdictional support for Victoria and New South Wales. I note that as the host jurisdiction, Victoria is leading the way in this regard. I note also that there is significant coverage across Victoria and New South Wales — some 70 per cent of legal professionals are covered in this regard, which is quite significant.

Clause 19 of the bill amends the use of the term ‘total legal costs’. The amendment will clarify that in making a costs disclosure, a law practice must give an estimate of total legal costs, which includes disbursements and GST, consistent with the current practice under the Victorian and New South Wales legal profession acts and consistent with the definition of legal costs in the uniform law. That clarifies the position in respect of legal costs.

#### **Sitting suspended 1.00 p.m. until 2.01 p.m.**

**Mr RICHARDSON** — Before we suspended the sitting for quite an important moment today — the recognition of Close the Gap campaign, something we all hold dear across the Parliament — I was reflecting on the importance of the Legal Profession Uniform Law, which sets out regulatory arrangements for the legal profession. The legal reforms coming in on 1 July

2015 will have 70 per cent coverage of jurisdictions across Victoria and New South Wales, which is quite significant. This arose from a Council of Australian Governments process initiated in 2009–10 where we got close to getting broad consensus. I reflect on the member for Niddrie’s contribution and his comment that Queensland was nearly on board. I hope that with Victoria as the host jurisdiction and the model jurisdiction maybe other jurisdictions will consider coming on board and streamlining processes.

Before we suspended I also reflected that the uniform law introduces new cost disclosure requirements to bring about greater transparency and accountability and to provide greater certainty. The objectives of the Legal Profession Uniform Law are to provide and promote interjurisdictional consistency in the law applying to Australian legal professions. It creates certainty. If you are a practising solicitor or barrister, you might be working in a range of jurisdictions. When our state boundaries are just lines on a map, it is an absurdity that different jurisdictions reflect different rules. A solicitor might be serving one week in Melbourne and the next week in Sydney and then might have a case in Western Australia. Trying to create greater consistency improves the rules for the profession.

The bill will also ensure protections for clients of legal practices and protection of the public generally. Prior to the suspension I reflected on a hypothetical situation of when a tradie or small business owner goes to a law firm seeking to have redress — the member for Essendon also reflected on this — and is concerned about how much it will cost and whether it is worth it. That individual can make an assessment of the costs they might incur in proceeding and whether legal action will be worth it. Minor amendments made by the bill will streamline the process in the broader context of the uniform law as we head towards 1 July 2015.

I will quickly outline some comments made by various third parties on the importance of the uniform laws. I reflect on the contribution of the Law Institute of Victoria, which said:

The scheme will create a common legal services market across these two jurisdictions, that together account for more than 70 per cent of all lawyers in Australia.

...

Law firms that straddle the Murray will benefit from a single consistent set of rules that govern things like the maintenance and auditing of trust accounts, continuing professional development requirements and the way in which clients can be billed. Unlike the current regime, only a single trust account audit will be required.

That is a significant development.

I will also reflect on the words of the former president of the New South Wales Law Society, John Dobson. In a contribution a year ago Mr Dobson said the proposed law:

... seeks to build for the next generation of legal practice in an environment in which national and even international borders are overcome as hindrances to efficiency and effective practising conditions.

He went on to say he believes that earlier drafts of the bill contained regulatory excesses and that the current bill reflects a common-sense approach.

The Chief Justice of the New South Wales Supreme Court, Tom Bathurst, said the single regulatory system was an improvement and its reach deserved to be extended. He was quoted as having said:

'It is a big advance having the two states with the greatest number of lawyers, and probably the greatest consumption of legal services, already on board ...

'If Victoria and NSW can work together cooperatively — and I have no doubt that they can —

and we certainly will, with Victoria leading the charge —

I have no doubt that other states will see the overall benefit to it and cease to have the concerns they presently do'.

That acknowledges that we have the two major jurisdictions of Victoria and New South Wales on board, and hopefully the other states can come on board in due course.

I will also briefly reference the benefit to the legal profession. It is very important to acknowledge that various firms operate across a number of states and territories. These reforms will make it easier to offer consistent and seamless services to national and international clients under the same basic regulatory framework. That is an important thing. Compliance will also be simpler and easier for firms operating in both New South Wales and Victoria, because a single set of rules will apply to matters such as trust accounts, complaints handling and billing. It is about streamlining the processes and making it easier for the profession, which I certainly welcome.

There are also important reforms for not only the legal profession but also the consumers. Consumers can be confident they will enjoy the same protections, rights and remedies across participating jurisdictions. The bill promotes greater accountability in cost disclosure and creates certainty for someone looking for these services. I welcome the contributions of all in the Parliament, and I acknowledge this bill has bipartisan support. I commend the bill to the house.

**Mr ANGUS** (Forest Hill) — I am very pleased to rise this afternoon to speak in relation to the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Amendment Bill 2015. I note from the outset that the coalition does not oppose this bill or the amendments before the house. The bill makes several minor technical amendments to the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014, including a number of amendments to the Legal Profession Uniform Law as set out in schedule 1 of the act. Some of those are typographical and consequential changes, while others are more substantive. The particular substantive issues addressed by this bill are about cost and the sharing of information between agencies.

To give some context to my contribution, it is worth noting some of the background to this legislation. In December 2013 the coalition governments in Victoria and New South Wales signed an intergovernmental agreement on the legal profession uniform framework. Victoria's part in the process and delivery of the reform package was very capably led by the honourable member for Box Hill. Those reforms serve as the basis of a uniform scheme for the regulation of the legal profession in the two states. There is certainly a lot of merit and common sense in having that, particularly as almost three-quarters of Australia's law practices are in the jurisdictions of Victoria and New South Wales. The south-eastern part of Australia is where the action is in terms of the number of solicitors and legal practices. Once New South Wales and Victoria take up these reforms, they will set a great precedent for the rest of Australia to get on board. Victoria is the host jurisdiction for this uniform law, so it was our Parliament that first passed its legislation, the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014, with New South Wales passing mirror legislation at a later date.

This scheme has a target commencement date of 1 July this year, from which date these arrangements will make it simpler for lawyers to do business within and across state borders. The bill strengthens the standing of Australian lawyers in international legal service markets and, very importantly, improves protection for clients. It covers a range of different aspects to create a better environment for businesses, practitioners and consumers. This scheme slashes red tape and hundreds of pages of legal regulation. It standardises consumer rights, complaint processes and new consumer remedies across the two states. That particular aspect on its own is symbolic of some of the work undertaken by the coalition government in Victoria, which created legislation to cut red tape to free up businesses and professional practices and allow them to get on with what they do best. The uniform scheme means that

lawyers and clients in New South Wales and Victoria will be operating under a single set of seamless laws. This is going to have significant consequences, for the reasons I have mentioned, particularly given that the two commercial legal hubs of Australia are in Melbourne and Sydney. The bill will make doing business on the east coast and throughout Australia that much easier.

In October 2014 the new Legal Services Council was established, which is made up of members from each of the participating jurisdictions. The council has a range of responsibilities, including recommending future changes to the uniform framework and making uniform rules. The commissioner for uniform legal services was also established, with whom the council issues guidelines under and plays a new role in the new uniform legal services scheme, which aims to reduce the complexity of legal services regulation by applying uniform laws and rules for lawyers in Victoria and New South Wales. That is how it all comes together. The inaugural chair of that council is the Honourable Michael Black, AC, QC, former Chief Justice of the Federal Court. He is an eminently experienced man and well qualified to take that position.

Amongst other things, the bill establishes a statutory admissions committee, which includes judicial representatives nominated by the New South Wales and Victorian chief justices. The committee deals with the various aspects of the admissions rules. Some members of this place who are admitted solicitors and barristers have already addressed those matters, so I will not get into them now.

Under the uniform arrangements clients will benefit from the requirement that law firms may only charge legal costs that are fair and reasonable. That is going to be music to the ears of many people in the community. In my previous occupation as a chartered accountant I had countless dealings with lawyers who were acting both for and against our clients. Thankfully we never had personal dealings with them against us. One of the staggering things that never ceased to amaze us in our practice was the way the costs of litigation could get completely out of control very quickly. Other speakers have mentioned charging by the 6-minute unit, which anybody in professional practice would be well familiar with — but, my word, lawyers absolutely know how to charge. The costs would sometimes end up being far more than the initial amount of the dispute at the start of the litigation.

Anything that can be done to address and simplify that aspect of the law is a good thing. I think the old saying

goes that there are two places you never go unless you absolutely have to: the hospital and court — and I think that is exactly right, particularly if you are accompanied by barristers and solicitors when you go there.

Law firms will benefit from a single set of rules governing matters such as the requirements for maintaining and auditing trust accounts, continuing professional development and billing. That is another matter I want to expand on a little bit, because, as I said, in my previous occupation as a chartered accountant I was an audit partner, so I audited many solicitors' trust accounts over a very long period of time. Thankfully I always found our clients' trust accounts in order, but there are many well-documented and well-reported cases here in Victoria, and indeed in other jurisdictions, where sadly — saddest most of all for the clients of those practices — solicitors' trust accounts have not been in order.

There have been some horrendous defalcations in recent years. Even earlier this year there was a multimillion-dollar one that finally reached its end in terms of the criminal aspects in the court system in Victoria. Anything that strengthens and emphasises that aspect is important. Once someone has the custody of someone else's money, it is incumbent upon them to act honestly with the client's best interests at heart and to ensure that that money is securely dealt with. As mundane as the auditing process can be from time to time, it is nevertheless an essential part of the process, and I think all clients of legal practitioners would be very grateful that that aspect has been strengthened in this situation.

Firms seeking to engage foreign lawyers to undertake specialised legal work will benefit from a simplified process for admitting foreign lawyers to practice Australian law. Smaller firms and sole practitioners will benefit from a short standard form for costs disclosure which may be provided as an alternative to full cost disclosure in matters where total costs are not likely to exceed \$3000. Again, that is going to be very much welcomed by consumers and by clients of legal practices. Whether that is in a conveyance or some other relatively minor and straightforward matter, that clarification will be well received. The scheme goes on and clarifies that in-house practitioners may act for related entities. As I touched on earlier, prospective lawyers will benefit from a single set of admission requirements.

The bill contains a range of clauses. In terms of the specific amendments, clauses 5, 14, 19, 22 and 26 make the main amendments. Given the time situation, I will not go into any of those in any particular detail.

Anything that can help the consumer, simplify and slash red tape, help the practitioner and create uniformity where the majority of the legal practitioners are is a good thing. As I said at the outset, the coalition does not oppose this bill.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Halfpenny)** — Order! The member for Footscray.

**Ms THOMSON (Footscray)** — Thank you, Acting Speaker. I understand this is your first time as Acting Speaker. It is nice to see you in the chair.

I rise to speak on the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Amendment Bill 2015. In doing so I want to go back to the time when this kind of legislation and other legislation around uniformity was being discussed. During the time of the Bracks and Brumby governments there was a real push to look at uniform legislation that went across state boundaries because we know that state borders are arbitrary boundaries that do not really apply in many instances over many areas that need to be regulated. There were regulations in Queensland that were different to the regulations in New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, Western Australia, South Australia and the territories.

It was very difficult for businesses to operate across boundaries in areas that had different regulatory regimes no matter what their business was. Having different regulatory regimes made it very difficult if businesses wanted to set up operations across borders. It cost a hell of a lot of money to set up, a lot of money in legal fees and in ensuring that you met the regulatory requirements, dual or triple reporting — depending on how many states you were doing business in — and if you were operating nationally, it was an absolute mess. It was a nightmare for business.

It was also unsettling for consumers because consumers had different regulatory regimes in every state. Members of the Bracks and Brumby governments were interested in striving to achieve uniformity on a whole range of regulations and laws across the country and to make it easier for consumers to be protected as well. If someone was living in New South Wales and had a certain protection regime — for example, in the building industry — they would come to Victoria and there would be a different regime. The work of the Bracks and Brumby governments was about lifting the standards, not lowering them, and making sure that you had adequate protection for consumers while streamlining the regulatory burden on business. That is the best of both worlds: we allow our businesses to operate efficiently and do not add to their requirements

to manage their books, or hire lawyers in this instance — maybe they should hire more accountants.

It is about ensuring that we bring down the regulatory burden for business, particularly those that are in expansion mode. They might not be as big as they could get if they want to operate across boundaries and they do not have the financial wherewithal to meet the regulatory burdens that apply across the boundaries. In that context we looked at a whole range of industries and areas where regulations could be changed, and we took to the Council of Australian Governments an active agenda on uniform law and regulation across the states in a whole raft of areas, and of course the legal profession is one of those.

We all know now how many law firms are operating across those state boundaries; there are a lot of them. A law firm does not have to be big to be operating not only across state boundaries but even internationally. Many middle size law firms are very active and work in a number of states and territories. This piece of legislation before us today has resulted from the work that commenced under the Bracks and Brumby governments and through former Attorney-General Rob Hulls. We all know lawyers' reputations are down there somewhere with, perhaps, politicians.

**Mr Katos** — Not even.

**Ms THOMSON** — The member for South Barwon suggests it is lower, and all of us who are members in this place but are not lawyers hope that is the case. It comes about because it does not take too many disreputable lawyers to bring down a whole profession, and the same applies as members. When we look at uniform laws it is crucially important to ensure that the accountability of lawyers to their clients is regulated as well.

It is also important that a client who goes to see a lawyer has some understanding of what their costs are going to be. This bill addresses how that is going to be done. It gives the power to the new Legal Services Council to negotiate with the legal profession over the development of a standard disclosure form that can be used for inexpensive matters — under \$3000. That is probably about how much the bill will be for most people who go to see a lawyer — about that, or you would hope under that. I am not sure which member referred to the two places you do not want to go as hospital and jail. You probably never want to have to go to visit a lawyer either.

**Mr Carbines** interjected.

**Ms THOMSON** — A nice suggestion from the member for Ivanhoe — branch meetings. I like mine; I am going to one tonight.

This legislation is crucially important, because it now means that the vast majority — close to 80 per cent — of law firms in Victoria and New South Wales will now be covered under this legislation. It means negotiations can continue to bring Queensland into the scheme. I understand Western Australia might be looking at similar legislation. Although it would not be joining with this legislation, Western Australia would be looking to mirror it. Then Tasmania and the territories hopefully will follow suit as well, so across the country there will be, if not the uniform laws that have been hosted in Victoria — which would be the ideal situation — then at least we may have mirroring legislation across jurisdictions that enables law firms to operate across borders without putting additional burdens on them. It would also make sure that accountability is clear so that firms cannot say, ‘Here the law was this, so we have done it like that’, and then get caught out doing something different in another state. If it is uniform, then the expectations of the law firms will be uniform, as will their accountability. That is crucially important in this legislation.

The bill contains a couple of other amendments. It provides regulatory authorities operating under the uniform scheme with the power to share information with interstate regulatory authorities in non-participating jurisdictions. This will hopefully mean, as we have the mirroring legislation, that we are able to keep tabs on the activities of all the law firms. It will also connect a consequential amendment to ensure continued jurisdiction of the Victorian Costs Court in respect of matters initiated under the previous legal professional legislation and statute law revision amendments.

This is an important piece of legislation. This is why we come to the Parliament and have these debates. It is about making sure that we are relevant to the communities we live in and that we understand times have changed. Now you can be not only physically present in a place to practise your craft, which in this case is law, but also operating off the internet and making connections that way. The world has changed. There are no borders or boundaries. As legislators we have to recognise that change and move with the times, and uniform laws are the best way of ensuring we do that. I commend the bill to the house.

**Mr THOMPSON** (Sandringham) — A number of years ago a Victorian civil servant bought a business in Canberra. He paid several hundred thousand dollars for

the business and acted for himself. Unbeknown to him when he took over the business, the leasehold did not have a renewal of the lease under the agreement beyond a finite term. He ended up paying several hundred thousand dollars for the value of the business, but he did not have the lease to the premises which was integral to the conduct of the business.

When people try to save legal costs it can lead to an adverse outcome from which their rights have been removed. There is an ongoing battle about how to provide sound advice to members of the community so that they are well guided and advised in what they do while at the same time we make costs affordable for them and ensure that there is a realistic and practical framework for costs.

A number of years ago I had the privilege of chairing the Victorian Parliament’s then Law Reform Committee. We undertook a review into access to law and legal services in rural and regional Victoria. The inquiry took evidence from towns including Robinvale, Swan Hill, Mildura, Bendigo, Ballarat, Geelong and Bairnsdale, as well as from the Latrobe Valley. At the time we undertook that inquiry the speed of internet access to information was increasing.

One of our recommendations was that the information available in the Fitzroy Legal Service handbook should be available online so people could get good and readily available, up-to-date information and advice online in relation to a tenancy matter, a neighbourhood fencing dispute, a motor vehicle accident or a will, and that would also save the time of small-town lawyers. They would not have to use their usual charge-out rate for an hour of time, and constituencies would be better informed. I am very pleased to note that that recommendation was taken up.

Ultimately, through a payment made to support the online access to information through Fitzroy Legal Service, the handbook was available online. I pay tribute to Sam Biondo, who I saw in the Parliament earlier today, and who encouraged, facilitated and supported that measure, because it put information into the hands of consumers without requiring elaborate legal work.

The rule of law is a fundamental issue, and it is unique to Australia as one of the world’s longest serving democracies. We are the fifth longest-serving democracy in which the rule of law has prevailed.

One matter I raise by way of a comment in passing in relation to the rule of law is that of retrospectivity. It is a fundamental principle that retrospective laws that take

away rights are not enacted. You can confer a retrospective benefit, but it is broadly improper and inappropriate to impose a retrospective burden on citizens or to remove their legal rights retrospectively.

I note that during the 1980s there was an unusual nuance in the law as a result of a change in insurance arrangements in Victoria after a law firm had a defalcation — or theft of money from its trust account — and the person responsible for the defalcation was not classified as being among the categories of people for whom coverage existed. This Melbourne law firm had lost several million dollars through the defalcation of one of its employees. Its owners were facing personal bankruptcy and their firm either going into receivership or being wound up.

It took a long time and a vigorous debate and dialogue in the corridors of power to enable the legislature to make a retrospective change in the law that went back a dozen years to rectify an oversight in the legal framework. Members undertook constructive work, a former Labor Attorney-General provided evidence as to the background factors for the change and the then coalition cabinet had the fortitude of purpose to arrive at a position which provided protection for the citizens concerned. In this case a retrospective benefit was conferred. The point was originally raised that you could not introduce retrospective laws, but that required a distinction: you could confer retrospective benefit, but it was very unwise and against the general principles of law to impose a retrospective burden.

The bill before the house, the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Amendment Bill 2015, covers issues in relation to the simplification of legal costs. The scheme slashes red tape by removing hundreds of pages of legal regulations, standardises consumer rights and complaint processes and proposes new consumer remedies across two states. Other states have been encouraged to join the scheme. The uniform scheme will mean that lawyers and clients in New South Wales and Victoria will be able to operate under a single, seamless set of laws, rules and policies. I anticipate that this will be of benefit for legal practitioners and consumers along the border.

I note that a new Legal Services Council has been appointed, with members Fiona Bennett, Kim Boettcher, Steve Stevens — who has Cypriot heritage, is a former president of the Law Institute of Victoria and former director of the Law Council of Australia, and was an AFL umpire in his younger years — and Bret Walker, the nominee of the Australian Bar Association. These are all people with wide backgrounds and expertise in a range of relevant fields.

Clients will benefit from a new requirement that law firms may only charge legal costs that are fair and reasonable. As a former suburban legal practitioner, I remember one occasion when someone asked me for a quote to go to court. I gave him what I thought was a fair and reasonable figure and he ran out of the office. I was keen that he be looked after so I ran after him and brought him back. I asked him what he thought would be a fair fee. The amount he nominated — \$20 — was a long way short of what would otherwise have been required, but I am pleased to note that I attended the Prahran Magistrates Court and represented his best interests on the day. For his offence, he was given a fine of \$20 by the magistrate. He managed, through skilled negotiation perhaps, to have his legal needs addressed in a constructive way. Unfortunately, he went before the courts again and incurred other legal charges from lawyers with other levels of expertise.

The Parliament of Victoria operates well to change the law to reflect good community outcomes — good processes and practices. It is interesting to note that laws can be changed through the work and recommendations of professional bodies and associations. Reforms can come from the public service, Council of Australian Governments committees or meeting groups. They come up with good ideas and recommendations to change laws with a view to simplifying processes.

Changes can also come from citizens. A number of years ago a person who had been admitted to practice in another jurisdiction sought to act in Australia, having qualified and studied overseas. He wanted to become a notary public, one of a body of lawyers and others who could certify documents in a particular way. He was declined the opportunity to join that group on some technical grounds he thought were entirely unreasonable given the aggregation of his experience. This one man, through his representations to a parliamentary committee, set about changing the law in the state of Victoria regarding the role of notaries public. Through his good work the law was changed and he had the chance to become a notary public. It was of assistance to his client base and also paved the way for other people. On an ongoing basis myriad bills will come before this chamber that reflect best practice.

On other occasions people have difficulty seeking legal advice because they are not in a position to afford it. There will be a pro forma cost disclosure form if a legal bill is unlikely to exceed \$3000, which will save legal time. I am aware of the unfortunate circumstances of a businessman who lost his rights under a lease and needed good legal representation to re-establish his rights. I pay tribute to members of the Victorian Bar

who represented his interests and advocated on his behalf on a pro bono basis so he was ultimately able to successfully reinforce his rights.

**Ms WARD** (Eltham) — I echo the sentiments of the member for Footscray, Acting Speaker, and congratulate you. It is lovely to see you in the chair. I rise to join the debate on the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Amendment Bill 2015. This bill may only make minor and technical amendments, but they are amendments that will make an important difference to the lives of many people, and they will also make the law profession easier to manage.

The bill is important because it will now be a requirement that a law practice disclose to its clients its expected costs. This is an important form of consumer protection. It is incredibly important when people go into a conversation with a lawyer without knowledge of how the law profession works — and there is sometimes an unequal partnership — that the costs involved are clearly articulated so people can make decisions that will work for them and which will not hurt them financially.

As mentioned before, jokes are often made about the legal profession, as they are sometimes about politicians. I have one to share with the house today. A lawyer dies and goes to heaven. ‘There must be some mistake’, the lawyer argues, ‘I’m too young to die, I’m only 55’. ‘Fifty-five?’, says Saint Peter, ‘No. According to our calculations, you’re 82’. ‘How did you get that?’, the lawyer asks, baffled. Saint Peter responds, ‘We added up your time sheets’. Tricky.

**Mr Edbrooke** — Bang!

**Ms WARD** — Bang! I think this just goes to show that full disclosure is incredibly important because time sheets, as we have seen with this joke, can be difficult for the average person to unravel and understand. Before you make a decision that could place you in considerable financial difficulty, it is important for you to know how much it is going to cost.

I take this opportunity to talk about an organisation I have had considerable involvement with, as has the very good member for Ivanhoe. It is the West Heidelberg Community Legal Service. I was on the board of this service for a very long time and saw firsthand how important it is that people get good, accurate and fair legal representation. I am sure the member for Ivanhoe will join with me in saying that this is a fantastic legal service that provides assistance and advice to people located not only within West Heidelberg but also the broader Banyule community.

One of the excellent projects this community legal service engaged in was to help people negotiate speeding, parking and other infringements and stop situations from escalating. Where someone would ordinarily ignore a fine and then subsequently accumulate huge amounts of debt, this legal service helped people have the fine dealt with straightaway. This is a good service, and it is great that it is offered to many people, but you have to meet certain criteria to be able to access it. It is important that people in similar circumstances, even for something as minor as a fine, are able to go to a lawyer and find out how much it is going to cost to engage in fighting it.

The other important thing about this bill is that it unifies the Victorian and New South Wales systems, making consistent how we approach this. I really hope the amendments stemming from this bill will be taken up nationwide so that we see a uniform approach across our country, one that helps give people certainty about the costs legal advice they may incur.

I thank the member for Northcote for taking the member for Pascoe Vale and me on a fantastic trip to a Magistrates Court a few weeks ago. This was an incredibly important trip for us because it gave us firsthand experience of what it is like to be in a magistrates court, especially when you are a vulnerable woman who has experienced great difficulty in her life and is fearful of her circumstances and may not be able to make fully informed decisions.

The bill will provide a great deal of certainty for those people in knowing how much they are going to be billed if they should need to pay for legal representation when they apply for an intervention order — as the member for Pascoe Vale and I saw when we went to the Magistrates Court — apply for custody of their children or seek to secure their property. There are a variety of reasons people desperately need the assistance of a lawyer, particularly when they are vulnerable, like the people we saw during our visit to the Magistrates Court. The bill will provide these people with a great deal of certainty so they know how much legal assistance is going to cost them should they not qualify for legal aid and as such will help relieve some of the burden people face in trying to pursue their legal rights.

It was interesting earlier today to hear the opposition question Labor’s small business credentials. Opposition members questioned our support of and dedication to small business. I found this amusing because we have been debating a number of bills this week that cut red tape for small business. I would argue that a number of law firms fall into this category. It is the role of

government to ensure that there are good practices, but we also want to make sure that people do not get caught up in red tape and that businesses can be productive and go about their day-to-day business as efficiently as possible.

**Mr Battin** interjected.

**Ms WARD** — As an Essendon supporter I am very hopeful that there will be a holiday before the grand final. I am very hopeful that my team will do very well leading up to the grand final. Go the Bombers! This does not take away the fact that Labor has a commitment to small business, and this legislation is yet another example of the fact that we want to simplify and make things easier for small businesses when we can.

Labor also wants to provide consumers with greater certainty and give them the opportunity to make informed decisions about whether to pursue legal recourse. This bill will make it easier for people to make that decision. The bill recognises the challenges the legal profession and consumers face. It is a well thought out bill. I am glad the government has put it forward. I commend the bill to the house.

**Debate adjourned on motion of Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Local Government).**

**Debate adjourned until later this day.**

## RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

### Offensive gestures

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Yesterday allegations were raised by way of points of order about members making inappropriate hand gestures in the house. At the time I indicated that I would review the incidents and report back to the house.

I met separately with the members for Frankston and Warrandyte to obtain their views on these matters. The member for Warrandyte indicated that he had pointed his finger when making an interjection and he did not consider that to be an inappropriate gesture. The member for Frankston advised that he had held up three fingers to illustrate the fact that the member for Warrandyte had taken three points of order. The member informed me that he does not believe his gesture was offensive, as he advised the house yesterday.

In reviewing the video footage of yesterday's question time, the Clerk and I were unable to identify any offensive gestures on the part of the members for

Frankston or Warrandyte. I have accepted the explanations provided by both members and consider this to be the end of the matter.

## GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

### Address-in-reply

**Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) for adoption of address-in-reply.**

**Ms EDWARDS** (Bendigo West) — I commence my address-in-reply contribution by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, and I pay my respects to their elders past and present, on a no more fitting day than today, which is National Close the Gap Day. My electorate is Jaara Jaara country, home of the Dja Dja Wurrung clans and their ancestors.

I also formally congratulate you, Speaker, on your appointment. I have not earlier had the opportunity to do so formally. It is a wonderful appointment to be Chair of the 58th Parliament.

It is an enormous honour to have been re-elected to represent the people of Bendigo West for another four years. Like all members elected to this place, this is not a position I have ever taken lightly. As such, I formally commit to continuing to work for my electorate as I have always done in a consultative, community-oriented manner that allows the people I represent to have a voice, to be heard and to have an advocate in their corner. It is a very proud moment when the poll is declared and ahead lie enormous opportunities to change the approach that was taken in this state over the past four years; to reignite issues of social justice and support for communities and individuals who have borne the brunt of the previous government's mean agenda.

I also take this opportunity to congratulate the newly elected members on both sides of Parliament, and I wish them well as they set about representing their electorates.

Already for me, four years in opposition have contrasted enormously with the first 100 days as an elected member of the Andrews Labor government. I would like to say at the outset that the Premier and the united team behind him, of which I am a member, have not wasted one minute since coming to office. I am very proud of what we have already achieved and that our plan and our vision, particularly for regional Victorians, are already having an impact. This is evident in the rollout of the ice forums across the

region, in the Royal Commission into Family Violence that will engage with regional Victorians, in the approach we have taken to ending the ambulance crisis and the nasty, bitter and vitriolic war that was waged against our hardworking paramedics throughout the Napthine government's time in office.

People in my communities told me over and over that the ambulance system in the Loddon Mallee region was reaching crisis levels, yet the Napthine government saw no reason to address that and instead went down the path of tying all the problems with the ambulance service to the ambos enterprise bargaining agreement and the ambulance union. It was indeed folly when most people knew it was about resourcing, ambulance officer fatigue, failures in the system and a government that was too hamstrung and dysfunctional to engage on any level and admit there was a problem or do anything to address it. Our recently released interim report into the ambulance system comes on the back of significant engagement with ambulance officers and paramedics across Victoria. I congratulate the Ambulance Performance and Policy Consultative Committee on its work to date.

There was much to be concerned about throughout the Baillieu and Napthine governments' years, from the initial shock in local communities to the slashing of the Take a Break childcare program in the coalition government's first year, to the shock and disbelief at the millions cut from TAFE. Cutting the Take a Break occasional childcare program set the agenda for the next four years of the Baillieu and Napthine governments. After 14 years of continuous operation, the Take a Break occasional childcare program run from the Maldon neighbourhood house was cut, and 21 families were left without any access to child care. In all, 31 rural towns and regional centres lost their only childcare provider.

That was the beginning of further callous and uncaring decisions. Many of the cuts over the next four years impacted on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, especially in regional Victoria. There were cuts to mental health services, cuts to drug and alcohol services, cuts to juvenile justice programs, cuts to health and education, and education support services — and the list goes on — along with the failure of the former government to even understand or engage with the people and communities those cuts were impacting on. There was no consultation with local people and no engagement with regional communities. The ministers showed an arrogant disinterest in what people across my region were concerned about — and the coalition wonders why it lost power at the last election.

A perfect example of that is the former Minister for Water completely disengaging from the potential closure of Welshmans Reef Caravan Park and from the community's concerns about the impact of that on site holders and on the local economies of Newstead and Maldon. I am very proud that, together with the new Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water, we have worked quickly to keep the caravan park open.

The former Minister for Planning also showed complete arrogance towards and lack of respect for the people of Maldon when they raised their concerns about the proposed Tarran Valley housing development on the outskirts of the town. The process to rezone that farming land began back in 2007 but was put on hold after the Black Saturday bushfires. The Napthine government pushed ahead without consulting locals. Labor's commitment to the people of Maldon is that the development will be referred to an independent panel to determine the suitability of the development. The process will give locals a real say in the future of their community. The review will be fair, independent and transparent.

Then there were the job losses right across Victoria, with 4100 public servants losing their jobs under the Liberals. In Bendigo and the region it was reflected in the 100 jobs lost from the regional Department of Education, as it was then, the 175 jobs lost from Bendigo TAFE and the jobs lost from Parks Victoria and the then Department of Human Services. All those job losses impacted on local families and the local economy and on the ability of those organisations to carry out their work effectively.

What the Liberals left regional Victorians with was the highest youth unemployment rate for decades and an overall unemployment rate that was the second highest in mainland Australia. It took four years for the previous government to put forward a jobs plan — and only then in the weeks of panic before the last election. Labor proudly went to the election with its Back to Work plan ready to go, and that is exactly what we have achieved in our first 100 days.

I am very excited by the prospect of a new school for children with special needs in my electorate. Having worked very closely with the school principal and vice-principal, as well as parents, carers, grandparents and staff, there is no doubt that a new school at Kalianna is absolutely vital for those kids and to meet the demand of future growth in Bendigo and the region. Advocating for the new school is something I have been very determined about. There was never any scope to redevelop the old school. The buildings are beyond repair, and sadly, that was all the Liberals

wanted to offer the families and students at Kalianna. We always knew a new school was the only way forward. To start that process it was necessary to get the planning for the new school right, and that is exactly what we are getting on with.

There are many projects to look forward to in Bendigo and the region under this government. As the member for Bendigo West, I am determined to see them delivered, starting with stage 2 of Castlemaine Secondary College, a school that is punching well above its weight now and has been planning for a new school for many years. There will be no delay in getting on with stage 2 of this 4-stage project.

I am looking forward to the new Bendigo Technical Education College and the new agriculture education centre at Bendigo TAFE. I am looking forward to the expansion of the Bendigo Stadium and the upgrade to Bendigo Senior Secondary College, the new mountain bike park at Harcourt and the Aspire project in the High Street precinct of Bendigo. All of these are projects that will not only benefit our communities but will also generate jobs. I am looking forward to the kindergarten modernisations in Bendigo. Seven kinders will benefit from investment that was denied them for four years. Labor's plan to make Victoria the education state has already started. There is nothing more important than excellent education for the future of this state and for members of future generations, some of whom will one day grace this place with their presence.

How they perform on education, health, transport, jobs and infrastructure investment is a litmus test for all governments. The Liberals and The Nationals failed miserably on every measure. There is no doubt that people in my electorate are excited and positive about and are engaged in this government's plans for the Bendigo West electorate.

Like all elected members, I did not achieve victory without the support and backing of many volunteers and staff. My sincere thanks go to all who contributed to the great outcome — it was truly a team effort. However, I will mention a few who were at my side constantly during that journey, including comrade Martyn Stradbrook. Martyn is an experienced campaigner and organiser, a travelling companion and a good mate. Thank you, Martyn, for all your hard work and dedication. I thank Mandy Olszewski for her care and support. I thank Elaine Walsh for her dedication to the Labor Party and her assistance, despite having treatment for breast cancer throughout the campaign period. I thank Kaye Petersen, my long-time friend, for stepping in whenever needed. I thank Robert Thompson, a young and passionate Labor member,

who as a volunteer in many capacities contributed to the campaign enormously. And of course I thank my husband, Steve, and my four children and two stepchildren for their invaluable support and love and their unwavering belief in me.

I also thank the campaign team who worked hard to ensure not just victory in Bendigo West but also victory in Bendigo East. There was in Bendigo a united effort to retain both Bendigo seats, and to the volunteers who doorknocked, letterboxed, rang the phones and helped out at street stalls and pre-poll, I say an enormous thankyou.

I want to make special mention of the firefighters, paramedics, nurses, teachers and disability care workers across the region who fought so hard to make the Liberals a one-term government and to make sure that their futures were protected by a Labor government. I look forward to the next four years as we rebuild this state and the regions, re-engage with the communities and set a positive and visionary direction for all Victorians.

I also want to say that, in retrospect, the beginning of the campaign in the Bendigo West electorate was blighted by the withdrawal of the Liberal candidate, who made some very inappropriate comments on social media. It goes without saying that anyone who comes into this house needs to be above reprobation. The Liberal Party needs to take very great care in preselecting candidates. When someone who is preselected is putting on social media misogynistic, sexist, racist and homophobic comments, there is something seriously wrong with the preselection process.

The former Liberal candidate for Bendigo West is now moving on in the community and has managed to get himself a position as chair of the Kangaroo Flat pool committee, which in itself is an interesting position to hold. The former government committed \$15 million to that project in the last budget. The money is still in the budget and still available. Unfortunately at the moment we have a federal government that has failed on every measure to commit to this project, despite the former Liberal candidate for the federal seat of Bendigo promising in a letter to constituents that the federal government would deliver on the project. Unfortunately that has not happened, and now the City of Greater Bendigo finds itself in a difficult position in deciding whether it will fund this project or not. Personally I think it is important for the Bendigo community, particularly the Kangaroo Flat community, to have some sort of pool facility in Kangaroo Flat. However, as I said, the \$15 million from the state is on the table,

and it remains on the table. It is now up to the federal government and the City of Greater Bendigo to match that commitment and get on with building this project.

I was also very proud the other week to turn the first sod on the new Kangaroo Flat Country Fire Authority (CFA) station, a project that was announced by the former member for Bendigo West way back in 2009 and has taken until now to get underway. The stalling by the former Liberal-Nationals government over this project was quite outrageous. The Kangaroo Flat community has been waiting for many years for that new CFA station. The land has been sitting there for a number of years. The community is very excited that the first sod has been turned and we can get on with delivering a new CFA station for Kangaroo Flat.

A number of things occurred during the campaign that are worthy of mention in this house. One is the atrocious and outrageous behaviour of certain members of certain political parties with regard to members of EMILY'S List. I am a proud member of EMILY'S List, and I would have it no other way. However, when you see large wagons driving around the City of Greater Bendigo with outrageous symbols and slogans on them, it defies belief that people would be putting their beliefs forward in that manner, including attacking members of Parliament and candidates for the election in a manner that was very unseemly and undignified. We all have different beliefs — there is no doubt about that. However, I have never hidden from the fact that I am a proud member of EMILY'S List and will continue to be so. On that note, I would like to congratulate and thank EMILY'S List for its support of me and two other women members of this Parliament and of other parliaments and for the great work it does. I also thank the Labor Party more broadly for the work it did during the election campaign. Head office and the staff there were enormously supportive of not just me but of every other candidate across Victoria.

**Mr CLARK (Box Hill)** — I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

In moving that the debate be adjourned, I make the point that it has become even clearer now that the Labor Party is seeking to avoid accountability to this house and the community and to persist in the breach of its election commitment to make a consideration-in-detail stage a standard part of the consideration of bills before this house.

The opposition has made it clear from the start of the week — indeed it made it clear when we debated the government business program on Tuesday — that it was agreeable to the business program on the

understanding and expectation that the government would behave in a logical and reasonable manner in dealing with the bills before the house and allowing for consideration-in-detail stages of those bills that needed such consideration and then moving on to the address-in-reply. But it seems that the government is determined to avoid the accountability that it trumpeted so loudly prior to the election and to make it clear every sitting week of this Parliament that it has no intention whatsoever of delivering on its commitment to make consideration in detail a standard part of the consideration of bills before the Parliament.

Before question time we heard the excuse that the government wanted to debate the address-in-reply then because it was not worth bringing on bills for debate before question time. Now after question time and after the break we had for the Closing the Gap observances, yet again the government has brought on the address-in-reply rather than moving to consideration in detail of bills.

For the third time I make it clear that the opposition believes it is appropriate that the Limitation of Actions Amendment (Child Abuse) Bill 2015 and the Veterans and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2015 be considered in detail. There are significant issues involved with the Limitation of Actions Amendment (Child Abuse) Bill and we need to ensure that the drafting of that legislation is right to achieve the objectives of the bill, which has bipartisan support. In relation to the Veterans and Other Acts Amendment Bill, a range of acts being amended, in particular those relating to consumer debt and debt collection, need further consideration. But the government is obviously running away from that accountability. It is now clear that it intends either to totally break its promise about consideration in detail or to allow only some token time for the consideration in detail of bills towards the end of the sitting.

Without prolonging the point, and we certainly do not intend to prolong the point because we made most of the points in debate earlier, we believe it is important that this house holds the government to account and that the government delivers on its promise. We expected that consideration in detail of these two bills would be provided for in accordance with the government's commitment and the expectations under which the government business program was discussed and agreed to, and I seek the support of the house to now move to consideration in detail of the two bills.

If that consideration can be completed before 5 o'clock, we can of course then return to debating the address-in-reply, because despite some of the disparaging remarks made by members opposite earlier,

we on this side of the house consider that the address-in-reply is an important part of parliamentary debate, but it is not part of parliamentary debate that will go to the guillotine at 5 o'clock. There will be further time for the address-in-reply debate on other sitting days. It is important that the house not be excluded from turning now to consideration in detail of the Limitation of Actions Amendment (Child Abuse) Bill 2015 and the Veterans and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2015.

**Mr EREN** (Minister for Tourism and Major Events) — Obviously we oppose the motion moved by the member for Box Hill, because we know what the motive is: to stifle debate. The address-in-reply debate is a very important part of the procedures of this place. A number of new and existing members want to relate their stories. There are new members who want to have — —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr EREN** — I did not interrupt the previous speaker. These are typical tactics of members of the opposition. When they were in government they did not have much legislation going through this place, and there were a number of bits of legislation which they got wrong. In the just over 100 days we have been in government we have been fixing some of the mess they created. There is a reason we are in government; it is because they got it wrong and the people saw that. For four years nothing much was done, and what we are doing — —

**Mrs Fyffe** — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the minister is straying far and wide, and I ask you to bring him back to the motion before the house.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Dixon)** — Order! This is a procedural motion, and I ask the minister to keep the debate relevant to that motion.

**Mr EREN** — The member for Box Hill has moved a motion to stifle debate. The government believes the address-in-reply debate is a legitimate process for the Parliament. This is how arrogant the coalition is in opposition. It was arrogant when it was in government, and it is arrogant now. It wants to stifle the process of government. We have been in government for just over 100 days. We know exactly the legislative procedures we have in place, and we want to give an opportunity to all government members, and indeed to opposition members, to outline some of their experiences about their time leading up to and during the election, and some of the commitments they made and some of the inadequacies of previous governments. That is a totally

legitimate process that this house goes through after every election.

The member for Box Hill is very precious about some of the comments coming from the government side of the house. For the last four years we were frustrated by the level of non-activity from the coalition when it was in government. On occasions you point out the inadequacies of government, and obviously that hurts. The member for Box Hill has a glass jaw — he cannot handle some of the comments coming from this side of the house. I understand why the opposition wants to stifle debate, but as a government we are quite entitled to set the agenda. We have a huge legislative agenda and we have outlined it. The opposition when in government was quite lazy in some of its legislation. It got it wrong and we had to correct it.

I am the next speaker listed for the address-in-reply debate and I have a few things to say to the Parliament. I want to share them not only with members in this place but also with the thousands of people who are watching the live stream on the net.

The government is setting the agenda. The Labor Party is in government and the coalition is in opposition and there is a reason for that — that is, it does not listen to the community. Opposition members refuse to accept that they have lost government. We are very happy with our legislative agenda and the progress we are making. Already we have an agenda that is packed. How many times under the last government did the upper house adjourn early because there was no legislation going through? Unlike the previous government, we have a legislative agenda. The address-in-reply debate is a very important part of the process, and we will continue it.

**Mr BROOKS** (Bundoora) — It is apparent that those who think they were born to rule are having trouble adjusting to being in opposition after just four years in government. I can hardly think of an occasion over the last four years when the Liberal Party and The Nationals in government provided an opportunity for this house to go into consideration in detail on a bill. I challenge those opposite to name, by way of respectful interjection, the bills that were considered in detail over the last four years.

We see the complete hypocrisy of those opposite, who want to use the Parliament as a place for conducting stunts as opposed to conducting the proper business of the Parliament. The business of the Parliament was voted on on Tuesday as part of the government business program. The opposition agreed on the business program for this week, and now it does not like the way the debate is travelling so it wants to

change the rules and go into consideration in detail on a bill.

I have been listening to the debate on some of the bills the honourable member for Box Hill mentioned members want to go into a consideration-in-detail stage on, and I have not heard many members in this chamber mention clauses of those bills to which they think there should be changes. There has been general discussion of the bills and, I daresay, general agreement on the bills, so it is very suspicious that those opposite would now come into this place and say they want to go into a consideration-in-detail stage on these bills. It underscores the fact that those opposite are not genuine in their request and that this is a parliamentary tactic. They find it hard to adjust to being in opposition. They think they can disrupt the running of this house using these sorts of cheap stunts.

I advise those opposite that we on this side of the house are a strong and united team. We are going to provide strong and united government, and we are going to see legislation move through this house in an orderly and proper fashion. We expect that members in this place will have the opportunity — a small amount of time in each sitting week — to make their contribution to the address-in-reply debate. We have just heard the member for Bendigo West give a great address-in-reply contribution, in which she spoke about the issues that are important to her electorate in rural Victoria — issues that those opposite obviously do not care about. It is no wonder they did so poorly in the Bendigo area at the last election.

In conclusion, it is important that the house stick with the business program that we put forward at the start of this week and that we ensure that the bills we go into a consideration-in-detail stage on are bills that the house agrees are important. Last sitting week we went into consideration in detail on a bill. It may just be that members opposite, particularly the member for Box Hill, are very upset that that piece of legislation has now passed the upper house and that the draconian move-on laws that were introduced by the other side are now consigned to history. We on this side of the house are very happy about that. We are happy to support the business program which was put forward and which was supported on Tuesday by both sides of this house. We reject the stunts of those opposite.

**Mr KATOS** (South Barwon) — I rise to support the motion moved by the leader of opposition business, the member for Box Hill, with regard to the adjournment of the debate. As the member for Box Hill has pointed out on numerous occasions, one of the Labor Party's election commitments was to make a

consideration-in-detail stage a standard practice in the Legislative Assembly. If we do not go into consideration in detail today, no bill will have been taken into consideration in detail this week. For that reason I support the motion of the manager of opposition business.

Labor needs to honour the commitment it made to the people of Victoria. As we have seen with many other things, those opposite have said one thing in opposition and done something completely different once in government. This is another example of a Labor untruth — I cannot say 'lie'. I support the motion moved by the manager of opposition business.

**Mr RICHARDSON** (Mordialloc) — It gives me pleasure to talk about the government business program. I want to reflect on the importance of the contributions of members to the address-in-reply debate. It was a proud moment when I stood in this place as the youngest member of this chamber and made a contribution in front of my family, friends and supporters. The right to make such a contribution is not removed simply because someone is a second, third or fourth-term member. Why should someone like the member for Clarinda, who has served in this place for a number of terms, not reflect on what he has achieved in four years and put that forward?

It is quite absurd that we have a situation where the opposition in its wisdom has supported the government business program, has engaged in debate knowing full well that the address-in-reply debate is on the notice paper, and then suddenly has done a flip-flop, which is something we have seen happen over and over again. Do not mention the flip-flop on the east-west link. Those opposite have turned around and said, 'We're not happy with it'. What kind of hypocrisy is it when you say one thing and do something else? There are certainly no side letters to this notice paper that I can see. I have got a pen for the member for Malvern, if he wants one. There is no signing over here. I want to acknowledge that today and throughout the week we have heard good contributions on the orders of the day, and more so from members on the government's speaking list. Members on this side of the house have been more willing than others to jump up and have a chat.

**Mr Wakeling** — They've started doorknocking now.

**Mr RICHARDSON** — Doorknocking is underway; don't worry. There have been some great contributions, particularly on the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Amendment Bill 2015. I

acknowledge the member for Hawthorn's contribution to the debate. It was made in good spirit. There have also been good contributions to the debate on the Limitation of Actions Amendment (Child Abuse) Bill 2015. We have even had a bit of a laugh about the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Hairdressing Registration) Bill 2015, with references to the lack of hair for some and the member for Sunbury's quiff, which is very nice. We have also debated in good spirit the Veterans and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2015.

We have arrived at the final order of the day, which allows all members the absolute right to reflect on their contributions to this Parliament over the past four years, and suddenly some home truths are dawning on those in opposition. Government members are reflecting on some of the atrocities in their communities and the effects of those on their constituents. They want to share with the Parliament in their address-in-reply contributions why they have come back and been so passionate about putting forward a Labor agenda. Suddenly those home truths are hard for opposition members to handle.

I think the business program has been good. During my speech I reflected on the Veterans and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2015. Two bills passed in two sitting weeks support our veterans community. That is a great thing. This government business program is sound, just as previous programs were. We were right when we came into this house on the first sitting day of the Andrews Labor government and introduced the Back to Work Bill 2014. That was an important contribution, and the bill passed the house.

We are getting on with the job. In the past 100 days we have been doing what is required, debating a number of bills and putting forward a positive agenda for our community. We will continue to do that. If we do not get to everyone's address-in-reply contribution this sitting week, it is only right that we look towards hearing those contributions in April. I think that is a right. I am very surprised that there are members opposite who may not have been able to make a contribution and to acknowledge their supporters and reflect on their work. I acknowledge that the member for Brighton yesterday gave a nice account of all female candidates in Brighton, and also acknowledge the good spirit in which that was done.

I sat with the member of Bentleigh and reflected nicely on that speech. It was important for the house to hear that contribution and for the member to put on the record her gratitude to her community. That is an important thing. That is the right of all members. I do

not think opposition members are being legitimate about their desire to debate bills. They have not been legitimate in question time. Their conduct today was about howling down the truth the Treasurer was putting forward about the dodgy side deals that were done and the side letters. We all know it; it has been reported. Today their technique was to try to howl down the truth. It was an absolute waste of time.

**Mr Clark** — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, it is obvious that the honourable member is filibustering and not addressing the substance of the motion. I ask you to bring him back to it.

**Mr RICHARDSON** — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, I do not engage in jargon like the member for Box Hill.

**Mr BATTIN** (Gembrook) — I rise simply to support the motion by the member for Box Hill. The sessional orders are slowly becoming a farce. Those on the other side of the house put forward sessional orders in relation to taking bills into consideration in detail and said they wanted openness and transparency, but this is another example of them not doing it. They said they were going to remove Dorothy Dixers. They only removed Dorothy; they kept the Dixers. That has failed for them, and it is getting them no run in the media.

We support the motion to adjourn the debate as we want to get on with debating bills rather than continuing the address-in-reply debate. Those opposite continually talk around the issues and say that address-in-reply contributions are very important. They say that we on this side are not getting over the fact that we lost government. I refer them to their address-in-reply speeches, 80 per cent of which tend to be about us when we were in government, whereas ours have been talking about the future of Victoria. That is very important; that is what we want to do. We want to get on with the business of the house and take bills into consideration in detail.

#### **House divided on Mr Clark's motion:**

*Ayes, 37*

Angus, Mr  
Asher, Ms  
Battin, Mr  
Blackwood, Mr  
Bull, Mr T.  
Burgess, Mr  
Clark, Mr  
Crisp, Mr  
Dixon, Mr  
Fyffe, Mrs  
Gidley, Mr  
Guy, Mr

Northe, Mr  
O'Brien, Mr D.  
O'Brien, Mr M.  
Paynter, Mr  
Pesutto, Mr  
Ryall, Ms  
Ryan, Ms  
Smith, Mr R.  
Smith, Mr T.  
Southwick, Mr  
Staley, Ms  
Thompson, Mr

Hodgett, Mr  
Katos, Mr  
Kealy, Ms  
McCurdy, Mr  
McLeish, Ms  
Morris, Mr  
Mulder, Mr

Tilley, Mr  
Victoria, Ms  
Wakeling, Mr  
Walsh, Mr  
Watt, Mr  
Wells, Mr

*Noes, 47*

Allan, Ms  
Andrews, Mr  
Blandthorn, Ms  
Brooks, Mr  
Bull, Mr J.  
Carbines, Mr  
Carroll, Mr  
Couzens, Ms  
D'Ambrosio, Ms  
Dimopoulos, Mr  
Donnellan, Mr  
Edbrooke, Mr  
Edwards, Ms  
Eren, Mr  
Foley, Mr  
Garrett, Ms  
Graley, Ms  
Green, Ms  
Halfpenny, Ms  
Hennessy, Ms  
Hibbins, Mr  
Howard, Mr  
Hutchins, Ms  
Kairouz, Ms

Kilkenny, Ms  
Knight, Ms  
Lim, Mr  
McGuire, Mr  
Merlino, Mr  
Neville, Ms  
Noonan, Mr  
Pakula, Mr  
Pallas, Mr  
Pearson, Mr  
Richardson, Mr  
Richardson, Ms  
Sandell, Ms  
Scott, Mr  
Sheed, Ms  
Spence, Ms  
Staikos, Mr  
Suleyman, Ms  
Thomas, Ms  
Thomson, Ms  
Ward, Ms  
Williams, Ms  
Wynne, Mr

**Motion defeated.**

**Mrs FYFFE** (Evelyn) — It gives me great pleasure to contribute to the address-in-reply debate in the 58th Parliament. I thank the people of Evelyn for having confidence in me once again. I also acknowledge the other candidates who stood at the election. It is not an easy thing to put yourself forward for election for public office. It was a long campaign and a tough one. Mostly candidates were professional and pleasant, particularly at the very busy early voting centre, which offered us no protection at all from the sun and the wind.

It is a great honour to be elected and a privilege to serve, whether it is on the back bench in opposition, in government or holding a higher office. It is sometimes forgotten that it is a privilege, and it saddens me to sit here and listen to the excuse of its being robust debate for members trying to shout each other down and for loud, repetitive and discourteous interjections that seem to be accepted as normal. The rationale that discourtesy, bad manners and at times the targeting and bullying of an individual member is part of robust debate is just an excuse. It is not robust debate — it is an unedifying sight and sound which so far in this Parliament gives every appearance of setting new records for poor behaviour.

The English language has a richness and breadth that with a modicum of wit and application — and if members adhered to the standing orders and practices of the house when we are debating — could result in a more dignified and more meaningful experience for the observer. Instead we appear to be sinking into an ever-increasing babble of noise that is demeaning to the positions we hold here. As I said, it is a privilege for each of us to be here, and we as a collective group are not honouring that privilege. I sincerely hope that members will change and respect the honour they have been afforded in being elected to this place.

I turn to talk about the achievements of the previous government. The coalition government achieved much in its four years of office: the creation of 110 000 new jobs and the retention of the AAA rating, which means so much in keeping interest rates down and leaving more money in government coffers with which to provide the things that the community wants, such as schools, hospitals and mental health services. The coalition government provided 1700 extra police and 940 protective services officers (PSOs). The PSOs at Lilydale and Mooroolbark railway stations have been warmly accepted and welcomed by the people of my electorate. It means so much to those who wish to go into town and come home later in the evening to know that they can travel on a train, get off the train safely and miss what often was yahooping, bullying and aggressive behaviour. The PSOs have made everyone more confident.

Healthcare spending increased by 21 per cent under the coalition, and mental health spending increased by 25 per cent. The elective surgery waiting list was slashed by 11 000. Record funding of \$9.2 million was invested in education in the 2014–15 budget. There was \$30 million to establish the Mental Health Complaints Commission, which is very important for those suffering from mental illnesses. We established 12 mental health services across the state, including at Eastern Health, as part of the first tranche of the coalition's \$15.1 million mental health and police response. I implore the Minister for Mental Health not to abandon this program. It is working, and it is vital it continues.

I also congratulate the previous Minister for Health, Mary Wooldridge, who is now a member for Eastern Metropolitan Region in the other place. She worked very hard on mental health issues and the review of the Mental Health Act over four years. She has done great work for people with anorexia and eating disorders. Anorexia is a mental illness that has the highest mortality rate of all mental illnesses. Through the department she changed procedures to make it easier

for parents and sufferers to access services. She provided extra funding for the Royal Children's Hospital for a dedicated area and for the improvement of programs to treat this insidious and, sadly, growing disease affecting young men and women. We now see many women in their 30s who have had babies and, sadly, more elderly people suffering from eating disorders.

All of us in here recognise the dreadful scourge of ice. It is a growing problem in all of our electorates. The government has put a lot of money into the management of the ice situation, but we also need to put money into the prevention of it. This is where Life Education Victoria should be utilised far more. Funding should reach the levels of funding provided in New South Wales and Queensland, which comes from health department budgets. Life Education Victoria teaches young people about their bodies, about the prevention of drug use and about what drugs can do to your body, showing them all of the things they need to know and giving them the tools as they get older to reject the drugs that will cause so much damage. We all see that ice affects every level of society and every age group. It only takes two, three or maybe four ingestions of the drug for a user to become addicted, and behaviour is then unpredictable and dangerous.

All of us would have had people on ice come into our electorate offices, and we know how cautious and careful we have to be when dealing with them. I am a very tactile person; I instinctively want to touch someone when they are distressed. After long conversations with my local police officers, they have said, 'No, Christine, you cannot: you must keep a space between you and them because of the unpredictable behaviour this drug causes in them'.

We have much to be proud of in the Yarra Ranges. Many of the businesses in the Yarra Ranges participated in the 80 trade missions run by the previous government, which went to 11 regions, 33 countries and 98 cities. Many orders were written and new machinery has been bought to produce the goods to fill them, which means more work here in Victoria and more work for the people in the Yarra Valley. Businesses in the Yarra Ranges have really grown. Food production has increased. Ricci's Bikkies at Healesville has had to increase production and stop taking orders, as have other producers. Some of my cherry growers cannot keep up with the orders. I think we are going to have to pay a lot more for cherries because the demand from overseas is now so high because of the quality of this premium fruit.

Yarra Valley businesses producing apple cider and pear cider cannot keep up with demand. The production of gin is growing. It is a very expensive gin, but for those who like it we have three companies making beautiful gin. It is absolutely fascinating, and I encourage anyone to visit a distillery to see the wonderful stills — they are like a vision from Doctor Who with all their colours and brightness. They are intense and full of flavour, and gin is going to become a great export business as production grows.

Winery tourism is expanding. New ventures in the district are developing confidence in the region, and that is because of the work that was done by the previous government with the trade missions that gave our products and businesses exposure to the world. Many of our businesses are now internationally recognised, and the number of international tourists arriving has also grown. The number of independent Chinese tourists is very high. They are really excited and keen to look at our products.

We have many internationally recognised people basing themselves in the Yarra Ranges. They have chosen the area because of its beauty, the fresh air and the people. We have international composers, directors, authors and artists who have all chosen to base themselves in the Yarra Ranges. Our strawberry growers are among the biggest producers of strawberries in Australia. We grow the most brussels sprouts. We produce so much food in such a beautiful area with great soil that is so productive. It is a well-kept secret how much we add to the economy of Victoria. We also have what must be the largest or second-largest number of tradies living in our beautiful area. They are the backbone of the community. They are the volunteers for the Country Fire Authority and the Victoria State Emergency Service. They are the ones who are on the committees running sporting clubs and leading school communities. They are fantastic contributors to our community. They are true Australians.

I have some amazing schools in the Evelyn electorate, and I will touch on just a couple of them. Firstly, what a joy it is to go to Mount Evelyn Special Developmental School and see its students progress. Because I have been in Evelyn for so long, I have had the joy of watching the children who started there in primary school move to the senior part of the school. I was there for their awards day and was given a box of vegetables that the children had grown. It was absolutely fantastic. It has been a joy to receive handmade cards over the years. It is a great school, and I am very proud of it.

Yarra Hills Secondary College at Mount Evelyn is another fantastic school. I was there for an Anzac performance that had been arranged by the former Department of Veterans' Affairs. The school chose to get involved. Two actors and an MC came out for the event, and it was amazing to see 175 students sit down and not make one sound. In fact at one stage I looked around and there were tears running down a few faces because the actors were portraying a male and a female who had fought in the First World War, and so many of the students were realising they were of the same age as the characters. The performance was extremely well done, and I commend the principal of the middle school for taking this on board and likewise the students for their interest and involvement. A First World War bugle was brought along, and at the end of the performance students were invited to have a go at blowing it. Some succeeded, although a few did not do quite so well, but it was a terrific morning, and I congratulate everyone.

We also have Melba Support Services in my district. It looks after people with severe disabilities and does everything it can to maximise these people's enjoyment of life, no matter their limitations. It is an overwhelming example of not letting what you cannot do stop you from doing what you can do. It ensures that every one of the people that the organisation is responsible for reaches their maximum potential and enjoys life. I am humbled every time I visit, and I am in awe of the staff, the patients and the hours they spend together. Those who work there have a genuine love and care for the people they are looking after. Melba Support Services works under the guidance of CEO Glenn Foard, who arrived at a difficult time. His calm, gentle persistence has restored the staff's pride, which has since grown over a period of years.

Many people helped me to get to this place, and I must not carry on too much without thanking my committee, the McCarthys, Aaron Violi, Rex McConachy, Vicki Violi, Alistair Osborne and of course Sue Roney in my office, who carried so much of the load during the campaign and while I was Speaker. She now knows the area intimately. I also thank Nadine, who filled in for a period of time last year.

It would be remiss of me if I did not mention Swinburne University and the promise made by the Minister for Education and the Premier to reopen the campus. They said they would absolutely do it and they would provide \$10 million for the fit-out. A million dollars of that money is now committed to Melba, which is using some of the space to build a separate facility on the site. The biggest worry is that the value of that site is \$24 million. As we know, a government

can compulsorily acquire, but only at the price set by the valuer-general; the government cannot just take. I do not know where the government is going to find \$24 million and who it will get to run the site, but a firm commitment was made on the reopening of that site. Fortunately Box Hill TAFE has come to Lilydale and is doing extremely well. It has, I think, 60 students after only three weeks of being open. It is working extremely well on its remodelled site.

The government has made other commitments to my electorate. One is the second crossing at the Lilydale station, which I am told is going to cost \$840 000 because of the modern signalling system that will be needed. The station will also need a new myki machine as the machine that was there previously has been taken to Seymour. The government has also committed to removal of the level crossings in Lilydale and Mooroolbark. I will be holding the government to those commitments.

I note that the Minister for Sport is at the table, so I cannot finish without touching on cage fighting. I honestly do not understand why the minister supports that sport. In boxing there is the blood rule — that is, if a boxer bleeds, the fight is stopped — and padded gloves are worn to minimise damage to the head. From what I have seen of mixed martial arts, there is not the blood that you see in cage fighting. With cage fighting there is far more damage and far more blood, and as a mother I cannot understand why on earth the minister supports such a brutal, horrible form of fighting. I cannot understand it.

**Mr EREN** (Minister for Tourism and Major Events) — The ignorance continues; obviously the member for Evelyn does not understand cage fighting. We supported the address-in-reply debate continuing. The member for Evelyn put a very good case about how wonderful her electorate is, and we would not have had an opportunity to hear all of that stuff about her gin factory, her vegetables and the other wonderful assets of her electorate — the second-largest number of tradies in Victoria — if members opposite had succeeded. They wanted to gag the member for Evelyn and prevent her from telling us that story.

I disagree with the member about what she termed cage fighting. There is no such sport as cage fighting; it is actually mixed martial arts. Cage fighting happened for four years under her government, except that it happened in boxing rings, which was dangerous. The member for Evelyn does not understand that. She needs to understand that the Professional Boxing and Combat Sports Board directly advises the relevant minister of the day about the safety of combat sports, and the board

advised the government to change the regulations in relation to making that sport — the fastest growing sport in the world — safer. The member for Evelyn still does not get that this sport existed under her government but it existed in a more dangerous environment. Ironically, it was more dangerous in the sense that people were getting injured falling out of the boxing ring and hitting their heads on concrete floors. That is what members of the opposition do not get.

I shall move on with my address-in-reply contribution. It is a great pleasure and an honour to respond to the Governor's speech. I am extremely humbled to have been elected to this Parliament for a third term, and I take this opportunity to congratulate both the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker on attaining high office. I also congratulate you, Acting Speaker, on your new role as an Acting Speaker. Those positions are extremely important in how this place runs, and I respect them.

I also congratulate all members of this house and the other house on their election to the 58th Parliament. Many members would know that my first term in this Parliament was in the Legislative Council. I spent my first four years in Parliament in that house and then I transitioned to this place. It is such an honour to be a member of this place, and I am extremely and ecstatically excited about being in government and about being the Minister for Sport as well as having portfolio responsibility for tourism, major events and veterans. It means this government can do some really good work in relation to policy formulation for this state in order to take Victoria forward in all of the portfolio areas I have within my command.

I thank the voters of Lara, my constituency. Once again they have blessed me with the opportunity to represent them. I think I increased my vote substantially, which is fantastic. Doing so is an indication that people are happy with what you are doing, and I am certainly pleased that I have been able to do my work to the best of my ability to ensure that my electorate gets looked after both in opposition and in government. I suppose that is one of the reasons the voters of Lara voted me back in.

I also thank my good friend and colleague the Honourable Richard Marles, the federal member for Corio. I thank him for his unwavering support. I look forward to working with him on a number of very important projects in our respective electorates. His electorate of Corio covers all of my state seat of Lara.

I also take this opportunity to welcome a new member, the member for Geelong. She is already doing a tremendous job of representing her constituency. She

has come to me with a number of issues in her electorate which relate to my portfolios, so she is being a tremendous member already, and I congratulate her on her achievement.

The member for Bellarine is a seasoned parliamentary colleague who has been in this Parliament for a while. Everybody wrote her off and was saying, 'Bellarine is notionally Liberal now. Lisa is going to lose her seat'. But we saw Labor increase its percentage in that seat in terms of the two-party preferred vote. Clearly not only has she been doing a good job but people overwhelmingly voted for Labor at the last election.

I also congratulate two members of the Legislative Council, Jaala Pulford and Gayle Tierney, both members for Western Victoria Region, on their success.

I do not want to single out any new member from outside Geelong, but I will congratulate the member for St Albans on being elected to this place. I have known her for a long time, and she was one of the best councillors in the area in which she resides. She received the greatest number of votes a councillor could receive, so I am pleased to see her in this place representing the good people of her electorate.

I thank my wife, Geraldine, and our five children for being yet again so supportive, understanding and patient throughout the campaign, which, as many members would know, is a testing time for families. What members of Parliament do is sometimes a thankless task and of course puts a lot of strain and pressure on families. Sometimes we miss out on quality times with our families.

I also thank all of my immediate and extended family and friends — they all know who they are. As much as I would like to mention them, unfortunately time constraints prevent me from mentioning everybody. I thank them one and all, including all of the ALP volunteers out there. The ALP is the oldest political party in Australia, and I am so proud to be a member of it. I have been a member of the Labor Party for most of my adult life. It is such a privilege to be a member of the party. I am grateful for the wonderful campaign that was run out of the ALP head office, and I thank the state secretary, Noah Carroll, for all of his achievements. As assistant secretary Kosmos Samara has also done a tremendous job. I thank not only both of them but all at head office for all the work they have done to get us to this position of being in government.

It was only eight years ago that I stood here and made my first speech to this place. I look back at the time, and I am extremely proud of it.

**Ms Ryan** — Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the house.

**Quorum formed.**

**Mr EREN** — I have been in this place for some eight years now and look forward to another four years of achieving for my electorate. The great state of Victoria has been at a standstill for the last four years. The voters of Victoria realised that the chaos which characterised the former government was a disaster for our state. Accordingly they spoke loudly and clearly by voting back in a Labor government after one term of coalition rule. Victoria needs strong leadership. Victoria needs a government which will fight for all Victorians and which not only recognises that we are in the middle of a jobs crisis but also has a plan to tackle the situation head on.

It is a government's responsibility to develop policies that support employment growth, and Geelong in particular has been hit with some tough times in the recent past. That has had a significant impact on residents in my electorate of Lara. The imminent closure of Ford, the closure of Alcoa and the redundancies at Target and of the Qantas maintenance workers at Avalon Airport as well as of other workers have seen many people left without work. I have personally met and spoken with many residents who have hit tough times and find themselves, many for the first time, without regular full-time and meaningful employment. Despite the resources available to them when in government and our desperate pleas to them at the time, no real action was taken by those opposite to come up with a substantial jobs plan. They turned their back on the manufacturing sector, leaving countless Victorians fearful for their job security.

Even without the resources of government we acted while in opposition. We knew that real action on jobs was needed, and we are very proud of the fact that we came up with a jobs plan. I was very proud to be given the opportunity by the then Leader of the Opposition, now the Premier, to create a Geelong-specific jobs plan. This was in addition to the jobs plan that had already been formulated for Victoria overall. That was an honour for me. The stakeholder contribution was tremendous and a lot of submissions were made. It was a jobs plan from the Geelong community, and we realised that by putting it into action. Now that we are in government, we can implement some of those things we announced. We recognise how important employment is not only Victoria-wide but for my electorate in particular. Locals are faced with a threat to the very future of employment in Geelong and Victoria.

We now have a plan that was recently accepted by this place, and it is a plan to get Victorians back to work.

I want to talk about my accomplishments between 2006 and 2010 in my electorate of Lara. It is a shame that the good work that was started in those four years was left stagnant over the last four years under the previous government. It was a difficult four years during which I felt I was talking to a brick wall if I tried to convince the government of some of the investments that were needed in my electorate. We just could not get through to the former government. However, I am happy to have done my part in securing funding for the health hub and continuing the Corio-Norlane education regeneration project. That project in particular was started by the previous Labor government.

This project involves a cluster of schools in my electorate. Communities collaborated to form the new Northern Bay College, which is located on five campuses. The new schools will allow for a more collaborative and flexible approach to teaching, which means students will be more involved in what, where and how they learn. I am very proud of our achievements with that so far. While in opposition we were fortunate enough for the then shadow Minister for Education to come out, and we announced a further \$6 million investment in that very important project. My community was very happy with the announcement.

Lara is a suburb in my electorate that has grown rapidly over the last few years. It is a shame that the previous government neglected the suburb and provided no funding whatsoever while allowing growth to occur. The previous Minister for Planning, who is now the Leader of the Opposition, made announcements about growth and further development. The growth resulted in an additional 5000 to 6000 people living in the township of Lara, but there was no additional funding to accommodate that growth. The former minister would come along, tick it off, and say, 'We've developed this area'; but no additional services were provided. That was causing a lot of angst in my community. We understood this and took measures to build infrastructure. Between 2006 and 2010, when we were in government, the electorate saw a brand-new police station, ambulance station and fire station. There were also upgrades to local schools and roads. We concentrated on that area, whereas the previous government did not.

In terms of my portfolio responsibilities, tourism and major events provide a huge economic boon to the state. I look forward to making my contributions to policy and making sure we get more than our fair share

of major events. We know that tourism itself is worth \$20 billion, and I plan to increase that to \$30 billion by 2021. We will be adding to the major events that occur and, in the limited time that I have to work with my veterans and sport portfolios, I look forward to working with all communities to make Victoria a better place to live, work and raise a family.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr EREN** — I am going right back now!

I want to make sure that we redress the losses of the last four years under the previous government. We want to ensure that Victoria is the best place to live and the best place to work and raise a family, and that is what we will endeavour to do.

**Ms RYALL** (Ringwood) — It gives me great pleasure to rise to contribute to the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech. First and foremost, I thank the community of the Ringwood electorate for the honour and privilege they have bestowed upon me in electing me to represent them. I again give them my commitment to represent them in this place and in the community to the best of my ability.

The boundary reforms saw an approximately 50 per cent change between what was the seat of Mitcham and the new seat of Ringwood. In the seven months leading up to the 2014 election I was privileged to visit almost all of the community groups in my electorate, whether they be sporting clubs, faith-based organisations, multicultural groups, residents associations, traders groups, environmental and common interest groups or primary schools, secondary schools and preschools. In addition, I visited many of the fabulous businesses we have in Ringwood.

One thing I pride myself on is my engagement and involvement with my local community on all levels and through all local organisations. Only being with people and understanding what they are saying — hearing and understanding the issues — enables you to adequately represent them. In connecting with so many from my community, whether it be through my mobile offices, local markets, community events, doorknocking, street corners, cold winter and spring mornings at the five railway stations in the Ringwood electorate or the many awards I present, I feel so heartened by the strength of our community, the ability of its members to communicate openly and their receptivity to engaging their local member of Parliament to represent them in the best way.

From 2010–14 I was delighted to be the member for Mitcham, and I thank that community for the privilege

of serving them. The new seat of Ringwood comprises parts taken from four seats, including the seat of Warrandyte, the former seat of Doncaster, the former seat of Kilsyth and the seat of Bayswater. I thank each of the members for those seats — the member for Warrandyte; Mary Wooldridge, the former member for Doncaster and now the Leader of the Opposition in the Council; the member for Bayswater; and the member for Croydon, who was the member for Kilsyth — for their great achievements for their communities in the time they held those positions.

I will touch on those great achievements across what is now the Ringwood electorate from 2010 to 2014. There was the \$27 million redevelopment of Maroondah Hospital; the removal of the Mitcham and Rooks roads level crossings, a blight on the ability —

**Mr Pesutto** interjected.

**Ms RYALL** — Absolutely. Those crossings were a blight on the ability of people to travel through those areas without being stuck at boom gates for 25 minutes during peak hour.

There was also the Box Hill Hospital redevelopment, with an additional 200 beds and one extra floor in the scope of the pricing envelope; the upgrades to Ringwood Heights and Ringwood North primary schools; the \$2.2 million upgrade to Ringwood Secondary College; and the Eastwood primary school rebuild — I was there only this week to inspect the first half of the rebuild that is taking place and it is spectacular. There was also the Ringwood station and bus interchange redevelopment, something that had long been longed for and something the member for Warrandyte worked hard to deliver. It is great to see that taking shape.

There were the Heatherdale oval and Mitcham Bowling Club lighting upgrades; the Box Hill to Ringwood shared bike path, some sections of which are already open; protective services officers being put on the beat at Blackburn, Nunawading, Mitcham, Heatherdale, Ringwood and Ringwood East railway stations; the preservation of Nunawading's Junction Road parklands as open space; the opening of the new premium Mitcham railway station, which is a spectacular piece of infrastructure; the \$5.1 million rebuild of Mount Pleasant Road Primary School and Kindergarten, which is underway and was much needed by the school, which was neglected for so long; and the \$1.29 million upgrade of Mullauna College.

I was privileged to chair the Family and Community Development Committee as it undertook an inquiry and

published a report into social inclusion for Victorians with a disability. I note that the government's response to the report, which was due on Tuesday, has not yet been provided. I look forward to seeing the government's response to the recommendations made by the committee so that Victorians with a disability may learn what will be done to provide them with the opportunity to live in their communities in a more inclusive manner.

One of the commitments we made was \$10 million for Ringwood Secondary College, which is absolutely needed. That funding was stripped from the school by those opposite, who in 2010 made a \$100 million commitment to the Maroondah education coalition. That has fallen short considering the fabulous indent into the work that needed to be done there. The government is cutting \$5 million from the pledge to Ringwood Secondary College and \$3 million from the pledge to Norwood College. We committed \$3 million to Mullauna College and another \$1 million to Rangeview Primary School. Norwood was to have a total of \$7.5 million, and Maroondah Hospital was to have an additional 100 car parks. Each of these things is very much needed, and they are either being done in a half-baked fashion or being ignored by the current government.

The now Minister for Education made a great song and dance about attending some of the schools in my electorate, in particular Norwood. He walked through those schools, so he knows their science and art facilities are absolutely appalling and in need of upgrade, but he has failed to fund the important things they need. They need \$7.5 million to do the work, and that is what we committed to.

What is the government providing? It is giving them \$4.5 million for a school hall. The government is not doing anything or providing any funds for the important science, technology, engineering and mathematics centre Norwood wants and needs or the arts facility the school wants and needs. That is what happened as a result of the Minister for Education failing to consult with the school, to sit down and wait for the new principal to arrive to work out the needs of the school, instead of flying off and spitting out money to different places to see if it suits a need. It is about listening to and understanding the needs of the community and making sure that you make commitments in line with those needs — —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Ms RYALL** — And properly, absolutely. Turning to the Maroondah Hospital car park, the electorate of

Ringwood and surrounding communities that make up the catchment for Maroondah Hospital desperately need the car parks that were committed to by the coalition government should it win the election. We have received nothing from this government. The member for Monbulk should hang his head in shame because this hospital serves his community and he knows only too well that health services need to be accessible to the community.

When I was out there talking about this issue and making the announcement of the 100 new car spaces a lady drove through the psychiatric area of the hospital and at that precise time said, 'I have been here when my son was suicidal. He was in the car with me and I could not get a park and I was beside myself'. She said that she parked illegally and then had to apply to have the fine that she subsequently received revoked.

Members of the community and I often have to go around the block trying to find a parking space at that hospital. I congratulate those opposite on the announcement of a breast cancer centre for Maroondah Hospital, but the community and I are yet to hear what will happen with it. This new facility will only compound the parking problem unless it is dealt with now so I call on the government to fund the necessary car parking arrangements and not expect Maroondah Hospital and Eastern Health to pull money out of their operating budgets to fund these car parks. We need those additional car parks. We do not need talk. We do not need to say, 'We'll look at it when we do the cancer centre and we'll cater for it' because there is a much bigger issue that needs to be catered for now. There is a much bigger community, including the member for Monbulk's community, that needs a resolution to this problem.

Those in the west know as well as those in the east just how necessary a second river crossing is. It is a travesty that the Premier can have so little insight and understanding of the needs of Victorians and Victorian businesses that he would consider tearing up the east-west link contract. It risks not only Victoria's reputation as a safe place to invest but also the ability of business to freely move products and services around the state. As the population grows this will only become worse. The immediate impact on those who hoped for years of work ahead on a shovel-ready project — a really shovel-ready project, one that immediately created 3700 jobs on the eastern end — has been huge.

Those people, a number of whom live in my community, are now wondering where their work will come from. This is about food on the table for those

people and families that need the work. I heard the Minister for Tourism and Major Events go on about a jobs plan and how fantastic he is, but this is nothing less than job destruction. The coalition also committed to both the rail capacity project and the airport link. It is not about one thing. Unfortunately those opposite can only do one thing at a time. This is about making sure that the necessary infrastructure and jobs are there for this state and that business has the ability to move around it. That is what is needed for the future, and I call on the government not to tear up the contract for the east–west link.

I want to pay tribute to the volunteers in my campaign who stood by my side in the seven months of very busy community activity leading up to the election. I am very grateful to those who stood by my side, helped at the stations from 6.30 a.m., doorknocked and letterboxed with me, assisted at mobile offices, stood at street corner meetings and markets, and assisted with the very important community forums that I held on family violence and ice.

Campaigns are not won by the candidate alone. Being elected relies on the goodwill and efforts of those people who support us and what the Liberal Party stands for, which is that platform of being able to have a go, personal responsibility and being the best you can be, enterprise, small government and interfering as little as possible in the lives of those people in your community. I thank all those volunteers who assisted me and gave all their time to winning Ringwood for the Liberals. My confidence never wavered. I never, ever took the people of Ringwood for granted. I have shown them my engagement and they know they count and that I am the right person to represent their needs. I am so thankful they saw fit to elect me, and I will be forever grateful.

Last year, 2014, was an incredibly difficult year for me and my family. I lost my father. He passed away 12 months ago. He was a true Liberal from working-class roots. He was a man who fought valiantly for so long. He never failed to give me the right advice right up until his last moments, and I will forever miss our talks, his frank advice and his 'say it like it is' manner. I commit to doing him proud and to continuing the work ethic he and Mum instilled in me in the knowledge that hard work and sacrifice is the basis for so much. To my mum, the most amazing woman I know: thank you for your never-ending love and support. She has done an amazing job, despite having lost my father in the last 12 months.

My daughter, Karlie, who I cherish, knows the sacrifice of family life that we MPs make. Her support has never

wavered. We celebrated her 18th birthday in Parliament and her 21st birthday celebration was held the weekend before the 2014 election. She has been with me through thick and thin since the beginning of this journey, and I love and admire her for her hard work throughout the campaign.

Last but not least, my husband, Jeff, has been steadfast and unwavering in his love and support. This role is a partnership. For five years now since I started with my first campaign he has supported me in every aspect and never failed to encourage me or give me the courage that I need. He has stood by my side. I will be eternally grateful for his love and commitment.

**Ms HALFPENNY** (Thomastown) — It is good to see you in the chair, Acting Speaker. I also rise to contribute to the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech. I am very proud to be standing here as a member of the Andrews Labor government. I want to congratulate the Premier for leading us to this great victory in the state of Victoria. I would also very much like to thank the residents of the Thomastown district, many of whom were new to the electorate because of the redistribution. The Thomastown electorate has almost doubled in size geographically. It now includes not only the older, more established areas such as Lalor and Thomastown but has extended into the growth areas of the northern suburbs — Epping and even further on to Wollert.

This election result was a little bit of a shock to some residents in the new growth areas of the Thomastown district because prior to the redistribution they were living in a marginal seat. As a result of the redistribution they are now living in a very safe Labor seat. In saying that, I want to again thank those residents for electing me for a second term, and by an increased margin.

I do not give myself any credit for that because the Liberal candidate for Thomastown was overrun by all sorts of scandal and accusations as a result of his actions in trying to fundraise to bring pornographic stars to Melbourne for entertainment. As a result of this I believe the Liberal Party said that he had been disendorsed. Nonetheless, he continued to enjoy the endorsement of the Liberal Party in my electorate. The Victorian Electoral Commission was never told that he had been disendorsed so there were people who were handing out material for him every minute of every day at the voting booths and claiming that he was the Liberal candidate for the Thomastown electorate.

I am also very much looking forward to getting on with the job as part of the Andrews Labor government and

making sure that all our election commitments, and more, are delivered. As was stated by the Governor in his address, in talking about what the new government has promised it was noted that the Labor government will invest in hospitals, ambulances and schools, create jobs, improve public transport and take action on family violence. Those are high aspirations and very big commitments that Victorians need and deserve. We will be true to our word, I believe, and deliver everything in full.

During the election, as I moved around the Thomastown electorate, I did a lot of doorknocking, held street stalls, talked about the election and about what Labor would do. It struck me that generally residents believed that Labor would be fairer and treat people more equally, and that it would better look after those who needed some help. In particular, residents had confidence that Labor would improve education and health outcomes. But in terms of infrastructure delivery in the area, I admit that there was some scepticism. I am glad to say that we were able to get strong commitments from Labor, and residents are very thankful for those commitments and look forward to seeing those commitments delivered.

If we look at the four years before the election, for example, we see that not one cent was spent by a Liberal-Nationals government on any form of infrastructure such as roads or public transport in my electorate. In saying, 'not one cent', without exaggeration I can honestly say not one single cent was spent. Nothing — zero — was spent in the seat of Thomastown. There are huge traffic congestion problems, including examples of how families taking children to school spend 20 to 30 minutes to go by car for a distance of about 5 kilometres to drop their children off at school. Residents might say, 'Let's get public transport', but bus services are almost non-existent, and when buses do arrive at an hourly interval, they are also caught up in all the traffic so that even for buses, as in one case, it can take 40 minutes to travel 7 kilometres from North Epping to Lalor Secondary College. These are major problems in the area, and they were not addressed during the full four years of the coalition government.

I am proud to say, however, that the Labor government has committed to provide money to address some of the traffic congestion in the area. The major commitment, which is something like \$40 million plus, is a commitment to the duplication of O'Herns Road and connecting O'Herns Road via a diamond interchange onto the Hume Freeway, thus removing the problem of people going west for work or into the city from High Street running through the Thomastown, Lalor and

Epping area by placing them onto a freeway. That will greatly reduce congestion. I believe there are commitments that will be seen in the first budget in May, and we as a Labor government will not lose any time to make sure that this very big commitment is underway.

There is only one thing that could stop the delivery of this commitment, and that is Prime Minister Tony Abbott. The Liberal federal government has responsibility for part of the Hume Freeway, and according to what is being said about road projects it fits into all the categories of a project that should get federal government funding. That is yet to be confirmed by the federal government, but we are working hard to make sure that there is a commitment from that government. We will be calling on people such as a member for Northern Metropolitan Region in the upper house, Craig Ondarchie, to demonstrate that he has a commitment to the area by lobbying with us to ensure that the federal government funds the part of the project for which it is responsible.

In terms of that project, I also make mention of the Aurora Community Association, which was a great lobbyist in getting this project up and running. Members of the association did a lot of campaigning around the O'Herns Road project and, full credit to them, their voices were heard. I also acknowledge the work done by local members of Parliament, such as the Minister for Industry, who was very active in agitating for the project. There were also individuals in the area, such as Succetin Unal, who was a tireless lobbyist in trying to get commitments for this very vital piece of infrastructure. When I say he was tireless, I am not saying that it was a difficult project to have a future Labor government commit to, but of course the government wants to make sure that where there are problems they are fixed. It is very important to make sure that these sorts of projects are known to the party and make sure that all the details have been covered off.

The other big election commitment from Labor was to rebuild the William Ruthven Secondary College. Again, I am proud to be standing here knowing that the school will be rebuilt because it is very much overdue. The state of the buildings and grounds are impossible, and I do not know how the skilled and dedicated teachers and staff are able to carry on with their jobs at the school with the state of the buildings. But all credit goes to them, and of course, also to the students who are very dedicated and thankful for the education they are receiving at the school.

The William Ruthven school did an impressive exhibition in Queen's Hall late last year when it

showcased some of the outstanding achievements and projects of the school and what students have done, including some incredible improvements in Australian tertiary admission rank scores, where I think something like 80 per cent of students last year were accepted into university places. Again, that is a huge achievement, but you cannot keep that up with old-fashioned, falling-down buildings with leaky roofs, so I am very glad and proud that Labor will rebuild that school to make sure that students have a proper, state-of-the-art learning environment in which to receive the education they need and deserve.

I am sad to see that the principal who worked hard on getting support for the William Ruthven Secondary College rebuild, Ms Karen Money, has moved on. She is now the principal of Melbourne Girls College in Richmond. She has been replaced by another very capable principal, Ms Judi Benny.

The third thing — the list goes on — is that Thomastown constituents have a commitment from Labor to purchase land and start planning to build the Edgars Creek school, which will go from prep to year 12. There is a lack of secondary school opportunities in the north of the electorate, where all students have to go south to attend secondary school. As has been mentioned in this chamber on many occasions, the population growth in the northern suburbs is skyrocketing, and there needs to be a secondary school in the northern part of the electorate to ensure that students do not have to travel long distances. There are many more cars on the road than there would be if there were a local secondary school.

All these things are still a little way off because there was no planning or action by the Liberal government to address any of the massive problems in the outer growth areas, where infrastructure is non-existent. Nothing was built in the last four years, so there are huge backlogs in what needs to be done.

In addition to rebuilding the secondary school and building a new school in the northern part of the electorate, Labor has many fantastic policies and ideas around supporting children in education, whether it be payment for school camps or providing support for schoolbooks and breakfast programs. These are important things for many students who go to school in the electorate of Thomastown. Many schools in the southern part of the electorate have breakfast clubs, but they are of a minimum standard and have a lot of difficulties because they are staffed by volunteers and receive food through the goodwill of local companies. As a result they do not necessarily provide all the

nutrition that students need for breakfast before a day of learning.

Another initiative is the technical schools the Labor government will roll out across the state. The Outer Northern Trade Training Centre at Peter Lalor Vocational College is a ready-made building that could be part of the technical school program. I want to mention mixed martial arts. Vik Grujic, a mixed martial arts fighter from Australia, came to speak to the students at Peter Lalor Vocational College — —

**Mr Southwick** interjected.

**Ms HALFPENNY** — You do not know anything about what I have to say. You are living in a different world.

Vik Grujic was so good in the way he spoke to those kids. He talked to them about how they should and should not carry themselves, how to control their emotions and how to work to better themselves. He was an inspirational speaker. He also talked about the difficult life he had, the hardship he faced every day and how he was able to overcome that to live in a loving family with his wife and children. As has been mentioned before, this is not an illegal sport; Labor's reforms are about making it safer.

That is not to mention the many other things Labor is doing to address drugs, including ice, and public transport. It is fantastic to be here as part of a Labor government.

**Mr SOUTHWICK** (Caulfield) — It is my pleasure to give my address-in-reply to the Governor's speech and to talk about the period of time leading to last year's election and afterwards. All of us put ourselves out there when it comes to this job. It is a very public job, and there is no better time to test that out than when it comes to an election. It demonstrates the visibility of what we have done over the years. If it is not your first term, you can talk about some of the things you achieved over the preceding four years.

Firstly, I will touch on some aspects of my first four years as the member for Caulfield. I came to the job taking over from a hardworking member, Helen Shardey, who had a number of years working as the member for Caulfield. There are some key things that were important to me coming into this job, including our commitments to open space — my electorate continues to have the lowest amount of open space of any metropolitan electorate — to public roads and public transport, to education and also to making our community safer, which I will touch on. It was

something I was keen to achieve and is something we continue to do.

In terms of public transport, one of our commitments leading into the 2010 election was the new Balaclava railway station, which was not disability compliant. It was one of those old stations with narrow platforms. We went to the election in 2010 with a commitment to build a new station, which we were able to do. Only a few months before last year's election we delivered a \$13.3 million station development. It was an important project for me that indicates that, when we as members of Parliament say we will do something, we should follow through and do it.

When we started the project we found the station had soil contamination. The initial response from the department was that we should do a patch-up job and not go through with the full development. The minister and I sat down with the department, and he quite rightly said that we needed to do the project, so we did. It cost substantially more to get rid of the contamination — millions of dollars — but we finished the project and achieved what we set out to achieve.

The \$115 million bayside rail project and signage and signalling improvements at the Caulfield, Glenhuntly and Ormond stations were all important. They are the sorts of things that quite often go unnoticed. I had someone with expertise give me a briefing at the Ormond and Glenhuntly stations. They talked about the interchanges, the fact that a train had to slow down every time it crossed an interchange because the signalling was not right and that being able to improve the signalling shaved minutes off each and every train journey from Frankston to the city.

The final transport project I will talk about is the commitment we made, funded in the 2013–14 budget, to fully fund the removal of the North Road, Ormond, level crossing and install a new pedestrian crossing. This is important because it was funded and announced before the election took place, but, ironically, the Labor Party claimed during the election campaign that, should it be elected, it would take this up as a project. It still remains in question whether this is one of the 50 level crossings Labor claims it will remove or whether it is an additional one. We on this side of the house know it has already been funded, approved and announced. I am looking forward to seeing where that ends up.

As I said earlier, better open space has been very important. We delivered \$30 000 initially for an open space strategy for the Glen Eira City Council. We followed up with a \$650 000 investment to redevelop an unused water reservoir, Glen Huntly Reservoir, into

a park. That will open in about six months. No doubt the Labor Party will be opening that, but all of the money came during our term in government. I was very happy to be part of that because that reservoir has been idle for a number of years. It has been locked up and had fencing all around it. It will be great to be able to provide a passive park space because we also have a huge shortage of that. It will be great to open that park and get the community into that space.

The other element is on the Elsternwick side of the electorate. I led negotiations to secure a 15-year lease with a 5-year option for a redevelopment of Elsternwick Park, and alongside that the rifle range. This rifle range is a great example of inaction by the Labor Party. It was locked up for 20-odd years. There was no opportunity to get rent for a fantastic property right on Glen Huntly Road, next to a train station and a park, because it was boarded up. We have been able to find a tenant for that property, a great cafe, which will spill out into the park. We went through all of the negotiations, and we ensured that the project could take place.

Again the Labor government has announced that recently. However, I was very happy to see it open, as were Elsternwick Mainstreet traders. Those traders were very involved in the redevelopment but were not acknowledged during the announcement, which is ironic. The retail traders who stood up and fought for this project were not even acknowledged when the announcement of the redevelopment took place. The head of the association stood next to me while the announcement was being made and burst into laughter when the person launching it spoke about 'all the great work that was done by the Labor Party'. The Labor Party was there for 5 minutes. It opened the park, but the traders association did all the work. I am sure the people in the know will remember these sorts of things at future elections.

There is another important element I will mention. It is work that still needs to be done, and I will continue to advocate very strongly for it — that is, the Melbourne Racing Club and Caulfield Racecourse Reserve. I have spoken on numerous occasions about this. The Caulfield Racecourse is a fantastic racecourse. Racing has a home in Caulfield, and I hope it continues. I am very proud of the Caulfield Cup. In fact my family had a winner in 1972, Sobar, which it backed to win the cup, so we have some history with racing and with Caulfield. We should have a number of active sporting facilities alongside racing, right in the middle of that racecourse. There is an opportunity for half a dozen footy grounds or other sports grounds. This is a great opportunity for sport to work alongside racing. I have

been advocating strongly for that, and I will continue to do so.

One of the things I did in my first term was ensure that \$1.8 million was invested by Melbourne Racing Club to improve open space in the area and to include a small-sided soccer pitch, so we have already had a first taste of sport in the middle of the racecourse. We have started that, and we are going to continue to lobby hard. I can assure members of this house and my voters in Caulfield that I will continue to work hard to deliver the best outcome possible for Caulfield Racecourse Reserve. Finally, I secured \$350 000 for the redevelopment of Caulfield Park Sports Club.

The coalition government did a lot in terms of learning centres. We provided many grants to develop relationships with other schools. We upgraded Caulfield, St Kilda, Prahran and Malvern police stations. I was very proud to be the Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services and to work very closely with the emergency service and police sectors. We also delivered around \$18 000 for crime prevention for the Beth Weizmann Community Centre. We made a number of commitments prior to the recent election. One was to Glen Eira College, which we promised \$9.5 million for an upgrade to a new school, which Labor also announced. I was very happy that the announcement was bipartisan, and I look forward to seeing Labor deliver that promise.

Other commitments the former government made related to security, particularly with regard to the Jewish community, which faces constant threats. As I have said in this house before, it is one of the few communities that needs security guards, many of them volunteers, who sit outside schools each morning. Many of these people are parents, ensuring that their kids are safe each morning and afternoon. This also occurs at a number of community centres and synagogues. We announced an election commitment of \$1 million, which included funding for Beth Weizmann, which is a community centre that houses a number of organisations. We also announced some of that funding was to go to schools to ensure that those schools would have proper security.

The Labor Party made an election commitment as well. Its election commitment was half a million dollars for security for the Beth Weizmann centre, to build a wall, and \$600 000 to provide security for schools. I look forward to seeing Labor deliver on those election commitments. They are very important commitments, and we need to make sure that Labor does that. However, we cannot just stop there. I have had a number of representations from organisations,

including preschools, aged-care facilities and synagogues that need funding when it comes to security in these very troubled times. I will be putting my case for St Kilda Shule, Chabad of Melbourne Shul, Gilly's Early Learning Centre and Emmy Monash Aged Care, just to name a few organisations that have made representations to me in the last few months and that are in desperate need to upgrade their security systems. It is all very well for us to talk about this in here, but the last thing we want to see in Victoria is the sort of situation that occurred at the Lindt Chocolate Cafe in Sydney.

The last thing I want to mention in terms of election commitments is that we put up half a million dollars to fund the Jewish Holocaust Museum and Research Centre, which thousands of kids, most of whom are from non-Jewish backgrounds, visit each year to see the atrocities of the Holocaust. This is a very important project, and I will be calling on the Labor government to provide funds to support that organisation, which does an amazing amount of work.

I know many Labor Party members have been to the Holocaust centre on a number of occasions and have seen the work that has been done there. The centre wants to upgrade its facilities, because its management cannot fit the kids into the facility. It has half a dozen groups coming through every day, and this would be money well spent. In terms of funding for education and multicultural affairs, these are the sorts of funds we are desperately in need of, and I call on the Labor Party to fund the Jewish Holocaust Centre.

In my last few minutes I want to thank my family, Hayley, Tyler and Paige, for sticking by me and for all the great work they do. I also thank all of the volunteers who helped me during the election. I thank my staff, Alexander Baranikov and Tim Neve, Alex Kain, who supported me during the campaign, Daniel Weil, Jono Elias, Alex Woff, Alex Hutchesson, Miaosheng Yang, Leonid Shvartsman, Kate Ashmor and Cath Kraina, who all did outstanding jobs.

Finally, I pay tribute to the people who are not here with us, particularly the former members for Bentleigh, Mordialloc, Carrum and Prahran. It is sad that they are not here. They were all hardworking members, and they should be in this place. It is fair enough to go out hard during an election campaign, but some of the tactics we saw during the last four weeks of the campaign were an absolute disgrace. Tomorrow is a National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence, and we are all wearing an orange badge for it. It is an absolute disgrace that people would dress up as Country Fire Authority volunteers — fireys and

paramedics in dress-ups — to abuse people, including the former members for Bentleigh, Mordialloc, Carrum and Prahran. They were dirty tactics. We will remember those sorts of games. We do not stoop that low. The current members for Bentleigh, Mordialloc and Carrum should hang their heads in shame. I wonder whether they will be wearing an orange badge on Friday. I certainly hope not. It is all very well to talk about something, but their actions in terms of the tactics that were used during the election campaign demonstrate that they are not fit for purpose when it comes to wearing the orange badge.

**Ms D'AMBROSIO** (Minister for Industry) — I was beginning to hope there had been some rehabilitation on the part of the member for Caulfield in regard to these matters, but unfortunately and sadly he does not seem to be able to refrain from trying to divide people and communities on such important issues rather than bringing them together.

I am pleased to contribute to the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech. I begin by congratulating the Speaker on his historic appointment to the position. He has ably conducted himself with great distinction and eloquence since his election, and I believe the functions of the Parliament will be all the better for that.

I thank the people of the Mill Park electorate for the confidence they have vested in me in representing the interests and needs of the community for the next four years. I will do my very best to assist them and to represent them robustly in that regard.

Victorians elected the Andrews Labor government on 29 November 2014. It is a government that will spend every day working to improve the quality of life of all Victorians. It is a government that will make sure that all Victorians have the opportunity to reach their full potential and that no communities, regardless of where they live and their circumstances, are left behind. There is no greater champion of Labor values, and I congratulate him on his elevation to the position.

I pay my respects to and thank the many people who assisted me in my journey campaigning for another election last year. I was very pleased that a lot of Labor's true believers shared the journey with me. I particularly thank the people on my campaign committee. They are wonderful people who gave me a lot of advice and support at the right moments during the campaign. I also thank my electoral staff and my family, who have gone beyond the call of duty over a number of years but especially during election times when jobs are often done without thanks. I thank them for all their efforts.

My electorate of Mill Park is a beautiful place to live. Let there be no doubt that no matter where people live there is a dignity and a pride in that. It is something we on this side of the house respect. Our aim is to acknowledge that but to always strive to make things better, to make communities stronger, more resilient, more sustainable, happier and more secure and prosperous places to live. The Mill Park electorate is one such community. It is a community of diversity. It has a great sense of community harmony and strength. I am proud of that and very thankful that I am able to serve such a community.

Unfortunately in the past four years the community was ignored in all respects. All the critical infrastructure and service deliveries that are the responsibility of state governments were overlooked, whether it was in health, ambulance services, support for schools, TAFEs, public transport, roads or jobs. The number of businesses that closed down in the northern suburbs over the last four years was a display of a government refusing to acknowledge a problem and step up and produce a plan that could draw the confidence of businesses and communities with the vision and assistance that could help push back the tide of many job losses.

There is worse to come in some respects. Many members of my community, and many families, totally rely on the auto industry for jobs through the supply chain. There are many suppliers and many small employers in the northern suburbs that rely on the work of the large automotive businesses, and Ford at Broadmeadows is certainly a big one. Unfortunately when those on the other side in this place were in government they stood by idly and silently when their mates in Canberra, including the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, and his vandals, called on the auto industries to shut up shop and leave the country. That is what they did, and that is the situation we have got.

I wish to focus on some of the key areas of the government's agenda, which are reflected in the Governor's speech. I will highlight them for the benefit of my community. They constitute a clear restatement of the commitment of our government to education, to health, to improving transport infrastructure and to supporting jobs growth and businesses. Families in my local community deserve to have high-quality schools that help nurture young minds.

Under the coalition schools were falling apart, and unfortunately our kids were falling behind. For example, approximately two-thirds of all classrooms at Mill Park Heights Primary School were portables. This school has about 1100 students, and about two-thirds of them were being accommodated in portables. That

situation dragged on for years under the previous government. Kids cannot get a first-rate education in a second-rate classroom; that is the reality, and these old portables had to go. I am proud that the Victorian Labor government will rebuild Mill Park Heights Primary School. Our \$6 million upgrade to the school will replace old portable classrooms with permanent buildings. It is a great school that is under a lot of pressure, and Labor's plan will help it do so much more.

Other schools in my community will also benefit from the raft of services and initiatives that have been championed by this government and will be implemented by it, from breakfast clubs to assistance with school excursions and uniforms, as well as health checks and the like. These are the lengths the government will go to to ensure that kids are able to stay at school, be happy and healthy and be given every deserved entitlement from a good education system to get the best they can for themselves and their futures.

Transport infrastructure is also a key issue for the people of my community. I was proud when the previous Labor government delivered funds for the South Morang rail project — a \$650 million project delivering new rail to Mill Park and South Morang residents; new train stations at Thomastown, Epping and South Morang; disability access; and bus interchanges. Only Labor committed to delivering the funds to make this project the reality that it is today. The Andrews Labor government will build on this project by extending the South Morang train line even further to Mernda. With the populations of Doreen and Mernda having grown from 19 000 people in 2011 to almost the size of the population of Shepparton, this train line extension will be a welcome service to the northern suburbs. This extension is only possible due to the decision by Labor to fund the duplication and extension of the Epping line to South Morang in 2009.

One important challenge is to not only continue to help the Northern Hospital by way of accommodating growth in the community but also to ensure that all hospitals are working as efficiently as possible. There has been an increase in demand for health resources, and this government will ensure that the resources and health systems that are in place are functioning as efficiently and effectively as they should be. That is why this government appointed an independent expert to find the missing beds at hospitals, including at the Northern Hospital. These are beds that the previous government said existed, were open and were being serviced by doctors and nursing staff. However, those beds were nowhere to be found. There were not any

patients being accommodated in those beds. They were missing beds.

Respected surgeon and former Australian Medical Association Victoria president Dr Doug Travis is conducting a statewide audit of beds and theatre capacity and will provide recommendations on how to increase the capacity of Victorian hospitals. Labor's expert assessment will find out how the Northern Hospital can treat more people and run more efficiently. Getting people off waiting lists, off ambulance trolleys and out of ambulances is something we are determined to achieve.

Labor will resuscitate the failing health system and get the missing beds up and running. We have already provided support, dignity and respect for our paramedics, who, put their life on the line every single day in challenging confrontations and difficult and traumatic circumstances. They deserve respect, and they did not get it from the previous government. We are determined to turn that around. We need to respect people who respect human life. That is what paramedics do, and they will get respect from this government.

I am honoured to have two portfolio responsibilities in this government, both of which I am very passionate about. I will do everything I possibly can to see that they thrive. An Andrews Labor government will act immediately on Victoria's jobs crisis with the *Back to Work* plan — a landmark plan to work with Victoria's best thinkers and leaders to grow our industries and help create 100 000 full-time jobs. The *Back to Work* plan includes a \$100 million fund to provide payroll tax relief to companies providing full-time work to unemployed youth, the long-term unemployed and retrenched workers. It will support the creation of 100 000 full-time jobs. The bill has been passed by Parliament and the legislation is ready to be used for the benefit of businesses and employees.

The *Back to Work* plan also supports industry and infrastructure projects that need to be invigorated. The Premier's Jobs and Investment Panel, an independent body of senior business and industry leaders, will provide direct advice to the Premier on the expenditure of \$500 million for jobs and investment.

The Future Industries Fund, a fund that I am honoured to be personally responsible for as Minister for Industry, is a \$200 million program to support job-creating projects in key sectors in which we have identified high-growth capacity. Those sectors include pharmaceuticals and medicine, new energy technologies, food and fibre, international education,

professional services, defence, transport and construction technologies and so forth. The Regional Jobs Fund will provide a further \$200 million investment to support job-creating projects in regional Victoria.

The *Back to Work* plan will also introduce reverse trade missions to bring international business leaders to Victoria and demonstrate in a tangible, personal way what we have to offer as a state. The single most important asset we have to offer is our human capital. Our knowledge, our know-how, our skills, the capacity and capability of our people, our innovative and ambitious desire to do more and go beyond the norm is a hallmark of our community. We will also be establishing new Victorian government business offices in South America, Turkey and Singapore.

We have made a commitment to strengthen the Victorian industry participation policy. We have committed to the procurement of 100 per cent Australian steel in the removal of 50 level crossings. This will generate important investment opportunities for Victorian businesses, and it will also grow jobs for Victorians. That is what this government is about. The Victorian Renewable Energy Action Plan is critical, and we will implement it. The Victorian energy efficiency strategy will ensure that our resources sector — which is very important to Victoria as a state — has a sustainable future. It will ensure that the sector is engaged with local communities so that we can have that social licence, which is so important in a state like Victoria where many communities live close to our natural resources. These things and many more are important in my portfolio. I wish I had more time to go into all the details. These are all important issues, and dealing with them is the hallmark of this government. I know that my community of Mill Park and other communities will have a friend in this government — a government that is committed to growing jobs, looking after young people and education, growing and improving our health system and ensuring that our community gets the very best it can from a good government.

**Mr T. BULL** (Gippsland East) — It is a pleasure to rise and commence my contribution to the address-in-reply debate. I start by congratulating you, Deputy Speaker, on your appointment to high office. Although I have congratulated the Speaker in the corridor, I put on the record my congratulations to him as well. I was very pleased to have again received the support of the people of Gippsland East at the November election, and I look forward in the 58th Parliament to representing what I believe to be the most picturesque electorate in the state. I know my

fellow member of the Bairnsdale faction here in the house would strongly support that sentiment.

In some ways it was four fairly tough years in Gippsland East. We had our fair share of fires and our fair share of floods, but the area has an enormous natural beauty, and I would not want to represent anywhere else. In my contribution I will raise many of the achievements that we were able to gain for my electorate but I will also touch on some of the needs for the future. Very briefly, in the past four years it was a great pleasure to see a new school built at Toorloo Arm and to see stage 1 of the Bairnsdale Secondary College being completed. A new supported accommodation facility at Noweyung Limited was also constructed with state government funds contributing to it. The all-abilities playground in Bairnsdale has become extremely popular, not only with locals but also with those passing through the town. The state government invested heavily in that great facility as well.

The coalition government also contributed funding to a new library and mall project in Bairnsdale, as well as other important infrastructure upgrades throughout the electorate, including at Lakes Entrance, Orbost, Omeo, Maffra, Mallacoota, Paynesville, Metung and Heyfield. Many of those projects were brought to fruition through the Regional Growth Fund, which provided extraordinary benefits to many rural and regional communities right across the state of Victoria. Similarly there were important projects in smaller townships like Bemm River, Boisdale, Stratford, Swan Reach, Bruthen, Buchan, Benambra and even Coongulla, on the shores of Lake Glenmaggie, to name just a few. All of these projects were very important to their local communities.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The time set down for the consideration of items on the government business program has expired. The honourable member for Gippsland East will have the call when this matter is next before the Chair. I am required to put the following questions.

## LEGAL PROFESSION UNIFORM LAW APPLICATION AMENDMENT BILL 2015

*Second reading*

**Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).**

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read second time.**

*Circulated amendment***Circulated government amendment as follows agreed to:**

## NEW CLAUSE

After clause 4 insert —

“AA New section 9A inserted

After section 9 of the Principal Act **insert** —**‘9A Meaning of law firm**

- (1) The Legal Profession Uniform Law (Victoria) applies as if for the definition of *law firm* in section 6(1) there were substituted—

“*law firm* means a partnership consisting only of —

- (a) Australian legal practitioners; or
- (b) one or more Australian legal practitioners and one or more Australian-registered foreign lawyers; or
- (c) incorporated legal practices; or
- (d) one or more incorporated legal practices and one or more Australian legal practitioners; or
- (e) one or more incorporated legal practices and one or more Australian-registered foreign lawyers; or
- (f) one or more incorporated legal practices, one or more Australian legal practitioners and one or more Australian-registered foreign lawyers;”.

- (2) For the purposes of this act and the Legal Profession Uniform Law (Victoria), a principal of a law practice that is referred to in paragraph (c) to (f) of the definition of *law firm* in subsection (1) includes an Australian legal practitioner who is a principal of an incorporated legal practice that forms part of the partnership.’”.

*Third reading***Motion agreed to.****Read third time.****EDUCATION AND TRAINING REFORM AMENDMENT (CHILD SAFE SCHOOLS) BILL 2015***Second reading***Debate resumed from 17 March; motion of Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education).****Motion agreed to.****Read second time.***Third reading***Motion agreed to.****Read third time.****LIMITATION OF ACTIONS AMENDMENT (CHILD ABUSE) BILL 2015***Second reading***Debate resumed from 18 March; motion of Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).****Motion agreed to.****Read second time.***Third reading***Motion agreed to.****Read third time.****PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELLBEING AMENDMENT (HAIRDRESSING REGISTRATION) BILL 2015***Second reading***Debate resumed from 18 March; motion of Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health).****Motion agreed to.****Read second time.***Third reading***Motion agreed to.****Read third time.**

## VETERANS AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL 2015

*Second reading*

**Debate resumed from 18 March; motion of Ms GARRETT (Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation).**

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read second time.**

*Third reading*

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read third time.**

**Business interrupted under sessional orders.**

### ADJOURNMENT

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

That the house now adjourns.

**Mr Hibbins** — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I draw your attention to the failure of the Minister for Education to respond to an adjournment matter I raised in this place on 12 February regarding the proposed state secondary school in Prahran. Sessional orders require the minister to respond in writing to adjournment matters within 30 days, so I would appreciate your writing to the minister to seek a response to that adjournment matter.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! I thank the member for Prahran. I will advise the minister of that request.

### Eastern Freeway

**Mr WELLS** (Rowville) — I raise an issue of grave concern for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I seek immediate action to get an undertaking to relieve congestion on the Eastern Freeway and EastLink. It appears that on a daily basis my electorate office is contacted by constituents frustrated by the Eastern Freeway, with complaints of significant queues banking up around Hoddle Street every single morning. Recently I have had discussions with one of the country's largest transport operators, who also expressed frustration that every day his trucks are stuck in traffic, which not only adds significant costs to his business but he also has to pass on the flow-on costs to his customers. This is just totally unacceptable.

I have also had discussions with one of the country's largest distributors of food. Again, there was frustration about trucks being stuck in traffic. These rigs can be worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, and instead of delivering six loads a day they may be down to delivering three or four loads a day. This is hardly a productive way of utilising assets. It is also a lot worse when we have accidents or breakdowns on the Monash Freeway and Melbourne becomes gridlocked.

The Eastern Freeway carries about 140 000 vehicles per day and this amount of traffic is only going to increase as the population increases. But it is not just about the growing population; the growth of businesses and industry is also crucial for a prosperous state. I fear that with this congestion of the Eastern Freeway motorists will look for alternatives and will start clogging up local roads and streets, and that is the last thing we need.

It is well known that the Napthine coalition government took action and signed an agreement to build the east–west tunnel. It would be a real boost for our state with thousands of jobs created. Of course the issue now is if the Andrews government is going to tear up that contract, what will it do with regard to easing congestion on the Eastern Freeway to ensure that transport operators can distribute goods around Melbourne effectively and people can leave work and get home at a reasonable hour to spend time with their kids and have quality time with their families?

The action I seek is that the minister tell us what the government is going to do with regard to relieving congestion on the Eastern Freeway as a consequence of it tearing up the east–west link contract.

### Western Ring Road sound barriers

**Mr J. BULL** (Sunbury) — Today I rise to ask the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to confirm for the house and the people who live in the seat of Sunbury Labor's \$10 million commitment that will help over 14 000 people in Glenroy and Gowanbrae sleep at night — a commitment to finally build sound barriers along the M80 Ring Road.

My constituents in Gowanbrae who live alongside the M80 Ring Road currently suffer intolerable and dangerous noise levels which heavily impact on their lives 365 days a year. Noise levels of over 80 decibels were regularly recorded at test sites and readings as high as 100 decibels were recorded. Families are suffering stress, lack of sleep and continual disturbance from noise coming from the ring-road. This noise greatly affects quality of life, disrupting sleep, waking children, preventing families from enjoying time

together in their backyards and forcing families to keep doors and windows closed even in summer in an effort to reduce the noise. Even with double glazing and other noise-reduction measures, the noise of the freeway wakes entire households. During summer residents are faced with the choice of being kept awake by the heat or by the continuous noise. The resulting effects on health and wellbeing are very concerning.

In October last year I was thrilled to join the now Premier as well as the former and current members for Pascoe Vale to experience for ourselves the constant noise that causes so much harm to the people we represent. We also announced our commitment to build barriers to help fix the problem once and for all. The Andrews Labor government has listened to the concerns of Gowanbrae and Glenroy residents, and I am proud that we are able to make this commitment for them. This announcement came as a huge relief to the communities I represent and was the result of many years of work by community leaders and residents fighting to keep their communities healthy and happy. Victorians deserve good health and the ability to sleep and live comfortably in their homes. These noise barriers will mean that the Gowanbrae and Glenroy communities will continue to be great places to live well into the future.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the former member for Pascoe Vale, Christine Campbell, for her work in helping get this project off the ground. I am proud to be taking the next steps as the member for Sunbury and delivering this Labor election commitment to the people of Gowanbrae. I ask the minister for an update on this important project, a project that puts people first.

### **The Dining Room Mission**

**Mr HODGETT** (Croydon) — Today I rise to bring the very important matter of The Dining Room Mission to the attention of the Minister for Families and Children. The Dining Room is a not-for-profit organisation in my electorate of Croydon that feeds and offers basic support to the less fortunate. The action I seek is that the minister ensure that a funding commitment is allocated in this year's budget to contribute to the ongoing running costs of the Dining Room.

The Dining Room relies on donations from supermarkets, on the goodwill of others and on volunteers to run the facility and provide meals and support for homeless and disadvantaged people, focusing largely in Maroondah. During the 2014 election campaign the coalition government made a

commitment to provide \$25 000 to support and assist with the everyday running costs of the Dining Room. This was on top of \$10 000 secured for the mission in 2010.

I have met with David Knoop and Matt James, the past and present directors of the Dining Room, who have both worked tirelessly to secure funding to reduce the financial burden on the Dining Room and enable it to continue its great work in the community. I have also visited the Dining Room on many occasions and have seen firsthand the terrific work the mission does in the community. The coalition government did a fantastic job of assisting local community and not-for-profit groups across Victoria, and it would be great if the new government could get on board and prioritise funding for the Dining Room in the upcoming state budget.

The Dining Room performs an integral role in our community, with many vulnerable and disadvantaged people relying on its services for a meal or just a bit of companionship. It would be wonderful if the minister listened to the local community and committed this much-needed funding for The Dining Room Mission. A budget allocation would reinforce our commitment to struggling families and individuals through funding valuable local organisations such as the Dining Room. The action I seek is that the minister ensure that a funding commitment is made in this year's budget to contribute to the ongoing running costs of the Dining Room.

### **Bentleigh West Primary School**

**Mr STAIKOS** (Bentleigh) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek is that the minister advise the Bentleigh West Primary School community of when works will commence on the 40-kilometre-an-hour flashing speed lights at the school crossing on Centre Road, Bentleigh.

Bentleigh West Primary School families have had to contend with a serious road safety issue on Centre Road for some years. The crossing near Milton Street is operated by a school crossing supervisor. However, it is located on the 60-kilometre-an-hour stretch of Centre Road. Just up the road at the busy Bentleigh shopping strip, the speed limit is reduced to 40 kilometres an hour. Local residents are finding that motorists increase their speed to 60 kilometres an hour immediately after leaving the 40-kilometre-an-hour zone, only to have to stop abruptly at the crossing just 100 metres away.

This is a serious safety issue for children, parents and indeed the school crossing supervisor. People are

constantly reporting near misses. It is an unsafe crossing. It makes absolute sense to extend the 40-kilometre-an-hour speed limit to the Centre Road crossing during school times, and that is exactly what this government will do. It will ensure that every journey to and from school is a safe one.

Parents asked the former member for Bentleigh to take action on this, but as was typical of the former member for Bentleigh, she ignored them for four years. She would not return their phone calls, and she would not return their emails. So they came to me, and we made sure that a future Labor government would take action on this issue. The Andrews Labor government is taking action to make getting to Bentleigh West Primary School safer. We all encourage people to walk to work and walk to school, but it is up to government to ensure that this can be done as safely as possible.

Bentleigh is a highly valued school in my electorate and has more than 500 students currently enrolled. It is one of Bentleigh's oldest schools, and it is a school that Labor has invested in strongly over the years to lay the foundations of a quality education for every child. I have had the privilege of working with staff and parents at Bentleigh West over many years, and I take this opportunity to congratulate the newly appointed principal, Steven Capp. I know he will be fantastic in that role. I also acknowledge Dr Simon Iles, the parent who first brought this issue to my attention. I ask the minister to advise the Bentleigh West Primary School community as to when work will commence on the 40-kilometre-per-hour flashing speed lights at the school crossing on Centre Road.

### **Electric line clearance regulations**

**Mr SOUTHWICK** (Caulfield) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Energy and Resources regarding the Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2010, administered by Energy Safe Victoria (ESV), which expire on 29 June 2015. The action I seek is for the minister to ensure that new electric line clearance regulations will provide safety where electric lines pose a risk and preserve the amenity of the trees where appropriate, particularly in metropolitan areas.

Electric line clearance regulations prescribe a code of practice and procedures for tree cutting or removal in the vicinity of electric lines to minimise the risk of fire and electrocution. The ESV regulatory impact statement seeks to address a number of problems, from bushfire ignition to electrocution and the interruption of power supply. Safety is always paramount, but the risk associated with electric lines vary across Victoria. Many metropolitan Melbourne electorates, including

Caulfield, are well known and loved for their scenic, naturally beautiful streetscapes. People choose to live in these leafy streets of Melbourne for many reasons, one of which is the love of the vista of large and often mature trees lining the streets.

In addition to Energy Safe Victoria, the inner south metropolitan mayors forum, which includes mayors from the Boroondara, Glen Eira, Port Phillip, Stonnington and Yarra councils, has outlined its concerns, stating:

Many of the street trees in the inner south metropolitan region are of historical significance and have shaped the character of the local environment for long periods of time.

The councils have indicated that there have been some instances of non-compliance with electric line clearance requirements throughout areas of inner metropolitan Melbourne and that the proposed new regulations will require:

... substantial pruning of well-established, high-value street trees to meet minimum clearance distances and communities that simply will not tolerate the scale of pruning needed to become compliant with the code.

...

The inner south metropolitan mayors forum is not seeking any change to the clearance requirements for the higher risk high-voltage cable.

I ask the minister to take on board the concerns of councils and residents when forming a final position on regulations for electric line clearance. We must ensure that any new regulations will keep Victorians safe first and foremost but also guarantee that empirical evidence is taken into account so that appropriate regulations reflect the area and its relevant risk profile.

### **Apennine Gourmet Foods**

**Ms BLANDTHORN** (Pascoe Vale) — I appreciate the opportunity to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Industry. The action I seek is that the minister meet with the managing director of Apennine Gourmet Foods, Robert Marsili, to discuss Labor's plans for the food sector. Labor has identified the food sector as one of six sectors with tremendous growth potential. The establishment of the \$200 million Future Industries Fund by the Labor government will assist in driving growth in this sector.

In 2013, after enjoying many successful years operating Cafe Stradina & West Street Deli, a business located in the heart of the thriving West Street business precinct in Hadfield, Robert and his mother launched Apennine Gourmet Foods. The business produces a selection of

homemade foods, including bolognese, Napoletana and matriciana sauces, as well as a selection of delicious soups. Every week Apennine Gourmet Foods supplies produce to 18 stores across Melbourne. At the moment Robert and his mother work from the same kitchen used by Cafe Stradina to cook and package meals for Apennine Gourmet Foods. Their business is expanding rapidly, and they are struggling to keep pace with the increasing demand for their products. Robert believes fulfilling his business's growth potential would require the procurement of an industrial-scale kitchen and an additional six or seven full-time staff, including chefs, marketing and advertising specialists, sales staff and delivery drivers.

State government support, particularly in the form of grants for business development, would greatly assist businesses like Apennine Gourmet Foods to meet increasing demand and grow the food industry in the north, which in turn creates local jobs. The Andrews Labor government will fight for local businesses and local industry to provide local jobs. It will work closely with individual businesses and identified industries to create employment opportunities. The closure of the Ford factory in the northern suburbs in 2016 along with closures of other manufacturing businesses will leave a vacuum in the north that must be urgently filled.

Recognising this necessity NORTH Link, a collaborative project between a number of government organisations and higher education institutions, has created a comprehensive growth plan for the food and beverage industry in Melbourne's north to address some of the consequences. NORTH Link's food and beverage growth plan envisions Melbourne's north being transformed into a food and beverage hub for small and medium size food manufacturers. The report identifies a number of natural competitive advantages these businesses could use to leverage success. A far from exhaustive list of the north's key competitive advantages include close proximity to metropolitan markets, supply bases and Melbourne Airport; the availability of a skilled workforce; affordable premises to operate from; and direct access to quality transport infrastructure. Of particular significance is NORTH Link's support of the premise that if the right assistance is given to businesses to expand — businesses like Apennine Gourmet Foods — there is the potential for 7000 new jobs to be created throughout Melbourne's north.

I ask the minister to meet with the owner of Apennine Gourmet Foods to discuss Labor's plans to grow the food sector through the establishment of the Future Industries Fund.

## Avalon Airport

**Mr KATOS** (South Barwon) — I rise in this afternoon's adjournment debate to request an action from the Premier. The action I seek is for the Premier to keep Jetstar flying from Avalon Airport. Avalon Airport is critical to Geelong's future. At present there are around 300 people employed there, including retail workers, airport staff, firefighters, air traffic controllers, bus drivers and the Jetstar staff.

Avalon has many advantages as an airport. It is looking to invest in airfreight. There are huge market opportunities in China, particularly for the dairy industry. The airport is close to a national highway and rail line. Not only is there the potential for Jetstar to stay there and perhaps increase its number of flights and destinations out of Avalon, but the airport could also attract another domestic carrier.

An international airport is critical for Avalon as well. I must compliment the Leader of the Opposition on his good work as planning minister on approving the structure planning for Avalon Airport, which gave it great capacity to expand in the future. Unfortunately unless Jetstar stays at Avalon, there might not be much of a future for Avalon Airport. Some \$45 million is spent in the region by visitors leaving from Avalon Airport and going out into the region — to the Bellarine Peninsula, the Surf Coast and the Great Ocean Road region. The successful air show that operates at Avalon is also fantastic, and I was there this year. However, the bottom line is that the air show needs an airline at Avalon to keep the show viable. It is concerning that Avalon is not mentioned once in the Andrews government's aviation plan, and that sends a mixed message.

Members of the previous government did everything they could to keep Jetstar flying, and Labor needs to step up. The Premier has told us he has a jobs plan and will fight for every job. He also said not a moment would be wasted. Now we have a local member, the member for Lara, who is more interested in cage fighting than keeping jobs at and fighting for Avalon. He is more interested in watching two men fight in a cage. Nick Papps summed it up well in the editorial in today's *Geelong Advertiser*:

Dan, you will make a very real difference to this city and this region by financing Jetstar to stay here.

This is one of those defining moments when a community looks to you to stand with us and for us — and keep Avalon open.

I could not agree more with the editor of the *Geelong Advertiser*, and I urge the Premier to do whatever he can to keep Jetstar at Avalon.

### Melbourne Metro rail project

**Mr RICHARDSON** (Mordialloc) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Public Transport. The action I seek is for the minister to prioritise investment in the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel. Melbourne Metro rail includes two 9-kilometre underground rail tunnels that will transform Melbourne's public transport system. The project, which will create 3500 jobs during peak construction, includes five new underground stations: Arden, Parkville, CBD North, CBD South and Domain.

Firstly, I acknowledge the work of the Premier and the Minister for Public Transport in establishing the Melbourne Metro Rail Authority. I also note that \$40 million in funding has been fast-tracked to establish the authority and start work on the project as soon as possible. The authority will oversee immediate planning works, complete development of the reference design and undertake detailed site investigations.

Our city and its suburbs are growing at a significant rate. It is estimated that the population will increase from 4.3 million people to 7.7 million people by 2051. In my region, the City of Kingston estimates that its population will increase by 20 per cent — a fifth of its existing population. Currently in my region around one in nine people catches public transport for work or social purposes, and our challenge is how to encourage more people onto the system and how to increase capacity and reliability.

A key challenge for many communities, including in my electorate of Mordialloc, is the stranglehold of congestion. With increasing pressures on governments to fund vital services, such as health and education, we need to be even more strategic and even more stringent in the investment and projects we undertake. Our city is in need of a second rail tunnel to support our population in the future. As I have said on other occasions, we must strip away the short-term politicking and look to the longer term needs of our state and what delivers the best outcomes and return on investment.

The city loop rail tunnels were a substantial upgrade that transformed our city and suburbs. The project spanned two decades — from its inception prior to 1971 to its completion with the opening of the Flagstaff station in May 1985. This was the equivalent of transitioning through coalition and Labor governments. The time for a second rail tunnel is well and truly here. I note that the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel has been

listed by the nation's independent auditor of infrastructure priorities, Infrastructure Australia, as the no. 1 priority for Victoria. It has been reported that Melbourne Metro could return an economic benefit of \$1.90 for every dollar invested. We need to get on with planning and commencing this important project.

In conclusion, I request that the Minister for Public Transport prioritise investment in the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel, which will significantly benefit my community.

### Guide Dogs Victoria

**Mr T. SMITH** (Kew) — I have a matter for the attention of the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing. The matter I raise is in regard to Guide Dogs Victoria and in particular the Fix Our Digs campaign recently raised in the *Progress Leader*. The action I seek from the minister is to approve funding to allow Guide Dogs Victoria to replace the 43-year-old Arnold Cook Centre as a key part of its wider \$12 million upgrade program. I will start by commending Karen Hayes and her team at Guide Dogs Victoria. They do a magnificent job for our community. Their work ensures that those with impaired vision can remain independent and active members of our community.

The Arnold Cook Centre was named after Dr Arnold Cook, who lost his sight to a rare disease at the age of 18 years. Upon graduation from the University of Western Australia, Dr Cook set off to London, where he became aware of the Guide Dog Association for the Blind. He applied for a guide dog, and his application was accepted. When he returned to Australia in 1950 he brought his companion with him — the first guide dog to arrive in Australia. It was an event which helped spawn the early guide dog associations around this country.

At present the Arnold Cook Centre is used to aid the transition of vision-impaired children and adults to live with a guide dog. Some will stay for up to a month as the bonding and education process occurs. The Arnold Cook Centre has provided 43 years of good service but is now very much behind the times. Its facilities are politely described as institutional, and Ms Hayes and her team are eager to build new motel-style accommodation which will better service the needs of vision-impaired Victorians as they bond with their new companions.

It is estimated that the \$2.5 million required to demolish the present building and build the much-needed accommodation will be in the best interests of all who currently use Guide Dogs Victoria in Kew. I am right

behind the Fix Our Digs campaign. It is time we came together to ensure that Guide Dogs Victoria has the facilities it needs to continue its vital work for the future. The commonwealth government has already made significant contributions to Guide Dogs Victoria, as did the previous Victorian coalition government, but I believe it would be a very wise investment for this current government to get on board with this important campaign. I again urge the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing to come on board. Let us get this project started without delay.

### Frankston railway station precinct

**Mr EDBROOKE** (Frankston) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Police, and the action I request is for the minister to visit the Frankston electorate and be briefed on the current activities of the Frankston Station Precinct Taskforce. As the minister would be aware, the task force is a representative group of key stakeholders who are working together in an objective, balanced and public-minded manner to achieve consensus on where government can best prioritise its expenditure of \$63 million to transform the Frankston station precinct. This will complement existing funding and investment in Chisholm TAFE as part of an overall state government investment of \$110 million to revitalise Frankston.

The first meeting of the technical and economic development working group of the task force convened in February, and as chair of that task force I am happy to announce that work is already underway toward achieving a fast-tracked master plan. Other participants in the technical and economic development working group include the mayor of Frankston City Council, representatives of Chisholm TAFE, Victoria Police, the Frankston Business Network, Public Transport Victoria and the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources. There is also a community working group which has been formed with people with a broad-based range of skills and experience. There will be opportunities through the public engagement stages to provide feedback to the groups and input into the master plan.

Community perceptions around the station are that safety is paramount. An article published in the *Age* of 7 January says:

Certainly a few places let Frankston down. The Frankston train station is one such place. Indeed, Frankston's poor image is often visually illustrated by its station. Frankston's city centre takes a far greater share of drug pharmacotherapy outlets than surrounding regions to help people from south-east Melbourne withdraw from hard drugs. This has led to an over-concentration of drug-related services around the station. Their clients tend to stand out in an otherwise drab

colourless environment. Residents report that they feel less safe in that area as a result.

These perceptions do little to enhance the reputation of the Frankston area to the broader community. I will work closely with Victoria Police to improve safety, and I believe a visit from the minister would be of benefit to the task force and in turn the Frankston community.

### Responses

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing will respond to the members for Kew and Croydon. The member for Croydon addressed his adjournment matter to the Minister for Families and Children, but it is the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing who has carriage of that issue.

**Mr FOLEY** (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing) — I have had a brief chat with the honourable member for Croydon. The Dining Room Mission is an organisation known to us, and the relevant portfolio is housing, disability and ageing.

The mission is an excellent community service that particularly targets a community in the city of Maroondah and in the Croydon community, as the member indicated. It deals with struggling families in particular and has been doing so in that community since 2005. It is not only a volunteer-based organisation that deals with providing meals and engaging with those who are struggling with homelessness and poverty but also a faith-based organisation that particularly seeks to deal with poverty and homelessness through a lens of those problems not being due merely to an absence of money, property or possessions but also to wider issues around exclusion, alienation and deprivation.

Like many other organisations that I am sure would be well known to all honourable members in this place, the mission plays a role at the coalface in providing services to some of our more vulnerable fellow Victorians and the most disadvantaged people. In that context I am more than happy to consider the honourable member's request and some material from the organisation itself in the context of framing the next budget.

As I have said in the past, the challenge with homelessness services, particularly at the moment, relates to the national partnership agreement on homelessness and the commitments arising from the 2009 Council of Australian Governments arrangements that have been honoured by both sides of the house in

that period of time. Currently the federal Minister for Social Services, the Honourable Scott Morrison, has yet to establish whether the existing agreement in the homelessness area, which funds so much innovation and so many programs around homelessness, will continue. We have called in this place for that certainty to be provided. This government's predecessor had allocated money for that in the forward projections, and we would very much seek for that to occur.

In terms of how other similar services in this area have been dealt with, I should point out to the honourable member that the former government's decommissioning of drug and alcohol and mental health services saw a number of these organisations close across Victoria in both regional and metropolitan settings. While we will carefully look at this, we need to be clear that the funding environment remains at risk from our friends at the federal level. I thank the honourable member for that contribution.

In response to the matter raised by the honourable member for Kew, guide dogs are well known to all of us in this place. As it happens, last weekend I was in Kensington at the new national guide dogs centre, which deals with guide dog training and development and is a key Victorian and national site. While I am familiar with the site referred to by the member — that is, the Arnold Cook Centre of Guide Dogs Victoria — the organisation itself has raised with me the fact that it is very supportive of the \$1 million that the Victorian government allocates to the organisation every year.

Its key strategic focus relates to how the rollout of the national disability insurance scheme will place the organisation in a position to seek the capital it needs for all sorts of projects. That is capital that until very recently it was targeting for a necessary relocation of the Kensington facility on the basis that an exit tunnel for the botched east–west tunnel was going to run straight through the middle of it. It was very relieved to hear that would no longer be the case and that it would be able to focus on the future of the Kensington site and other sites, such as the location mentioned by the honourable member for Kew.

Whilst I will continue to discuss with the guide dogs organisation its many concerns, it has not actually raised the site that the member for Kew has raised with me. I will certainly look at that matter, take on board his request and make sure we are in a position to respond.

We will make sure that the strategic direction and needs of this wonderful organisation are looked after both through continued support from the Victorian government and more importantly through that support

being institutionalised in an ongoing way by getting the national disability insurance scheme right in its rollout for so many key organisations that support people with disabilities, such as Guide Dogs Victoria. I thank the member for his suggestion in this regard, and I will take that on board in terms of how we frame our subsequent budgets.

**Mr NOONAN** (Minister for Police) — I thank the member for Frankston for raising with me the issue of the Frankston Station Precinct Taskforce and for issuing me with an invitation to visit his electorate. I commend him on his early work as the new member for Frankston in terms of advocating for his electorate. As the member outlined, the Premier and the Minister for Public Transport announced the task force in January. It will provide recommendations to the Minister for Public Transport for the future direction of the Frankston railway station precinct. In my capacity as the Minister for Police I look forward to learning more about this when I visit.

I can inform the house that the Frankston transport hub is one of three high-risk community locations within the Frankston police service area. I am advised that Victoria Police maintains a highly visible presence 24 hours a day, 7 days a week using regular foot patrols, with increased resources across Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. Victoria Police's leadership in Frankston is also engaged in a range of activities, including things such as community forums, and of course the Frankston Station Precinct Taskforce. I look forward to visiting the member's electorate and learning more about the task force and about how Victoria Police can continue its engagement with the local community. In particular I look forward to the work and recommendations of the Frankston Station Precinct Taskforce.

**Ms ALLAN** (Minister for Public Transport) — I am pleased to respond to the matter raised by the member for Mordialloc. In his short time in the chamber he has proven to be a strong advocate for improvements to rail services for his community. I thank him for that ongoing advocacy and support. It is great to see people in this place who are passionate about public transport.

The Melbourne Metro project is such an important project for improving overall rail capacity not just for Melbourne but for Victoria. It is such an important project for dealing with some of the challenges we face now and for making sure we are planning for the services we will need in the future. The population of Melbourne is expected to double by 2050. That is a dramatic fact. We need to make sure that we make the decisions now on the right projects — the projects this

city and state need — and that is why we are getting on with the Melbourne Metro project.

To provide information for the member, \$40 million of Labor's \$300 million election commitment has been allocated in this financial year's budget to complete the planning, design and early works. We did not want to wait until the May budget and the start of the next financial year to get on with this important work because this project has sat on the shelf for far too long. It sat on the shelf for four years under the former government before it finally scrapped it in favour of its — what was it? Metro rail link? Where did it go? What were the suburbs? I do not think even the former government knew.

The Melbourne Metro Rail Authority will deliver this project. That is the other action we have taken already — we have established the Melbourne Metro Rail Authority and appointed Evan Tattersall as the CEO. The authority is already at work finalising the business case, updating it with the latest information and doing that planning work that is so vital. This will not only transform our system but also create around 3500 jobs during peak construction — creating jobs that this state needs in addition to the public transport service that the state needs. Again, I thank the member for Mordialloc for his terrific advocacy and support for this project, a project that will make a real difference to public transport services here in Victoria.

The members for Rowville, Sunbury and Bentleigh raised matters for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety.

The members for Caulfield and Pascoe Vale raised matters for the Minister for Industry and Minister for Energy and Resources.

The member for South Barwon raised a matter for the Premier. All these matters will be referred to those ministers and the Premier respectively for action and response.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The house is now adjourned.

**House adjourned 5.40 p.m. until Tuesday, 14 April**

