

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

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

Thursday, 28 May 2015

(Extract from book 7)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC, QC

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

Speaker:

The Hon. TELMO LANGUILLER

Deputy Speaker:

Mr D. A. NARDELLA

Acting Speakers:

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

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier:

The Hon. D. M. ANDREWS

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier:

The Hon. J. A. MERLINO

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

The Hon. M. J. GUY

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

The Hon. D. J. HODGETT

Leader of The Nationals:

The Hon. P. L. WALSH

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Ms S. RYAN

Heads of parliamentary departments

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

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
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
Angus, Mr Neil Andrew Warwick	Forest Hill	LP	Morris, Mr David Charles	Mornington	LP
Asher, Ms Louise	Brighton	LP	Mulder, Mr Terence Wynn	Polwarth	LP
Batin, Mr Bradley William	Gembrook	LP	Naphthine, Dr Denis Vincent	South-West Coast	LP
Blackwood, Mr Gary John	Narracan	LP	Nardella, Mr Donato Antonio	Melton	ALP
Blandthorn, Ms Elizabeth Anne	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Neville, Ms Lisa Mary	Bellarine	ALP
Brooks, Mr Colin William	Bundoora	ALP	Noonan, Mr Wade Matthew	Williamstown	ALP
Bull, Mr Joshua Michael	Sunbury	ALP	Northe, Mr Russell John	Morwell	Nats
Bull, Mr Timothy Owen	Gippsland East	Nats	O'Brien, Mr Daniel David ²	Gippsland South	Nats
Burgess, Mr Neale Ronald	Hastings	LP	O'Brien, Mr Michael Anthony	Malvern	LP
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Couzens, Ms Christine Anne	Geelong	ALP	Pearson, Mr Daniel James	Essendon	ALP
Crisp, Mr Peter Laurence	Mildura	Nats	Perera, Mr Jude	Cranbourne	ALP
D'Ambrosio, Ms Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Pesutto, Mr John	Hawthorn	LP
Dimopoulos, Mr Stephen	Oakleigh	ALP	Richardson, Mr Timothy Noel	Mordialloc	ALP
Dixon, Mr Martin Francis	Nepean	LP	Richardson, Ms Fiona Catherine Alison	Northcote	ALP
Donnellan, Mr Luke Anthony	Narre Warren North	ALP	Ryall, Ms Deanne Sharon	Ringwood	LP
Edbrooke, Mr Paul Andrew	Frankston	ALP	Ryan, Mr Peter Julian ¹	Gippsland South	Nats
Edwards, Ms Janice Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Ryan, Ms Stephanie Maureen	Euroa	Nats
Eren, Mr John Hamdi	Lara	ALP	Sandell, Ms Ellen	Melbourne	Greens
Foley, Mr Martin Peter	Albert Park	ALP	Scott, Mr Robin David	Preston	ALP
Fyffe, Mrs Christine Anne	Evelyn	LP	Sheed, Ms Suzanna	Shepparton	Ind
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Gidley, Mr Michael Xavier Charles	Mount Waverley	LP	Smith, Mr Timothy Colin	Kew	LP
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Halfpenny, Ms Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Staley, Ms Louise Eileen	Ripon	LP
Hennessy, Ms Jill	Altona	ALP	Suleyman, Ms Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Hibbins, Mr Samuel Peter	Prahran	Greens	Thomas, Ms Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Hodgett, Mr David John	Croydon	LP	Thompson, Mr Murray Hamilton Ross	Sandringham	LP
Howard, Mr Geoffrey Kemp	Buninyong	ALP	Thomson, Ms Marsha Rose	Footscray	ALP
Hutchins, Ms Natalie Maree Sykes	Sydenham	ALP	Tilley, Mr William John	Benambra	LP
Kairouz, Ms Marlene	Kororoit	ALP	Victoria, Ms Heidi	Bayswater	LP
Katos, Mr Andrew	South Barwon	LP	Wakeling, Mr Nicholas	Ferntree Gully	LP
Kealy, Ms Emma Jayne	Lowan	Nats	Walsh, Mr Peter Lindsay	Murray Plains	Nats
Kilkenny, Ms Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Ward, Ms Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Knight, Ms Sharon Patricia	Wendouree	ALP	Watt, Mr Graham Travis	Burwood	LP
Languiller, Mr Telmo Ramon	Tarneit	ALP	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Rowville	LP
Lim, Mr Muy Hong	Clarinda	ALP	Williams, Ms Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
McCurdy, Mr Timothy Logan	Ovens Valley	Nats	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP
McGuire, Mr Frank	Broadmeadows	ALP			

¹ Resigned 2 February 2015

² Elected 14 March 2015

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

Legislative Assembly committees

Privileges Committee — Ms Allan, Ms D’Ambrosio, Mr Morris, Mr Mulder, Ms Neville, Ms Ryan, Ms Sandell, Mr Scott and Mr Wells.

Standing Orders Committee— The Speaker, Ms Allan, Ms Asher, Mr Brooks, Mr Clark, Mr Hibbins, Mr Hodgett, Ms Kairouz, Mr Nardella, Ms Ryan and Ms Sheed.

Joint committees

Accountability and Oversight Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Angus, Mr Gidley, Mr Staikos and Ms Thomson.
(*Council*): Ms Bath, Mr Purcell and Ms Symes.

Dispute Resolution Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Allan, Mr Clark, Mr Merlino, Mr M. O’Brien, Mr Pakula, Ms Richardson and Mr Walsh. (*Council*): Mr Bourman, Mr Dalidakis, Ms Dunn, Mr Jennings and Ms Wooldridge.

Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Crisp, Mrs Fyffe, Mr Perera and Ms Ryall.
(*Council*): Mr Elasmr, Mr Melhem and Mr Purcell.

Electoral Matters Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Asher, Ms Blandthorn, Mr Dixon, Mr Northe and Ms Spence.
(*Council*): Mr Dalidakis and Ms Patten.

Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Halfpenny, Mr McCurdy, Mr Richardson, Mr Tilley and Ms Ward. (*Council*): Mr Ramsay and Mr Young.

Family and Community Development Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Couzens, Mr Edbrooke, Ms Edwards, Ms Kealy, Ms McLeish and Ms Sheed. (*Council*): Mr Finn.

House Committee — (*Assembly*): The Speaker (*ex officio*), Mr J. Bull, Mr Crisp, Mrs Fyffe, Mr Staikos, Ms Suleyman and Mr Thompson. (*Council*): The President (*ex officio*), Mr Eideh, Ms Hartland, Ms Lovell, Mr Mulino and Mr Young.

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Hibbins, Mr D. O’Brien, Mr Richardson, Ms Thomson, and Mr Wells. (*Council*): Mr Ramsay and Ms Symes.

Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Dixon, Mr Howard, Ms Suleyman, Mr Thompson and Mr Tilley. (*Council*): Mr Eideh and Ms Patten.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Dimopoulos, Mr Morris, Mr D. O’Brien, Mr Pearson, Mr T. Smith and Ms Ward. (*Council*): Dr Carling-Jenkins, Ms Pennicuik and Ms Shing.

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

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Thursday, 28 May 2015

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

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Birth registration

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of we, the undersigned citizens of Victoria, draws the attention of the house, requesting assistance in our efforts to see that babies born under 20 weeks gestation are not recognised as a baby or a stillborn, but that they are recognised as a miscarriage. Mothers who have endured hours of labour and given birth prior to 20 weeks gestation, and in many cases have held their babies, find it very disturbing that the Victorian government does not acknowledge these babies. The Queensland, New South Wales and South Australian governments provide a free service, through births, deaths and marriages, whereby bereaved families can receive a certificate of life/loss in honour of their babies. This certificate is not a legal document but formally acknowledges the baby and gives these families comfort in knowing that their loss is recognised. The Victorian government does not provide this service to families suffering the loss of their baby.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria immediately take the necessary steps to have the government formally acknowledge babies born less than 20 weeks gestation by providing the bereaved families with the opportunity to receive a certificate of life/loss through the Office of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

By Mr NARDELLA (Melton) (397 signatures).

Jetty Road, Rosebud

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the residents of the electorate of Nepean points out to the house the extremely dangerous traffic conditions at the intersection of Jetty Road, Rosebud, and the terminus of the Mornington Peninsula Freeway.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria in accordance with VicRoads *Point Nepean Road Study*, urgently approve funding for the Jetty Road overpass in order to relieve the congestion on local roads at the current terminus of the Mornington Peninsula Freeway.

By Mr DIXON (Nepean) (140 signatures).

Tabled.

Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Nepean be considered next day on motion of Mr DIXON (Nepean).

OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC ADVOCATE

Community visitors report 2013–14

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing), by leave, presented government response.

Tabled.

DOCUMENTS

Tabled by Clerk:

Auditor-General:

Technical and Further Education Institutes: 2014 Audit Snapshot — Ordered to be published

Victoria's Consumer Protection Framework for Building Construction — Ordered to be published

Members of Parliament (Register of Interests) Act 1978 — Summary of Primary Return May 2015 and Summary of Variations Notified between 18 February 2015 and 22 May 2015 — Ordered to be published.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Adjournment

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

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until Tuesday, 9 June 2015.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Save A Dog Scheme

Mr M. O'BRIEN (Malvern) — This Saturday, the Save A Dog Scheme (SADS) celebrates its 30th anniversary — 30 years of leadership in animal welfare and caring for animals; 30 years of a pioneering 'no kill' policy that has saved countless thousands of lives. This organisation's mission is as simple as it is profound: to work steadfastly for change from a culture of killing companion animals to a culture of saving them.

Since 1985 SADS has demonstrated that with care and compassion and the hard work of many dedicated volunteers, the lives of thousands of lost and abandoned dogs and cats can be saved. In giving these gentle souls a second chance at life, the people who bring these animals into their homes and into their hearts have their own lives enhanced.

The Save A Dog Scheme was founded by the remarkable Pam Weaver. In 2005 Pam was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for her service to the community in the field of animal welfare, particularly through the provision of dog shelter facilities in the city of Stonnington. Pam, supported by her husband Hugh, and each and every volunteer who has turned the Save A Dog Scheme into what it is today, deserves our recognition and our thanks. I am proud to stand in the Parliament of Victoria today and place on the record my thanks to the Save A Dog Scheme for its wonderful work over 30 years, especially in my electorate of Malvern.

In conclusion, I refer to the words of Charles Darwin:

The love of all living creatures is the most noble attribute of man.

So measured, the Save A Dog Scheme is a most noble organisation indeed. I wish it well for its next 30 years.

Geelong Gallery

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water) — On Friday night, 15 May, I had the pleasure of opening four new exhibitions at the Geelong Gallery: 1915 Revisited; Framework, by Victorian artist Lisa Young; From the River to the Sea, by Geelong artist Lisa Wang; and the Iron Duke — Soldier and Statesman, an exhibition on the Battle of Waterloo.

Importantly, the night also celebrated the 100th year of the Geelong Gallery being located in its current building, perhaps one of Geelong's most beautiful buildings. The gallery actually predates this building, having been established in 1896. It was originally housed in Geelong city hall.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Terry Wills Cooke, president of the board, and his team for the work they do in partnership with long-serving director Geoffrey Edwards and his dedicated staff. Geoffrey has announced his intention to retire from his position in April next year. There will be many chances to celebrate his contribution, but I want to acknowledge what a fantastic role he has played in building up that gallery over the years he has been there.

Ocean Grove Community Hub

Ms NEVILLE — On Sunday, 24 May, I had the honour of opening the Ocean Grove Community Hub, the new home of the neighbourhood house. The expanded and refurbished hub will give locals a centralised facility and ensure that the Ocean Grove

neighbourhood house can meet the needs of the community into the future. This has been long in the making. In 2010 the funding of the new children's centre provided the chance to move the neighbourhood house into the former children's centre. I acknowledge the former Leader of The Nationals, who put up with my pestering and provided the funding to make this possible. I congratulate Jan Farrell, Nikki Dunn and board chairs Donna and Fay for their work.

Euroa StreetLife program

Ms RYAN (Euroa) — Given the Premier has assumed the responsibilities of the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade, I would like to draw his attention to the question mark hanging over the StreetLife program. StreetLife was an initiative of the previous coalition government. It provided grants to councils and business and trader associations to support small business and develop targeted projects to improve the competitiveness and economic outcomes of local shopping precincts.

Business Enterprise Euroa applied for a grant just prior to the last election. More than six months later it is still waiting to hear whether the government will grant its request for funding. Business Enterprise Euroa is proactively encouraging new businesses to operate in Euroa, and among other things it is encouraging local businesses to sell more locally produced goods and services.

Many of the local retailers in Euroa have been there for successive generations, which is testament to the strength and resilience of their businesses. I would ask that the government give its speedy and favourable consideration to the community's application for funding.

Kyabram District Football Netball League

Ms RYAN — My congratulations go to the Kyabram District Football Netball League interleague football team, which defeated Mininera district by 95 points on the weekend at Deakin Reserve in Shepparton. The Kyabram District Football Netball League has been on the bottom of the football interleague ladder for some time, but this side was considered the strongest the league has ever put together.

The team had strong representation from the Euroa electorate, including Merrigum coach Christian Barnett and players from Avenel, Girgarre, Merrigum, Murchison, Nagambie, Stanhope and Violet Town. It is my sincere hope that Longwood will get there one day.

Oakleigh Amateur Football Club

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) — I was very honoured to be invited to take part in a fathers night at Oakleigh Amateur Football Club — the Krushers — which was run in conjunction with the Oakleigh Dragons Junior Football Club. The fathers night was organised following a recent personal tragedy suffered by the club, something that is unfortunately all too common in our community. All funds raised from the evening went to beyondblue.

The night included a range of panellists, including Carlton champion David Rhys-Jones, Monash mayor Cr Paul Klisaris, Victorian Amateur Football Association president Michael Hazell, Jake McCauley from the South Metro Junior Football League and Tony Wynd from beyondblue. The evening allowed a varied discussion about many of the issues relating to mental health — a topic that for men is not always easy to talk about.

I would like to personally commend Pat Heverin and the committee and members of both clubs for organising the night, which I believe may become an annual event.

It is something that I would love to see replicated at many other footy clubs and sporting groups. Local sporting groups are known for being a big family for members and supporters. There is a great camaraderie, but sometimes it can be hard to speak up or indeed know the right thing to say or do when personal issues get raised, including depression and suicide. Events like this help to open the conversation.

I would like to pay tribute to the footy clubs for showing the leadership on this very important issue. I am very keen to bring a range of interest groups together to further this idea in my community across a range of other football and sporting clubs, and I commend it to other sporting groups around Victoria.

Port capacity

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — I rise this morning to raise my concern at the path on which this government has embarked for the future of our ports. Clearly under the rule of anticipation I cannot address the bill before the house, but I do believe it is worth looking at the history of Labor policy in this critical area of infrastructure.

Let us cast our minds back to 1999, when the Victorian ports strategic study was delivered to the Kennett government on the eve of the election. This report was critical, because the size of the vessels using our ports

had been continuing to grow — they were growing beyond the capacity of Port Phillip Heads. Urgent action was essential.

We know what happened at the election, but what happened after it? Then Premier Bracks sat on that report for two years. When it was finally released, another two years were wasted. What was the upshot? The alternative to Port Phillip, Hastings, could not be developed in time to meet the demands of international shipping. Because of Labor's procrastination the only action left, if we were not to risk our maritime trade or lose our state's pre-eminent role in trade, was to deepen the Port Phillip Heads.

Here we are again, only a decade on, and we have a new Labor government confidently expecting that the Heads will be able to sustain our trade for 50 years. The container trade through Melbourne barely existed 50 years ago. The whole concept of container trade is not even 60 years old. There can only be two outcomes from this policy decision: either Melbourne will surrender its role in trade to the rest of Australia or Port Phillip Heads will be deepened again and again. Any way you look at it, it is a bad decision.

Yellow Dance Spot

Ms WARD (Eltham) — As the mother of two girls, I want to speak about the sexualisation of girls and how as a community we can change the increasing trend to objectify girls' bodies. In my electorate exists a gorgeous dance school, the Yellow Dance Spot, run by Eltham resident Inbar Niv. Like me, Inbar is concerned at the early age at which girls are exposed to messages which promote the sexualisation of young bodies. This is an everyday experience for women and girls — in newspapers, on television, in magazines and on the internet. It is very difficult to shield our children from this view of women's bodies as a commodity. As a parent, it is an ongoing battle to explain the negative and potentially damaging messages girls receive about their bodies and their value.

At the Yellow Dance Spot the focus is on creativity, not what children look like or what they wear, which is just fantastic. Children are encouraged to be creative in the way they dance, coming up with their own moves, which supports and promotes the unique character of each child. As this government makes inroads in promoting gender equality, which we know is the root cause of family violence, members of our community — like Inbar — are taking a lead in promoting confidence and self-esteem in local children, and also ensuring that they learn to dance in an environment which is positive and age appropriate. I

look forward to visiting Inbar and the Yellow Dance Spot in the next few weeks, and I congratulate her on her work.

Public holidays

Mr BURGESS (Hastings) — On 12 May I was pleased to visit the electorate of the member for Eildon to meet with small business operators. The small business operators I met with said that the Premier's decision to introduce two more public holidays — on Easter Sunday and AFL Grand Final eve — will cost them and other regional small businesses dearly. One business owner said the cost impact of the Easter Sunday public holiday on one of the busiest weekends of the year in Mansfield would leave him no better off than a normal weekend due to extra labour costs. He saw no likely extra trade for the grand final eve holiday, but is now facing a larger wages bill on the day.

Other Mansfield businesses voiced concerns that an additional \$50 000 would have to be found for these two extra holidays. The feeling was that the grand final eve holiday would not bring any additional business to town, as people were more likely to stay where they were to watch the grand final. There was also uncertainty surrounding what businesses would or would not be open on the day, creating confusion for customers and potential visitors. Many businesses expressed their thanks that in the complete absence of any consultation from the Labor government the member for Eildon had listened and brought their plight to attention.

Peninsula North Men's Shed

Mr BURGESS — On 15 May I was pleased to join members of the Baxter community at the official opening of the new Peninsula North Men's Shed by the mayor of the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, Bev Columb.

Luke Batty Foundation

Mr BURGESS — On 19 May I was invited by the Hastings Football Netball Club to attend an evening with Rosie Batty to discuss the issue of family violence on behalf of the Luke Batty Foundation. Rosie formed the Luke Batty Foundation, named after her son, in February 2014 after his life was ended by his father. The foundation was set up with the goal of raising funds to support women and children affected by the trauma of family violence.

Castlemaine State Festival

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) — I have spoken in this house on many occasions about the very successful Castlemaine State Festival. I have also spoken about how the festival is a community event that brings together many people from different arts and entertainment areas across regional Victoria, interstate and internationally, as well as school students, volunteers and community members. It is a festival that Castlemaine is very proud of and one that stands out among regional festivals across Australia. Sadly, last week arts organisations around the country received a late email from Tony Grybowski, CEO of the Australia Council, advising that the six-year funding program will not proceed past the expressions of interest stage and that their June funding round will not proceed at all. The federal Liberal budget and Senator George Brandis have effectively cut the Australia Council off at the knees.

The impact of this news is extremely concerning for the Castlemaine State Festival, which last year received notification of six years of funding for three festivals. Now it is faced with the prospect that this funding may be withdrawn. The loss of federal funding to the Castlemaine State Festival will have a significant impact on and negative implications for the organisation and associated artists and communities. While communities across regional Victoria, like Castlemaine, will benefit from the \$20 million state Labor government regional arts and creativity fund, they now face great uncertainty about funding from the federal Liberal government, which is determined to see the arts and creative industries in Victoria crumble. This is outrageous, and I condemn the federal government and Senator George Brandis for this attack on regional festivals, regional artists and regional communities.

Melbourne livability

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) — The year 2014 marked the fourth year in a row Melbourne has been named the world's most livable city, but what are the ingredients of livability? I think it describes a city built with people in mind, one with robust public transport and bike paths, open green space, public art, places for commerce and entertainment, and which protects our heritage.

The danger we face in Melbourne is that we will have a city built by and for property developers, where apartments are as small and towers as tall as engineering allows and where the basic infrastructure for community needs is ignored and public space is sacrificed for developer profits every time. I am calling

on the government to take several actions with immediate effect to preserve the livability of Melbourne. The first is to immediately bring in minimum apartment standards. Without immediate standards the Fishermans Bend development and many others currently being fast-tracked by the government will go ahead using the old system, resulting in the building of yet more poorly designed apartments.

Next the government must reinstate notice and appeal rights for residents living in the CBD, remove the right of the Minister for Planning to approve developments over 25 000 square metres and remove the Melbourne City Council gerrymander, where businesses are given two votes while residents are given only one. Importantly, the government must also ban political donations from property developers. Victoria has some of the weakest rules about political donations in the Western world, and this must change. As the member for Melbourne, I am fighting to preserve what makes this city great. This government must make sure planning laws and regulations build a city for people, not for property developers.

Wick Studios

Ms GARRETT (Minister for Emergency Services) — On 17 May I had the pleasure of joining musicians, songwriters and the live music community in the relaunch of Wick Studios in Brunswick. With Brunswick recently taking the mantle as home to the most songwriters in Australia, it is certainly apt that we have had the reopening of this state-of-the-art music space. We love our live music in Brunswick; we love the creativity, we love the diversity, we love the entertainment and we love being home to such an artistic community. Wick Studios really is outstanding. It has 15 rooms, with two recording studios across three buildings. It has undergone a \$2.5 million refurbishment after being damaged by flood and will provide artists with the skills and networking opportunities necessary for them to take their music to the world and to be able to rent recording spaces and rehearsal spaces at record low cost. My congratulations in the warmest possible way go to Glenn Scott, Dan Corless and the team at Wick Studios on their significant commitment to the Brunswick music scene, and indeed to Melbourne's live music scene, as we know that Melbourne is the capital of live music in Australia.

Brunswick Secondary College

Ms GARRETT — The other great news for the local community in Brunswick is that there will be a special relationship between students from Brunswick

Secondary College and Wick Studios to help students gain the skills they need when the school gets the \$10 million refurbishment committed to by the Labor government budget.

Gippsland rail services

Mr BLACKWOOD (Narracan) — The Andrews government's total disregard for Gippsland V/Line commuters was exposed once again last week during Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings by the Minister for Public Transport. When questioned about the duplication of the line between Longwarry and Bunyip, the minister made it very clear that Labor still does not have a plan to improve the V/Line service between Melbourne and Gippsland. The commuters on this line will not be fooled by attempts to blame the coalition government for the ongoing problems they experience daily.

Labor had 11 years between 1999 and 2010 to fix the infrastructure and provide the extra rolling stock to ensure that the Gippsland line would cope with the steadily increasing population growth occurring even back then along the Dandenong-Cranbourne corridor and now happening in West Gippsland. In 2006 the Bracks government dropped Gippsland off the regional rail link project that would have given V/Line its own dedicated line into the city, just like Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo now have. The Labor government of that time treated Gippsland commuters like second-class citizens, and that continues under the Andrews government.

In stark contrast, the coalition government in just four short years developed a comprehensive plan and committed to fund and deliver that plan. The duplication of the line between Bunyip and Longwarry, an extra flagship service in the morning and afternoon peaks, and extra rolling stock were promised with the \$178 million upgrade of the Gippsland line as well as the \$2.5 billion plan to upgrade the Dandenong-Cranbourne corridor. Once again we have a Labor government that persists in trying to spin its way out of inaction as it continues to take the good people of Gippsland for granted.

State parks and reserves management plan

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) — I am pleased to report that on a trip to Portland on Monday I was able to meet with many people when the innovative state plan that takes a fresh approach to managing more than 140 parks, reserves and Indigenous-owned properties in the far south-west was launched at the Mount Clay State Forest. I pay particular tribute to Damein Bell,

CEO, Gunditjmara Traditional Owners Corporation, for the leadership he has shown and the hard work of the Indigenous community in Portland for the way in which its members have been able to bring this statewide first plan to fruition. At the launch on Monday, Mr Bell said one tangible benefit of the plan is that professional tour operators are being invited to submit plans for a wide range of tours in Mount Eccles National Park, a Budj Bim cultural site, with operations up and running, hopefully by the end of the year. Mr Bell said, 'We want to see how tours can happen, as well as looking at other activities. We will also examine how we can respond to climate change on traditional lands'.

Parks Victoria CEO, Dr Bill Jackson, also said that we have strong Indigenous involvement in land management in Gippsland, the Goldfields and along the Murray but that this plan is a special example of getting through challenges because of the goodwill of all parties involved. This fresh approach looks at country and natural ecosystems in developing strategies for management which take a practical approach that recognises both the purpose of the parks and reserves and the role of the Gunditjmara traditional owners in managing these special areas. I again commend them all on their work and their leadership, and I hope this spurs on further great work across Victoria's state parks.

Bay West port proposal

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — The legislation introduced into the house yesterday to facilitate the sale of the port of Melbourne exposed one of the greatest hoaxes perpetrated by the Labor Party on the people of the Geelong region during the 2014 election campaign — that is, Bay West. In what can be described only as a mirage in the desert, Labor Party members told the people of Geelong that they would build Bay West instead of the port of Hastings as Victoria's second container port. The people have been conned. Now, having won the election, the Andrews Labor government is seeking to lock Victoria into having only one container port, being the port of Melbourne, for the next 50 years.

The members for Lara, Bellarine and Geelong all continually trumpeted Bay West as a jobs saviour for Geelong. This was done in order to deceive people into voting for them. They tugged at the heartstrings of workers who have been or will be retrenched from Alcoa, Ford and Blue Circle as well as other workers in Geelong. On 11 December 2012 the member for Lara said this in the house:

The Bay West port proposal is a policy of the Labor opposition ... The Bay West port proposal by Victorian Labor will give surety and confidence for the future to Geelong residents. By locating the new port in the Bay West area, major infrastructure investments will be assured. Not only will there be many jobs created at the port itself, there will also be many jobs created during the building ...

While the member for Lara has deceived and conned the people of Geelong, its business community and its council, Bay West has now been exposed as nothing but another Labor lie.

Family violence

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) — On 20 May I was pleased to co-host, with the member for Broadmeadows and the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, a forum on family violence. I thank the member for Broadmeadows and his electorate officers for organising the forum. It was a terrific event. Family violence has a devastating impact on communities right across the state. I was alarmed to learn that women who are disabled, pregnant or speak a language other than English are more likely to be exposed to instances of family violence. This should not be acceptable to any of us.

There is no community that is shielded from the impact of family violence, but I note the horrific statistics for the Hume City Council local government area, in which my electorate is located, with more than 6 out of every 10 instances of assault-related offences in 2014 being related to family violence. This is a community problem. David Morrison, the former Chief of Army, said, 'The standard you walk past is the standard you accept'. We cannot walk past this problem knowing the devastating impact it has. I mention David Morrison because of the perception by many at the forum that family violence is seen as a private problem. This alarming attitude of course only serves the abuser and hurts the victim. The end result is that family violence thrives. I thank all involved for participating in the forum. I have put in my submission on behalf of the community and I hope others do the same.

Crossway LifeCare

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) — Recently I had the pleasure of attending the Crossway LifeCare Bright & Glorious Ball. It was a fantastic night, providing an opportunity not only to celebrate the great work being undertaken by the LifeCare team but also to raise some much-needed funds for ongoing programs. I congratulate Pastor Toby Baxter and his team of staff and volunteers on the outstanding work they are doing to assist people in our community who are experiencing challenging times. I also thank Pastor Dale Stephenson

and the members of Crossway Baptist Church who support this very valuable and highly regarded local community service in my electorate.

East Burwood Tennis Club

Mr ANGUS — It was a pleasure to recently attend the East Burwood Tennis Club to celebrate the completion of the resurfacing of three of its synthetic tennis courts. The club is a vibrant and growing local tennis club, with great demand for its courts. The court resurfacing was funded in part by a \$50 000 grant by the former coalition state government, and I was delighted to be able to try out one of the new courts on my recent visit. I congratulate and thank those involved in organising this project, in particular club president Colin Jeffery and other committee and club members.

Benwerrin Kindergarten

Mr ANGUS — I was very pleased to attend the Benwerrin Kindergarten recently to celebrate the opening of the preschool's newest playground addition, a Balinese hut. This hut is a great new addition to the preschool's playground facilities and was partially funded by a \$10 000 grant from the former coalition state government. I congratulate and thank those involved in organising this project, in particular preschool director Toni Lepore, committee members and other volunteers who worked hard to see this project completed.

BlueCross Livingstone Gardens

Mr ANGUS — I recently had the pleasure of attending the open day at BlueCross Livingstone Gardens, a new aged-care residence located in Vermont South in my electorate of Forest Hill. This new facility will eventually provide accommodation and care for 150 residents and employment for more than 100 people. The completion of this major local project will provide additional residential options for eastern suburbs residents for many years to come. I congratulate the management of BlueCross and all involved in this project on the completion of this great new building and wish all new residents well as they settle into the local area.

Ambulance services

Mr J. BULL (Sunbury) — On Wednesday, 29 April, I joined the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services; the member for Macedon, who is the Parliamentary Secretary for Health; and the member for Yuroke at a local forum discussing ambulance services in our region. The forum was held

in the Blue Room of the Sunbury Aquatic and Leisure Centre and was extremely well attended. People came from Craigieburn, Roxburgh Park, Gisborne, Macedon, Woodend and of course Sunbury, to name just a few. There were a number of paramedics and local healthcare professionals in the room, as well as members of the community, all of whom are very concerned about the ambulance crisis that has developed over the past four years.

One thing that shone through at this forum was that the previous government left ambulance services in disarray. They are stretched to the limit. Paramedics are under severe stress, and the Victorian community is at a loss as to what to do. While paramedics lost faith in the former government, people lost faith in their ambulance services. At the forum the minister reported that the war on paramedics is over and that this government will stand side by side with our ambulance services to help them do the very difficult job we the community rely on day in and day out. I thank the minister for attending the forum, and I thank all of those local community members and healthcare professionals who came out on a cold night to show just how much they care about this extremely important issue.

McDonald's Mount Waverley

Mr GIDLEY (Mount Waverley) — I rise to congratulate McDonald's Mount Waverley on the recently completed upgrade of the restaurant. The upgrade included significant plant and equipment upgrades, and the refurbishment will allow for more service offerings. The upgrade generated direct and indirect job opportunities throughout the project, and it will provide ongoing jobs for local residents. Well done to owner-operator Bob May and manager Cameron Barnett on their continued efforts to generate better economic and leisure opportunities for Mount Waverley residents. I recognise the tremendous efforts of all those investing in our district and providing jobs for residents.

Early childhood literacy

Mr GIDLEY — Today in the Parliament I highlight my concerns regarding a proposal to restrict bedtime stories being read by parents to children. The ABC has questioned whether parents should read to their children before bedtime, claiming it could give some kids an unfair advantage over less fortunate children. I reject this bizarre left-wing nonsense from the taxpayer-funded national broadcaster, which also seems to be on the increase in Victoria, and encourage all residents to read to their children and support childhood reading wherever possible.

Child discipline

Mr GIDLEY — I rise to defend the right of parents to discipline their children with a smack every now and then if they feel it is appropriate as a means of controlling behaviour. A proposal to have governments ban the smacking of children was recently outlined at the annual meeting of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians in Cairns. Not only is there nothing wrong with a parent giving their children the occasional smack, but any suggestion of the state outlawing such a practice shows a lack of understanding of and respect for this unique and crucial relationship.

Taradale Primary School

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — Last Friday I popped into the Market Building in Castlemaine to see the handiwork of the Taradale Primary School children, who had created a big red beanie for the Castlemaine Country Women's Association of Victoria Beanie Affair exhibit and market. The children's skill in knitting, weaving, sewing, felting, crocheting and embroidery was on display in their fantastical creation. Taradale Primary School is enjoying a resurgence under the leadership of principal Chris Burgess, supported by the hard work of the member for Bendigo West and the Minister for Education, who under the previous government joined with the local community and fought to keep the school alive.

Taradale is everything you would expect from a small primary school and more. It is much loved by its local community. Whole-of-school activities like participating in Beanie Affair and Stephanie Alexander's kitchen garden program, maintaining an orchard and preparing a cooked lunch every Thursday are integral to the school education program. Before-school and after-school care and family day care on site mean commuting families and others know children will get the care they need at Taradale. I congratulate the teaching staff — principal Chris, Michelle Law and Lee-Anne Callaway — and office manager Jill Henderson, as well as the parent community. I also thank them for the lovely invitation to join them for lunch. I look forward to attending soon.

All Aboard Shepparton

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — This morning, along with the mayor of the shire of Mitchell, Rodney Parker, I met with the member for Shepparton; the mayor of Shepparton, Dennis Patterson; Cr Wendy Buck from Moira Shire Council; and around 100 travellers from Greater Shepparton and Moira shires, who had all risen well before dawn to catch the slow train to Melbourne

as part of the All Aboard Shepparton campaign. Many, including Mayor Patterson, were still in their pyjamas.

I was pleased to serve breakfast, including a range of muffins, Anzac biscuits, choc-chip cookies, tea and coffee, to the determined All Aboard Shepparton campaigners. Community leaders, including the Committee for Greater Shepparton, school and university students, tourism operators and retirees were all aboard.

Shepparton rail services have lagged well behind those of other regional cities, and it is reassuring indeed that the city now has a fabulous MP who is dedicated and determined to take this message to the state government. I am glad that the Minister for Public Transport will be meeting with the group later today here in the Parliament.

Rail improvements to the Shepparton line would also greatly benefit the Yan Yean electorate, especially the communities of Wallan and Donnybrook. I thank Mayor Parker for backing me up by supplying milk this morning. Improvements to this line will be great not only for members of my community who wish to travel into town but also for tourism and jobs. They will also assist with education by providing access to La Trobe University and TAFEs. Students in Wallan would greatly benefit from this reverse travel to Shepparton.

Berwick Lodge Primary School

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) — It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak about the fact that just this week I visited Berwick Lodge Primary School, which is located in what was formerly the electorate of Narre Warren South. It is a wonderful school, and during my visit I went on the school's radio program.

We have the pleasure of having students from the school in the gallery today. They are a wonderful group of students, and obviously they have fantastic teachers. On the day of my visit I was interviewed by Alma, Georgie, Dimitri, Josh and Zac. I will say that being interviewed by those young people was harder than being on with Jon Faine or Neil Mitchell! They asked some pretty challenging questions about what it is like to be in Parliament, and they showed great interest in our democracy. They understand exactly how our democracy works.

On the day we had the pleasure — and the maybe Minister for Education can take this on board — of proposing legislation that there will be no more homework in Victoria. That is a fantastic policy to take forward on behalf of the school! It was quite

interesting. We spoke about party politics, not just about what happens inside the chamber but also about the decisions that are made inside party rooms, about how the democratic process starts. Of course we did not talk about what happens inside the party room. We focused on how democracy starts and the fact we have discussions inside party rooms. It was a pleasure to see that these young people understand how our democracy works and how important it is. Can I say, and I know the Deputy Speaker would join me in this, that I welcome them here today to our chamber — a place where all Victorians are welcome. I know the students will take away even more than they have learnt so far.

Marriage equality

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) — Early Sunday morning I received a text from a constituent of mine named Bill. Bill is in his 70s, and earlier this year Bill lost his soulmate and life partner, Bob. They shared 41 years together. Bill texted me to say what a fantastic day it was because he woke up to the news that the people of Ireland had voted in favour of marriage equality. He said it was too late for him and Bob, but that did not diminish the overwhelming feeling of joy he felt that a country like Ireland had voted decisively in favour of marriage equality, with nearly 2 to 1 voting yes in the public referendum.

Bill told me that he and Bob could have been married in the United Kingdom, but they chose not to. They wanted to be legally married in their adopted country of Australia. He asked me:

When will Australia's Parliament reflect the views of the majority of Australians? When will Australia's Parliament show the kind of leadership that is needed to right a wrong, a wrong which sees discrimination against so many of our own citizens by refusing them the right to marry the person they love?

Well said, Bill.

HEALTH FUNDING

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) — I move:

That this house condemns the Prime Minister and the federal health minister for their \$17.7 billion in savage cuts to Victoria's hospitals over the next decade, and for other measures that will disadvantage Victorians, including dental, preventive health, Indigenous and medical research programs and investments.

Australians value their healthcare system. They value a universal healthcare system, and they value investment in and protection of their healthcare system. When they see a federal government attempting to wind back investment in things like their access to GPs and their

access to hospitals, they know they are dealing with a federal government that is, by stealth, attempting to attack universal health care.

In the federal budget handed down two weeks ago the Abbott government locked in a \$17.7 billion cut from Victoria's hospitals over the next 10 years. Those cuts will have a devastating effect on hospitals, on the community, on primary healthcare providers and on the very hardworking professionals who work throughout our health services to save lives every day. But it is more than that. Those cuts will have a devastating impact on Victorians who are sick and who need health care and treatment, because you simply cannot rip \$17.7 billion out of our healthcare system and expect there not to be any consequences.

That is not all the federal government did. In speaking to this motion I not only want to discuss the impact of the \$17.7 billion cuts to health services right across the state, I also want to talk about the federal government's deep cuts to other important parts of the healthcare system, such as cuts to our dental services, to preventive health and to health programs that support some of our most disadvantaged members of the community. I have had many great privileges over recent months, but one of the greatest privileges was travelling around the state visiting health services and meeting with patients and their families. I have met families celebrating the most joyful moments of their lives — the birth of a new child, for example, or those who are deeply grateful to be recovering from an illness.

I have also met patients experiencing their most painful moments, when they are diagnosed with a very difficult disease and are in deep pain. I have met those who are experiencing great new trauma and their families who are attempting to assist them in recovering from it. In short, our health system sees us at our best and at our worst, and the healthcare system and the people who comprise it — the wonderful doctors, nurses, allied health workers, paramedics, those who feed us and deal with the washing and everything in the health service — play an incredibly vital role in our lives. They deliver our children, they support us through illness, they relieve our pain and deal with our grief. Few other public institutions play such a critical role, and it is a matter of great honour to be the Minister for Health in this state.

Therefore I feel a tremendous sense of responsibility in this role and a sense of stewardship. We want to leave our health system in a better position than the one we found it in, so we will not let it be ruthlessly attacked by the federal government. We will stand up for both

quality and affordable health care. This matter is fundamental to the values of the Labor Party. It is fundamental to my values, and it is a fundamental value that motivates and drives the Andrews Labor government. A strong public health system is a critical element of a fair society. If we are serious about building a fair society, one that puts people first, then we must have the best quality health system and one that is accessible to all, irrespective of how much money you earn and irrespective of any position of privilege you hold. That does not just mean treating a person when they are sick; it is about investing to keep people well and about investing in prevention.

That is not just a matter of fairness and equality; it is a matter of good economic sense. We need to get in on the ground floor when it comes to early intervention and investment in prevention, and by investing in prevention we save enormous amounts of money that would otherwise be spent at a later stage on intervention at the acute level. Investing in prevention is one of the best investments governments can make, yet the most recent budget handed down by the Abbott federal government not only betrayed the values of equity and fairness, but it made bad economic sense. The federal government's cuts to hospital funding and to programs for some of our most disadvantaged communities are reflective not just of a mean-spirited government, but of one that is irresponsible.

Over the past few months I have spoken about the \$13.6 billion cuts to our hospitals over the next 10 years. That \$13.6 billion was revealed when the midyear economic and fiscal outlook was handed down towards the end of last year. We thought that was bad enough, and in response to that projected cut health services, health workers and patients all exhibited their deep concern about the impact that those cuts would have. It will result in dramatic cuts to our health services.

Health workers and patients were telling me and they were telling the Abbott government very clearly that they were worried about how they would be able to continue to access health services. They were telling me that if we made those cuts, they would have to cut services and cutting services would compromise care. Then we saw some great hope put out there by Mr Abbott. He started to say that the forthcoming federal budget would be a kinder, gentler budget. He started saying that he might start to address some of these issues, and perhaps we were naive to take him at his word.

What happened? On the night that Mr Abbott handed down his budget he revealed that he had not reversed

any of those cuts but had in fact deepened them. He had deepened the cuts to take an extra \$47 million away from Victorian hospitals compared to last year's midyear economic and fiscal outlook. That means the cuts in previous budgets and the budget update are going deeper into the future. If Tony Abbott remains Prime Minister — and that would be a great threat to the health and wellbeing of Victorians — \$17.7 billion will be cut from Victoria's public hospitals over the next decade.

I know that \$17.7 billion is a huge number. It is often difficult to comprehend what that would mean, so let us put it into perspective. It would mean the equivalent of 2.9 million fewer elective surgeries. It would mean the equivalent of 32 million dialysis sessions. This will impact upon the ability of Victorians to access health care, and what would it mean for the services based on their current funding model? What would it mean for our hospitals?

We have done some modelling. Mr Abbott's \$17.7 billion cuts will mean that Monash Health will lose \$2.2 billion over the next 10 years. It will mean that Alfred Health will lose \$1.39 billion over the next 10 years. It will mean that Eastern Health will lose \$1.33 billion over the next 10 years. It will mean that Melbourne Health will lose \$1.32 billion over the next 10 years. It will mean that Austin Health will lose \$1.11 billion over the next decade. And our hospitals in regional Victoria are not immune; they will also be hard hit.

It will mean that Barwon Health will lose \$840 million over the next decade. It will mean that Bendigo Health will lose \$476 million. It will mean Ballarat Health Services will lose \$455 million. It will mean Seymour Health, which is a fantastic health service that I had the opportunity to visit last week, will lose nearly \$26 million over the next 10 years.

Then we have our small rural hospitals. They will be devastated by these cuts. These are health services with the least capacity to deal with such savage cuts. It will mean that rural health services like Beaufort & Skipton Health Service will lose \$10.5 million. It will mean that Bort District Health will lose \$5.4 million. It will mean Alpine Health will lose \$26.8 million.

These cuts are not just outrageous in their magnitude, they are breathtakingly duplicitous, because we remember before the last federal election the coalition issued its health policy, and its health policy says:

A coalition government will support the transition to the commonwealth providing 50 per cent growth funding of the efficient price of hospital services as proposed.

Mr Abbott has broken that promise. Mr Abbott promised to increase funding to public hospitals, but instead he has cut funding to public hospitals. These cuts will permeate every health service in Victoria, and they will have a devastating impact on the ability of patients to access care.

The Abbott government has also remained steadfast on its decision to walk away from key components of the national partnership agreement on improving public hospitals. Under those cuts Victoria has lost millions to support improving access to emergency care, elective surgery and subacute beds, and all of those cuts come on top of the \$1 billion that was cut by the coalition state government. They will have an incredibly detrimental impact on our hospitals. They will see Victorians wait even longer in emergency departments, they will see Victorians wait even longer for their elective surgery and they will see services reduced.

In stark contrast to the Liberal approach, this government's approach has been to make a very passionate investment in health. In this year's budget we have invested a further \$2.1 billion over the next four years, including \$970 million extra for hospitals to meet increased patient demand. We are investing more than three times the amount that those opposite invested in health capital in their last budget. There is \$560 million for new and upgraded hospitals. We are building the Western Women's and Children's Hospital in Sunshine, we are expanding the Werribee Mercy Hospital and we are providing \$106 million to expand Casey Hospital.

In Ferntree Gully we are investing \$20 million to provide an intensive care unit and a short-stay unit at Angliss Hospital. We will expand Moorabbin Hospital with \$16.2 million for additional magnetic resonance imaging and computed tomography machines and 11 new outpatient specialist consulting suites. These investments will make a difference.

We have provided \$10 million to expand the cardiovascular service at Ballarat Health Services to build, develop and equip a new cardiac catheterisation laboratory. We have also invested \$20 million for ambulance capital works, including the rebuilding of nine existing branches, and we will build a new branch at Wendouree. These are just some of the investments we are making — and this is our first budget. We are a Labor government, and investing in health is in our DNA. We will have more to come.

It shows Victorians that we care about their health and that we think all Victorians should have access to health, irrespective of what is in their bank account or

whether they live in the suburbs, the inner city, the regions or rural Victoria. We are motivated by the values of fairness and equity. We believe everyone should have the right to access affordable quality health care close to their homes. There is no doubt it will be incredibly challenging to deliver health services in light of the Liberal Party's vicious cuts. I know Victorian health services are very worried about the future funding shortfalls that may result from these cuts. We will do everything we can, but we simply cannot plug a \$17.7 billion hole produced at the hands of Tony Abbott and the federal Liberal government. We will fight these cuts all the way.

But what have we heard from those opposite? What have we heard in terms of standing up for Victorians and their ability to access health care? The opposition has said only one thing about the federal government's savage cuts. I quote from the *Sunraysia Daily* of 2 May, in which the shadow health minister is quoted as saying:

... the federal government had given notice a year ago of its intention to scale back funding ...

What a roar in terms of standing up for our health system from those opposite! It is simply not acceptable for them to roll over and say okay to these health cuts. I can tell you, Deputy Speaker, that we will not. We will stand up and fight as Victorians expect us to. We will not let the Abbott government get away with a cost-shift to consumers that will have a negative impact on their ability to access healthcare services.

The Abbott government's determination to walk away from its obligation to invest in health is also evident in the cuts it has made to the national partnership agreement on preventive health. It has resulted in the loss of funding to a terrific program called Healthy Together Victoria. This program is a partnership of state and local governments, hospitals, non-government organisations, businesses and the community. It brings together a range of important programs with the aim of improving people's health where they live, where they learn, where they work and where they play, in our schools and in our local communities.

One of these programs, the Healthy Together Achievement program, helps organisations to create healthy environments by providing advice and resources about better health. That may include things like sun protection, mental health, physical activity and wellbeing. More than one in four Victorian children currently participate in this important program, and more than 300 000 Victorian workers currently participate in this program at over 780 workplaces. These are incredibly important programs, and the

commonwealth has simply walked away from them. Last year in the federal budget the coalition government indicated that it was cutting that program.

It is not often that I doff my hat to my predecessor, the former Minister for Health, David Davis, but in this circumstance I will say that he at least got on the phone to the federal government and begged it not to cut this program. I have been advised that the then federal Minister for Health, Peter Dutton, said he would see what he could do to keep that funding going, and stakeholders were advised that everything was going to be okay.

In the dying days of the last state government a document called a request for tender was put to the Victorian government for \$30 million to help support the ongoing investment in Healthy Together Victoria. Then the government in Victoria changed, and in January this year I wrote to my federal counterpart seeking an update around this funding. I sought a meeting with the federal Minister for Health, Sussan Ley, and raised the issue with her, but we received no commitment. The only advice we were given is that they would consider it in the context of the forthcoming federal budget. But, disappointingly, on budget night there was no funding for Healthy Together Victoria, as many were led to expect. I can only assume this was a decision about politics and not about prevention. Sadly it will be the communities of Bendigo, Cardinia, Dandenong, Geelong, Hume, Knox, Latrobe, Mildura, Whittlesea, Wodonga, Wyndham and Central Goldfields that will suffer, because investing in prevention reduces the long-term toll of disease on our communities.

The Andrews Labor government has made, does make and will continue to make significant investments in prevention. We see that in our 2015–16 budget, and we will look at what more we can do to save parts of the programs under Healthy Together Victoria, but I cannot mislead those communities or the house. The Abbott government's abandonment of the national partnership agreement on preventive health has ripped vital funding away from this project, which will have a detrimental effect on the health and wellbeing of Victorians.

The Abbott government's attack on our health system does not stop there. The dental health program that delivers publicly funded dental services to those who have the most limited access to dental care, including children, pregnant women, Indigenous people, refugees, people facing homelessness and people registered as clients of mental health services and disability services, has been ruthlessly cut by the Abbott government. Under the partnership agreement

Victoria was supposed to receive \$220 million over three years. But what did we see in this year's budget? Initially the federal government said it was going to defer it, but what we saw was \$181 billion cut from our public dental services. That means 214 000 Victorians will have to wait even longer to access public dental services, if they access those services at all. We know that poor oral health, once ignored, leads to people who are in unbearable pain ending up in our emergency departments. The federal government has cut \$181 million from our public dental services, yet we hear absolutely nothing from those opposite.

If that is not enough for them, the Abbott government then took its axe to the funding of child dental benefits as well. The child dental benefits scheme is a means-tested scheme that support's children aged between 2 and 17 years. It covers basic dental treatment and preventive health treatment. It provides \$1000 worth of basic dental care per child every two years, and since that program started it has helped hundreds and thousands of children across the country. But the commonwealth government is refusing to confirm whether or not it will continue to fund that program. Cutting public dental funding, particularly for the most vulnerable of people, is not just bad social policy and bad health policy; it is bad economic policy.

But the cuts do not end there. This year's federal budget has also seen the cruel axing of the Healthy Kids Check. Since 2008 children between the ages of three and five have been able to go to a GP for basic health checks. These checks determine whether they have a hearing impediment, a speech impediment, language or behavioural issues or health concerns that may impede their progress as they develop. These checks mean their families can identify potential developmental problems before the children start school and look at options for early intervention.

What did the Abbott government — the supposed champion of family values — do in this most recent federal budget? It told families right across the country, including those in this state, that they are on their own, because the Healthy Kids Check will no longer be covered by a Medicare rebate. This is just another senseless cut with absolutely no policy justification.

This week is National Reconciliation Week, and at the start of the week we heard members from all sides of this chamber talk about the importance of supporting our Indigenous populations. Here in Victoria we have an Aboriginal population of about 47 000 people, about 0.09 per cent of our population. Our Aboriginal population is young and growing, with more than 45 per cent aged 20 years or younger. We all know —

and no-one in this house requires persuasion — that the challenges involved in closing the gap, particularly when it comes to Aboriginal people, are very significant. Aboriginal people are more likely than any other people in this country to experience incredibly poor outcomes. We know that Aboriginal children are twice as likely to die in their first years as are non-Aboriginal children. The sudden infant death syndrome rate among Aboriginal infants is higher. Aboriginal maternal death rates are higher. All of the health outcomes of Aboriginal people are worse. That is why programs such as the Koori maternity services program are so important.

The Koori maternity services program, the national partnership agreement on Indigenous teenage sexual and reproductive health and the young parent support program are programs that have made a difference. All the evidence says those programs have fundamentally improved health outcomes for young Indigenous Victorians, including sexual and reproductive health, and have improved maternity and birthing services — and they have done it for reasonably small amounts of money. What happened in this year's federal budget? I am appalled to advise the house that the federal government decided to axe such an important program as the Koori maternity services program. This will have an untold impact on those who rely on the program, which has been incredibly important in efforts to close the gap in relation to Aboriginal health. Despite that, the Abbott government has cut the funding for it.

The Abbott government has also walked away from the funding for Indigenous teenage sexual and reproductive health. That will see funding cuts to Wulumperi, the Aboriginal sexual health unit at the Melbourne Sexual Health Centre. That unit is doing terrific things, but now its funding has been cut. It was the only dedicated program for best practice sexual health interventions for young Aboriginal people. It has been making a difference, yet the federal government has decided, in all of its wisdom, to cut it.

Since coming to government we have been lobbying the federal government about these important programs. We know the cut in this funding will mean a significant reduction in access to culturally appropriate services. There are more and more examples of these savage cuts and of how they will make it difficult for families to get the treatment they need.

Another one — and sometimes it is the small things that really count in people's lives — is the inborn error of metabolism food grant. This grant supports people with rare metabolic diseases. They are provided a small amount to help them buy necessary medications and

supplements. The grant is received by only about 1000 people. It is a blip on the federal Treasury books, but it is an essential source of funds for people who have that condition. Mr Abbott decided he would cut that as well. What makes it worse is that those 1000 people were not even told about this and found out only by reading the budget papers. I am continually astounded by the ability of the members of the Abbott government to so nonchalantly shrug their shoulders at the Australian people, including Victorians, and effectively say, 'We simply don't care about these cuts'.

After last year's disastrous federal budget, when Mr Abbott forecast he would deliver us a kinder, gentler budget, we can understand why people were so concerned about the federal health budget. We saw the ongoing backflips and somersaults around the Medicare GP co-payment. That was quite an astounding policy development process to watch. We thought the federal government had received the message that Australians, including Victorians, consider universal access to healthcare services a mainstream value, one they do not want governments to remove or make the subject of brutal cuts. That is because we do not want to live in a community, in a state or indeed in a country that reflects some of our international comparators. We do not want to live in a country where how much money you earn determines what access to health care you get. Australians very forcefully told the Abbott government that when it tried to mess with our Medicare system. We thought the government might have learnt the lesson. It seems not, however. It seems we are going to have to continue to tell it that.

The Andrews Labor government will continue to invest in health, but it is not going to cop a \$17.7 billion cut to the health system and roll over and say it is okay. We are going to take the fight up on behalf of our community. We are going to tell Mr Abbott we will not allow our state to become one where people do not get access to health care, where we do not invest in prevention, where children are forced to go without primary dental care and where children's learning and speech impediments and development delays are not diagnosed at an early age, thereby denying them the opportunity to have early access to relevant sorts of programs. We are not going to enable our health system to be the subject of brutal, stealth-ridden cuts.

Before the last election, Tony Abbott stood before all Australians and promised he would not cut the health budget. He has broken that promise, and he has broken it in every single health budget since that point in time. We need partnership, however, in taking up this fight. We need people to stand up for Victoria. We need

people to be Victorians first and politicians last — and the deafening silence from those on the other side of this chamber is an absolute shame.

The challenge for those who sit on the opposite side of the chamber is whether or not they too are going to stand up for the Victorian health system. Do they think it is acceptable for \$17.7 billion to be cut from the Victorian health system? Do they think it is acceptable for Healthy Together Victoria to be cut and for people to lose those programs? Do they think it is acceptable for the most vulnerable Victorian people to be denied access to public dental health care? Do they think it is acceptable for Indigenous Victorians to be denied access to maternity programs and to sexual health programs?

Do opposition members think it is acceptable for mental health funding to be cut by the feds? Do they think it is acceptable for rural, regional and metropolitan health services to cut their cloth? Do they think that Victorians should wait longer in our emergency departments? Do they think it is acceptable for Victorians to wait longer for their elective surgery? Do they think it is acceptable when a society and a community starts to have two classes when it comes to health care — those with the financial means to buy it and those without it? Do they think there is a compelling economic argument to not invest in prevention? Do they want to take us backwards, after Australia has enjoyed access to universal health care for decades? I think all Australians and indeed all Victorians now regard that as a mainstream value, and they will punish politicians who do not support it.

We will not have our health system ripped apart by stealth. We will not allow those who sit on the other side of this chamber to remain silent and try to look busy while responsibility and partnership is required to stand up to the federal government. We will hold them to account for their behaviour, because we are a Labor government that fundamentally believes it has not only a political obligation but a moral obligation to make our health system better, and that is exactly what we intend to do.

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — My oh my. It has come to this. Here we are with the opportunity to debate the budget this government presented this month and we have had the Leader of the House stand here just before to indicate that she did not wish to debate the first item on the notice paper, which is a debate about this government's own budget. We are now standing here having to discuss the federal government. My oh my.

We know that it has been a bad week for this government. We know that this is a government in disarray. We know that because — and I quote — 'I can't believe we've reached this point after six months'. Who said that? It was said by a backbencher in the Labor Party about their own government. Was it the member for Mordialloc? Was it the member for Carrum? Maybe it was the member for Essendon. Have we really come to the point where in this house the Minister for Health is having to put a motion on the notice paper that can be debated quickly to take attention away from the parlous state of this government? It is absolutely bizarre.

The motion before the house talks about the federal government. I appreciate the fact that some members of the house are new, and I accept that, but those who were here in the last Parliament will know that the coalition government was willing to stand up for Victoria. Whether it was Kevin Rudd as the Prime Minister, whether it was Julia Gillard as the Prime Minister, whether it was Tony Abbott as the Prime Minister, whether it was Gonski, whether it was the national disability insurance scheme (NDIS) or whether it was health we were talking about, we always said, 'We are Victorians first'. We were more than happy to stand up for Victoria.

I remind those opposite that in December 2012 there was a debate about cuts to federal health funding by the then Labor government. I know that because I participated in the debate. Why was Labor at that point in time not picking up the phone on behalf of Victorians? Let me remind those opposite what was happening at that point. The then federal Labor government said that Victoria's population had dropped by 11 000. As a consequence, the then federal Labor government took money, not out of the forward estimates but out of that year's budget, away from Victoria — \$107 million was taken off Victorians.

Where were state Labor members at the time? Why were they not standing up for Victorians when their colleagues in Canberra were taking the money away? There was a deathly silence from those opposite, and they know that. It was only the coalition government that stood up for Victorians on that issue. In fact we shamed the then federal Labor health minister into reversing that decision and returning the money to Victoria. So, with the greatest of respect, I am not going to stand here and be lectured to by those on that side of the house, given their actions when they were in opposition.

Let me say unashamedly that I believe this state should receive its fair share of money from the federal

government, whether it is a Liberal-National government or a Labor government. Whether we are talking about health, education or the NDIS, we believe we should receive our fair share. However, as we know, one of those members sitting on the back bench told a journalist, 'I can't believe we've reached this point after just six months'. That is exactly why we are standing here today having to debate this baseless motion.

What I would like to talk about is what this government has actually done with respect to health. You could not get a more shameless act than the cutting of cancer beds at the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre (VCCC). For 30 minutes I listened to the Minister for Health, waiting to hear an explanation to justify why she cut cancer beds at the new Peter MacCallum centre. Why would you cut health beds in the new VCCC? Why would you do that? It was not going to cost Victorians one cent. In fact it was money that was donated to help deliver this new facility.

It was only done because of ideology. It was only done because of politics. It had nothing to do with health outcomes. People throughout Victoria shook their heads and said, 'What does this government have against people being able to obtain health services in a private health facility?'. The minister can tell me I am wrong, but she needs to explain why she took the decision she did. I ask the minister one question: did she support the motion or was she rolled? Was it actually a decision of the now Premier? That is what Victorians need to know. Was it the minister's call or was it a captain's pick made by the Premier? Clearly this is a government that is more interested in ideology than it is in health outcomes. Nobody in Victoria supported the decision of this government.

If you look at the budget, you see there was nothing for the Maroondah breast cancer centre and nothing for the Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery. The government only provided 10 per cent of the funding for the Victorian Heart Hospital, and it has only provided 2.5 per cent of funding for the Casey Hospital.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr WAKELING — Members opposite are shaking their heads at me. That 2.5 per cent does not deliver an expansion. It will not even build you a door. It will not deliver the outcomes the government has promised.

I was very interested to listen to the discussion about preventive health. Knox is one of the councils in my electorate, and it is doing fantastic work. However, what Victorians now need to hear from this Minister for Health is that she is going to fix it and that she is going

to continue the program. She cannot sheet the blame home to others. She is the Minister for Health. This was a program that was administered — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr WAKELING — In the former government, I was Parliamentary Secretary for Health. Working with the Department of Health, the former government administered this program. I was involved in its administration. Can I say, with the greatest of respect, that it now behoves the Victorian Minister for Health to explain to the 14 councils what her position will be. Is she going to continue to run this program?

Ms Graley interjected.

Mr WAKELING — I am more than happy to show respect to the minister, and I apologise for that. However, can I say that the minister has an obligation to ensure that this program continues. At a time when we should have the opportunity to investigate and grill this government on its own budget, we are sitting here this morning having to listen to a debate about Canberra.

We on this side of the house believe that this government should stop worrying about its own internal factional problems. As one of its caucus members was recently quoted as saying, 'I can't believe we have reached this point after six months'. You need no greater explanation of that than the fact that we are standing here today debating a motion regarding the federal government rather than debating and investigating the activities of this government, which does not want to be scrutinised. This government is running from scrutiny, and it does not want to debate its own budget.

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — I am very pleased to stand to speak on this motion that the house condemn the Prime Minister and the federal Minister for Health for their \$17.7 billion in savage cuts to Victoria's hospitals over the next decade and for other measures that will disadvantage Victorians, including in dental, preventive and Indigenous health, and medical research programs and investments.

What is the role of government if not to provide health services for its community?

An honourable member — It's called governing.

Ms THOMAS — It is called governing. It is about delivering for those in our community who are most disadvantaged, who need strong government, effective representation and strong ministers. The worst of it is

that the current Prime Minister, the one who is overseeing these horrendous cuts that will impact Victorians, was formerly Minister for Health. That is a great shame. What good fortune we have here in Victoria that we have a Minister for Health who understands what her role is, who understands that the role of the Minister for Health is to stand up and ensure that high-quality health services are delivered across the state, especially to those who are most in need. We are very fortunate that we have a Minister for Health who will stand up for the interests of all Victorians, particularly those who struggle to have a voice and those who look to this side of the house to represent them in this Parliament — that is, those in our community who are disadvantaged and experience worse health outcomes than others.

Prior to the 2013 federal election, the current Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, promised he would make no cuts to health, and yet at every opportunity since the election his government has broken that promise. It has cut health deeper and deeper each time. What the federal budget shows is that the Abbott government does not care about health, which is a fundamental responsibility of government.

The Abbott government's decision to walk away from the funding arrangements under the national health reform agreement in last year's horror federal budget, the impact of the 2014–15 mid-year economic and fiscal outlook and the 2015 budget will see around \$17.7 billion cut from Victoria's public hospitals over the next decade. This is on top of \$181 million in cuts to dental services over the next three years. The federal government is cutting Indigenous teenage sexual health programs. It is indefinitely freezing indexation on the Medicare benefits schedule fee, and it has broken promises by making cuts in funding for medical research. There are shameful cuts to the Healthy Kids Checks, which give at-risk kids the opportunity to put themselves on the right track before they start school, and there are cuts to preventive health programs.

You cannot cut \$17.7 billion from Victoria's public hospitals and expect elective surgery waiting lists and emergency department waiting times to get better. These savage cuts will mean longer waiting lists, longer waiting times at emergency departments and cuts to dental services. It will see some of our most vulnerable wait even longer for basic dental care. Indeed the \$17.7 billion in cuts to Victorian hospitals is the equivalent of 2.9 million elective surgeries or nearly 32 million dialysis sessions.

I look up and see that those on the other side of the chamber are not standing up for their communities.

They do not care. They are not going to fight for them. In particular I draw attention to members of The Nationals. They tell us they represent the interests of country people, that they are the only ones who will speak up for the country. Where are they right now? They have an opportunity, but they are absent. When I look at what the impacts of these federal cuts will be in country Victoria, it tells a shameful story. I noticed before that the member for Benambra was in the house, but he has left the chamber. I have a particular interest in the way he represents his electorate because it is where my family live and where I grew up. I note that the Tallangatta Health Service will lose almost \$10 million over 10 years. I would like to be there when the member for Benambra delivers that news. I would like to see the want-to-be candidate for Indi, Sophie Mirabella, get out there and defend that cut to the Tallangatta hospital.

In my own electorate, the Hepburn Health Service, a very fine health service delivering for the needs of everyone in the Hepburn shire and particularly the communities of Daylesford and Hepburn, will have just over \$24 million cut over 10 years. The Kyneton District Health Service is a fabulous health service; it is really well led and meets the needs of the community. This wonderful health service was built by the previous state Labor government and had some new ambulatory care funded by the previous federal Labor government, but it will have \$16.9 million cut over 10 years.

It is a disgrace that members of The Nationals are not here in the chamber. They say they stand up for country people, but they have no interest in the needs of country people and they will not stand up to the Liberals. The Liberals will cut and cut and cut, because its members do not believe in government services. They do not believe in meeting the needs of those who are disadvantaged in our communities; they have no interest in that. Yet members of The Nationals will stand side by side with them. They will not speak up and they will not defend communities in regional Victoria. The only party that can represent the interests of country Victoria is the Labor Party. We have demonstrated that time and again.

I would also like to speak briefly on the cuts to the national partnership agreement on preventive health. In 2008 the then federal Labor government, under Prime Minister Rudd, and the Victorian Labor government, under Premier Brumby, signed up to a national partnership agreement on preventive health. We know that making investments in supporting people to live healthy lifestyles pays huge dividends in the future, not only for the health and wellbeing of those people but also for the budget bottom line. This was a

groundbreaking agreement, and it was intended to address lifestyle-related chronic disease.

In Victoria this national partnership agreement led to the development and delivery of Healthy Together Victoria, which aimed to prevent chronic lifestyle diseases like diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some cancers. Healthy Together Victoria was tackling the issues in some of our most disadvantaged communities, and it will be of no surprise to anyone on this side of the house to know that some of our most disadvantaged communities are in regional Victoria: in Bendigo, Wodonga and the central goldfields. While I was visiting my family over the Christmas break it was my great pleasure to also visit Jamie's Pop-Up Kitchen in Wodonga. What a fantastic program! Along with the Wodonga City Council, that community was right behind Healthy Together Victoria, and it was addressing some key lifestyle issues such as the consumption of unhealthy food and obesity and all their health impacts.

As we know, the initiatives under Healthy Together Victoria run through local councils, and this national partnership agreement was due to roll out until June 2018. But in the May 2014 horror budget the Abbott government axed the national partnership agreement on preventive health as of the end of this financial year. In total the cuts to Victoria amounted to \$90 million. This is an absolute disgrace. Prior to last year's state election, and as the minister noted, the former Victorian health minister claimed that he had struck a deal with the former commonwealth health minister, Peter Dutton. They are now both former health ministers, and for good reason, I would say. The deal was to provide some additional funding for Healthy Together Victoria to ensure that it could continue and be evaluated. The previous state health minister made this claim to a group of CEOs, but the commonwealth has walked away from the deal. The only response from the commonwealth minister was that the matter was being considered. We know what happened in the 2015 budget: the funding was cut.

This is an important motion. It is absolutely vital that members of this house take the fight right up to the federal government. We cannot stand here and see our health system decimated. We cannot stand here and see people in Victoria — those who are most disadvantaged and least able to afford it — bear the brunt of the cruel and evil cuts of the federal Liberal government. I commend the motion to the house.

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) — I am pleased to make a contribution to the debate on the motion moved by the Minister for Health. In the Ivanhoe electorate we

understand this issue because we bear scars after fighting off the Kennett government's desire to privatise and sell off the Austin Hospital, our public health service. We know the form of those on the other side of the house and their federal mates in Canberra when it comes to \$17.7 billion worth of cuts to health care in Victoria.

We also remember the attempted merger of the Austin and Northern hospitals by the previous Liberal government in Victoria. The only reason that was scuppered, of course, was that the current Leader of the Opposition leaked the cabinet papers of the former Minister for Health who sought that merger. The Labor Party caught sight of the issue and exposed it; that is what we did. We ensure that the Liberal Party, whether it is in Victoria or in Canberra, is held to account for its constant cuts, its attacks on health workers and the health system, and its desire to run down public health services in Victoria and across the country. That is why at every opportunity Liberals put Victorians last and Tony Abbott first.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member will continue his contribution when the debate is next before the house.

Business interrupted under to sessional orders.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER — Order! I am pleased to acknowledge in the gallery today the presence of Anthony Di Pietro, chairman of Melbourne Victory Football Club; Ian Robson, chief executive; Stella Smith, general manager, community engagement; and Jim Christo, general manager, commercial. On behalf of the Premier, and I am sure on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition and members, welcome to the Parliament of Victoria. I am sure supporters of Melbourne Victory and the broader Victorian community are thrilled that the team has brought the A-League premiership trophy home. And may I say the final was definitely an exciting game, with an overwhelming 3-0 win over Sydney Football Club — a strong one-sided game in A-League grand final history!

I have been informed that the global audience that night was between 250 million and 300 million viewers of the telecast to about 54 countries around the globe. What a great achievement not only for Melbourne Victory but also for Victoria. The coverage of the final has put Victoria on the world map. We thank you. It is good for the state, our business sector, trade and tourism. I also acknowledge Kevin Muscat, Mark Milligan and the rest of the players, who are on a

well-deserved break. I hope we will see them here in Parliament.

In accordance with the rules regarding inappropriate materials being displayed in the house, however, I request that members now remove scarves.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade

Mr PESUTTO (Hawthorn) — My question is to the Premier. As the Premier has indicated that the matter concerning the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade, Minister Somyurek, could be criminal in nature, and given reports that Minister Somyurek has engaged a leading workplace lawyer as well as Queen's Counsel, can the Premier confirm that taxpayers will pay for the minister's expensive legal representation?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — No, I cannot confirm that at all.

Supplementary question

Mr PESUTTO (Hawthorn) — For the record, can the Premier confirm whether all employees in Minister Somyurek's office who will be dragged before this inquiry will be afforded the same level of taxpayer-funded legal representation as the minister, including Queen's Counsel?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Government members will come to order. I remind the house, as I did yesterday, that this matter requires silence and composure.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I thank the member for Hawthorn, and again, no, I cannot confirm that.

Mr Pesutto — On a point of order, Speaker, on the responsiveness of the answer, these matters are not confidential; they are not confidential matters. There is in fact a standard for the provision of legal indemnities for people who are the subject of —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Government members will allow the member for Hawthorn to raise a point of order in silence.

Mr Pesutto — Speaker, with respect, I ask you to direct the Premier to answer the question. He cannot escape the question, because he does not give an answer.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, there is clearly no point of order from the member for Hawthorn to support, because as this house should well know, you are not in a position to direct any minister or the Premier to answer a question, and indeed, notwithstanding that, the Premier very clearly answered the question that was asked.

Mr Clark — On the point of order, Speaker, this raises a new issue about the interpretation of sessional order 11(2). The member for Hawthorn has raised the point that the Premier was not responding to the question that he asked. The Leader of the House has said that the Premier can decline to answer the question or say that he is not willing to confirm an answer.

I am raising with you, Speaker, the fact that sessional order 11(2) empowers you in such circumstances to rule that the answer is not responsive to the question. Sessional order 11(2) does not require a degree of culpability or dereliction of duty on the part of the minister concerned; it can also apply where the Premier or other minister indicates that he or she is not in a position to answer the question.

The Minister for Finance, when he was not in a position to answer a question earlier in the week, undertook to provide further information to the house. The Premier could have done so in response to the member for Hawthorn. Given that he has not done so, I submit you should use your powers under sessional order 11(2) to ask the Premier to follow up, so that when he is in a position to do so he can confirm or otherwise in answer to the member for Hawthorn's questions.

Mr Pakula — On the point of order, Speaker, the member for Hawthorn in future may want to consider the form of the question. A non-responsive answer to a question which invites a yes or no answer would be one which refuses to give either a yes or a no. The question was: can the Premier confirm?. A responsive answer to a question like that is either, 'Yes, I can confirm' or 'No, I cannot confirm', and the Premier's answer was, 'No, I cannot'. In terms of the form of the question, the answer was as responsive as it could possibly be.

The SPEAKER — Order! A substantive question was put to the Premier and the Premier responded to a substantive question. I have heard members on the point of order, and I rule the point of order out of order.

Ministers statements: health funding

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I rise today to speak to the house about the federal government’s savage cutbacks to our Victorian health system and the fact that those cutbacks are hurting patients in hospitals right across our state. This morning I was very pleased to visit with the leadership team of St Vincent’s Health together with the Minister for Health and the Parliamentary Secretary for Medical Research to celebrate our government’s honouring the commitment we made late last year to invest \$60 million in the Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery.

This is a first-class project; one that the team at St Vincent’s Health — the researchers, the scientists, the clinicians, all the staff and the management team — should be abundantly proud of. The discoveries that will be made possible through this centre of excellence we really cannot know. We cannot know where these discoveries may go in terms of curative treatment, quality of life, saving lives and, of course, creating jobs.

As a government we have very proudly marked out the pharmaceutical and medical technology industry as a great centre of future growth and opportunities for our economy so that we will have better outcomes for patients and will honour the work of everyone in that diverse team: our scientists, our nurses and doctors, our biomedical engineers and so many others. We are honouring their work and, of course, creating employment and economic growth opportunities for the future.

The benefits of this project are self-evident, not for just our state and our economy but indeed for the world. Given the significance of these discoveries, who knows where they may take us? Who knows how many may be saved or may benefit from this work? It now falls to the federal government to do the right thing, to stop cutting hospital funding and to be a partner in the delivery of the Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery. It is such a fantastic project.

Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier confirm that as of last night there has been no written complaint lodged against Minister Somyurek by his chief of staff?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — No, I cannot confirm that.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — Given that the minister has been stood down, I ask if the Premier can confirm that a 1 June deadline has been given for a written complaint to be formally lodged against the minister by his chief of staff?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. A complaint was made and it has been acted on. The investigation — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS — As I have made clear — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The opposition will allow the Premier to continue answering the supplementary question.

Mr ANDREWS — As I would have thought was abundantly clear, the investigation is not being conducted by any member of the government. It is being conducted by the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, so I am not in a position to confirm what paperwork he has. I am not in a position to confirm how he is conducting that inquiry — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the member for Kew. I indicated yesterday and I will repeat — —

Mr Staikos interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Bentleigh is also warned.

In the judgement of the Chair, this subject matter warrants silence, respect and composure from all members. I advise each individual that doing it any other way will not enhance that person’s standing in the community. The media and the public expect composure on this subject.

Mr ANDREWS — The time has expired.

The SPEAKER — Order! I extend my apologies to the Premier. The Chair should have asked the Clerk to stop the clock. The Chair did not ask the Clerk to stop the clock. The Premier’s time has now expired.

Ministers statements: mental health funding

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Mental Health) — I also rise today with the sad duty of advising the house of the new action I have taken, an action that has been necessitated by the commonwealth government’s

savage cuts to the mental health budget in our health system.

This morning I have asked my department to prepare a full analysis of how the recent federal budget will impact on Victoria's mental health system so that we can make sure we can mitigate the cruel cuts that Tony Abbott's budget has wreaked on some of our most vulnerable citizens. The commonwealth government has cut \$1.9 billion from our health system nationally, and it is vital that we understand its implications for our state. We need to understand what that means given the chaotic state in which those opposite left the mental health system in our state, particularly through their botched community mental health recommissioning.

Those opposite made a particular mess of how some of our most vulnerable citizens are dealt with, notably in inner urban suburbs — some of our most vulnerable communities. That is why this government was particularly pleased to see St Mary's House of Welcome, Jesuit Social Services and the Prahran Mission — as the member for Prahran will attest — re-funded in this most recent budget. In that regard, we were surprised when the commonwealth government's recent National Mental Health Commission review sent mixed messages to the community more generally.

At the start of the day the commonwealth government seemed to be suggesting that it was supporting taking money off our acute mental health services in favour of community settings. Later that same day it seemed to have changed its position. That has left severe confusion in the community and mental health sector. I have asked my department to advise us as to the best way to undo the damage of the federal mental health cuts.

Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is again to the Premier. Given the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade, Minister Somyurek, stood down due to a verbal complaint, has not been sighted at Parliament all week and has not produced a medical certificate, can the Premier advise the house: where is the minister?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Let me again make it very clear that a serious matter was raised, a complaint was raised. Every Victorian has the right to feel safe in their workplace. Part of achieving that outcome — something I would have thought we could all fundamentally agree on — is a robust, proper

complaints process. That is what we have in place. That is what the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet is giving effect to: a proper handling of this serious complaint. It is a serious matter, and it is not one to be trivialised. That is not my intention, and it is not what we will do.

We will deal with this properly. That is to say, we will ensure that a proper investigation is conducted, but not by one politician sitting in judgement upon another. Instead, the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, at my urging, has instituted a process, and I have confidence that that will run properly and well, as it should for any staff member in any workplace. The minister is on leave. As to his exact whereabouts, he is on leave.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — I ask the Premier if it is now the policy of his government that taking leave to avoid media and parliamentary scrutiny is a good reason not to be in Parliament, not to be at work.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — The answer very simply is no, that is not the government's policy.

Ministers statements: local government rates

Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Local Government) — I rise to provide the house with an update on the progress of our new initiative: the much-anticipated fair go rates system. I know it has been anticipated because ratepayers tell me they are tired of yearly rate increases well above CPI — rate increases like a 9 per cent increase in 2008 and a 6 per cent increase in 2009 in the city of Geelong, when the member for South Barwon was a councillor down there.

The house will be interested to know that the Essential Services Commission as of yesterday had received 252 submissions providing advice and views on the design of the system. The submissions came from councils, peak bodies, ratepayers associations and individuals. We even have one submission from the opposition spokesperson for local government, who still cannot bring himself to commit to a view on the policy design of a framework that will help families manage their budgets.

I know that the Essential Services Commission will methodically work through these submissions, and I look forward to bringing further reports to the house. I note that a number of concerns have been raised in the submissions so far which mirror things that the councils

have told me. They are concerns around falling funding in real terms from the federal government. For instance, Rural Councils Victoria notes that the federal government's freeze of indexation for federal assistance grants is having a huge effect on rural councils.

The federal government was unfair. It did not listen, and it does not care. The most recent federal budget has made things worse for our councils. The federal budget has seen a real cut to local government funding by not providing a CPI increase.

Shepparton rail services

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — My question is to the Minister for Public Transport. More than 120 people in my electorate gathered at dawn this morning at the Shepparton railway station to travel to Melbourne to demand faster, direct and more frequent rail services. Will the minister commit to improving the rail services and infrastructure and provide the Shepparton district with the rail services it needs to ensure that our regional economy grows in the way that we all know other major Victorian cities have enjoyed for a long time with better, regular rail services?

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — I thank the Independent member for Shepparton for her question. It is pleasing to have a member for Shepparton who is so committed to improving public transport for her region. I would also like to acknowledge the many people from Shepparton who have made their way to Melbourne today because this issue is so important to them.

Mr Guy — The member for Melbourne! The member for Melbourne!

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition!

Ms ALLAN — The Leader of the Opposition is displaying such disrespect for the community of Shepparton.

Over the years I have met many times with members of the community of Shepparton, who have consistently pushed the case for improved public transport services. I am sure the Premier will recall our visit to Shepparton back in August 2013, when we visited the Shepparton train station with the Minister for Planning to talk about improved public transport services.

I absolutely share the passion of the member for Shepparton and her local community for improving public transport services for regional Victoria. Public transport is one of those vital services — it connects

country people with Melbourne and towns to each other — but it is more than just a service: it represents such an important outcome for social and economic improvements in country communities.

That is why it is important that the government invest in regional rail services, and that is exactly what the Andrews Labor government is doing. We have big improvements and investments in new regional rail carriages and upgrades to regional level crossings and in regional rail freight, with the Murray Basin rail freight project.

We want to do more, and we understand the desire of communities like Shepparton to see improvements in their public transport services, unlike those opposite, who cut funding to V/Line and threatened 100 jobs. The Andrews Labor government will be preparing a regional network development plan that will involve extensive community consultation next month. This is the first time ever in Victoria there has been a regional network development plan; it has not been done before. It will set our priorities for regional public transport services over the short, medium and longer terms, and it will importantly focus on coordinating regional public transport services across the train and bus networks.

We are setting up an advisory committee to help support this work.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms ALLAN — The lack of respect being shown for the Shepparton community reflects the lack of investment those opposite made when they were in government in improving regional rail services.

This regional transport advisory group will help work with the government to develop this first ever regional network development plan that will look at improving services to Shepparton and regional Victoria.

Supplementary question

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — Will the minister today provide detailed time lines for action to address the long-term underinvestment in regional rail to and from Shepparton?

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — I thank the Independent member for Shepparton for the supplementary question, and I indicate to her that the consultation process is kicking off pretty much straightaway on the first ever regional network development plan.

Consultation is going to be a critical part of the development of the plan, and given that there are so many people from Shepparton who are either here today or watching with great interest, I am pleased to announce that a representative from the Shepparton community will sit on the advisory committee that is going to be chaired by my colleague representing Northern Victoria Region in the other place Jaclyn Symes; Gippsland identity Richard Elkington will be co-chairing this group; and a representative of the Committee for Greater Shepparton, David McKenzie, will be participating in this advisory group.

As I said, this will be Victoria's first ever long-term strategy for regional public transport services. Labor has always been the party that has invested in improving regional rail services, and I look forward to continuing that proud tradition.

Ministers statements: infrastructure funding

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I rise to inform the house about actions being taken by the Andrews Labor government to stand up to the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party in Canberra and make sure that Victorians get their fair share of federal infrastructure funding.

We are trying to work cooperatively with the commonwealth on these matters, but it is making it very, very difficult. Again and again we enter into discussions in good faith, but we find that they are cut short by childish media stunts and deceitful behaviour. The Prime Minister promised that he was not going to rip off Victoria, but the truth and his words parted company, just like his words and Victoria's interests parted company.

Over the forward estimates period the federal Liberals are planning to allocate just 8.9 per cent of federal infrastructure funding to Victoria — 8.9 per cent! — even though we represent 25 per cent of the Australian population and we are one of the fastest growing states. That means that every year for the next five years every Victorian man, woman and child will subsidise the construction of infrastructure in New South Wales and Queensland to the tune of \$148. It is a rip-off that would make Arthur Daley blush. It is sandpit politics, and the Andrews government will not be complicit in any way to assist with this anti-Victorian rip-off from a federal government based firmly on the North Shore of Sydney.

The Andrews government will fight for every dollar of the funding that is the just deserts of Victorians. We will resist any attempt by the Prime Minister to take back what rightfully belongs to Victorians, and we will

deliver what Victorians voted for and what they deserve.

Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) — My question is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education. Can the Deputy Premier inform the house what conversations he has had with the Premier's chief of staff, John McLindon, regarding the standing down of his factional rival the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade, Minister Adem Somyurek?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the House and the Premier will allow the Deputy Premier to answer the question.

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — This has clearly got nothing to do with my portfolio responsibilities or government business, but I am happy to answer. These are serious matters that are being canvassed this week. A process has been put in place, and it should be treated with the respect it deserves — both the complaint that has been raised and the process that has been put in place.

Supplementary question

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) — Did the minister discuss with his friend Mr McLindon if Mr Somyurek should resign or could be sacked?

Mr Foley interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing. I will not warn the minister again.

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — In response to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the answer is no.

Ministers statements: health funding

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) — I rise to update the house with new information about yet another program that has been ruthlessly cut by the Abbott government in its 2015 budget. This time it is the Healthy Kids Checks, and I am delighted to see the lack of interest on the other side, just as opposition members do not stand up to the Prime Minister in respect of his vicious and cruel health cuts.

Healthy Kids Checks is an incredibly important program around early intervention. It is a program that

funds children to have checks before they go to school; it is to identify problems such as language impairments, hearing impediments and behavioural issues that need to be identified before kids go to school. I do not need to make the case as to why early intervention is so critically important. Last year 154 000 health checks were performed as part of this program, and the Abbott government has effectively told these families that they are on their own. The program has supported children aged between three and five years. They require support and the opportunity to ensure that any learning challenges they might have are identified at an early stage.

This might come as no surprise from a government that has ripped \$17.7 billion out of our health system, but each and every day the commonwealth government reveals yet another program that it is de-funding, and again we hear deafening silence from opposition members in terms of standing up for the Victorian health system. This time I urge them to stand up for Victorian children, who deserve better than the sort of treatment and behaviour we are seeing in this chamber at this time.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Ferntree Gully electorate

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — (Question 266) My question is to the Minister for Education and relates to Fairhills High School in Ferntree Gully. Given that in this year's state budget no funding was contributed to one school in my electorate, the residents of Ferntree Gully are concerned that no money has been provided for Fairhills High School. At the last election the coalition committed \$8 million to deliver stage 1 of its upgrade. However, the community is very concerned because it has not received one cent of investment by the Labor government. There was a clear commitment by the coalition government to provide funding if it had been re-elected. Given that this government is not prepared to invest funding in this school, I ask again on behalf of the principal, Harvey Wood, and the parents and students, whether the government will commit \$8 million to upgrade the school.

Eltham electorate

Ms WARD (Eltham) — (Question 267) My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. Constituents in my electorate are passionate about issues around animal welfare. Many have told me of their deep concerns regarding the treatment of animals, particularly the battery farming of chickens, the terrible

conditions of many puppy farms and live baiting for greyhounds. I commend the minister for her action on live baiting for greyhounds. I ask the minister for an update on the government's progress in protecting animal welfare in Victoria, particularly in relation to the matters I have just raised.

Lowan electorate

Ms KEALY (Lowan) — (Question 268) My question is directed to the Minister for Training and Skills. The Hamilton District Skills Centre community and stakeholders are deeply concerned that the Melbourne-based Labor government has not committed to providing desperately needed recurrent funding for this vital training facility. The centre is concerned that without a state funding commitment of \$200 000 for three years, the centre will be unable to continue. The success of this centre is clear, growing from 4 students in 2009 to 186 students from district schools enrolled in certificate courses in 2015. It has been instrumental in raising apparent retention rates in the Southern Grampians Shire Council area from 35 per cent in 2009 to 68 per cent last year.

Closure of this facility would have a devastating impact on the future of students in the local area, and have a significant flow-on effect to the challenge of youth employment in the region. It is essential that sufficient resources are provided to the centre to enable these vital training programs to continue. I therefore ask the minister to commit sufficient resources to allow Hamilton District Skills Centre to remain open.

Sunbury electorate

Mr J. BULL (Sunbury) — (Question 269) My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I ask that the minister provide information as to what measures may be taken to reduce congestion at the roundabout at the intersection of Gap Road and Horne Street in Sunbury. As the minister is no doubt aware, this intersection is a constant frustration to locals due to population growth. Also contributing to this congestion is the level crossing just a couple of hundred metres away from the intersection. The issue is of great concern to my constituents, who would appreciate knowing what can be done to improve the roundabout.

Burwood electorate

Mr WATT (Burwood) — (Question 270) My question is to the Minister for Education. Parkhill Primary School is a school without permanent classrooms. Last year the Liberal-Nationals government committed \$5 million to redevelop the school. I note

that the then Labor opposition committed \$500 000 to the school, and in this year's budget the current government failed to fulfil this commitment. I note, however, that the budget did allocate planning money, and a letter I received from the minister confirmed that the funding for the school was \$51 000 short of the government's own election commitment of \$500 000. I ask: if the allocated money is for planning — and planning for a \$5 million development of the school should not cost \$449 000 — what is the school supposed to spend this money on, and more particularly, when should the school expect the rest of the \$5 million needed to redevelop the school?

Dandenong electorate

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) — (Question 271) My constituency question is to the Minister for Police. It relates to the recent budget commitment of \$148.6 million to recruit and accommodate 400 custody officers to guard 20 police stations across Victoria. Dandenong police station in my electorate was announced as one of the six stations to first receive the rollout of new custody officers. The local police play a vital role in my community, and their presence in and around the community gives many a source of comfort. The Dandenong police do a wonderful job, and in my dealings with them I have been very impressed by their professionalism and dedication to often challenging tasks. I ask that the minister provide information on how the custody officer initiative will assist the police officers who work at Dandenong police station, and how this will allow them to better serve my community of Dandenong.

Bayswater electorate

Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater) — (Question 272) My question is to the Minister for Education. Just yesterday a lady wrote to me explaining how The Basin Wildcats Basketball Club is in desperate need of a suitable training facility. It currently rents courts all over Knox for training, which is a considerable expense for the club. It has inquired with Knox City Council regarding clubrooms in The Basin, which are at Batterham Park and currently used by The Basin football and cricket clubs. It could potentially use this facility to display its paraphernalia, which currently sits at the homes of various committee members; however, it would still be short of training facilities.

An unused basketball court is located at the old Boronia Heights College on Mount View Road, Boronia, on Department of Education and Training land. The possibility of using the court for training would greatly assist the 350-plus members until a permanent solution

can be found. I ask the minister if he will investigate whether the Wildcats' request can be met, or if another alternative with training facilities and clubrooms can be found.

Frankston electorate

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) — (Question 273) My constituency question is to the Minister for Public Transport. Can the minister inform the house about the first release of funds for the Frankston train station redevelopment from the most recent budget and reinforce the intention to release further funds once the consultative business case is finalised?

Gembrook electorate

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) — (Question 274) My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services. I ask the minister to confirm funding for the Clematis Country Fire Authority (CFA). Clematis CFA is located on Wellington Road, Clematis, which is a small town in the Dandenong Ranges located near the town of Emerald. Recent communication from the minister's office to the brigade states that no money was allocated and encouraged the volunteers to work with CFA management to locate appropriate land prior to looking for further funds. The current station is the place at which the volunteers and community would like to remain, and both they and the CFA support this as the best location. Can the minister confirm that funding will be made available as soon as possible, as this land is suitable. Should there be a requirement to work with the local council on parking et cetera, I will be all too pleased to assist.

Niddrie electorate

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie) — (Question 275) My constituency question is to the Attorney-General. Last Monday night I met with the board of the Moonee Valley Legal Service, which later this year will be celebrating 30 years of service to the people of Melbourne's north-west. I know both the Premier and Attorney-General are on the invitation list to this celebration. It was a pleasure to meet with the recently appointed manager of the Moonee Valley Legal Service, Lauren Hills, and members of the committee of management, and in particular to learn about Moonee Valley Legal Service's Growing in the Gaps initiative to provide services to the people of Airport West, Avondale Heights and Keilor East. I was particularly pleased to learn that its outreach service at the Avondale Heights Library and Learning Centre has grown from 7 per cent to 22 per cent of its workload.

My question to the Attorney-General, and the issue to which I committed to following up, is: can he provide an update on the draft national partnership agreement on legal assistance services between the commonwealth and states? Moonee Valley Legal Service has been around for 30 years. It is a wonderful service that provides for the needs of people from Airport West and Avondale Heights who do not access the services as much as other parts of Moonee Valley. It is an issue I am both committed to and committed to following up.

HEALTH FUNDING

Debate resumed.

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) — I am pleased to continue my contribution on the motion of the Minister for Health, which states:

That this house condemns the Prime Minister and the federal health minister for their \$17.7 billion in savage cuts to Victoria's hospitals over the next decade, and for other measures that will disadvantage Victorians, including dental, preventive health, Indigenous and medical research programs and investments.

I was touching on the form of those on the other side of the house, and in particular on their history both in Victoria and nationally when it comes to public health services. In the Ivanhoe electorate we remember well when we had to take a stand to ensure that the Austin Hospital was not privatised by the former Kennett government. This goes to the reasons I expect that we have had nothing but silence from those opposite in relation to these savage cuts to the federal health budget by the Abbott government. It makes sense that we hear nothing from the Leader of the Opposition and the Liberal Party, because they supported the privatisation and attempted sell-off of the Austin Hospital until the community fought hard in the 1990s under the great leadership of people like John Brumby, John Thwaites and Steve Bracks to make sure that the health service remained in public hands.

Not only that, but I was pleased to be working with a past Minister for Health, the former member for Melbourne, the Honourable Bronwyn Pike, when with Steve Bracks we were able to invest money to build two hospitals on one site — the Austin and Mercy hospitals — which were opened by the former Premier, Mr Bracks, during our previous term in government. It says a lot about what Labor builds in government on behalf of the community when it comes to health services and about what drives the Liberal Party, not only in Victoria but also nationally.

In relation to the cuts made by the Abbott government, over the next 10 years we are looking at \$1.1 billion being cut from the Austin Hospital. This relates to some 182 119 elective surgery operations that we are forecasting will not be available to the local community if these cuts are not fought with the vigour that the state Labor Party in government is seeking to do by raising the matter in this house today. In opposition we also had to fight to make sure that the Austin Hospital and the Northern Hospital were not merged by the previous Victorian Liberal government. That sort of activity was what we came to expect from that government. As they were unable to privatise and sell the Austin Hospital when they were last in government, on their return to office Liberal members have sought to merge, distribute and dilute the services available to the people in the northern and north-eastern suburbs.

The attempts to merge Austin Health and Northern Health services were not about adequately funding those services. The actions of the former government in attempting to act duplicitously and secretly as it went about its task were driven in particular by a former Premier, Mr Baillieu. He is the Premier who will be remembered for achieving two things. Firstly, in regard to health services, he was in charge when funding for the whooping cough vaccine was cut in Victoria. I remember asking him a question about that matter not long after our daughter was born, when funding for the whooping cough vaccine was scrapped by the Liberal government. Secondly, and about the only achievement of any note of the former Premier, was his decision to make gold the mineral element of Victoria.

That is about the level of standard public policy debate we got from the previous government. So when it comes to health there is form from those opposite, not only in cutting funding for whooping cough vaccines for Victorian families but also not standing up against Abbott government cuts that we have outlined in the house and which the Minister for Health has pointed out are worth \$17.7 billion. Mercy Health and Mercy Public Hospitals have made a great contribution in my electorate, in Werribee and in other parts of the state.

Mercy Public Hospitals is looking at a \$493 million cut if these Abbott cuts are not fought by the Victorian government. That equates to something like 80 479 elective surgeries that will not be able to be offered to the Victorian community. The Austin and Mercy hospitals are great drivers of employment and great drivers of international research and discoveries. They comprise one of the cornerstones of what makes the Ivanhoe electorate a place where people want to make a contribution as healthcare workers. People seek out the great services that the Austin and Mercy

hospitals provide to my community. To see those services under threat is something that the Andrews Labor government will fight against tooth and nail.

We have a strong track record in investing in the new buildings of both the Austin Hospital and Mercy Health services. Those two hospitals are located on the one site. Austin Health operates 980 beds across acute and subacute mental health services. It has an annual operating budget of \$700 million and also operates the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, which not only cares for the veterans of past conflicts but also provides great trauma-related and mental health services to many of our emergency services workers today. All these services are threatened by the cuts of the Abbott government. In 2013–14 Austin Health completed some 95 000 inpatient admissions, 177 000 outpatient attendances and 75 000 emergency attendances. We are currently in the process of rebuilding the emergency department and of building a new short-stay unit at the Austin Hospital. It goes back to the commitment made to Austin Health by those on this side of the chamber.

We have seen the completion of construction of the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre, which began of course under the former Bracks and Brumby governments and concluded after a strong fight in 2010–11 when the community had to demand the remaining \$45 million of funding to fit out the centre and make it operational. That was a strong campaign fought by the local community, together with a representative for Northern Metropolitan Region in the other place, Mr Elasmir, along with me and my northern suburbs colleagues the members for Bundoora, Yan Yean, Eltham and of course Preston. We fought hard to make sure that those funds were delivered to the community.

We showed our commitment to a service that was saving lives and promoting those wellness issues to which Olivia Newton-John committed not only her name but her personal experiences. She invested substantial time in making sure that everyone understands that not only is cancer treatment about international discoveries and medical treatment but it also encompasses how we support patients, staff and families in these vulnerable times.

Labor has always had an ongoing commitment to fight the privatisation of places like the Austin Hospital. Again we have to fight to save them from being merged and diluted with other health services instead of addressing the need for resourcing, funding and support for research and innovation across Northern Health and across the Austin Hospital, which the previous government ignored. These are the services that Labor

continues to stand up for in government and in opposition, and there will always be that expectation. It is what the community expects of Labor. It is central to why I am in this place representing the electorate of Ivanhoe. These matters go back a very long way in our electorate and in our community. They are burnt into our psyche.

Not only will Labor in government build those two hospitals on the one site and continue to support, grow and fund them and the internationally recognised research and innovation that happens on those sites, but it will continue to provide the care in the community for the people of the north and the north-eastern suburbs. That provision is again under threat from those in Canberra and Tony Abbott through these \$17.7 billion of health cuts.

We have heard nothing but silence from those opposite. We know their track record from when they were in government. The Victorian community understands that Labor members in government and in opposition will always advocate for its rights because we are determined to have the best health care in Victoria and Australia.

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) — I rise to speak in support of this motion. During the election campaign my team and I knocked on 20 000-odd doors and spoke to the voters. We received a pretty clear message when it came to health, and it was one that I am sure the member for Melbourne also heard from residents in her electorate. Residents have clear expectations from the government when it comes to health care. They expect the basics. They expect a hospital bed when they need it. They expect basic affordable health care and they expect an ambulance to turn up when they need one. That is why we are absolutely committed to opposing the Abbott government's cuts to hospitals and the failed GP tax. That is why we are supporting this motion today.

We know the Abbott government promised 'no cuts to health care', and we know how terrible its first budget was. When it came to this year's budget we were promised a change in direction, but instead the federal government locked in the most damaging cuts to our healthcare system and to our hospitals. Instead of a change of direction from last year's budget, it doubled down on cuts to health care and hospitals. These cuts will result in longer waiting times in emergency departments and longer waiting times for necessary surgery. They will make it harder for people to get access to lifesaving treatments.

The federal government is making it harder for people to see a dentist. It is cutting health promotion programs and front-line services. It has no plan and no funding for mental health. We know this is leading down the road to a two-tiered American-style system of health care where people's access to health care depends on their wealth.

In Victoria the Greens are standing up to the Abbott government's cuts to health and hospitals. We are fighting those cuts in federal Parliament as well, because we know that we need to invest in primary health care and hospitals, dental care and mental health. I am very parochial, and it is great to see that the person who is leading that charge in federal Parliament is the Green's Senator for Victoria, Richard di Natale, our new leader. He is leading the charge. If members ever want to seek advice about health care or on what policies to adopt, they should look to our Victorian senator and our leader, Richard di Natale, as someone who is leading the charge.

I am very proud to see a Victorian in there. We are supposed to believe that these cuts to health care are due to some sort of budget crisis or emergency and that healthcare spending is out of control. We are supposed to believe that that is why we need these cuts, and that is why we need to make it harder for people to see a doctor and to pay more for the service! This is simply not true.

Spending on health is an investment as much as an expenditure. The health of our community should be the top priority for any government. The federal government slashed funding to health services and hospitals instead of cutting handouts to the big end of town. It has declared a budget crisis as an excuse for cutting spending on health whilst handing back billions to the big polluters and the big miners. The federal government is continuing the federal-state blame game, where each blames the other for the overcrowding in hospitals, clogged emergency departments and longer waiting times, and it is trying to create a situation where the states have to beg for an increase in their GST receipts to run their health systems. The Greens call on the federal government to return funding to hospitals in full because our health funding is just too important to cut. We have a health system that is the envy of the world, and there is no evidence that health spending is out of control. Yes, there are opportunities to reduce waste and inefficiencies in the health system, so let us focus on those and not on cutting funding to the most vulnerable.

I want to touch on the bedrock of our health system, which is Medicare. A strong Medicare is essential to

keeping Australians and Victorians healthy and cutting costs in the health system. But the federal government, in all its wisdom, has tried to make it harder and more expensive to go to the doctor in an effort to shift costs to emergency departments and to the people who can least afford it. We have an affordable and sustainable health system. We spend less on health than the OECD average. Medicare puts downward pressure on the health system, and without it we would have the runaway health costs they have in the USA, where a high percentage of gross domestic product is spent on health care — in a two-tiered system for the rich and poor — with people experiencing medical bankruptcy. We have seen multiple versions of the GP tax, and we are making sure there is not another one.

Let us touch now on preventive health, which is always a key issue and something the Greens have been championing for a long time. We know that investment in health prevention is more cost effective than dealing with health issues when they reach a crisis point. Cutting funding to health prevention puts more pressure on hospitals and emergency departments. It is not a stretch to say that we have a public health crisis when it comes to preventable illness. If we are looking to reduce costs in our health system, then preventive health is the way to go. But what has the Abbott government done? It has disbanded the Australian National Preventive Health Agency, which worked to tackle smoking, alcohol and obesity-related diseases. That agency achieved plain packaging reforms, and reforms around alcohol harm and behaviour change.

It is not only that; the federal government has also cut state preventive health programs which target obesity among young people and which assist them with healthy eating. We know that if we implement policies to prevent people from developing a number of common conditions, we can get a return of \$11 billion on a \$4 billion investment. The best way to reduce health costs is to invest more in prevention. The preventive health agency was a cost-effective investment in keeping people healthy and out of hospitals.

Dental care is a great achievement of the Greens. We do not need to cut Medicare; we just need to expand Medicare to include dental care. Going to the dentist should be like going to the doctor. It is far more effective to have someone access a dentist early, before they reach a crisis point. The Greens were proud to deliver this when they supported minority government in Canberra, and I look forward to supporting something similar in this Parliament when the government of the day enjoys our support and confidence. That is what we are here to do — to get

policy wins, and Denticare is central to that. We are going to expand dental care to provide universal access.

We secured almost \$5 billion to start Denticare, with access for over 1 million children, adults on low incomes, pensioners and concession card holders. But what has the Abbott government done? It has made cuts to dental health, thereby making it harder for people to see the dentist. The federal government is going in the wrong direction. The Greens are committed to expanding Denticare so that every Australian can go to the dentist, no matter what their financial circumstances are. I look forward to the Greens delivering on that initiative.

Let us touch on mental health. The state's mental health system is disjointed and crisis driven. We need to focus on prevention and community health care for mental health. The Abbott government cuts from one service and gives to another. The lack of adequate mental health services creates huge economic burdens for Australia, so we need a mental health plan that is properly funded.

Let us now discuss the revenue side of things, which I regard as important. We cannot have a good quality health system unless we can pay for it. We have been sold this absolute lie that we are in some sort of budget crisis and costs are out of control. It is simply not true. We have a revenue problem, and we need to raise revenue rather than make cuts to services for the most vulnerable.

Mr Pearson interjected.

Mr HIBBINS — I am so glad the member asked. We need to raise revenue from big mining, from the big polluters and from the big banks. We need to abolish the tax breaks for big mining, reinstate the price on pollution and implement the original resource super profit tax on mining from which the federal Labor government walked away. We need to impose a levy on coal exports, reduce tax avoidance by multinationals, implement a millionaire's tax, apply a public insurance levy on the big four banks that are too big to fail, and introduce a progressive superannuation tax system.

With these policies the federal government could raise billions. If we can do that — if we can implement these revenue measures — we can not only reverse the cuts to our health services and hospitals but we can also invest in our hospitals, reduce waiting times, end the cost-shifting between the state and federal governments, get primary care working better, tackle mental health, close the gap between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people, invest in preventive health

to keep people healthy and out of hospital, and expand Medicare to include Denticare. That is what we should be doing. That is what the Greens will be doing, and that is why I am supporting this motion.

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) — Let us talk about leadership and excellence. Today I had the privilege of standing next to the Premier of Victoria and the Minister for Health as the Premier gave the assurance to St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne that the Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery would go ahead. This is critical. It is a three-part deal, and the Victorian government has shown leadership in its first budget by putting in its part of the deal. This will help the consortia around St Vincent's get the rest of the one-third of the money it needs. The Premier appealed to the Prime Minister to stump up for his one-third of the money as well.

This reflects the critical nature of what we are trying to achieve in Victoria. Victoria is world class in medical research. In the last funding round of the National Health and Medical Research Council, Victoria received 50 per cent of the funding because of the excellence in this state. In the world context, there is Boston, with Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology; there is London, with the Imperial College London and Cambridge nearby; and there is Melbourne, with the precinct around Parkville, where there is the University of Melbourne and the Monash precinct, with the CSIRO next door. This represents our investment in the future — in future industries and in the lifesaving products that can result. This is what was delivered today.

Just so that we understand the significance of this, I note the Aikenhead centre will help achieve three major health outcomes for Australians: improved management of chronic illness, ageing well and the prevention of disease. Biomedical engineering innovations will be the centre's focus, and these include tissue engineering, which is about cells and genes; drug design and delivery, which is about developing intelligent drugs and smart delivery systems; and medical bionics, which involves developing innovative devices to replace organs and body processes. Put simply, this is a combination of world-class science and world-class health care. This is what Victoria is known for. This is part of what has been developed through a great Labor legacy extending from the Bracks and Brumby governments through to the Andrews government. This is the leadership the country is crying out for. Australians are fed up with the two-dogs-barking style of politics and the endless gaming of positions.

Today the Premier was providing the example required — he was giving certainty to this project. That again goes to the leadership and vision that was shown and outlined as early as the Governor's speech opening the 58th Parliament of Victoria, in which it was declared:

This government wants Victoria to lead the world in medical technology, researching cures for chronic diseases and developing devices that change lives. The plan includes a \$60 million investment in the Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery at St Vincent's Hospital, Australia's first research and education centre for biomedical engineering. The centre will bring together leading doctors, scientists and researchers, create more than a thousand jobs and assist an industry that will support an estimated 10 000 jobs during the next 15 years.

This is the vision that Labor stands for.

It is about building. It is about bringing science together — —

Ms Thomas — We believe in science.

Mr McGuire — It is about elegant science, and, yes, as one of my colleagues says, we believe in science. This is the contradiction that the Australian people see before them now. There is no use having this big Medical Research Future Fund, where the headline says you will get \$20 billion but the reality involves asking: how much do you think is going to be available this year? Out of \$20 billion, do you think it might be \$10 billion? Or \$5 billion? No. Maybe \$100 million? No. It is going to be \$10 million. After all of that, it will be \$10 million. That is after all of the politics of attaching it to two of the heaviest anchors you could ever attach it to. I am referring to the GP co-payment fee and then the other one the federal government came up with after the co-payment fee sank in the Senate — the federal government attached the fund to the deregulation of university fees. That was so cynical that the public saw through it for what it was. That was a pure case of playing politics, which people are well and truly over. People want instead the leadership and excellence that was shown today.

It is as clear-cut as that. The Premier of the state of Victoria spoke to all the scientists and clinicians, who are delighted and relieved. They can actually get on with it. The old emergency centre at St Vincent's Hospital is now a building site — the building is up and going amongst the brick and rubble. The people there just needed this commitment, and here is the Premier, right there today before the Parliament with the Minister for Health, saying, 'We are supporting you; we believe in you. Bring everybody together, and let us get on with these vital experiments and collaborations'.

Increasingly in medical science this is what it is about; it is about the partnerships. This is what Victoria does best. It is clearly best going by the National Medical Health and Research Council funding, of which we get 50 per cent, the lion's share. It is then about how we look for the other areas and new markets, including the international markets in the Asia-Pacific and particularly in China. This goes to the essence of how we get new industries and new jobs happening. This is a critical proposition. It is about lifesaving discoveries with which to fight cancer. It is about the bionic ear and allowing the profoundly deaf to hear their loved ones and music. Just think about that — about hearing your loved one or music for the first time. It is about elegant science that delivers locally produced and internationally exported blood plasma. It is helping define the importance of Melbourne as a world leader in medical research.

Recent celebrations to honour the centenary of all the medical research done at the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research — and this is where Sir Frank Macfarlane Burnet was working when he won the Nobel Prize for revolutionising the understanding of our immune system — and the oration in honour of Professor Graeme Clark, the inventor of the cochlear implant, underscored the value of science, from the serendipity of discovery to the commercialisation of results.

This has been one of the things that Melbourne does best. As I said, we are internationally renowned for this defining proposition. As I outlined earlier, when you think it through, we are in the top three cities in the world. I have said to many in the medical research industry that I do not think they are getting their story out well enough. The cognoscenti get it because they read all the papers that universities publish, but we need to reframe the message that this is better than grand slam tennis. We need to use a sporting analogy to cut through and get the message out so that people understand there are four grand slams but here we are in the top three internationally.

The Premier wants Victoria to be a world leader in medical technology, researching the cures for chronic diseases and developing devices that change lives. As a former health minister, he has a deep understanding and sophisticated view on medical research and how all of this comes together. At the centenary celebrations of the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute I spoke to a former Australian health minister, now Prime Minister Tony Abbott, and he displayed a deeply felt appreciation, declaring that he wants to be known as the Prime Minister for Medical Research. This is along with being

known as the Prime Minister for Infrastructure. So here is the way he can do this.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr McGUIRE — He can deliver on both of these propositions by providing the money we need for the Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery. Here is an opportunity. The Victorian government is reaching out and saying to him, ‘Honour this proposition. Here is the chance. You are on the public record as saying that you want to be the Prime Minister for Infrastructure and the Prime Minister for Medical Research. Here is a first contribution in that down payment to show that you are fair dinkum. Here is the chance to do it. Here is what it means’. This is important to us at an international level, at a national level and even at a local level. As I have said before in this house, I would like to see Broadmeadows remembered for the rise of CSL, not the demise of Ford. Here is an opportunity to collaborate, because that is the only way we will succeed: get the results, build the new industries and a great future and find the cures to give people a better opportunity in life.

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) — It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak on this motion to talk about some of the challenging arrangements facing our state over the coming years, particularly with some of the significant cuts to funding across our nation. I want to add my voice to that of others who have contributed to debate in this place about the damaging effects of not implementing the national health agreement. We face an interesting dynamic in a range of policy areas where we are under a significant amount of pressure. That might be in infrastructure or in education services. The matter of public importance yesterday dealt with the Gonski education funding reforms. Now we come to health and a discussion about some key pillars that will support our livability into the future and how we are going forward.

I want to again reflect on the findings of Infrastructure Australia in its recent report which outlined the problems we are facing from a population growth standpoint. In 2011 we were a nation of 22 million people and we were edging towards —

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

Quorum formed.

Mr RICHARDSON — Going back to Infrastructure Australia’s findings that our population will grow by 36.5 per cent over the coming 15 years, I want to draw the attention of the house to a systemic

issue we face which was highlighted in a Productivity Commission research paper in November 2013 titled *An Ageing Australia — Preparing for the Future*. The findings in that report were that Australia’s population is projected to rise to 38 million by 2060. A key finding in the report is that the population aged 75 or more years is expected to rise by 4 million from 2012 to 2060. In fact during that time we will reach a point where 14.4 per cent of our population will be over the age of 75, challenging our health system significantly.

The challenges we are facing and the pressures that will be brought to bear on our communities go to the nature of the relationship between state and federal governments. We had a circumstance in 2011 where savage cuts were made by the Baillieu and Napthine regimes, and that was at a time when health funding was increasing at a federal level. Under the federal Gillard Labor government more funding was delivered to Victoria. On the one hand we had more funding coming in and on the other hand it was going out the back door because of savage cuts by the former Baillieu and Napthine governments. When you consider that \$831 million was taken from the health system by the former Liberal Premier, the member for South-West Coast, you can see that that puts significant pressure on our services and communities.

One stark change to the funding arrangements that really surprised me was the cuts to preventive health. I have had the opportunity to meet with a community health service in my electorate out in Parkdale, Central Bayside Community Health. I met with the CEO of that health service, Chris Fox. Government members have talked at length with a range of service providers about the importance of preventive health.

The Minister for Health spoke earlier about the importance of preventive health as an economic issue. That is a key thing. The burden on our health system is significant, and it is a challenge we must face over time. In meeting with Monash Health recently I learnt that there are big concerns about the pressures it will have to bear. Already these health services and our emergency departments cannot cope with demand. With population growth and with an ageing community and an ageing population, there is a storm cloud on the horizon that we are not addressing. It requires the consideration of state and federal representatives coming together.

That is why we on this side of the house are so aggrieved about projects like the east–west link and the lack of a business case for that project. A dollar taken out of the budget for a project that does not add up economically is a dollar that we cannot invest in health and cannot invest in education. We might only get one

opportunity to make significant changes, and if that opportunity is lost on a project or an initiative that does not add up, we get a poorer outcome for our communities and a poorer outcome for Victorians.

Turning to some of the specific health cuts that have been made, there is the \$17.7 billion cut over the coming years. It is hard to comprehend such a figure being taken out of the budget. It is close to half of Victoria's budget each year. That is the money that supports our state, and it will be taken out of our health budget over the coming years. It is an absolute shame, and it is a big challenge for us to face going forward.

In relation to the cuts to preventive health, funding of up to \$90 million has been taken out of preventive health services, and that will have a direct impact. Those people who are not getting support and who are not having that care in their home or in their communities are then going to present at the hospitals down the track anyway. The point made by the Minister for Health about economics is a good one, because down the track that longer term pressure will be borne by our health system.

These cuts represent short-term politicking on the part of the federal government, and that is something we have to get away from. The national health reform agreement aimed to bring together participants who signed up to that agreement. Former Premier Ted Baillieu signed up to this agreement.

For the federal government to now take money out the back door and make substantial cuts to health funding is just a form of giving and then taking. It does not address the longer term challenges and pressures upon our system. We have to look at the longer term, and that is what that national agreement looks at. It goes hand in glove with some of the challenges in education policy as well. When the experts are saying, 'We will not be able to cope, and we will not be able to deal with this', we need to look at what we can do as policymakers going forward. That cost-shifting is going on across the board. It is also happening in other states and territories, and it leads to poor outcomes for our community.

I am looking to the future. Obviously there are budget challenges federally, but you cannot make cuts to the most vulnerable or to the basic services we rely on each and every day. These cuts in the range of \$17.7 billion that have been put forward are an absolute shame and an absolute disgrace for our communities. I have met with staff at Monash Health and I have met with my local constituents. I have talked about the pressures upon them and what they will try to do.

It is also worth looking at some of the contributions that have been made by others. The member for Broadmeadows talked about investing in medical research. Not only is that a great health outcome but it also looks towards an economic outcome for employment. That is an opportunity we will miss going forward if we do not look at how we invest in our health services.

I know the Leader of the Opposition has been doing a bit of a tour and has been talking to the Prime Minister about the east-west link, even though we had a referendum on that and it is done and dusted. It will be interesting to see whether the Leader of the Opposition or any of his colleagues will say anything about the devastating cuts made by the Prime Minister and the federal Treasurer, Joe Hockey. At present there has been barely a murmur. Maybe the Leader of the Opposition will reach out. He has said he is a great negotiator. Tony Abbott is happy to present in front of a billboard. Maybe the Leader of the Opposition could team up with us, act in Victoria's interest and ask the federal government to consider these changes and the impacts they will have on our health services.

The numbers are startling. There is a storm on the horizon. We cannot just keep our heads in the sand and think it is another government's responsibility to do this. This is our challenge and the federal government's challenge. We need to address it now before it gets away from us and people in our communities suffer. I am absolutely happy to support this motion, but let us put a challenge to policymakers and ask them to look forward, to have vision, to look at medical research and to look at better ways of funding our health system. This is not about finding efficiencies. That is just a dressed up way of talking about slashing money from our communities. I commend this motion to the house.

Ms THOMSON (Footscray) — I can say I am not happy to rise in the house today to speak on this motion, which should not have to be put to this Parliament. We should not have to have an argument about federal health cuts. The federal government should be meeting its contribution commitment under what was agreed to be a partnership of going 50-50 on health costs.

I am going to go back a bit. In the days before the Whitlam government introduced Medibank there was a system of health care under which you had to wait to get care if you could not pay for it. Under former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, who took this to an election in 1972, it was decided that we would have Medibank. The idea was that Medibank would be a universal health system and that government has a responsibility

to provide proper, adequate and good health care to every Australian, irrespective of how much they earn or where they live.

Then there was a change of government and Medibank kind of disappeared. It went away. However, Australians wanted it. They wanted a universal healthcare system. With the re-election of another federal Labor government we got Medicare, and Australians have wanted and supported Medicare ever since. Like a lot of Labor members, I have been out on the hustings with petitions to save Medicare. People would swarm to sign those petitions, because no-one wants to see the demise of Medicare — except for the federal coalition and Tony Abbott.

Then we have what is happening here in Victoria. I turn to my own area of the western suburbs of Melbourne.

Ms Ward — Great suburbs.

Ms THOMSON — It has great suburbs and great people — the best people you could find anywhere. However, there are people within these communities who are disadvantaged, who struggle to make a decent wage, who in many instances struggle to get a job, who struggle with language and who struggle with education. They expect the government to deliver on health care for them, because they have heard about the importance of Medicare too, and they signed those petitions. They expect to be supported by government, and so they should. However, they are going to see about \$1 billion in funding being cut from Western Health over 10 years if this federal government gets its way.

This is money that people in the western suburbs desperately need. We all know that along with disadvantage comes an increase in chronic diseases. In the western suburbs we are facing a crisis in chronic illnesses. Whether it be cardiovascular illnesses, diabetes or respiratory illnesses, we are at crisis point in the western suburbs. We in the western suburbs cannot afford that cut to Western Health of \$1 billion over 10 years. Nor can we afford the cut to preventive health. If we work with children when they are young, if we work with adults, showing them how they can avoid these diseases and the ways in which they can assist themselves, if we educate them, if we ensure that there are medical checks in workplaces and if we actually work with these communities, we may not see the incidence of these illnesses increasing to the point where it creates an even bigger burden on our health system than it needs to.

There is another point I want to make about this. We have talked about adequate health funding as being the right thing to do socially. When the Minister for Health spoke earlier she said it also makes economic sense. It does make economic sense, because the costs to our health system would be cut if people led healthier lives. It also means they can contribute more as individuals to the economy if they are leading healthier lives — and they are happier people if they are leading healthier lives.

Let us come to mental illness. There are not too many members on this side of the house — and I assume it would be the same situation for members on the opposite side of the house — who have not had to deal with constituents who are suffering from a mental illness. They are people who have got themselves into all sorts of problems, whether it be confronting the justice system, homelessness or hospitalisation. Yet we are talking about cutting funding to mental health, and we are no longer going to have a mental health plan that we can rely on to support these people. This is not what Australians and Victorians — and certainly not what the people of the western suburbs — expect from government. It is fundamental for government to provide health services that meet their needs. It is a community must and a social must.

I cannot believe we have a Prime Minister who on the one hand got up before an election and said, 'I will make sure we meet our commitments to the health agreement. We will make sure we won't cut health' and on the other hand slashes and burns. No wonder Australians are cynical about our politicians. If you ask anyone, 'What do you expect from your government? What do you want them to provide? What does this community need?', you can be sure health will be no. 1 on the list. 'We do not want to be America', people will tell you. Victorians do not want a health system — one, of course, which Tony Abbott does want — that means that if you cannot afford it, you do not get the service; where your insurance is checked before your health status is checked. This is not the hospital system we want in this country.

Where are the state opposition members on this issue? They are Liberals before they are Victorians. They care about supporting their federal Liberal colleagues before they care about supporting their constituents, and that is not a good place to be. They should be saying, 'We'll stretch our hand across the table. We will work with the government to put as much pressure as we can on our federal colleagues, our Liberal mates. We will help you lobby for that money here in Victoria because we know it is crucially important. We know that our constituents need that health care as much as if we were in

government'. It should not matter whether you are Labor or Liberal; you should be fighting for this money to come to Victoria. But that is not the case.

Who on the opposition benches have we heard from in this debate today? Only one Liberal and not one member of The Nationals spoke on this issue, because they hide their heads in shame. They know we are right; they know that this money should be coming into Victoria, and that is why they cannot participate in this debate. They should be participating and supporting this motion before the house today. They should be calling on their own Liberal Party and Nationals colleagues to support this motion.

In my remaining time I have one quick comment to make to members of the Greens party. It has always been the Labor Party that has cared about universal health. It has always been the Labor Party that has wanted to make sure that we look after the most disadvantaged in our communities. I can assure the Greens party that with every breath Labor Party members of Parliament and Labor governments will continue to hold to those commitments. We do not need to be lectured by the Greens party on how to provide health care to the most needy and most disadvantaged in our community, and neither do we need a lecture on how a universal health system should work.

In closing, I want to mention dental care, which the Greens also mentioned. It was a Labor government that brought in dental funding for health care.

Ms Ward — As it always is.

Ms THOMSON — As it always is, as the member for Eltham points out. In the western suburbs we have waiting lists for dental care for our adults, our most vulnerable and, most importantly, our children. With the cut to dental care those kids will miss out — and shame on the federal Liberal government for doing that. What the federal government is doing to our health system shames it in every way, and its actions will set our health system back a very long way. I commend the motion to the house, and I urge all members of the Parliament to support it.

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) — I also rise to support this motion that condemns the Prime Minister and the federal Minister for Health for their savage cuts of \$17.7 billion to Victoria's hospitals. As the member for Footscray very compellingly put the case, those opposite do not have the courage to stand up for Victorians, and it is a real shame to see that today. I quote our Prime Minister, who said, 'Nope, nope, nope'. He said, 'Nope, I will not cut funding'. What he

actually meant was, 'Nope, I don't care about Victorian health; I just don't care about it'. I also quote the federal Minister for Health, Sussan Ley, who said:

Unsustainable health spending will cause Australians more harm than good in the long run ... These decisions are never easy or popular, but doing nothing is not an option and we are a government taking action.

I have never heard anything so patronising. It is indicative of how out of touch with ordinary Victorians and Victorian families the Abbott government is. Can you imagine how you would tell a sick child who is unable to access quality health care that they should just suck it up and get over it. Imagine saying, 'It is in the national interest. Just toughen up, you'll get through'. I ask: how can health spending be unsustainable? Governments have an absolute obligation and responsibility to fund our health services and hospitals. What am I meant to say to people in my electorate about the federal government's axing of \$780 million from Peninsula Health alone? How do I speak to them? I do not know where that will come from.

I also refer to the former Treasurer in the Napthine Liberal government, who was concerned with cuts to the federal health budget last year. He said that no state or territory is in a position to fill all the funding gaps left by the commonwealth.

As we have heard, these savage cuts were first inflicted through Prime Minister Tony Abbott's budget last year. That budget was both heartless and cruel, and it was rightly slammed by so many people. It was based on a fairytale concocted by Prime Minister Abbott, Treasurer Hockey and others in Canberra that Australia was in some debt and deficit crisis. What a load of rubbish! There was no crisis, and Prime Minister Abbott, federal Treasurer Hockey, the federal Minister for Finance, Senator Cormann, and all the others knew it. That deceitful mob knew full well that there was no debt crisis. The only crisis was just how far out of touch that mob in Canberra has become with families across Australia and with families in Victoria.

Make no mistake though, the budget this year is just as cruel and just as heartless. While the budget may look softer this year, the impact on our health system is simply catastrophic. These cuts by the Abbott government are savage and unsustainable. We have heard today that there are two types of cuts. First, we heard about the federal cuts that have slashed funds from really worthy programs such as kids dental and kids check programs, as well as other preventive health programs, Indigenous health and medical research. We have also heard how Tony Abbott is now renegeing on funding arrangements for public hospitals and that he

plans to shift to a new funding model for public hospitals. This will cut \$17.7 billion from Victoria's public hospitals over the next 10 years. The Australian Medical Association (AMA) has declared the Abbott cuts to health as:

... full of pain for patients.

It also said the cuts will mean:

Patients will have longer waits for public hospital services — and will:

... threaten fairness and equity in the health system.

The AMA says the proposed funding model will fall well short of the funding needed to position public hospitals to meet the increasing demands, locking them into having inadequate capacity to give people the treatment they need.

Let us look at this proposed funding model for public hospitals. At the moment, as we know, we have two major funders: the commonwealth government and state governments — in our case, the Victorian government. In 2011 significant and progressive steps were taken to establish the boundaries between the commonwealth and states, and they came up with the national health reform agreement. That was significant reform and importantly, it introduced activity-based funding, which is funding based upon a national efficient price. The importance of that is that the changes were designed to provide incentives for efficiencies and, most importantly, would more closely align funding to what a hospital actually does. That is a really important point. I repeat it: the agreed funding model would more closely align funding to what a hospital actually does.

It was based on the volume of activity within hospitals and upon an agreed efficient price. It was working to identify waste and unnecessary costs in our healthcare system, and was operating to better link patient health outcomes to funding — and that is exactly what we need to do. This is smart funding, it is responsible funding and it is fair funding, but Tony Abbott is abandoning it. He is abandoning his agreed position with the states and territories. It is brutal and irresponsible. The Abbott government has now reneged on its obligations to fund hospitals in accordance with the previously agreed funding agreements. I feel as if we are going back to the Howard era. Under Tony Abbott's changes, hospital funding from 2017–18 will be linked to the consumer price index and population growth.

The Victorian Healthcare Association's chief executive, Tom Symondson, called the changes to hospital funding 'terrifying'. He further said that population growth and inflation are very poor measures of demand for health services due to the ageing population and the fact that healthcare costs outpace the consumer price index. The new funding model will leave a massive black hole in our public hospital funding. This is like the health care equivalent of Abbott's failure to commit to Gonski in years five and six. We cannot have cuts to this much of our health budget without having massive and detrimental ramifications on healthcare services in this great state.

It is obvious what the Abbott government's cuts will mean for Victorians: longer waiting lists for elective surgery, disaster for our emergency departments and tragedy for Victoria's health system. As a result of that, all Victorians are going to suffer. This will create an absolute future funding crisis in this state, but Tony Abbott does not care about Victorians or about Victorian families. These cuts cannot be passed on to Victoria. It is irresponsible, it is reckless, it is negligent and it is short-sighted. It is Tony Abbott playing politics with the health of Victorians.

We have also heard about the other cuts that will be made. The Abbott government is axing the national partnership agreement on preventive health. That great initiative paid for programs to encourage healthier lifestyles. Those programs make sense, because the best medicine is preventive medicine, which is exactly what those programs were designed to achieve. We have also heard how Tony Abbott is axing dental health schemes. He is refusing to continue to fund a program that provides dental care to Victorian kids, which is a means-tested scheme to benefit children aged 2 to 17 years for preventive dental care as well as basic dental treatment. We know how important oral health care is.

The Abbott government is also axing commonwealth funding for the Healthy Kids Check program. Tony Abbott is really picking on kids, and I do not understand what he has against kids. It is absolutely reprehensible. A study in the *Medical Journal of Australia* in 2014 found that the Healthy Kids Check program was detecting problems in about one in five children, most commonly in relation to speech and language, hearing, vision and behavioural issues. I know from speaking with many parents in my electorate just how important early intervention is in determining issues with their kids and addressing issues at an early age before they get to school. Axing this program just does not make any sense, just like these other health cuts do not make any sense.

In summary, health is something on which governments simply must spend money. Along with education, health is the foundation of a nation's wellbeing. Good health fosters workforce participation, engagement and productivity. It means people can engage in social and civic activities, which are the activities that are so critical to the good functioning of our communities. These cuts must be reversed, and surely those opposite, if they have any heart at all, must see these cuts for what they are. They are bad for Victoria and bad for all Victorians. I call on those opposite to stand up against these cuts and call on Tony Abbott to reverse them and reinstate the funding that is so desperately needed in this state of ours. The Prime Minister and the federal health minister should be absolutely condemned for these brutal cuts to Victoria's health system. I support the motion.

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) — The motion before the house is an important one, and I am pleased to speak on it and defend my regional electorate from these terrible federal government cuts to our health system. Last year Tony Abbott handed down what was described as a horror budget. This year we have seen another horror budget. The budget handed down just two weeks ago was without a doubt a budget about getting the Liberals back into government; it was not about looking after the people of Australia.

What we see in this year's federal budget is really a repackaging of last year's budget, the 2014 budget. This year's budget is the wolf in sheep's clothing. It is a budget in which the federal government has tried to hide further cuts of \$2 billion to health on top of the cuts in last year's budget totalling more than \$60 billion. That means that regional Victorians will not have access to health services they have depended on and need. We must remember that many communities in regional Victoria are geographically isolated from main centres and that without health services in those areas people in those areas will suffer much more as a result of these cuts than people in metropolitan Melbourne or other areas will.

Prior to last year's state election the then Victorian health minister, David Davis, a member for Southern Metropolitan Region in the Council, claimed that he had struck a deal with the former commonwealth health minister, Peter Dutton, to provide some additional funding for Healthy Together Victoria to ensure it could be evaluated and continue. He made the claim to a group of CEOs of Healthy Together Victoria councils before his government was booted out by the people of Victoria. Since then, our Minister for Health has been pursuing the commonwealth to honour that deal. So far the only response from the current commonwealth

health minister has been that the matter was being considered in the context of the 2015 federal budget, but what we have seen is that there is no money in that budget for the Healthy Together Victoria program.

Many of our regional hospitals are also going to be hit very hard. That is clearly indicated in an article in yesterday's Bendigo *Advertiser* headed 'Bendigo Health disappointed at federal decisions', which states:

Bendigo Health has expressed its disappointment at the federal government's decision to reduce funding to preventive health in this month's budget.

It states also:

Bendigo Health chief executive officer ... said preventive health funding was needed to reduce costs in the long run of Bendigo Health.

The article quotes John Mulder, the CEO:

'While I understand the commonwealth government's desire to introduce a sustainable model for future healthcare funding, I was disappointed to see a reduction in funding for health prevention', he said.

'Bendigo Health has placed considerable emphasis on improving the health of our Loddon Mallee communities over recent years but the prevention effort requires ongoing commitment from all levels of government if we are to succeed.'

The article goes on:

The federal government chose not to continue funding for the Healthy Together Victoria program, which aims to take a whole-of-community approach to reducing smoking, poor eating habits, lack of exercise and alcohol abuse.

Mr Mulder went on to say the [Victorian Labor] state budget had provided a welcome boost to health services.

'I welcome the additional funding towards health services in the state government's first budget since being elected', he said.

'With record demand for our services, it is reassuring that investment is being made to ensure high-quality health care will continue to be available for our regional and rural communities'.

Unfortunately the \$2 billion federal government cut to our health system includes \$1 billion from programs that fund measures such as preventive health care, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, and mental health and other crucial health programs. It has been revealed also that in part the \$2 billion cut to health and aged-care funding includes a \$125.6 million cut to the child dental benefits schedule, a \$144.6 million cut to the Medicare benefits schedule for child health assessments, a \$69.6 million cut to dental and allied health services for veterans, and a \$20.1 million cut from what will be the Dementia and Aged Care Services Fund.

What do those cuts tell us about the federal government? They tell us that federal government members do not care about children, and they certainly do not care about people who are ageing. All those cuts are targeted at young children and at older people. More importantly, they are targeted at families — families are right in the firing line of these federal government cuts to health. Obviously the Prime Minister and the rest of the federal government have no respect for and do not care about families, do not care about children and certainly do not care about ageing people.

Just like their mates here in Victoria, the federal Liberals and their lackeys, The Nationals, have no understanding of the needs of regional Victorians. Sneaking through in the federal budget papers is the abolition of the after-hours GP helpline. Who do members think would benefit most from an after-hours GP helpline? The answer is that people in isolated regional communities benefit most from such a service. It offered parents with sick kids and also elderly patients a vital backup service when their GP could not be available — that is, at night and on weekends and public holidays. Last year more than 200 000 calls were made to the helpline, and since its inception in 2011 it has had well over half a million calls. That cut shows such a lack of care and lack of compassion. It shows that we have a federal government with no heart, whose members do not give a toss about sick people and do not want to help them get better.

It gets worse. The announcement about cutting the GP helpline came just weeks before Medicare Locals are going to be wound up, taking with them their after-hours GP Access service, another service that regional Victorians have relied on. The Abbott government's decisions to persist with its attempts to slug families with a GP tax and to hike up the price of medicines will also hit regional communities and regional families. The Abbott government appears determined to inflict even more pain on and produce more chaos in a health sector that is already reeling from the cuts made in last year's federal budget. Literally thousands of organisations across regional communities whose members do vital work caring for Australians most at risk and vulnerable people will be left reeling from this assault on their core funding. The scale of the cuts means that many organisations will be forced to close their doors, while others will have to cut back on staff and services.

In last year's federal budget cuts were made to the very successful Youth Connections program. This program ran in my electorate through the local community health service and provided essential support for local

youth at risk. What is really disturbing about cuts to vital services such as this is that, particularly in regional areas, there is an increasingly high rate of youth suicide and without the Youth Connections support many young people in regional Victoria will not get the intervention and support they need.

There is no doubt that the federal government's budget is short sighted and that it threatens the future of our health system and entrenches the fundamental unfairness of the Liberals' first budget. Since they came to office the federal Liberals have endeavoured to dismantle or gut Medicare. As the member for Footscray said, Medicare is a universal health insurance scheme that is the envy of other countries, that works so well and has benefited millions of Australians. It was a great Labor initiative, and it has been an enormously successful scheme. It provides affordable health care for everyone through a public health system that is for all. If the Abbott government gets its way with Medicare, it will be reduced to nothing more than a residual safety net. It is because it was a Labor initiative that members of that government hate it so much — or maybe it is just because they do not care about people in general or families or sick people.

In Victoria we already have long elective surgery waiting lists, thanks to the Liberal-Nationals government's cut of more than \$830 million from health during its four years in office. Projected cuts by the federal Abbott government to hospitals in my electorate are alarming. Without a doubt they will make the waiting lists longer and mean that emergency departments will continue to be overrun. Finally, let us not forget Tony Abbott's pledge before the last federal election, when he said there would be no cuts to health, no cuts to education. What a lie!

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — I rise to express my deep concern not just for my own community but for communities across regional Victoria that will be impacted by the cruel and harsh cuts of the Abbott government to health funding. We have a Premier who has been a health minister and understands the intrinsic importance of health and health expenditure to our community. At a national level we have a Prime Minister who has also been a health minister, but unlike our Premier he has learnt nothing and knows nothing about the importance of health spending.

I had the great pleasure of representing the Minister for Health at the opening of the Northern Centre for Health Education Research, located at the Northern Hospital in Epping, just a few short weeks ago. I did the opening with federal health minister Sussan Ley. She is quite a pleasant woman. She commented on the enormous

growth in the northern corridor. While she said she had been unfamiliar with that growth in the past, she was left in no doubt that it is one of the fastest growing areas in Victoria and in the country. She took a little bit of time out to chip me and say that I needed to pass on to our health minister the message that the rates of childhood immunisation in Victoria are unacceptable.

What she did not say was that in addition to the cuts already coming through in the federal budget, cuts would be coming through in the midyear economic and fiscal outlook. This was despite her having seen the growth in our community and acknowledging the benefits of state and federal funding partnerships. She had the good grace to acknowledge that it was not the Abbott government that put funding into that fantastic centre at the Northern Hospital, which is training health professionals both from the north and attracted to the area by the facility. That money was contributed by Labor governments at both a state and a federal level. She could see the benefit of such partnerships right there and then. However, since talking with Ms Ley, who gave me that little lecture and acknowledged that growth, the Victorian government has had to lobby extremely hard for the retention of preventive health funding.

This is something that is very close to my heart; I served for three years as a representative of this Parliament on the VicHealth board. Victoria has been a world leader in prevention. We have, for instance, seen a massive reduction in the use of tobacco and its harmful effects in this state, and our model is being copied all over the world.

Healthy Together Victoria is yet another casualty of harsh cuts by this federal government. My community has been running some excellent programs — the City of Whittlesea in particular — but with \$52 million being cut from the national partnership agreement on preventive health, those programs are at risk. The state has committed to fund those at a state level, but there are no guarantees for the future from the federal government. The huge reduction in national health reform agreement funding to Victoria — an extra \$104.4 million — means that over \$500 million has been cut from Victoria's health budget over the three-year period.

This is not just about cuts to big-ticket items like the large hospital networks or dental and preventive health. Tiffany Dean, a mother from Doreen, has spoken to me on behalf of her son, who suffers from a metabolic disorder that means he cannot ingest proteins and other products. He has to eat specific foods. This disorder has been recognised through an inborn error of metabolism

(IEM) grant program, which has been in place for a long time to supply food to people managing protein metabolic disorders.

The IEM food grant has been cruelly cut, affecting this family and some 900 others across the nation. They were notified only last week that they would no longer receive support to purchase these foods. Tiffany and her firefighter husband have to prepare food for their son every day. It is an incredibly dangerous condition. If they had not discovered this syndrome very early in this little boy's life, it would have been disastrous. It has an effect on the brain that causes mental retardation. So if they are not able to afford to supply this food to their son, it means certain mental retardation.

The lack of sense and lack of heart shown by cutting such a grant to families like these when the consequences are certain mental retardation is incomprehensible. Just imagine the cost if this little boy suffers that level of mental retardation: he will not be able to participate in education, he will not be able to work, he will probably not be able to have children and he will have a very short life span. If you just look at it in dollar terms, it will be an incredible impost on the taxpayer, but what I want to say is: what about this little boy's quality of life? What does that mean, each and every day?

Sussan Ley, that great expert — someone said she just lays down and gives up when she is presented with budget cuts and does not fight, so it is a good name for her — was quoted on Channel 9 news last Friday night as saying:

Foods for people managing protein metabolic disorder are now more readily available and cheaper than when the program began.

According to the families that I have spoken to, there is no evidence of that. There are only two suppliers, or maybe three, in this country that you can get this food from. I will give the example of flour without these enzymes in it. We might get a packet of flour in a supermarket for \$1; the equivalent for this child's needs is \$10. Every single product needs to be made from scratch, whether it is pasta or bread, because it keeps this little boy alive. From the end of this year this grant will be cruelly cut by the federal government.

This is in addition to the cuts to dental chairs; the huge cuts to the number of elective surgeries that will be able to be undertaken in our hospitals; and the impacts across metropolitan and regional health services — every part of this state. I notice that there are very few members of the opposition in this house. The Nationals try to say to us that we are a city-centric government;

well, why are they not in here standing up and criticising the cuts that are going to impact so harshly on the regional health services? They are silent. They are not standing up. I condemn the federal government health cuts.

Mr NARDELLA (Melton) — This is an important debate that this house is having. We had the member for Ferntree Gully speaking earlier — the one and only Liberal to contribute to this debate. The only other opposition member that we have had up on his feet to talk on this has been the member for Prahran from the Greens political party. The only Liberal to get up to speak on this debate, who virtually said that he agrees with us, said that he would rather talk about the budget. What is a \$17.7 billion cut to the health budget about if it is not about the budget?

I am the last speaker on this motion in the Parliament. Why is it that The Nationals are not contributing? Why are they here? Why do they not stand up and represent their constituents in country Victoria? Why are they not standing up for the hospitals, the families, the children, the mums and the dads who are going to find their lives inevitably changed for the worse because The Nationals' mates up in Canberra are making sure that their constituents are going to have a worse life? Why have The Nationals members not got up on their feet to represent their constituents, who they cry crocodile tears about?

They come in here and they bleat that they are the only ones who represent country Victoria, that there are all these cuts happening elsewhere and that this government is city-centric. Where are they on this debate? They are silent, because they are Nationals people before they are Victorians. They represent Tony Abbott in this house. They come to this house representing the most reprehensible, conservative, destructive and cruel Prime Minister that we have had in Australia for a very, very long period of time, and they are complicit in making sure that the voices of country Victoria that they represent are not heard in this house. They are not here in this house to speak on behalf of their residents, and if they do contribute to the debate, let me say this: they will have been goaded into it by my contribution to this house. But let me also say that they probably will not. They are too scared and too cowardly to do the right thing and to earn the salaries that they got paid today. They should have been up here defending their constituents — their families and their children — because these cuts are despicable.

These cuts will affect every single person in country Victoria. These cuts are not being opposed by The Nationals within this house, let alone by any Liberal,

other than the member for Ferntree Gully, who got up and spoke before. How long did he speak for? I will tell honourable members that he had half an hour to speak. Did he speak for 25 minutes?

Ms Knight — No.

Mr NARDELLA — Did he speak for 20 minutes?

Ms Thomas — No.

Mr NARDELLA — Did he speak for 15 minutes?

Mr McGuire — No.

Mr NARDELLA — He spoke for 10 minutes on the cut of \$17.7 billion to the health budget here in Victoria. These cowards, who are here to represent Tony Abbott within this house, are Liberal Party members first and Victorians last. They believe in the dictum that you have to pull out your credit card before you have your heart checked. These cowards are a disgrace.

Liberal members do not have the guts to argue why it was bad in 2012 when \$112 million was taken from Victorian hospitals but now that \$17.7 billion has been taken, it is okay. That figure is \$17.7 billion. We might have to do a 'mini me' on this so that they can understand the difference between millions and billions, but it is a comparison between \$112 million in 2012 and today's \$17.7 billion, and not one of them has the guts to argue against it because the people on the other side of the house are cowards. The Nationals cowards who sit in this house and take their salary week in and week out are so weak that they cannot stand up and oppose these disastrous cuts.

How am I going to explain this to the constituents who come into my office? Every other member of Parliament has this situation too. They come into the office and say 'Don, I have been on the waiting list for a while. The last four years have been terrible'. People have come into my office who have been on the waiting list, depending on the category, for 30 days, for 3 months, for 6 months or for 9 months, and what am I going to tell them? They do not want excuses from me, with me saying, 'It is the federal government' or 'It is us' or 'It is them'. They are not there to listen to excuses from me, so what am I going to tell my constituents when they cannot get their operation?

What am I going to tell them when their child is sick and waiting for an operation, and the federal government is doing this? We have this pathetic person as Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, who hates people. Why is he there? Why is he Prime Minister of Australia

when his one and only reason for being is that he hates Australians? This man hates people. He hates children and he hates mums and dads, so why is he there? Why are these people who support Prime Minister Tony Abbott and his cuts to the hospital and health system here in this chamber? Why are they here? I cannot work it out. I cannot work out why these despicable members on the other side of the house do not stand up for the pensioners, for the elderly, for the sick and for the people who need the services that governments are there to provide. If you are not prepared to provide the services and stand up for the things that you believe in — —

Ms Spence — They don't believe in anything.

Mr NARDELLA — They do not believe in anything, that is correct. If they are not prepared to do that, why do they steal their salary every two weeks? Every two weeks their hands are in their pockets, getting their money out, but they are not prepared to stand up for their constituents.

Then we have the platitudes from the Greens. They are going to fix everything. They have Richie on the job. After the knife had gone through the neck and out of the back, they put Richard di Natale in as their leader up in Canberra. Dr Richie will fix it because the Greens are very good at this. Greens political party members speak lots about what they are going to do, but in reality they do nothing. They have never put in place a policy of their own. Whenever they have had to make a decision about policy, whether it be climate change or dental services, they always run away because every time they make a decision on a policy, they know they will lose half of their base, half of their membership, so they never make a decision other than one — —

Ms Green — 'What's in it for me?'

Mr NARDELLA — Apart from saying, 'What's in it for me?'. That might be the second one. Really there is only one, and that is: how do I attack the Labor Party and how do I defeat Labor governments at either the federal level or the state level? That is the only decision that these political prostitutes ever make in their political careers. You just have to listen to them to realise that, either here or in Canberra. When these people get up to talk they only attack one party — the progressive side of politics, the Labor Party. We are the only people who stand up for the poor, the disadvantaged, the unemployed and the working class within Australia. That is why it is a disgrace that the opposition is not supporting this motion.

Motion agreed to.

APPROPRIATION (2015–2016) BILL 2015

Second reading

Debate resumed from 27 May; motion of Mr PALLAS (Treasurer).

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) — After that disgraceful performance by the member for Melton I am delighted to continue my contribution from where I left off last night. I genuinely hope the member has a Bex and a good lie-down because he certainly needs to do that to start to understand about representation. He has it all wrong.

In relation to the Appropriation (2015–2016) Bill 2015 the record will show that this budget is all about politics and not about people. We have certainly found that to be the case in regional Victoria. The Victorian Farmers Federation, which is the peak agricultural body in Victoria, said that this state budget is disappointing — and it is a disappointing budget, as I said last night. While the government is cutting money out of regional Victoria, we have still not recovered — and in fact the paint has not dried on them — from the last lot of white elephants that were produced by a Labor government in times past, such as the desalination plant. We all know that Victoria remains the largest sanctuary in Australia for white elephants, thanks to Labor governments. In fact, it has got so big that we will be declared a national park in the not-too-distant future.

The Premier has certainly taken the opportunity to make white elephants over time, and he will continue to do so, although at this time we do not know what they will be. I can imagine him standing there with a paintbrush in one hand and a roller in the other, while the Treasurer stands beside him with a big can of Dulux, and them being ready to paint the next white elephant that comes along. They did not need a paintbrush this time — they just wrote a cheque for \$640 million. That money could have been used well in regional Victoria.

It is a bit like the shovel, but they have now put the shovel away. They talk about shovel-ready projects, but it is just another cruel hoax perpetrated on the people of both regional Victoria and metropolitan Melbourne. We have an Oxford dictionary, a Collins dictionary, and now we are getting a Daniel Andrews dictionary, and in that dictionary 'shovel-ready' means a thought bubble to win votes. And if you look up the word 'contingency' in that dictionary, you will see it means an escape route in question time. That is what that means. Certainly if you look up 'union' in the Daniel

Andrews dictionary, you will see it says ‘soulmate or family member’.

These are the issues that the Premier has been confronting all the time, and I get so disappointed for regional Victoria. The fox bounty only has a year to run — there are a few old foxes on the other side of the chamber, and the Treasurer is one of them. He has been stitched up by his own party, so those in the chook house will certainly have to beware. Victorians voted for change, and they certainly got it. They got new taxes, sacked water authorities, and a bill for \$640 million not to build a road. Six months into breaking these promises, you can see that the foundations are already rocking and the plaster on this government is beginning to crack.

I simply ask: what has country Victoria done to be so despised and hated by those on the other side, particularly when the Premier grew up in regional Victoria? I do not understand. We produce their food, deliver their export earnings and create Melbourne’s playground. I just do not understand why the government wants to ignore regional Victoria like it does. Twenty-five per cent of Victoria’s population lives in regional Victoria, but the government has allocated it 1.7 per cent in the health fund and 2.9 per cent in terms of the infrastructure spend. We are talking about minute figures in regional Victoria where 25 per cent of Victorians live. Members opposite cannot stand up in this place and tell me that this government is governing for all Victorians, because it simply is not.

We will see whether the Murray Basin rail project comes to fruition. There is \$30 million allocated and not the \$220 million that we put aside, but in time that may happen. We will see whether that happens or not. The \$600 million for Mernda rail is an illusion: there is only \$9 million in the budget, so it is not just regional Victorians who are suffering. The government is ripping off all Victorians and turning money into nothing. A great man once turned water into wine. It takes an absolutely special person to turn \$640 million into dust.

I will now focus on the Ovens Valley electorate specifically and what we received. It will not take long to talk about Ovens Valley and what we have achieved in the budget. If I were to talk about a few of the things we require and would like to achieve, that would take a lot longer. The upgrade of the Wangaratta saleyards roof is a project to which we took Labor kicking and screaming. I am pleased that Labor has matched the \$500 000 commitment the coalition government made last year. That project will go ahead, but that is the only thing we have been able to achieve in the electorate.

The government talks about Victoria being the education state. There is nothing for Ovens Valley for education. In health, again, there is nothing for Ovens Valley.

I encourage the government to have a broader look at regional Victoria. As I said in a debate yesterday, regional Victoria is not just Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo. It is also other communities throughout the state, and the government needs to consider looking at those communities as well.

The country roads and bridges program is gone; it is absolutely gone. That was a great program the former government provided to local councils. Freeburgh is a little community just outside Bright that is desperate for an upgrade to a bridge, which would cost only \$350 000. Alpine Shire Council is one of the best in regional Victoria in being able to manage its finances. The CEO, Dave Barry, and the councillors have done an amazing job over the last couple of years in cutting costs to make sure that they are as efficient as they can be. Now with rate capping coming along, they need to be even more efficient. But a bridge like that is going to take a lot of money out of the community that could be used on other projects. Country roads and bridges was an ideal program that would have been able to support upgrading bridges like the Freeburgh bridge. Edi Cutting Cottage on the Wangaratta-Whitfield Road is another example of what the money from the country roads and bridges program would have been able to support.

I will briefly touch on Bright Hospital, as the Leader of the Opposition did yesterday. This hospital so badly needs an upgrade. We committed \$15 million to it prior to the election.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr McCURDY — Correct; we did not get up. Now we are looking for support from the current government. That will be difficult in the current climate, while the government is ignoring regional Victoria like it is. This community in Bright had put together \$800 000 as seed funding to go forward with this project. It is now asking the government, ‘What do we do with this \$800 000? Are we a chance to ever get a hospital here, or are we just going to wait and wait? Should we do something else with the \$800 000?’. I understand the community’s dilemma, because it was a mammoth effort to have raised \$800 000. Does the community let it sit in a bank or put it into another project? That is a dilemma we have got to work through, and with the assistance of the Minister for

Health I hope we can achieve something in the short to medium term.

Appin Park Primary School is a little school, and one of many schools in my electorate, that certainly needs government support. For an education state I am surprised that we did not get a look in in the budget, given that it was requiring only \$410 000. That is nothing compared to what is being spent on other projects around the state. At the Wangaratta District Specialist School the principal, Libby Hosking, does an absolutely sensational job with those kids. We were looking for \$750 000 to support this special school, but again, despite being the education state, it was not forthcoming.

Members will recall that \$640 million has been ripped out of the budget not to build a road. If you look at even a small portion of that, we are not greedy in Ovens Valley. We are quite reasonable people. If we could just get 5 per cent of what was ripped out, it would be \$32 million. We can just imagine what projects that would have funded in our community. As I have said, country people such as the people in Bright who raised \$800 000 know how to stretch a dollar. They know how to get leverage. They put in working bees, make in-kind donations and attract corporate sponsorship, but we need that seed funding to get us started.

It is important that we get seed funding for projects like the Cobram Football Netball Club upgrade, which needs \$650 000 but is now on the backburner, as is the Yarrowonga drainage study. Yarrowonga really requires that drainage study, because Yarrowonga is one of those communities in which you do not need 5, 6 or 7 inches of rain, or so many hundred millimetres, for it to come under water. It takes only 2 or 3 inches, or 50 or 75 millimetres, of rain, and all of a sudden it comes under pressure. That is why \$200 000 for a drainage study would have been ideal.

I will finish where I began last night in this place when I said that it was a very dark day for regional Victoria when this budget was handed down. I think the Treasurer's opening words were, 'Every family is different, but every family wants the same thing'. If that were the case, he would have delivered a fair and balanced budget, not just smoke and mirrors and not just spin. This budget is really a con. It is not a contingency like the Treasurer tries to tell us; it really is a con and another cruel hoax.

It is such a disappointment to see that the regional expo has probably seen its last ray of sunshine as well. It is a great expo that lets us showcase to metropolitan Melbourne what we have in regional Victoria. It is a

great opportunity, but I think it has seen its last ray of sunshine under this government. Labor used to put money in one hand and take it out of the other. We understand how that works, but in this budget it did not even put it in our hand to start with. Government members still talk about jobs and infrastructure, but jobs still have not been created or the infrastructure built. We need that seed funding and the commitment to and confidence in regional Victoria. It really has been a deception and a disappointment to all of us. People understand that.

The funding for agriculture is down by 12 per cent on a statewide basis. That will be of concern to regional Victoria, particularly as \$9 million has been cut from research and development. When matched with the \$9 million we would have received from the federal government, that equals \$18 million. People at the Ellinbank research station and other research areas throughout regional Victoria had better brace themselves because they are no doubt going to see some cuts. There is not always a lot of money for research and development, and when you take that much out it is going to be of major concern for them.

The regional development spend is down 24 per cent, and the Energy to the Regions program has gone altogether. As I said, only 2.9 per cent of the infrastructure spend is being spent on regional infrastructure, and that is a shame, given that 25 per cent of Victorians live in regional Victoria. There is a spend of 1.7 per cent of health funding on health capital in regional Victoria. Think about that. It is an absolute disappointment. It affects places like Bright, Wangaratta, Cobram and Yarrowonga. Those regions could do so much with not a lot of money, but 1.7 per cent is a disgrace, and we deserve better than that.

We find another example in the \$100 million which was committed by the previous government to ensure that the regional cities program continued to expand but which will not be delivered by the current government. Let us face it, we have got to make sure our regional cities are in good shape to take the excess population that spills out after metropolitan Melbourne fills up, starting with the \$1 billion promised for regional road upgrades over eight years. But again, where is that in the budget? I do not think we will see anything like that sort of money being committed. If we cannot find it in the budget anywhere, we can only assume that it will not be there.

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water) — It was an interesting contribution from the member for Ovens Valley. I am not sure if we are looking at a different budget. This is

certainly a very different budget to the ones the member was used to seeing when the coalition was in government. That budget would have contained massive cuts to staff, programs and services. For example, the member talked about agriculture, but I think a third of the staff were lost out of the agriculture department during the previous government. It is an interesting comparison when he is talking about this budget and pointing out what he sees as a deficit — that is, which schools did not get funded or which roads did not get funded. They were not funded during the four years of the previous government because it had a budget program that was about cuts to staff, services and programs.

A lot of people talk about this being a truly Labor budget, and that is partly right, but it is actually a budget that Victorians have come to expect from state governments. It is a budget that is focused on infrastructure, on jobs and on the services that matter to Victorian families. That is exactly what this budget is all about. In addition to that it spreads the spend right across Victoria. The Labor Party has always very much supported regional Victoria. We have always ensured that the funding in our budget is spread across the board, including from the small regional towns to the large regional towns, and this budget continues that process.

This is a budget that commences the process of rebuilding Victoria's programs in relation to protecting our environment, taking action on climate change and ensuring that we have the right water infrastructure to support communities right across Victoria.

One of the really important parts of this budget is the record investment that we have put into education. Education is critical to Victoria's future. It is about ensuring that we have a skilled workforce going forward and making the most of our people skills — that is, our abilities and our education and training skills. This budget makes sure that Victoria continues to lead Australia in education. We are investing in capital, which is really critical. In my community we are investing in Drysdale Primary School, Bellarine Secondary College, Saint Ignatius Secondary College and Portarlington Primary School.

Our investment is not just about capital, which is obviously really important, but also about having the right facilities to support good learning outcomes. It is actually about investing in teachers and improving educational outcomes. I am sure the community remembers the very long investigation that was undertaken at a federal level and the subsequent findings, known as the Gonski report, which identified

a road map to ensure that we are putting money in the right areas in our schools to get improved outcomes for all children right across the country.

This budget is about delivering on that commitment and making sure that the full amount of the Gonski money is funded in this budget. I know from talking to my local schools that that funding is extremely welcome. Hopefully over the long term we will start to see really significant improvements in outcomes for all young people in Victoria.

This budget also invests an extra \$1.38 billion in health services. That is about our hospital system and equates to, I think, 60 000 extra admissions into hospitals and 40 000 extra admissions into our emergency departments. Of course most importantly it also reinvests in our ambulance services and our paramedics. These are the people we rely upon so significantly as a community. Over the last 12 months I had the privilege of spending a lot of time with a number of paramedics trying to understand the challenges that they face, and I would say it would have to be the hardest job in our community. This is about supporting our paramedics through fair wages and conditions and also ensuring that we have the right services to meet community needs going forward.

Job creation is a big focus that runs through all of this budget — how we can use the levers of government to create and assist business to generate jobs in our community. Certainly as a member who represents one of the communities of Geelong I can say that the Geelong community has suffered significant setbacks in terms of job losses and the flow-on effect of those losses in our economy more broadly. Last year we witnessed quite substantial increases in unemployment rates.

This budget is focused on delivering our commitments around jobs, both at a central level — a Victoria-wide level — through the Back to Work grants and at a regional level through the Premier's jobs and investment fund, through the Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund as well as through the Future Industries Fund, \$20 million of which will go to new energy to drive the renewable energy market.

In Geelong we are investing in the Geelong Region Innovation and Investment Fund, which is about making sure that we are able to co-invest in new opportunities to create manufacturing jobs in Geelong, again using the levers of government. There will be some financial support and expertise to encourage new businesses, new ideas and innovation that hopefully

will provide sustainable jobs in our local community going forward.

The budget also funds ManuFutures Geelong, which is based at Deakin University. This is where the carbon fibre plant is located and where defence work is going on as well, so it is an opportunity to create a hub of new research and development for manufacturing into the future. This is a great partnership with Deakin University, and I am hoping that the federal government will also come on board to assist in that process.

Importantly, we have said that with all our major projects, and those in Geelong in particular, we will require local content and local procurement rules to be set. This is about making sure that when we are investing in, for example, the Geelong Performing Arts Centre (GPAC), which is a great arts facility and a \$30 million investment, we get the most out of that \$30 million in terms of economic benefit back to our community. Local procurement might involve the purchase of seats from local businesses or local businesses partly tendering for that project. These investments are important in not just creating construction jobs at that time but also having a flow-on effect to other businesses in our community.

Talking about some of the infrastructure spends which we believe will generate further economic growth in Geelong, not only is there GPAC but there is also the fourth stage of the football club redevelopment at Simonds Stadium. This is not just about the football club, although in itself that generates huge economic benefit, whether the Cats win or lose. I think people spend more when we win, but they still spend when we lose — we are hoping for more wins. That project is also a partnership with Deakin University, which will provide world-class rehabilitation support, and again we expect it will generate a lot of jobs and a lot of local content. The local content component of the previous three stages is sitting around the 90 per cent mark, and we are hoping that will be the case with the rollout of stage 4. It is a really significant investment that is about achieving not just one outcome but a number of outcomes. It will also ensure that we have a stadium available for other events.

The Portarlington safe harbour project is in my community and it also sits in my portfolio area. Again this is about not just having a great harbour but also being able to grow the aquaculture industry. Portarlington is known for its mussels, but we also have a growing scallop industry and a growing oyster industry. The Drysdale bypass is a major road infrastructure project worth \$109 million which will not

just provide enormous congestion relief to communities down that way but in itself be a huge economic driver.

I will touch very briefly on some of the other commitments in my electorate that were funded in this budget. They include the Ocean Grove Surf Life Saving Club, the Queenscliff Community Sports Club, the Drysdale Football Netball Club, the Leopold Football Netball Club, the Barwon Heads Football & Netball Club, extra police to ensure that we can reopen stations that the previous government closed, traffic lights in Ocean Grove and a traffic management plan in Barwon Heads. These projects represent a substantial investment in jobs and large-scale and small-scale infrastructure, which are supporting local communities and supporting families.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my contribution, this is also a budget that starts the process of an upward trend in investment in the environment, climate change and water. Last year's budget was the lowest point for environmental spending. We went way, way down, and we are beginning the process of moving upwards. In terms of water investment, for example, I point to the contribution of the member for Ovens Valley about investment in regional infrastructure. In water alone billions of dollars are being spent on infrastructure, largely in regional Victoria. Water infrastructure development is a major economic driver in many regional communities, along with the water authorities. They provide many jobs and many opportunities in those communities.

This budget sees the biggest ever spend of the environmental contribution levy in Victoria's history. We have an extra \$45 million to go to programs like grant assistance for sustainable projects to manage on-farm irrigation to help farmers with their irrigation practices to achieve further water savings. There is further money for the Goulburn-Murray Water Connections and Sunraysia Modernisation projects and \$20 million for riparian land management in regional Victoria. These are substantial investments in infrastructure that are about supporting farmers and improving water savings as well as improving outcomes for our estuaries and wetland areas.

The budget includes the first investment in climate change in four years, with around about \$34 million across government for expenditure on climate change for the next year alone while we do all the work around the Climate Change Act 2010 review and the review of programs and policies in relation to climate change. And then there is the Sustainability Fund. Interestingly, in four years the previous government invested \$10 million from the Sustainability Fund, the lowest

spend ever. This budget will see the biggest spend from the Sustainability Fund to fund things like threatened species protection, climate change works, waste reduction programs, water efficiency programs, energy efficiency programs and remediation of contaminated land.

We are continuing the program of fuel reduction burns, with an allocation of \$50 million. That funding will also be used to remove trees damaged by fire, which are one of the biggest causes of injury to our firefighters who are out doing planned burns. A real positive in this budget is the assistance we are giving to Parks Victoria, which was basically decimated when \$88 million was taken out of its budget. We are reinvesting to both fix critical infrastructure that has been left to deteriorate as well as build new facilities. We are also building for the future, with funding for projects such as the Grampians Peaks Trail, the Portarlington safe harbour and the Canadian State Park. We also recognise that Parks Victoria needs to boost its basic capacity to fix some of the facilities that have been left to deteriorate over the last four years.

All these things are being delivered in the context of a surplus, which next year will be \$1.2 billion rising to \$1.8 billion in 2018–19, in a AAA-rated budget where we are seeing a reduction in net debt. This budget is not about cutting staff, it is not about cutting the services that matter to Victorians and it is not about shutting down the economy so that we see fewer jobs created. This is about investing in the things that we know can create jobs. We know that Victorians care about education, health services, public transport services and the environment. Importantly, we are also assisting communities in regional Victoria that have been doing it tough, such as Geelong and Bellarine.

The budget is well targeted. It is about using the levers of government, which we have used very well in this budget. We are doing it with a sound financial base and we are reducing net debt over time. I welcome this budget, and I wish it a speedy passage through this house.

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — It is a pleasure to rise to speak about the Appropriation (2015–2016) Bill 2015, but can I say that the manner in which this budget debate has been conducted is an absolute disgrace. You would have thought that in its very first budget debate this government would have been keen to have a good debate and to talk about this budget for a decent length of time, yet we have seen the debate time cut now that we are outside the budget week. We have seen the available debating time cut from the standard two weeks back to one, which is entirely contrary to

established practice. Then we were presented yesterday with the blatantly political motion we debated this morning, and all it did was to take away time that should have been available to debate the budget.

Yesterday we had 3¾ hours of debate on the budget, and today we will have 4 hours if we are lucky, meaning we will have a total of 7¾ hours on the budget before the appropriation bill goes to the guillotine. On that basis, and given a period of 15 minutes for members to contribute, probably only half the members of this house will have an opportunity to speak on the budget. You really wonder what the government thinks it is on about.

If there were any doubt that Labor was back in town or not, this budget settles the argument absolutely. This is not Bracks lite; this is not Brumby lite; this is a good, old-fashioned, big-spending, big-taxing Labor Left budget. It is a budget that increases taxes. Despite the constantly repeated promises prior to the election that there would be no increases in taxes, this budget increases them. This is a budget that grows — and grows rapidly and unsustainably — the size of the public sector, and there are absolutely no demonstrable improvements in service delivery built into that. It is just more people to do much the same.

This is a budget that slashes infrastructure spending. It is a budget that has abandoned any pretence of fiscal responsibility. Public spending is set to rise 40 per cent faster under this government than was forecast under the coalition just six months ago. This is a budget that draws no line in the sand and requires no \$100 million minimum operating surplus. It just throws all accountability out the window.

Let us start by having a look at taxes. This is a record taxing budget. The Treasurer will require more tax to be paid in the next 12 months than has been paid at any time in the history of the state. We know what Labor's so-called leaders had to say before the election. They said there would be no new taxes. They said there would be no increases in taxes. There were promises from the Premier, there were promises from the Deputy Premier and there were promises from the Treasurer, yet what we do we get in this budget?

We get a 3 per cent stamp duty surcharge, which is a hit — and we talked about this earlier in the week — on first-time homebuyers on Melbourne's metropolitan fringe. We get a 0.5 per cent land tax increase, and we get fees, fines and charges all going up 2.75 per cent even though the CPI is sitting at 1 per cent. The fire services property levy is going up 7 per cent, again when the CPI is sitting at just 1 per cent. How you

square a 7 per cent increase with a 1 per cent CPI increase and then say, ‘There is no increase in taxes’ is beyond me. Then of course we have the de facto charges, the dividends demanded of public authorities, and I will come back to that subject in a few moments. Every single one of those rises is a broken Labor promise.

Let us move on to the surpluses. We can remember the comments the then shadow Treasurer made to the *Age*, which were published on 28 November 2014, one day before the election and after the release of Labor’s financial statement. He told the *Age* that his intentions would have no impact on budget surplus projections. What are the facts? The coalition left a \$2.3 billion surplus for the coming year. Since the pre-election budget update, Labor has pushed up revenue for the coming year by around \$1 billion. It has increased taxes and increased charges despite those solemn commitments. Despite those solemn promises that there would be no such increases, revenue has been pushed up by \$1 billion a year. Not only has revenue gone up; spending has gone up by more than twice that amount. Spending will go up by \$2.1 billion in the coming year — an extra \$2.1 billion in one year. In one year, then, the government has cut the surplus by over \$1 billion.

If you take out the money this government is sitting on — the money that the government was given to build a road that it has now decided it will not proceed with — you see that in less than a year this government has gone from having a surplus of \$2.3 billion to having a deficit of \$600 million. These are the numbers in the documents we are considering this afternoon. There will be a \$600 million deficit this year — that is, if the government pays its bills, if it pays back the money it is keeping on false pretences. That is a turnaround of almost \$3 billion in just six months.

If we look at the picture over the forward estimates, we see it gets worse. If we go back to the pre-election budget update, we see that before Labor members got their hands on the financial levers the projected surpluses amounted to \$9 billion through to 2018. Under this budget, charges over that period are up \$2.6 billion, which is again a clear breach of Labor’s solemn promise not to increase taxes. While charges might be up \$2.6 billion, spending has gone through the roof. Spending has gone up by \$6.8 billion. What is the bottom line once all the east–west link money has been paid back? And it must be paid back. Regardless of the protestations of the Treasurer and regardless of the assurances of the Minister for Finance before the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, if you take money to do something and you do not do it, you have to give

it back. That is what is going to have to happen eventually.

The bottom line is that a \$9 billion surplus — representing money that would have been available to invest in infrastructure and to spend on schools, hospitals, roads and public transport — has been slashed to just \$1.8 billion. That is a \$7.2 billion reversal, achieved by this government in just six months. So on 28 November last year, when the Treasurer said there would be no impact on the budget surplus predictions, who did he think he was kidding? Clearly he thought he was kidding the public of Victoria.

We should remember the rhetoric about jobs we have heard over the last couple of years. There is not much for jobs in this budget. This is a budget that forecasts higher unemployment, and higher unemployment that will be sustained over a much longer period than was forecast just six months ago — and this is as a direct result of the changes that have been made by this government.

You do not have to look too far to find the cause. The Victorian Construction Code Compliance Unit has been abolished, so the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union has been given free reign across Victorian building sites yet again. There is the road that the government is not building — \$640 million to not build a road — and 3500 jobs gone at a stroke of the Premier’s pen.

There are massive cuts to infrastructure spending in this government’s first budget that total \$6.4 billion over the next four years. The eastern section of the east–west link has been scrapped; the western section of the east–west link has been scrapped; the Melbourne rail link has been scrapped; the airport rail link has been scrapped; and Peter Mac Private has been scrapped, which is a clear indication that this is an ideologically driven government. Worse than all of that is that as a consequence of those decisions in this budget thousands of construction and ongoing jobs have been lost — \$6.4 billion that should have been invested in roads, schools, hospitals and public transport is all gone.

One aspect of the budget that I am particularly concerned about is the forced expropriation of funds from statutory authorities. We know about the claims of no new taxes and no new charges. We know that there were not going to be any tax hikes, and we know that that commitment did not last even six months and has been comprehensively overturned in this budget. However, even worse than the new taxes, the new

charges and the tax hikes is the practice, perfected by Labor, of milking statutory authorities, state-controlled organisations and public bodies through the imposition of excessive dividend demands. It is important to underline the word ‘excessive’, because clearly it is entirely appropriate for the state to seek a reasonable return on the public funds it has invested. However, in this budget the claims that are made are grossly excessive. The claims far exceed any reasonable return on the funds invested, and they are claims that genuinely put at risk the financial future of some of these organisations. Let us have a look at just a couple of them because time does not permit me to go through the list.

Let us have a look at the Transport Accident Commission (TAC). The pre-election budget updated anticipated dividends from the TAC of \$681.6 million. This budget pushes that figure up to \$1.18 billion. The requirement for dividends out of the TAC is pushed up in this budget by 173 per cent. Almost half a billion dollars is going to be ripped out of the TAC in the next three years — an extra half a billion dollars. You cannot rip half a billion dollars from a statutory corporation and expect it just go on as if there was no impact. I must admit, though, that I was not particularly surprised when the Minister for Finance at the estimates hearing would not give a guarantee that his raid on the TAC would not result in higher charges for motorists. He would not guarantee that motorists would not be left carrying the can for this decision.

The budget also raided the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA). Some members may not have heard of the VMIA because it is a relatively low-profile organisation. It provides insurance services to government departments, to 150 statutory authorities and agencies, to 25 rail operators, to more than 300 hospitals, health centres and bush nursing hospitals, to 250 rural doctors, to 25 medical research bodies, to more than 500 cemetery trusts, to around 2300 community service organisations and to more than 13 500 registered residential builders, so it is a reasonably important organisation in the scheme of things.

Today we have an Auditor-General’s report that identifies certain issues with the building consumer framework and the VMIA is at the centre of that. Whatever the problems are with that aspect of the building industry, it is not going to be helped by jacking up insurance costs. This is a service organisation that has not ordinarily paid dividends to government. It did not pay dividends to the coalition government, yet it is expected to pay dividends to this government. We did not expect it to do that but this government does. The

government is demanding that the VMIA give up its cash to the tune of \$145 million in the coming year, \$145 million in 2016–17, \$87 million in 2017–18 and \$43 million in 2018–19. That is a total over those four years of \$420 million.

Let us put those figures into perspective. If you look at the last annual report of the VMIA, which had a reporting date of 30 June last year, you see that it had total equity of only \$145 million, neatly enough exactly the dividend that has been demanded of it this year. It has net premium revenue of less than \$260 million annually. On any fair assessment this is dividend stripping of a high order. The only possible outcome of this decision can be soaring insurance premiums for schools, for hospitals, community service organisations and home construction. As the Auditor-General said today, there are some issues of concern in that area. The construction sector already has enough challenges without adding to its burden.

I could go on in that vein, but I also want to briefly refer to the Mornington electorate. That will not take long because only two projects are claimed in this budget, and they are funding for the Moorooduc and Mornington primary schools. In relation to Mornington Primary School, no amount is disclosed, so whether it is a serious figure remains to be seen. Certainly work needs to be done. I just hope this government meets the coalition’s commitment with regard to that school. It is a worthy project and one I have been pursuing for eight years. On the other hand, there are no additional funds provided in this budget for Moorooduc Primary School. There is money there, but it is money that was allocated by the coalition in the last budget. There is no funding to relocate Mornington Special Developmental School, to improve local sporting facilities or to continue the work at Mornington harbour. This is an old-fashioned, big-spending, big-taxing Labor left budget, and we will wear the consequences of this lost opportunity for years to come.

Mr HOWARD (Buninyong) — I am very pleased to rise to speak on the Appropriation (2015–16) Bill 2015. It is always interesting to speak after an opposition member, in this case the member for Mornington. In some ways I thought I would like to have a copy of his speech to share around my electorate. Although they would mostly be bored by it, it would assure the people of my electorate that they did the right thing in voting Labor at the last election.

We heard from the member for Mornington how dreadful it is that this government has been popularly elected by the people of Victoria and has come back into office is spending more money. I make no apology

for an Andrews Labor government budget that spends more money, because that is why we came to office. For the last four years, the sad Liberal-Nationals coalition government simply cut, cut and cut, and it seemed to be the only thing it knew how to do. Those opposite had no vision for the future. They just cut away and provided nothing for the people of Victoria by way of funding many of the projects that are important for the life of our community.

I am in fact delighted to be part of an Andrews Labor government that is increasing spending. But at the same time as doing that — and I emphasise this — Labor is still running a surplus budget, as Labor did in its previous 11 years of government that I was involved in. There is no threat to a AAA credit rating from the budget that Labor is running. It is a very sound financial budget that will deliver for the people of Victoria the things they were missing out on for the last four years.

I am very proud to stand here as the Labor member for Buninyong as part of a Andrews Labor government that has delivered so much. The first budget of this government is something that I am very proud to speak on. It contrasts with the budget that was delivered a week later in Canberra by the Abbott federal government, which was probably one that the member for Mornington would be very proud of, because it managed to spend less. It was a mean budget that will result in families who need support in our communities missing out. By contrast the Andrews budget recognises that we have a responsibility to support people who need support in our community, and we have delivered so much in that area.

I was pleased last week to be out in my electorate in the rural towns of Smythesdale, Ballan and Meredith, and also in Ballarat, talking to community members about the budget and other issues that are important to them. I was overwhelmed by a positive response from them about the way this government went about the preparation and delivery of its budget. The reason was that they saw we were delivering to and supporting communities across regional Victoria and across Victoria generally. They were impressed by what we did in contrast to the last four years, when they felt they were being neglected by the former government. The coalition government clearly had no sense of vision or concept of how to progress the important issues that needed to be progressed in this state. So this budget invests in our local schools, our health services and our roads across the electorate of Buninyong.

It is also very clear that we need to invest in creating jobs and support local manufacturing. An example in the budget is Labor investing in new trains and Country

Fire Authority (CFA) tankers, some of which will be built locally in Ballarat. This recognises the proud local manufacturing history we have in Ballarat at what were the railway workshops but are now the Alstom railway production sheds, where they are producing great X'trapolis trains. Alstom has been given a commitment to have those trains built at its workshops in Ballarat, and CFA tankers will be produced at SEM Fire and Rescue in Ballarat. There will be more jobs for people in Ballarat and we will be supporting local manufacturing as a result of this decision in the budget. So not only is the government supporting jobs but it is investing in better infrastructure for our public transport facilities and better infrastructure for our emergency services by providing the state-of-the-art fire tankers that SEM are producing. I am certainly delighted to think that we are acting in a way that continues to support employment in my area.

When we look at the essence of what a good budget does, we need to look at the future. We know that when we consider people across our community — I look at the young people in particular as they are the ones who are going to be the future — we need to support them in getting a good job so that they can help build our community. To do that you obviously need a good education. As a former teacher, I am clearly passionate about the need to support our education facilities and our schools across the spectrum of education to ensure that young people get the opportunities they need to support them towards a good future, and therefore put our whole community on a good track for the future.

Let me start by looking at the early childhood education area, where we are building the foundations of lifelong learning. In particular in the budget I am pleased to see an early years centre in Sebastopol being funded. This is going to be a new one-stop shop for families with young children in the Sebastopol and broader area. It is going to house a kindergarten and maternal and child health service and have room for playgrounds. Clearly we are supporting that area.

I am delighted to see that several schools across my electorate are getting the funding they need to build the infrastructure they need. I was pleased to have the Minister for Education in my electorate only last week or the week before when we visited Phoenix P-12 Community College and announced a further \$10 million for new classrooms and food technology and visual arts facilities to be rebuilt and modernised. We also went to Ballarat Secondary College, which is going to receive \$6 million to upgrade its campuses at both Ballarat East and Wendouree.

I am also pleased to note that \$5 million has been committed to building a new year 9 centre in Bacchus Marsh. I cannot help noting as the former member for Ballarat East that one of the schools that I fought so hard for in the last term, Daylesford Secondary College, which was neglected under the last government, will now get the \$10 million that it has been looking forward to in order to go to the next stage of development of its school. Kyneton Primary School will get \$8 million to help it relocate, and Kyneton Secondary College will get \$5 million. I am delighted to see that those schools, which are in the new electorate of Macedon, will be supported under a Labor government. They were hoping to get something in the last four years, but they got nothing.

Under the heading of Gonski funding a great move forward in education was proposed by the federal Labor government some years back. Sadly during the term of the former state coalition government the Gonski funding was not forthcoming as schools expected it would be. In this budget Labor commits to the full Gonski funding, and I look forward to seeing that roll out into schools across my electorate and across the state. Additional funding will be provided to support low-income families so that students can go to camps, purchase the items they need and not feel that because their family is struggling financially they cannot afford to do what other students are able to do. Terrific support for families on low incomes is available from this budget.

We have committed to a new technical school in Ballarat. I look forward to supporting the various players who are going to come together to develop that proposal. As we know, TAFE was devastated by the former government. I am pleased to see our TAFE rescue package in place, and I will be pleased to work with the member for Wendouree in ensuring that TAFE funding flows back to Federation University and that we can rebuild TAFE opportunities for our young people in the Ballarat region.

Education support services such as the Highlands Local Learning and Employment Network are also going to get ongoing support and funding through this budget. Local learning and employment networks provide great support for young people who might otherwise fall through the cracks. They allow us to see how education flows into the employment sector and to undertake work to ensure that all young people are appropriately supported in linking their education to their employment and do not fall through the cracks.

Let us move on to health services. While at the Canberra level health services are being savagely cut,

the Victorian state budget provides great support for health. I was pleased to be with the Minister for Health at the Ballarat Health Services base hospital last week. We looked at the site of a new catheterisation lab, which the hospital will be receiving \$10 million from this government to develop. This will mean that in the future people who need lifesaving treatment will not have to go further afield than Ballarat to receive important cardiac services. The budget also includes the \$200 million Hospital Beds Rescue Fund to support Ballarat Base Hospital to provide new short-stay medical beds so that an additional 689 patients can be treated there. Looking down the road to Bacchus Marsh, part of which falls in my electorate, I am pleased to see there is further funding for Djerriwarrh Health Services to enable the treatment of an additional 800 patients each year.

The Victorian ambulance service has been allowed to be run down, so the Andrews Labor government is investing an additional \$99 million to fix the ambulance crisis by reducing response times and upgrading ambulance stations. This includes \$1.5 million to upgrade the Wendouree ambulance station. We are also investing in the employment of more Country Fire Authority (CFA) staff and ensuring that we upgrade our CFA fire stations. I am pleased to see that Buninyong, which has a 60-year-old station, has been promised \$1.5 million for a new fire station.

There are so many more things I want to speak about, but time is going to limit me from going through all the great things in this budget that will benefit my region. Roadworks are to be undertaken along the Western Highway, and \$11.25 million worth of works will be undertaken to improve the road bridges at the Lerdererg River, Pentland Hills Road and Pikes Creek Reservoir. Funding will be provided to continue work on the Colac–Ballarat road, which clearly fell into a poor state of repair under the last government.

I am pleased to see that pedestrian crossings that the communities of Ballan and Buninyong sought in the last term of the government will be funded in this budget under the Andrews Labor government. Let me not forget Canadian State Park, a great area of forested land on the eastern edge of Ballarat. Six-hundred hectares of Canadian State Forest and Victorian Plantations Corporation land is going to be part of a reserve park, with \$2 million to support an upgrade and establish a permanent buffer that the people of the Ballarat community and beyond can appreciate for many years into the future.

This budget delivers much for the people of the Buninyong electorate, as it also does for people across

Victoria. It is a great education budget and a great health budget. It is a budget that delivers environmental benefits for people. It delivers road upgrades and many things that the people in my electorate are looking forward to. I am pleased to work with our ministers to see those projects delivered.

Ms ASHER (Brighton) — This is a disappointing budget. It is a budget of broken promises, such as changes to tax that the electorate was not told about prior to the election. Overall it reduces the economic security of the state of Victoria. This budget pays insufficient attention to infrastructure. It is big on expenditure and big on taxes, and it is — and this is the only item with which I agree with members opposite — a typical Labor budget. It is big spending and big taxing. It is no wonder the *Herald Sun* attributed to the budget the headline ‘Hey, big spender’.

In the first instance I will look at a couple of items that impact my electorate of Brighton. In particular I will look at page 25 of budget paper 4, *State Capital Program*, where there is \$10 million allocated for what is described as the regeneration of Elwood College. I do not expect members of this place to be up to date with redistributions, but the electorate of Brighton, to which I was elected in 1999, now includes all of Elwood. I am pleased because we in the coalition made commitments to the school, which was a neglected state secondary college. Labor made a commitment as well, and it has honoured the \$10 million, although I note that in 2015–16 only \$1.6 million has been allocated, with the government telling us the remaining expenditure of \$8.38 million will see the project completed by the fourth quarter of 2016–17. I hope that timetable is kept to. I have had experience of Labor governments and major projects, and they do not necessarily adhere to timetables, but I hope it will be the case. I am pleased Elwood College was skilful enough to make sure both sides of the political divide made substantial commitments to it.

I also make reference to page 31 of *State Capital Program* and two tranches of funding for Brighton Secondary College. It took a coalition government to deliver funding to this school in my electorate. Previously over 11 years of Labor only some funding in relation to fire repair work was allocated. The \$8 million we as a government allocated in our last budget has been honoured by Labor, with \$5.6 million to be spent after 2015–16 and an estimated completion date of 2017–18. I am pleased Brighton Secondary College has kept its allocation from the coalition government, and the member for Bentleigh should also be pleased, because 40 per cent of the students who attend the college live in the electorate of Bentleigh.

I turn now to budget paper 3, where there is an allocation that may have an impact on my electorate. I draw to the government’s attention an item described on page 110 as ‘Golf centre of excellence’. A funding allocation has been made, and the government claims that Golf Australia and Golf Victoria are working with Sport and Recreation Victoria to identify a suitable site for the centre. The site the proponents are currently suggesting is in Elsternwick Park, which is in my electorate. If that is the site for the national centre of excellence for golf, there will need to be ongoing discussions not only with professional golfing organisations but also with council and the local community. A golf course is currently there, and it is well used, so there will need to be a discussion with the community about what facilities will stay and what facilities will go. At this stage I am simply encouraging consultation.

I turn now to the fire services property levy increases, which will have a devastating impact on household budgets in my electorate. The reference is page 165 of budget paper 5, where the government has forecasted significant increases in the fire services property levy from \$585 million in 2014–15 to \$627 million in 2015–16 and going up to \$662 million in 2018–19. There is a 7.2 per cent increase in the fire services property levy from 2014–15 to the anticipated 2015–16 amount. The question is: who will pay this? Households will. This is a government — —

Mr Brooks — It’s your system.

Ms ASHER — I strongly support the fire services levy system. I am a strong supporter because it means people who previously got off scot-free by not paying insurance now have to make a contribution to fire services. However, on these figures the government is imposing an additional impost on householders, yet this was not in the rhetoric prior to the election. I suspect the government will be selective in which households will carry this burden; we will wait and see where the burden falls, but it will fall on households.

I will make a couple of general comments in relation to my policy interests, as I am sure members expect me to do. I will start with trade. I refer to page 19 of budget paper 3. Trade is important for the state of Victoria, and the government has itemised a number of trade initiatives that will be good, but they are nowhere near as extensive as the commitment we made prior to leaving office. Oddly enough there is an item called ‘Connecting to the world through film’, where \$1.4 million has been allocated. There is a strong trade angle to having an Indian film festival and a Chinese film festival, because trade does not exist in isolation. If

one has cultural links, economic links can be further built on them. We also have a China and India scholarships program, where \$300 000 has been allocated per year for three years. The aim is to have people linguistically literate to assist various businesses to trade. It is not only about having literacy in another language; it is also about understanding cultural perspectives, which gives economic opportunities to the state of Victoria.

The government has allocated \$1.4 million in 2015–16, followed by \$1.5 million in the next two years and then \$1.6 million in the final out year, to expand the Victorian government business office program. The previous government indicated prior to the election that it wished to establish offices in South America, Singapore and Turkey. I presided over a substantial expansion of the Victorian government business network, and under my administration — I am not claiming sole credit for it by any means — there was significant growth in the level of exports in the state of Victoria. I commend the government for expanding the Victorian government business office network. I note that in the last year of our government the member for Yan Yean regarded these sorts of expenditures as frivolous. She indicated that in a question to a minister at the time. I am pleased the member for Yan Yean's view has not prevailed in the government's funding of the important trade portfolio.

An amount of \$3 million per annum over four years has been allocated for inbound trade missions. Much has been said by the Premier and others, and I am interested to see what the government does with outbound trade missions as well. We allocated \$12 million — substantially more than \$3 million — for inbound and outbound trade missions, and a vast range of inbound trade missions were announced by the previous government. The international engagement strategy presided over by the previous government had a \$62.6 million budget allocation over four years, which included part of the trade mission program, and between December 2010 and November 2014 we supported over 3300 Victorian companies on 78 trade missions.

The house is already getting a sense that the amount of dollars we allocated as a government is nowhere near the amount of dollars the Labor government has allocated in its first budget, and I again urge the government to look at this important area of trade, because we are a small and confined domestic market. If the government does not promote trade, there are not too many other things the government can do to assist its smaller sector in particular to increase sales and hopefully increase employment as a consequence.

In terms of tourism, the government has allocated an extra \$20 million for major events on page 19 in budget paper 3, but the key question is what that extra \$20 million will be spent on. The previous government did not cap the major events spend; we simply had the Major Events Fund. If I were a member of this Parliament interested in tourism, I would ask what the base figure is — and more importantly I would ask whether it includes the grand prix subsidy. I urge all members of Parliament to try to find the answer to these questions. To simply say that you will spend an extra \$20 million but then claim that the base figure is cabinet in confidence — which was the practice of previous Labor governments — means that major events will not necessarily yield an additional \$20 million. For example, if the grand prix subsidy were going to rise, the cost might simply be absorbed by that.

The Melbourne Exhibition Centre expansion is flagged in this budget without moneys being allocated by the line item — but we then have the very unusual situation of footnote (b) assuring us that money has indeed been assigned to it. One can only assume it is in contingency, seeing as that is the Treasurer's explanation for everything that did not get a line item. I urge the government to get on with this project. The coalition had a very comprehensive plan for the expansion of the Melbourne Exhibition Centre. These business events are worth \$1.2 billion to the state of Victoria, but Sydney's expansion project is coming online in 2016 and there is also significant international competition in this area. Again I urge the government to get on with this particular project.

Similarly I cannot find any additional money for regional marketing, which was something we committed to prior to the election because of the enormous benefit it has for tourism in regional areas. I also cannot find any specific references to how the government proposes to handle the vast Chinese tourism market, which is now Victoria's no. 1 visitor demographic. We had an \$8 million Victoria-China tourism strategy, and I draw the minister's attention to the *Age* of 27 May, in which Tourism Australia chairman Geoff Dixon, who is stepping down, warned the federal government and the state tourism authorities that we cannot simply sit back and expect the Chinese to visit us in growing numbers. We need to make sure that we are competitive, and we can make ourselves competitive through marketing campaigns and by aggressively selling the state through the Tourism Victoria offices and the government business offices in China. I urge the government to look at that important area of economic development.

I conclude by referring to the *Herald Sun*'s editorial of 6 May, headed 'Labor's back and spending', which says:

This is a distinctly Labor budget.

Big spending — to the tune of almost \$280 billion over five years — and big taxing; revenues of \$296 billion across the same period.

Money comes in one door and an almost commensurate amount goes out. It's a highwire act, predicated on Treasury forecasts staying on track.

If things go awry, Victoria's financial wellbeing and long-term infrastructure investments will be seriously threatened.

That is my view also. I have seen many state budgets from a range of Labor governments, and there is no doubt about it: when one looks at the first budget brought down by the Andrews government, one sees that — and I am very sorry to say this because it is very bad news for Victoria — the fiscal delinquents are back in town.

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — In response to the member for Brighton, I say that this is a budget that this side of the house is proud of. This is a Labor budget that delivers on the things that matter to Victorians. This budget goes directly to the areas Victorians voted for and to the issues they worry about around the family table: jobs, health, education, public transport and infrastructure, all within a framework of a AAA-rated budget in surplus and declining debt over the forward estimates. This is a budget we are absolutely proud of, and it gives me great pleasure to join this debate. I will focus my contribution on my portfolio responsibilities as the Minister for Education and on my beautiful community and electorate of Monbulk.

Victoria has a strong education system. Our schools, teachers and principals have a lot to be proud of. We have a passionate, professional and highly qualified workforce that is and will be at the heart of leading students and schools to excellence and inclusion across Victoria. This budget delivers for all our schools. It delivers for the profession — for our principals, our teachers and our education support staff — and it delivers for families and students. In the lead-up to the election we outlined a range of commitments to set the direction to and build the foundations for the delivery of the very best education system for every Victorian. In November last year we outlined a \$1.3 billion commitment to Victorian schools. Today, in May 2015, we have delivered well beyond that. In our first budget we delivered a \$3.5 billion commitment to our

schools — the biggest ever single boost to school funding — —

Mr Battin — Acting Speaker, just to ensure that we have full factional support for the minister, I call your attention to the state of the house.

Quorum formed.

Mr MERLINO — As I was saying, in our first budget we delivered a \$3.5 billion boost — the biggest single boost to Victorian school funding in our history. Across early years, schools and TAFEs there is almost \$4 billion. It is something that members opposite do not want to hear. They do not want to be reminded of the damage they inflicted in just four years. Theirs became the first, first-term government since 1955 to be tossed out of office, and that is because of their cuts to education and health and their absolute lack of commitment to the things that matter to Victorians.

In honouring our election commitments we set out to achieve two things with this budget. We set out to repair the damage that was inflicted to the core fabric of our system, and we set out to demonstrate our commitment to Victoria's schools and to establish Victoria as the education state. We are doing that in a number of ways. We are tackling disadvantage including through our Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund. In terms of repairing the damage, we put in place that \$148 million program to replace what was lost through the previous government's scrapping of the education maintenance allowance (EMA), something it should hang its head in shame about. During the past six months as minister I have heard firsthand about the impact on families of the cuts made by the previous government to the education maintenance allowance. My office has received letter after letter from parents who are struggling this year to pay for their kids' school camps, sports activities and excursions. That is why we are not going to wait for the start of the 2016 school year to provide some relief to families across Victoria; we will be making a payment to schools for our most vulnerable students in July. I am proud that we have delivered on our promise to fill the gap left by the withdrawal of the EMA.

In terms of breakfast clubs, it is a sobering reality that while many of us take breakfast for granted, one in seven children come to school with an empty stomach. Students from low socio-economic backgrounds are over six times more likely to miss breakfast. An empty stomach makes it difficult to learn. You cannot concentrate, it makes kids tired, it makes it — —

Mr Battin interjected.

Mr MERLINO — Apparently the opposition is opposed to the expansion of breakfast clubs to 500 schools and 25 000 kids. It has no idea. This is a \$13.7 million partnership with Foodbank over four years to deliver this program.

In terms of glasses for kids, children with undiagnosed vision problems can experience difficulty in accessing and participating in education. If a child is unable to see properly, they are potentially at risk of developing learning difficulties. We can and we will reduce this risk. In this year's budget the Andrews government will provide \$480 000 over four years for the Glasses for Kids program. This is a partnership with State Schools Relief and OneSite, a partner of OPSM. In addition to thousands of free eye tests in 250 of Victoria's most disadvantaged primary schools the program is expected to provide 10 000 pairs of free glasses over the next four years to the kids who need them most in prep to grade 3.

As well as addressing the critical issues of breakfast, participation and vision, a key part of our government's commitment to ensuring that every student has the opportunity to reach their potential is to support parents in meeting the full costs of educating their children. For the past 80 years State Schools Relief has worked with government schools to provide uniforms and shoes to families who are struggling with the costs of education. This budget provides an additional \$15.65 million over four years to boost the impact that State Schools Relief can have. The funding will more than triple the number of disadvantaged students getting help to pay for school uniforms, shoes, books and stationery through State Schools Relief. Having the same uniform as their peers and decent shoes is a critical part of a student's sense of belonging, purpose and wellbeing in their school community. The other tangible school essentials to get kids started and keep them engaged and participating at school are books and stationery.

We are working on expanding our mentoring programs. As well as the increased numbers of breakfasts, books, shoes, glasses, uniforms and stationery, we are also providing another critical avenue of support to students through the expansion of our mentoring program. Mentoring is a wonderful, tangible resource for young people who need the guidance and support that their parents, guardians or teachers may not always have the time to provide. The government recognises the value of mentoring programs and has delivered on its promise for \$1.6 million to expand existing mentoring programs, delivered with community organisations and not-for-profits and, additionally, to pilot a program for high-achieving tertiary students to mentor school students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This dates

back to a trip to Israel that I took part in in 2013. We have taken on board the terrific program that is part of Israel's university structure, and I am excited about this program.

In terms of capital — and I do not get tired of saying this — this is the biggest ever investment in school infrastructure programs in the history of Victorian education, with \$730 million to build, upgrade and maintain schools across the state. There is \$610 million in this budget for government schools and \$120 million over four years for Catholic and independent schools. This is a phenomenal investment made even more extraordinary when we remember that school capital funding was halved under the Liberal government. It collapsed. There is \$610 million for government schools in our first budget. Do you know, Acting Speaker, what the previous government delivered in its first three budgets? It was around \$200 million, \$200 million and \$200 million — an average of \$200 million over its first three budgets. We are delivering \$610 million for government schools in our first budget.

Across Victoria kids are learning in run-down, uncomfortable and overcrowded classrooms. Many temporary buildings have stood for decades, and many more are riddled with asbestos. It is the legacy of those opposite that not one new school will open in 2016. The budget provides \$325 million to renovate, refurbish or rebuild 67 schools, 25 of them in our fast-growing outer suburbs and 21 in regional Victoria.

One school to receive a \$10 million rebuild is Essendon Keilor College, which has been identified as one of the state's most run-down schools with over 1300 maintenance items requiring attention. The previous education minister described the school as 'disgraceful' and then proceeded to do nothing for four years. In our first budget, due to the advocacy of the member for Niddrie, we will deliver a major upgrade for Essendon Keilor College. Others to receive assistance are Geelong High School, Viewbank College, Sunshine College, Elwood College, Brunswick Secondary College, Daylesford Secondary College, Phoenix P-12 Community College, William Ruthven Secondary College. We are going to make investments right across the state.

There is the Maroondah education plan and the Morwell school regeneration project, and there is \$35 million for more than 120 new, safe relocatable classrooms to ease the pressure and reduce overcrowding in our schools. There is \$42 million to tackle asbestos as part of our \$100 million commitment. The shadow Minister for Education had a bit to say

about this. Let us make a comparison. In our first budget there is \$42 million to tackle asbestos in addition to the more than doubling of the capital program. The previous government's last budget provided \$7.5 million to tackle asbestos, comprising of \$2.2 million for audits, and \$5.3 million to remove it. We are providing \$42 million in our first budget. I could go on, but I am running out of time and I want to talk about my wonderful community in Monbulk and what this budget delivers for them.

There was a huge campaign to save the Olinda pool in the Dandenong Ranges. The council allowed it to be run-down and then, when cracks were found, it closed it down and expected the community to accept a permanent closure of that wonderful community asset. There was a huge community campaign to save it. Before the election I was proud to make a commitment that if Labor won, we would deliver \$500 000 to repair and reopen the pool and also deliver a community playground. That is delivered in our first budget and it has been greeted with acclaim from the communities across the Dandenong Ranges.

In terms of keeping our local schools safe, there is \$593 million to improve road safety in the Dandenongs, including electronic variable speed limit signs at Mount Dandenong Primary School, at Selby Primary School, where this campaign began, and also at The Patch Primary School. There is \$728 000 for resurfacing works on a 2.4-kilometre section of Monbulk Road between Kallista and Belgrave.

In terms of my local schools, there is \$3 million towards the refurbishment and replacement of classrooms at Monbulk College. This is something that the principal, Margaret Uren, and the school council have been campaigning for. This is a wonderful school. It has wonderful science facilities out the back but the building at the front is an old light timber construction, and we are going to provide \$3 million to transform that front building and the face of that school.

There is also \$1 million to Mooroolbark East Primary School to upgrade its sports hall, improve teaching spaces and do some important drainage works as well. I know the principal, Debbie Nelsson, is extremely pleased. This is a wonderful school — in a new part of my electorate, being Mooroolbark — and I will be working with the school over the next few years to look at its longer term needs because this is a great school in high demand and it is doing a great job.

In terms of the Angliss Hospital, we need to ask: why is it only Labor governments that invest in the Angliss Hospital in the outer east? The former Kennett

government wanted to shut it down, and if it had won the election in 1999 it would have closed Angliss Hospital. I am proud that under the Bracks and Brumby governments we delivered multimillion-dollar refurbishments and upgrades to that hospital. We are doing exactly the same in our first budget: \$20 million to provide an intensive care unit and short-stay unit at the Angliss Hospital, providing up to 20 beds to cater for patients needing urgent care. This is what Labor does for our local hospitals, always neglected under the previous government — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Angus) — Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Debate interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Angus) — Order! I acknowledge in the gallery a former member for Ballarat West, Mr Paul Jenkins.

APPROPRIATION (2015–2016) BILL 2015

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Ms KEALY (Lowan) — I rise today to speak on the Appropriation (2015–2016) Bill 2015, which outlines a budget that bears a true reflection of the intent of this Melbourne Labor government and its utter disregard for the people of country Victoria. I am quite perplexed to hear some of the members opposite, who have been carrying on with loads of shenanigans today and speaking about how important country Victoria is to this state. There is no doubt that when country Victoria is doing well the entire state is doing well. However, can we judge this Labor government on its words or should we judge it on its actions?

I know the people of Lowan, and I know that the people of Lowan are intelligent, hardworking, honest, loyal, pragmatic and most importantly incredibly astute. So when the Treasurer stood proudly to give his second-reading speech and espouse that Melbourne Labor is 'taking our state into the future and leaving no-one behind', the people of Lowan were highly sceptical — and rightly so, given that this Melbourne Labor budget clearly has not just left country Victoria behind but completely abandoned us. As we can see, the Minister for Education has abandoned us right now, which is absolutely appalling.

Perhaps education should be first cab off the rank when I look at how this Melbourne Labor government has

treated the people of Lowan. I quote the Treasurer: ‘the education state’. I think that this Melbourne-based Labor government does not understand that it has to govern beyond the tram tracks and right to the edge of the state and to the border. That is clear when you look at the map published on the front of the budget papers, where Lowan was largely left off. In fact there was no infrastructure funding anywhere west of the Grampians, except for a bridge that arguably should have come out of normal operational budget anyway. East Gippsland, as we know, completely fell off the map and was hidden behind the index. It is absolutely appalling that you can call Victoria the education state when nowhere appears to matter apart from Melbourne.

This is a quote from the Treasurer:

... kids still can't get a first-rate education in a second-rate classroom.

Why, then, could this government not find any funds to invest in schools in Lowan? We had fantastic pre-election commitments to invest in Dimboola Memorial Secondary College, which has lots of buildings that are full of asbestos. I note that the Minister for Education mentioned his asbestos program earlier; however, there has not been any outline of how that will be applied. Will there be any confirmation for schools like Dimboola that it will be prioritised, as it desperately needs works done?

How about Baimbridge College in Hamilton? The light timber construction that it has there urgently needs works to refurbish the science and maths wing. I am very happy that the shadow Minister for Education, the member for Ferntree Gully, made the effort to actually come down and see the schools in our region. He was absolutely appalled that these schools had not been funded in the budget.

This is another quote from the Treasurer on education:

... we're focusing on the schools that need the most support.

Why then did the Treasurer not fund the Warracknabeal education precinct? We made a commitment before the election to fund that project with \$8 million, and when you look at the site you can completely understand why. The Warracknabeal Special Development School is currently located in three transportables located on leased premises, which means it cannot even access government funding to build a new bike shed because it is not allowed to build on leased land. Why is this not one of the schools that needs the most support, with kids that absolutely need a proper and appropriate facility to deliver their educational needs and to bring

them on-site with the primary school? We committed to that; this government will not. It is appalling.

What about Warracknabeal Secondary College, where the member for Ferntree Gully did not just look at the cracks in the wall but put his hand into them to measure how many centimetres along his arm they reached? It is absolutely appalling, and yet this does not come into Labor's commitment and judgement of focusing on the schools that need the most support.

I will move to training now. The Treasurer said he will:

... save the jobs and skills centres that give a second chance to the people who are dropping out of school and dropping out of our economy.

Not so for Hamilton District Skills Centre, where \$200 000 for three years is all it needs to keep afloat. The students are raising their own money at the moment. They are selling firewood, building cubbyhouses and doing projects for the caravan park in Dunkeld, including building accommodation. They are even delivering training programs to students in the Kimberley in Western Australia. The centre has had outstanding results locally, with student retention rates in the shire increasing from 35 per cent in 2009 to 68 per cent last year. Yet this government will not commit to the funding program. It is absolutely appalling.

I note that 81 per cent of capital expenditure for school funding has gone to Labor-held electorates. How interesting! Is this an education state or is it an education electorate for Labor? Perhaps I should add that only 2.9 per cent of infrastructure funding has been delivered to rural and regional Victoria, and that includes Geelong. That is absolutely shameful.

I move on to the fantastic topic of roads, which is raised with me quite frequently in the Lowan electorate. Prior to the election we heard this amazing commitment from Labor that it would spend \$1 billion on regional roads. I note that this was to be over eight years. When coalition members asked questions at the recent Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings, we found that that was a complete lie. It disappeared. It was, ‘We forgot about that commitment’. Even though it was less money than the coalition had committed, Labor members were proudly waving the flag and saying, ‘Here we are. We are going to spend less money than you and we are happy about it’, and then they forgot about it during the budget anyway. The government has actually cut road maintenance funding by 10 per cent. That is absolutely appalling. Not only that, Labor has cut the \$160 million country roads and bridges program. That program directly funded local

governments to repair their local roads. Councils were making great decisions and employing local people, and Labor has completely neglected it. It is absolutely appalling.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms KEALY — It was in the budget. I note that it was in the budget and we committed to it. You may have noticed we have mentioned it a couple of times in Parliament. I do not know whether this is the first time that Labor members have heard there was a \$160 million country roads and bridges program, but I am more than happy to brief them on the fantastic results of that and how it impacted on our local area in a positive way.

Mr D. O'Brien interjected.

Ms KEALY — It is true. It is the first time they have heard of country Victoria. This is a new news day!

I want to flag some of the roads in my local area that desperately need funding, including the Henty Highway, the Wimmera Highway, the Glenelg Highway and the Western Highway east of Kaniva. Let us not forget about this Labor government's record on roads. It managed to spend \$600 million not to build a road. It is absolutely beyond belief that it would do that, but who knows where we are headed with this government? It is really a mystery.

Let us move to health. The Treasurer said:

Health care is not just a government's duty.

It's the test of a government's decency.

That is very telling when not a dollar was spent on health infrastructure in Lowan. How decent is a government that would do that? The coalition committed \$15 million to redevelop Hamilton Hospital's desperately needed emergency department and intensive care unit area — which even koalas will access — yet the hospital was completely neglected by this Labor government. There is no funding for the Wimmera Cancer Care Centre. People are travelling hours to go to Ballarat. In fact 40 per cent of patients seeking cancer treatment travel to Ballarat, hours away, to get treatment. Why can this state government not find \$1 million to fund this very important local centre?

What about real-time prescription drug monitoring? Prescription drugs kill more people each year than the road toll. We were going to put \$8 million into implementing this very important system, yet guess what Labor wants to sit back and do? It wants to spend \$300 000 on yet another study — excellent, more

paperwork! — rather than implementing something that will save lives from today.

On regional development, we have seen the scrapping of the Regional Growth Fund, which was the very successful fund that members of The Nationals in particular are very proud of. Included in that was the \$100 million Putting Locals First Fund and the \$100 million Local Government Infrastructure Fund, which has made such a difference to my electorate. I will give a few examples. There was the \$500 000 Dunkeld RSL Memorial Hall upgrade. I opened that facility a couple of weeks ago and it is absolutely fantastic. It is a credit to the local people who put a lot of work and energy into making sure the facilities supported the local people and the types of events that they wanted to hold in that region. There was \$10 000 for an upgrade to the Rainbow agricultural and pastoral facilities. There was also \$10 000 for the Willaura and District Kindergarten playground and safety improvements, looking after the kids in that region. The kindergarten has bumper enrolments, which is very impressive for that region. And there are brilliant vanilla slices at Willaura as well, if members are ever in that area.

There was \$100 000 for a biosecurity fence at Halls Gap Zoo. I think this is one of the best zoos in the world. Anybody in the region should visit that zoo — it is absolutely brilliant — and check out the biosecurity fence that would not have been installed if it were not for the Regional Growth Fund. There was also \$130 000 for the Minyip-Murtoa Football Netball Club lighting upgrade and changing rooms.

Then we look at this pale imitation of the Regional Growth Fund, the Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund, from which I believe over \$200 million of funding has already been allocated in a way that is pure theft from what was the Regional Growth Fund. The coalition government made sure the Regional Growth Fund was for projects that would develop our regional areas. In relation to the Grampians Peaks Trail, which the coalition government also committed to — and it is positive that the Labor government committed to that too — we were going to fund it out of the budget for the environment, whereas Labor has taken it out of its pale imitation of the Regional Growth Fund, essentially ripping off the region yet again. It is absolutely appalling.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms KEALY — More money back to Melbourne; that is exactly right. It is appalling. How about agriculture? It is the backbone of the Lowan economy.

The coalition allocated \$12.5 million for the Grain Centre of Excellence in Horsham. This is a very important facility. Horsham, and the Wimmera in general, are becoming centres of excellence in their own right with a reputation for research in relation to grains, pulses and oilseeds. We do a fantastic job. The best thing is that local research means there is local information and our farmers can access cutting-edge information regarding production in western Victoria, resulting in more money from more profitable farming practices in western Victoria, so it is good for everybody.

However, what do we see from Labor? Will it invest in research in agriculture? Of course not; it is not even on its radar. In fact some days I do not think its members even know where their food comes from; it is a mystery. What was the former government going to use the \$12.5 million for? It was to renovate glasshouses originally built in the 1950s, to build new research labs. That would help attract the best scientists in the world to western Victoria to continue the fantastic work we do in that area.

Is this a budget for families, as the Treasurer stated? I suspect it is really a budget for Melbourne families. This government has completely abandoned country Victoria. Its members should absolutely hang their heads in shame over how they have neglected us. When they were pulling the budget together I think they had a bit of a party when they thought it was all coming together — maybe it was a factional party; maybe they got a bit distracted, perhaps a little drunk on power — and woke up in the morning and found that they had not actually finished the budget, stuck their hands down the back of the couch, found a bit of shrapnel and thought, ‘Goodness, we have to find some money for the country, and this is all we’ve got’. It is absolutely appalling.

That the Labor government continues to say that this will be a good budget for the whole of the state is absolutely ridiculous. It is deceptive. But our people know better. We are astute. We will judge people by their actions. Most importantly, I will be holding Labor to account, my Nationals colleagues will be holding Labor to account and my coalition colleagues will be holding this Labor government to account, to make sure we have a fair investment in our rural and regional areas and to ensure country Victoria is not just surviving but is thriving. We all know that when country Victoria is doing well, the state is doing well. We will hold Labor to account.

Mr NOONAN (Minister for Police) — It gives me great pleasure to rise and make a contribution to debate

on the Appropriation (2015–2016) Bill 2015, the first under the Andrews government. In doing so, I want to congratulate the Treasurer and his team on delivering a very important Labor budget. In my contribution I want to speak about a number of areas, most particularly police and corrections, which are my key responsibilities, and time permitting I want to mention a number of key outcomes for the Williamstown electorate which stem from this budget and some important work that was done from opposition to prepare for government.

I will start with police. I am very pleased that this budget delivers to our hardworking police, our hardworking men and women right across the state. I am pleased that this budget delivers on all the commitments Labor made in the lead-up to the election last year. First and foremost, the 2015–16 budget provides a record budget for Victoria Police of more than \$2.5 billion, which is more money than the coalition ever provided to our police. The budget also ensures that a number of long-term challenges faced by Victoria Police will finally be resolved.

I will make a couple of references to the media release by the Police Association that was issued on the day the budget was delivered because it is instructive in terms of how the budget has been received by police. The first reference is:

... the measures outlined in the budget deliver on a number of commitments it has long sought from government on behalf of Victoria’s 14 500 police officers and PSOs.

We all know that our police are highly trained and professional. They undergo a thorough training program before they are deployed on our streets. For too long they have been required to babysit prisoners who are in police detention. Police tell me that this is a waste of their skills and expertise.

An Ombudsman report of last year has this to say:

Victoria Police estimates that up to 500 police officers per day are drawn from policing activities in the community to supervise detainees in police custody resulting in fewer police to patrol local areas.

That is why as part of its election commitments the Andrews-led Labor Party had a very clear policy approach to try to do something about this problem of highly trained police being essentially underutilised by babysitting crooks. That is why this government’s first budget will free up 400 to 500 police, who will now be free to return to the front line, to patrol our streets and to keep the community safe. That is why in its media release the Police Association said this:

For decades, we've been saying that police officers should be freed from 'babysitting' prisoners in police cells in order to do the police work their communities expect of them, like providing proactive street patrols. We're delighted that this 'chestnut' issue will soon be fixed.

That is what this budget does. It fixes that issue, and we will get on with policing. We hope to start recruiting custody officers later this year or early next year. Initially they will be deployed to Sunshine, Dandenong, Heidelberg, Ballarat, Geelong and Broadmeadows, and then we will seek to deploy them across the state with the objective of releasing police back to the front line so they can keep the community safe.

Nothing is more important than the safety and wellbeing of our police members. For too long — and The Nationals members might be interested in this — police in rural and regional Victoria have been endangered by having to use outdated radios that can be listened to by anyone with a smart phone. All they have to do is download an app, and people can listen in. The Acting Chief Commissioner recently stated that upgrading police radios would be his no. 1 priority. At a recent Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing he said:

The anecdotes I heard, the evidence I saw, left me in no doubt that this was the greatest threat to operational safety for our members ...

That is why Labor has committed \$11.5 million of new funding to upgrade the outdated analogue regional police radio system to a secure, encrypted digital network. This will ensure that country police have the same secure radio network that police in Melbourne and Geelong experience today. This will in every way ensure that crooks will no longer be able to listen in to police communication — and this is delivered in country Victoria. Only the Andrews Labor government was prepared to make this commitment at the last election, and only this government will deliver this important safety upgrade for police.

Labor has also committed \$15 million to purchase land and build a new police complex at Mernda. This investment will ensure that police will be stationed in the growing northern suburbs of Melbourne. I pay tribute to the member for Yan Yean, who worked tirelessly to ensure that this commitment was delivered for her community. I certainly look forward to joining with her when we turn the first sod on that project.

When in government those opposite abandoned Geelong and the Bellarine Peninsula. They were happy to see a reduced level of policing across the peninsula. Labor was not prepared to stand for that, and that is why it has committed \$7.8 million to provide for more

police to be stationed in the growing areas of Bellarine and Geelong and to allow for longer opening hours at Drysdale, Portarlington and Queenscliff. I know some members have not welcomed that commitment, but they do not sit on the government benches. I will make clear what the Police Association said about this commitment.

Mr Katos interjected.

Mr NOONAN — The member for South Barwon might like to listen to this, because this is what Ron Iddles said:

Our members in Geelong have been extremely passionate about this issue. Less than 12 months ago they and their families felt strongly enough about this issue to rally in their hundreds in their push for extra staff. I'm delighted for them and their communities that we've made progress on this issue.

The member for Lara, who is at the table, knows about this because he stood shoulder to shoulder with members in the Geelong area in pushing this along. I acknowledge him and the members for Bellarine and Geelong for standing up for those communities. The Andrews Labor government will continue to support the police in that area as we will those right around the state.

We are also investing in upgrading the fleet of drug and booze buses as part of this budget. We have provided \$15 million to Victoria Police to upgrade its entire fleet. In addition, we have committed funding through the Transport Accident Commission such that Victoria Police will test 100 000 drivers a year for drugs to ensure that our roads are safer by reducing the number of drug-affected people on our roads — getting them off our roads. Many of these tests will take place in country Victoria.

Finally, Labor has also committed a further \$4.5 million in funding that will also help police track down and close down clandestine laboratories. Every 12 months about 100 clandestine labs are detected. They need to be processed. This provides important funding for Victoria Police to improve their capacity to have more scientists and analysts to tackle the problem of drugs. I know the member for Bundoora would be very happy with that investment.

I turn now to corrections. In the period since June 2010 there has been a 38 per cent increase in male prisoners, a 37 per cent increase in the number of women in our prison system and a 16 per cent increase in offenders under supervision on community corrections orders. I know those opposite seem to think that having more prisoners equals a greater or safer community. The opposition seems to think that imprisonment is the end

of the discussion, that it is a one-size-fits-all approach; that it is a simple solution to crime to simply lock everybody up. I am afraid to say it is a little bit more sophisticated than that.

What the opposition when in government failed to ensure is that our Victorian prisons could do their best to turn prisoners around and make it less likely for those prisoners to reoffend when they leave prison. The coalition government's policies have driven up the recidivism rate, which is projected to reach 45 per cent in this financial year — 45 per cent of those people who left prison in 2012–13 will be likely to return or to have returned to prison in 2014–15. The recidivism rate went up every single year under the previous government. Those opposite also failed to prepare for the growth of community correction orders. They failed to make forward provision to expand corrections in the community so we could tackle offending earlier and intervene before prison becomes the only option for people.

That is why in this budget Labor is committing \$333 million in a range of areas which are targeted at recidivism or rehabilitation of offenders. We will hire 143 new community corrections staff across the next year. We will bring on more buses and trailers to mobilise the additional work of reparation in the community. We will invest \$2.6 million more for offending behaviour programs in 2015–16. We will also invest \$4.7 million for more alcohol and drug treatment programs in 2015–16. We will provide more psycho-educational programs in gambling, mental health and road trauma. We will deliver a pilot mental health court liaison service for two Magistrates Courts for specialist screening for community corrections orders and we will provide \$2 million for mandated men's behaviour change programs for offenders on community correction orders which are family violence related. Seventy six per cent of offenders supervised in the community do not return to corrections within two years.

Investing in community corrections fits the evidence of what works. That is why Labor will invest in this pathway, as we will in the prison system. I have now been to almost all of the prisons; I only have a couple to go. I have seen enormous strain in our prison system. Every single prison has more prisoners within its walls than it was built to accommodate. Sadly, whilst the coalition found the money to put beds into the system, it failed to invest in the spaces and places that help rehabilitate offenders whilst they are in prison. The areas of industry, education, health and mental health programs and services were simply not invested in.

That is why we are seeing an increase in the recidivism rate.

In many respects Labor is playing catch-up in terms of investing in these sorts of areas so that we can drive down the recidivism rate. That is why we are investing \$124.9 million across the men's prison system and \$119 million across two women's prisons to deliver the critical infrastructure and services that are needed to drive down the reoffending rate. We are building more mental health beds. We are building a greater capacity into the health centres, education, industry and service areas, and we are doing so across many prisons. These are wise investments that we are making in order to tackle the very high rates of recidivism.

We are also investing \$9.5 million in eight new beds at the Thomas Embling Hospital for prisoners and forensic patients with acute mental illness. This is the first investment in new beds inside the walls of Thomas Embling since it was opened. They are important investments that were not made by the previous government, but our government is making them. Why are we making them? Very clearly it is to make our community safer. We are doing this because those people who will finish their prison sentences will reintegrate into the community. If they are not appropriately rehabilitated, their likelihood of reoffending will simply increase, as the statistics in this budget are showing and will continue to show without these investments. We will invest in acute mental health care, proper health care, the opportunity for education and the appropriate programs that will assist in transitioning prisoners back into the community. We will continue to do that, and that is why this budget provides a significant level of funding in those areas.

In the time I have left I will make a couple of points about the Williamstown electorate. It is a great budget for schools; it is a great budget for education. The Williamstown electorate has not missed out. Importantly there is \$500 000 for Williamstown High School to build a new performing arts centre of excellence in its centenary year. That is a very important investment. I want to congratulate the principal, Gino Catalano, and the ex-president of the school council, Hugh Jones, who drove that policy for Labor to adopt in opposition. I make the point that when the Liberals were in government, they did not match that investment. Only Labor took that investment to the election last year.

There is also a \$300 000 investment for Bayside P-12 College in order to enable it to redevelop its technical wing at the Williamstown campus. I congratulate its principal, Andrew Harnett, on that. When Labor was

last in government it rebuilt the Newport campus and totally rebuilt the Altona North campus, and now Labor is starting on and investing in the third campus at Williamstown. That is what good Labor governments do. We continue to invest in education, we invest in TAFE and we invest in higher education because we want to give our kids the best start in life, just as we are investing \$1 million to start the planning works at the Footscray educational precinct. This is a very important investment that I have worked on long and hard with the member for Footscray. This is an investment that in the first instance will see \$15 million rolled out during this term of government to help local schools and Victoria University provide an education precinct in Footscray. This is a budget that delivers for the Williamstown electorate.

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — I rise this afternoon to make a contribution to debate on the Appropriation (2015–2016) Bill 2015. What we see before us is a return to the bad old days. It is yet another classic high-spending, high-taxing Labor budget. The surplus is down. The coalition had a \$2.3 billion surplus forecast for this coming budget. That surplus is now down to \$1.2 billion, and incredibly it takes into account \$1.5 billion from the scrapped east–west link. Only Labor could lose that much money from the surplus in six months. We are actually \$300 million in deficit when you take that into consideration. It is my understanding that pending court cases have not been factored into the many contingencies in this budget, a number of which are due to the incompetence of the Premier when he was Minister for Gaming. Those factors could put us even further into deficit, because that is where we really sit. A sum of \$4 billion has been stripped out of the surpluses in the forward estimates.

This budget is full of false and broken promises. It is a highly political budget that is very much skewed towards Labor electorates, particularly with regard to education. I will touch on that later in my contribution. If you are in a Labor-held electorate, you are part of a trade union or you are a Labor mate, then this is the budget for you. Public sector wage expenditure is at 7.1 per cent. We are clearly paying back the many favours that were owed to the trade union movement for the election of the Andrews Labor government. I will give an example. In Table 1.6 on page 19 of budget paper 3, under the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, line item ‘Employment industry and growth’ says that a central bargaining unit has been allocated \$600 000 a year over the next four years. That is a total of \$2.4 million. Page 23 of budget paper 3 tells us what the central bargaining unit is. It states:

A central bargaining unit will be established, adopting a strategic negotiation role in major public sector enterprise agreements. They unit will aim to improve communication and deliver a more efficient enterprise bargaining process.

So, effectively, who knows which union mates are going to be put on in the department to facilitate negotiations with unions on enterprise bargaining agreements (EBAs)? The EBA is there. There is a nice, cushy job for another Labor mate. That is what this will be about.

If we look at the fire services property levy, we see it has gone up by 7.2 per cent, which is around four times the rate of inflation. The rate of inflation is running at about 1.8 per cent, and the levy has gone up by 7.2 per cent. This is incredible at a time when the Andrews government is looking to introduce rate capping on local councils, yet it is showing no restraint itself and going on a spendathon.

With regard to rate capping, on page 9 of today’s *Geelong Advertiser* there was the headline, ‘Surf Coast opposes rate cap’. Interestingly enough, in that article two Labor councillors came out supporting the Surf Coast Shire Council’s opposition to rate capping. They are Cr Rose Hodge and Cr Libby Coker, the latter of whom happens to be the ALP’s preselected candidate for the federal seat of Corangamite. It is interesting that they have come out in opposition to what is being proposed and the structure of what is being proposed. That is a very interesting concept.

Mr Eren interjected.

Mr KATOS — I take up the interjection from the member for Lara. The whole issue about rate capping is that the Andrews government is asking for restraint by councils. The problem is that the government is showing no restraint whatsoever in its spending. It is on a spendathon. It is one thing to ask one level of government to show restraint, but it is not showing any restraint itself. It should lead by example and show restraint, which it is trying to put on local councils.

Another thing that has been cut from this budget is the country roads and bridges program. There was \$160 million which went out to 40 municipalities around the state, each receiving \$1 million each year — so \$4 million over four years. The Surf Coast shire in my electorate certainly was a recipient of that money, and it was very well received. A lot of roads and intersections that normally would have been beyond the council’s ability to fund were funded under this program.

I am a bit disappointed that the member for Lara has left the chamber, because one of the job panaceas for Geelong that was trumpeted prior to the election by the member for Lara, by the member for Bellarine, by the now member for Geelong, by my opponent and by the then shadow Minister for Ports, now the Minister for Local Government, was Bay West. What did we find out this week? Bay West is gone. There is no Bay West; it is gone. There was this absolute con job on the people of Geelong. This was supposed to be the answer to everything. 'If you're going to be a retrenched worker at Ford or Alcoa or Blue Circle' — which has already gone — 'or if you're going to be retrenched at all, here's an opportunity for you. Vote for the Labor Party, because we're going to build Bay West, and it will be the freight and logistics capital of the world'. It is now gone for 50 years, and the worst thing about it is that the bulk of the money from the sale of the port is going to go into Melbourne. Nearly all of it is earmarked for those level crossing removals. It is a good thing for Melbourne — do not get me wrong — but where is the money that is going to go into the regions and into Geelong?

I will move to schools. It is interesting: 81 per cent of capital expenditure in schools is in Labor-held electorates. That is an interesting statistic.

Mr Pearson — Did you write your speech yourself?

Mr KATOS — I write my own speeches; I thank the member for Essendon. I do not use briefing books, like half of his backbench does.

I will touch further on education when I come to the few things that were given to the South Barwon electorate in this budget. The Minister for Police earlier talked about the additional police that he says are for the Geelong region, but they are for the Bellarine electorate. There are three police stations: Drysdale, Portarlington and Queenscliff — not Heidelberg West, Acting Speaker, much to your displeasure. That is great for Bellarine — do not get me wrong. It is a good thing to get extra police in any area. Mind you, the coalition put on 1900 extra police and over 60 officers in the Geelong police service area. The problem is that the Minister for Police, via budget paper 3, page 83, is now directing the Chief Commissioner of Police where to deploy police. Every member in this house who raises an adjournment matter requesting extra police in their region will be told, and rightly should be told, that it is a matter for the chief commissioner. Resources are provided by government to the chief commissioner, and the chief commissioner deploys them on the basis of need. However, what we have here in this budget, which shows how highly political it is, is the Minister

for Police and the Treasurer directing the chief commissioner where to deploy police.

Mr Pearson interjected.

Mr KATOS — If the member for Essendon listened to what I was actually saying, he would know that I said that is a good thing for Bellarine. But what about the rest of Victoria? There are 87 other seats, all of which want extra police — including Essendon, I would venture to say.

What is in the budget for South Barwon? There is \$3 million for an upgrade at Moriac Primary School. That is much welcomed by that local community, and they appreciate that. There is \$1.6 million for a children's services hub in Highton — strangely enough, no land has been identified, and there has been nothing really done yet about it. It is sitting there. That is a strange one. It is good for the people of Highton, but the Labor government is trumpeting that \$50 million will be spent over four years on kindergartens and new kinders. That is a good thing — the only problem is that it is a cut! We spent \$135 million over the last four years on capital works on new kinders and extensions to kinders, so there is an \$85 million cut.

One of the broken promises in this electorate relates to the Armstrong Creek West Primary School. The member for Ferntree Gully, who is the shadow Minister for Education, has visited the site with me, as has the Leader of the Opposition. Prior to the election the Labor Party made a commitment to buy approximately 10 sites around the state. Guess what? The only one that was not funded was the Armstrong Creek West Primary School. There was no funding there. Maybe the minister would like to see a photo of the land — there it is — because I do not think he has been there. There is a photo of the land, for the minister's benefit.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Carbines) — Order! The member knows not to display material in the chamber. I would ask him to put the paper down.

Mr KATOS — Incredibly Armstrong Creek is the second-largest growth area in the state of Victoria, but there is not one dollar of new funding in this budget for Armstrong Creek at all. This is a growth area with 22 000 house lots. In the next 25 years it is projected to have 55 000 people living there. Not one cent has been allocated to Armstrong Creek. Not one cent has been allocated to Torquay, Jan Juc or Bellbrae — another growth area. It is incredible.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr KATOS — The member for Essendon asks what I did. The time limit precludes me from responding because I only have 3 minutes remaining. I will go through what I did over four years, which is more than he will do in the next 20 years if he is still here: Waurn Ponds railway station, Pioneer Road upgrade, Wandana Heights noise barriers, Surf Coast Secondary College, Grovedale early learning hub, Torquay Kindergarten extension, Waurn Ponds police station and State Emergency Service complex, Torquay bowls club redevelopment, Grant Pavilion in Torquay, Torquay Tigers Football Club pavilion, South Barwon Football Club pavilion, Grovedale Football Club pavilion, Highton Tennis Club pavilion and a new Barwon Soccer Club pavilion.

An honourable member — More to come?

Mr KATOS — There is more to come. They were election commitments, by the way — all funded, all built, all done. We have upgraded Montpellier Primary School in Highton and funded two new schools in Armstrong Creek East — Armstrong Creek Primary School and Armstrong Creek Special School. Torquay North Primary School was funded, but this incoming government has delayed it by at least six months. Torquay Primary School has 1025 students. The building of Torquay North Primary School is desperately needed. There is more. It is like a Ginsu steak knife ad. There is the Jan Juc Kindergarten extension, the Torquay North children's services hub, upgrades to the Surf Coast Highway, a new Torquay State Emergency Service station, a new Bellbrae Country Fire Authority building, and Modewarre Football Club pavilion.

Then there are the commitments we made that were not matched by Labor. Belmont High School was to be upgraded, as was Grovedale College. Bellaire Primary School and Highton Primary School were to be upgraded. There was Grovedale East Kindergarten, which my opponent at the last election, who is a councillor, shamefully was more than happy to see closed down and not relocated. Torquay men's shed was going to get an upgrade. The Jan Juc Surf Lifesaving Club, which is at one of the most dangerous beaches in Victoria, has facilities that were built in the 1960s and that are an utter disgrace. We committed to upgrade that pavilion, but where did the money go this year? The money went to Ocean Grove and South Melbourne. Albert Park and Bellarine are Labor-held seats. That is where it went!

We committed \$300 000 for a new pavilion for the Torquay Netball Club. The facilities are disgraceful, and the girls and ladies down there desperately need a

new pavilion. We also committed to extend further the Grovedale Football Netball Club pavilion, and we committed to upgrade the Grovedale Tennis Club and the Barwon Soccer Club. As I said, this is a highly political budget. Funds are allocated for Labor-held seats. The people of South Barwon have been short-changed by this budget.

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Industry) — I am very pleased to join in the debate on the Appropriation (2015–2016) Bill 2015. Before the election in November last year we presented our plan for Victoria, and this budget delivers on our election commitments. Our budget is sustainable. In 2015–16 we will deliver a \$1.2 billion surplus, reduce our state's net debt to 4.4 per cent of GST by June 2019, and importantly preserve our AAA credit rating. This is all very important in terms of confidence and especially for industry in terms of future investment. The budget is pro-business because we are pro-jobs, and those two things go together. Only Labor understands and supports that nexus.

The Andrews Labor government took a comprehensive plan to the election, focusing on creating jobs and boosting investment. Our *Back to Work* plan, which is clearly outlined in the budget, includes a number of initiatives to do just that. It includes a \$100 million Back to Work scheme that will get unemployed young people, the long-term unemployed and retrenched workers back into the workforce. There is \$500 million to support the Premier's Jobs and Investment Panel, which brings together expertise across business, the community and industry to ensure that the government is working with all of the key stakeholders on our economic growth agenda. We also have \$200 million in the Future Industries Fund, which will support the development of the six sectors that have high growth potential for us in Victoria. There is \$500 million in this budget for our Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund to drive jobs growth and economic opportunities in regional Victoria.

There is \$2 million for Ethical Clothing Australia to ensure that workers in the clothing industry get a fair go and have safe and healthy work conditions. I know what this means because my mother was a clothing worker, and I understand that for decades she and her workmates were let down by conservative governments who did not care about their working conditions or the ethics of the businesses which employed them and which failed to provide good wages and good conditions. We are about ensuring that we drive away unethical behaviour, so supporting this fine organisation is important, and it symbolises what Labor governments are about. There is also \$3 million in this

budget for a Geelong manufacturing hub at Deakin University.

Mr Eren interjected.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — I welcome the member for Lara's cheering of that announcement from this budget, because he knows, as do others on this side of the house, how vitally important it is for us to identify and grow opportunities for new investment, new jobs and new industries in regional areas, which will be badly impacted by the federal coalition government pushing the three auto manufacturers out of this country.

As a state Labor government we will do all that we can to stand shoulder to shoulder with those workers to ensure that together we can build a future that can give them some sense of certainty and security, can promote investment in the new industries that will sustain the Victorian economy and workers and can provide good and paying jobs.

As I mentioned earlier, a centrepiece of the budget is the \$200 million Future Industries Fund. This fund is a core element of our *Back to Work* plan, which will drive significant economic growth into the future. The fund will support six high-growth, high-value industries: medical technologies and pharmaceuticals; international education; food and fibre processing; professional services; new energy technologies; and defence transport and construction technologies. These sectors were chosen due to their potential for future growth, such as those with global success in key markets and those with good prospects for entering new markets and sectors with global supply chains. The fund will offer grants of up to \$1 million to firms working in these sectors. The fund will also include a \$20 million New Energy Fund, which will help change Victoria's energy mix and ensure that we are investing in jobs for the future.

Work on the future industries initiative is well underway, and I look forward to making further announcements in relation to this important initiative in the coming months. The initiative is about developing strategies for those six sectors which will underpin our economy and our prosperity into the future. A highlight of the budget is the additional \$18 million that our government is investing in the Geelong Region Innovation Investment Fund and the Melbourne's North Innovation and Investment Fund. This includes \$10.5 million for the Melbourne's North fund and an additional \$7.5 million for the Geelong fund. Sadly, although I reached out to the federal coalition government to match our funds, it has refused to put

one more cent into the funds that were established prior to this government coming to power.

Certainly this is not an approach that this government has taken. We will go it alone and manage our state's new investment funds ourselves, investing this money and revising the guidelines so that they are better targeted to better assist automotive sector workers. Our scheme will invest in job-creation projects in Melbourne's north and in Geelong that will help former automotive workers, including retrenched workers. We are getting on and doing that work right now.

Another highlight is the \$5 million we are investing in the Victorian Defence Procurement Office in Geelong. I was thrilled that the Premier launched the office less than 100 days after we formed government. We do not waste any time; we got on with the job of rolling out as many of our initiatives as we possibly could squeeze into the first 100 days, and I am very pleased that this was one of those. The Victorian Defence Procurement Office has a statewide responsibility and acts on behalf of all Victorian-based defence companies in promoting Victoria's capabilities.

Importantly the office identifies defence industry opportunities and promotes industry research collaboration to boost the competitiveness of our industry. For example, the office will work collaboratively with industry to support major defence projects such as LAND 400, an armoured reconnaissance vehicle. We have a fantastic capability in this state to be able to deliver on that project. There is also the supply chain work that can come out of the SEA 1000 — that is, the future submarines procurement opportunity, which we believe Victoria is very well positioned to maximise contributions towards.

Before the election, Labor presented our plan to the Victorian people on energy and resources, and I will articulate some of those important measures outlined in the budget. There is a \$20 million New Energy Fund, which I have touched on already. We have also allocated \$30 million to implement the recommendations of the 2014 Hazelwood Mine Fire Board of Inquiry. This includes the \$6.5 million for coalmine regulation that will be used to acquire mine fire safety specialists and inspectors to improve oversight of Victoria's coal mines. This is very important, because we know that during that terrible catastrophic event in February last year the community quite rightly lost confidence not only in the previous government in terms of its failure to manage the outcomes and consequences of the fire and especially the health impacts on the community but also

confidence in the way that our coalmines are maintained and regulated.

Government members believe there is a lot of unfinished business, and we aim to finish that business and ensure that answers are provided to the questions that have still been left unanswered for the community. That is very important in this process, and I will elaborate on that a little bit further. In terms of energy and resources, we have already put aside \$200 000 to help the community of Newstead achieve 100 per cent renewable energy and \$100 000 of funding for the Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group for a solar farm at the old timber mill. I commend the members for Macedon and Bendigo West for being fantastic champions for these two great communities and these great initiatives. There is \$1.9 million for improving energy efficiency, including reviewing the Victorian Energy Efficiency Target scheme and delivering the Residential Efficiency Scorecard program, an advanced home energy audit tool. There is \$1 million for engaging with the mining sector to promote best practice community engagement approaches to improve the public's confidence in the way that resource projects are implemented, managed and regulated in this state.

We know that many communities are in very close proximity to our natural resources. Victoria's landmass is such and our regional communities are such that more often than not where our natural resources are being developed we have significant communities that live very close by. We need to make sure that people have not only confidence that those resources are being managed properly but also, and importantly, that those resources are regulated properly so that communities can be confident that people can continue to live in a healthy and safe environment and get on with their everyday lives.

A centrepiece of the budget is \$30 million in funding to implement all of the recommendations of the 2014 Hazelwood Mine Fire Board of Inquiry. We will implement all of the recommendations of the original inquiry, and it is very important for us to keep that in mind. Of the \$30 million, some \$6.5 million will go towards coalmine regulation to ensure that we are able to acquire mine fire safety specialists and inspectors to increase oversight of the coalmines and increase inspections and audits. It is very important for us to do that.

This government is also delivering on its commitment to reopen the inquiry because of the concerns in the community about a spike in deaths following the fires as well as about mine rehabilitation. I was pleased to

have visited the Latrobe Regional Hospital in Traralgon together with the Minister for Health on Tuesday morning last week to announce the terms of reference of the reopened inquiry and the appointment of the board, which is headed by the Honourable Bernard Teague. I commend Bernard Teague on the terrific work he did in the original stage of the inquiry, and I am very pleased that he has agreed to continue the work with extended terms of reference to ensure that we get the answers to the questions that the community still has as a result of that fire.

I will spend the little time I have left in speaking about some very important initiatives for my electorate of Mill Park. People in my community are ecstatic because a number of initiatives that have been funded as election commitments have now appeared in this budget very early on, at the first possible opportunity for a Labor electorate to receive the benefits of commitments that were made to them during the election. It is basically an assurance and a confirmation that this government's commitment to implement every single election promise will be effected, and I am very pleased to say that that is the case for the people of Mill Park.

There is \$6.5 million for the Mill Park Heights Primary School, which will allow the school to remove more than a dozen portable classrooms that are currently occupied by school students. This school has more than 1000 students, most of whom have had to put up with portable classroom accommodation for a number of years. I am very pleased to say that \$6 million will remove most of those portables, leaving only a couple that the school wants to hold onto for various purposes. Importantly, we will be able to build a special purpose-built permanent building to provide world-class and first-class education opportunities for our young kids. There is money in the budget for breakfast clubs, uniforms, excursions support, eye tests — all of the things that give our primary school students the best opportunity and ensure that they have a clear run to get the best out of education that they can possibly get.

Only a Labor government understands the importance of education and will ensure that our young kids from the early age — regardless of their economic background or social standing in the community — will be entitled to an equal go at education and get the best education possible.

There is money in the budget for the O'Herns Road interchange. We are obviously now waiting on the City of Whittlesea to put its contribution towards that, although I urge the council to do that. But also

importantly the federal government needs to be a partner in this. We certainly urge the federal government to do that. Our community in the north has been let down time and again by federal coalition governments, as it has also been let down by state coalition governments. I will give the federal coalition government the benefit of the doubt and hope it will be able to contribute these funds sooner rather than later so we can get that interchange built.

There is money in the state budget for the rail extension to Mernda with two new stations between South Morang and the proposed Mernda station. South Morang of course was a rail extension that was delivered by a previous Labor government. We are very proud of that. At least one of the new stations, I imagine, will be located in the seat of Mill Park, which has all of the South Morang suburb within its boundaries. I am very grateful to see that the Labor government is delivering on the commitments it made at the last election.

In its first budget our government has delivered 97 per cent of every election commitment we took to the election. In Labor's first budget it has either fully funded or commenced funding for every election commitment it made. That is a record. It should leave the members of the previous government hanging their heads in shame. They made a lot of commitments and then threw their commitments out the door as soon as they got elected. Our government will not play that game. Our government is one that is based on integrity and on delivering on everything we said we would. We will do that because people voted for that. There can be no simpler equation than that. It is a mantra, and it is a commitment that Labor will deliver.

Mr PAYNTER (Bass) — It is my absolute pleasure to stand up and speak on the budget, which is something that I have been looking forward to, but I must say not as much as I was looking forward to the day that the Treasurer was to present his very first budget to this house. There are times in your life where you think, 'This is my opportunity. This is my day to shine, because I am the new Treasurer and I am going to deliver my first budget. The house is going to be listening. The state of Victoria is going to be waiting on every word I speak. This is my day. I have studied so long. I did the books at university, I did the books for the union, and I did the books at home. This is my day. I am finally the Treasurer of the state of Victoria. I am going to deliver the budget. The house is waiting'.

What can I say? What an absolute failure he was. He finally got the football in his hands. The game was finishing. He had a shot at kicking a goal after the siren

went to win the game for his team. He was 20 metres out. He was dead in front of the goals. The ball was perfectly positioned. It was a brand new Sherrin. And what does he do? He kicks it out on the full and loses the game for his team.

That is what we have seen in the state of Victoria with this new Treasurer delivering a shocking budget for the state of Victoria. In fact the Premier and the Treasurer should both hang their heads in shame for dismally failing the state of Victoria. I was prepared to give them an opportunity. Being a new member of this house, I was prepared to give the government a chance. Give 'em a go! Let us see what they have really got for the state of Victoria and what they were going to deliver for the seat of Bass. I had heard many times that Labor governments lack leadership, they cannot manage finances and they do not deliver on their promises. So I waited on the day to listen to the budget, but what can I say to the people of Victoria now? The rhetoric about Labor governments has proven absolutely correct. Do not take my word for it as a new member. Let us have a look at the budget. Let us break it down. I am pleased to see in the chamber some of the new members of the house who obviously did not get to university for the budgeting 101 class. Let someone who knows a little bit about it give them a quick lesson on budgeting, because I think that was the day they probably waggged university. They clearly were not there for that class.

If you look at the budget papers, you will not see an infrastructure plan for Victoria other than a plan for not honouring contracts. Not honouring contracts is Labor's infrastructure plan for the state of Victoria. What Labor claims is infrastructure is unsolicited bids from private enterprise. What a disappointment for the state of Victoria this government is proving to be in the six months it has been here. It will continue to prove to be so in the next three and a half years, because we are stuck with substandard rail projects which are going to break the heart of the Melbourne CBD. The government is going to rip up Swanston Street for years — it does not even know how long it will take — to build a substandard rail project which will not deliver anywhere near the outcomes of the coalition's plan. Where is Infrastructure Victoria? I thought coming into the election that the then opposition had planned for Infrastructure Victoria to be an independent body which was going to assess Labor's infrastructure projects. I have not heard a squeak out of Infrastructure Victoria because it has not been properly formulated. If it was formulated, it would have nothing really to assess because there is nothing on the table. Nor is there a business case for any project that has been proposed.

In fact this budget's forward estimates show \$6.4 billion less than the coalition's plan for infrastructure for the state of Victoria over the next four years. For one of Australia's fastest growing states, the Labor government has failed to provide infrastructure not only for this year, not only for next year, not only for year three but also for year four. That amounts to a \$6.4 billion lack of infrastructure for the state of Victoria.

The government has even cut the country roads and bridges program. Country Victoria is going to suffer at the hands of this government because it only follows the tram tracks. When the tram tracks end, that is it for Victoria, because those opposite do not use any of the roads or bridges outside of the CBD. I do not think they know where they are.

Let us talk about a jobs plan. What jobs plan does the government have? It hands out \$1000 cheques to employers who are supposed to employ long-term unemployed and retrenched people — 'Here's a \$1000 cheque'. Those opposite have obviously never employed anyone, because everybody knows you cannot hand out \$1000 cheques and expect to create employment.

What else has the government done? It has created another two public holidays, which will cost small businesses thousands of dollars. That is the government's jobs plan. In its budget it predicts that unemployment will rise, killing small business. It is in the government's budget, and it is in government members' DNA. You can tell it is in their DNA. They have reduced surpluses. We projected surpluses, but they have cut them. They have made no commitment to cutting debt. It is an absolute disgrace. They have made no commitment to reducing unemployment. This is the highest taxing government in the history of Victoria. Shame on the government. Where is the money going to be spent? It will be spent on a 7 per cent increase in wages for the public sector. Who would not enjoy that?

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr PAYNTER — Let me talk about contingencies. That is a word we have heard often. Let me give members a definition. They only need to check the Australian accounting standards if they want a definition of contingency. Let me indulge the house. Australian accounting standard 137 states:

... the term 'contingent' is used for liabilities and assets that are not recognised because their existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence or non-occurrence of one or more uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the entity.

Contingencies are a farce because they do not exist. Those opposite are not committed to the line items that are in contingencies. They are promises that will never be delivered on.

Let me ask a question of the house. A couple of people on the other side of the chamber may well get this right, but let us see. How much would members say is allocated to contingent liabilities? Between \$0 and \$1 billion? No, of course it is higher. Maybe it is \$1 billion to \$2 billion in contingencies? No, it is higher. Is it \$2 billion to 3 billion? Is that the amount in contingencies? No. Is it \$3 billion to \$4 billion? Am I getting closer? In the year 2018–19 contingent liabilities measure \$4.193 billion under accounting standards that indicate they will never be delivered. Those opposite do not promise them and will not deliver them. We all know that. I do not know why they have them in there. This Treasurer should hang his head in shame.

Let me focus a bit more on my own seat, the seat of Bass, the people of whom are bitterly disappointed by this budget. This budget has failed to deliver or even match the commitments that the coalition government made to the seat of Bass.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr PAYNTER — Those opposite ask what they were. Let me take the house through them. We committed \$25 million to add a second floor to the Wonthaggi hospital. Another commitment that has not been matched by Labor is the \$2.3 million commitment to build the new Cowes fire station. That is nowhere in the budget. Another commitment that has not been matched by Labor is the \$1 million for the Cape Paterson Surf Life Saving Club. That is not in the budget. Also not in the budget is \$1 million to add a new administration and year 7 building to Pakenham Secondary College.

Let me get to the important point. Let me really hammer home what a shame and disgrace this government is. Twenty-one million dollars was committed to Wonthaggi Secondary College to help build the new Wonthaggi education precinct. That is not in the budget. It is another failed promise by Labor. Let me explain. On 30 September 2014 in the *Great Southern Star* Labor stated that the McBride campus of Wonthaggi Secondary College was in appalling condition. On 21 November 2014 in the *South Gippsland Sentinel-Times* Labor stated that out of the \$510 million committed to school projects a new Wonthaggi Secondary College will be built. On

22 November 2014 in the *Bass Coast Post* a state Labor candidate stated:

... the ALP has committed to spending \$510 million on upgrading state schools, including Wonthaggi's ...

When asked about this statement at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing on 12 May, however, the Minister for Education stated that funding for Wonthaggi was not a commitment made in *Labor's Financial Statement*. 'We are delivering on all our election commitments in full' is what he stated. That was followed up by Harriet Shing, a member for Eastern Victoria Region in the other place, stating on ABC radio that the state Labor candidate was misquoted. She said the statement was incorrect and that a correction was subsequently issued. Is that not interesting?

Perhaps she needs to speak to the editor of the paper, because he did not receive notice of a correction or a retraction. He is the one who interviewed the Labor candidate personally. He took down notes, which stated that Wonthaggi Secondary College would be built. It is a broken promise, and those opposite need to fess up. The school needs to be funded. I challenge the government to ring the editor and ask him about the retraction, because it simply did not happen. It is another Labor lie. This budget is a disgrace. This budget is a lie. This budget is a joke. This budget is a fraud. The vibe is all wrong. I will not be supporting this budget.

Mr EREN (Minister for Tourism and Major Events) — After that performance of the new member for Bass — I never thought I would say this — bring back Ken Smith! Again I never thought I would say this, but at least Ken Smith sometimes made sense. On occasion you give new members a bit of latitude on appropriation bills, but the member for Bass will have to sharpen his knives if he wants to get the Labor Party with some of the crap he just spoke.

I am pleased to speak in support of the Appropriation (2015–2016) Bill 2015, and I begin by congratulating the Premier, the Treasurer and my fellow ministers on delivering a responsible first budget. The last four years saw Victorians face some difficult times. We saw cutbacks to TAFE, a health system in crisis and an education system left behind by both the Liberal-Nationals state government and the Liberal-Nationals federal government. This budget reflects the Andrews Labor government's commitment to fix the mess left by those opposite, a task that is never to be underestimated.

This budget is clearly for families. We come up with most of our policies by listening to communities to find out what they want from a Labor budget. Not only the candidates but the Labor Party itself consulted widely with communities, and they wanted a budget that concentrates on families and getting back to basics. It is a budget that gets on with restoring confidence in Victoria. We have delivered a budget that sees the biggest ever increase in school funding. Prior to the last election we said we wanted to make Victoria the education state, and we meant it, so we are providing \$730 million to fix our schools and keep them safe. We will save TAFE, create 100 000 jobs and relieve the overwhelming pressure on our hospitals.

This is my ninth budget as the member for Lara, with five in government and four in opposition. Over the course of my first four years the electorate of Lara and the wider community of Geelong were part of record investments made by the Bracks and Brumby Labor governments. Between 1999, when Labor came to government, and 2010 the Geelong region received over \$1 billion in funding from the state government, which is a considerable amount of money when you think about a state budget. We knew how important the region was to Victoria and Victoria's economy, and accordingly we made those investments.

I am proud that in my first four years as the member for Lara, when we were in government, my electorate received record amounts of money from a Labor government — \$350 million to be exact. That amount of money had never been allocated to that electorate. The money concentrated on education, with \$52 million over the four years, which was matched dollar for dollar by the federal government. We saw over \$100 million invested in education in the electorate of Lara. For four years under the watch of The Nationals and the Liberal Party coalition government there was a bit of a standstill and a lull in the momentum that had been building in the electorate.

I am proud the Andrews Labor government has announced key investments not only in my electorate of Lara but also in the Geelong region, and I will mention a couple of them. Northern Bay College is receiving \$6 million for its next stage of development, to rebuild its campus and to continue to work on the Corio-Norlane education regeneration project, which began under a previous Labor government. I am proud of the education investments that continue in my electorate.

Avalon Airport is a key driver of jobs in the economy, and the Andrews Labor government has guaranteed the future of the airport by signing an agreement with

Jetstar that secures operations for the next 10 years and expands passenger services. As part of the agreement, over the next 18 months Jetstar will increase the number of flights per day from five to seven and will fly to new domestic destinations, which is good news for Geelong and Victoria. Hopefully this will lay the groundwork for future expansion that will cement Avalon Airport as Victoria's second major passenger airport, including international carriers in future.

Sport is important. We made a number of election commitments, and one of them relates to Stead Park in my electorate, with \$100 000 to upgrade the pavilion and do other works. Support for the northern health hub is continuing, and for the wider Geelong region there are key investments, including \$70 million for Simonds Stadium, which is a fantastic investment in stage 4 of that development. We want to ensure that Simonds Stadium not only continues to hold the AFL events it does now but that it also expands its opportunities for other major events that could occur at that ground. We are keen to make sure the development goes ahead — full steam ahead — which is why we made that commitment, which will provide 90 jobs in construction and 320 jobs after completion.

There is \$30 million for the Geelong Performing Arts Centre, \$3.15 million for the Queenscliff sports precinct, over \$30 million for upgrades and rebuilds across multiple Geelong schools, \$13.5 million for the Portarlington safe harbour, \$3 million for stage 2 of the Leopold Community Hub project and the recently announced \$115 million for the Waurin Ponds stabling and maintenance yard for V/Line trains. The regional rail link will be online soon, and it is the largest rail infrastructure investment in the nation. It was proudly announced and funded by previous Labor state and federal governments. It is \$4.3 billion of investment in rail infrastructure, and we look forward to it being online soon.

Investment in my portfolios of tourism and major events, sport and veterans will have great benefit not only for my region but right across Victoria. Providing a boost to our major events bids and building the best sports and conference venues in Australia will attract more visitors to our state. This budget includes provision for stage 2 of the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, with an allocation of between \$190 million and \$210 million, which will create hundreds of jobs. That significant expansion will ensure that Victoria will continue to boast that it has Australia's largest convention and exhibition space. The convention centre is the reason Victoria is the national leader when it comes to staging lucrative major business events, contributing some \$274 million

towards Victoria's economy each year. New facilities interstate mean we have to work harder to stay no. 1. I was recently in South Australia, which has refurbished its conference centre, and Sydney is hot on our heels in wanting not only some of the major sporting events we have but also some of the business events, which is why it is investing millions of dollars in its conference centre as well. This government's investment is a key strategy in ensuring that Victoria continues to lead the way.

The budget invests an additional \$80 million to safeguard our status as the events capital of Australia. I am proud that the Premier and I recently announced an additional \$80 million for our war chest to make sure we retain all the major events we have and enhance opportunities going forward. That \$80 million over four years will go a long way. It is on top of the current \$42 million annually, so there will be a total budget of \$62 million per annum going forward to attract further events to Victoria. We want to concentrate not only on Melbourne but on regional centres around the state. That will go a long way to making sure we continue to be both the sporting and the events capital of the nation.

Victoria is already the home of the Australian Open Tennis Championships, the Australian Formula One Grand Prix and the Spring Racing Carnival, and we will soon add the International Champions Cup soccer tournament to our calendar as well, but we cannot become complacent — we need to be mindful of the envy the rest of the nation and indeed the rest of the world feels for some of our major events. This boost will help our state bid for more events, which in turn will keep our hotels full, our restaurants and bars buzzing and our economy strong. It will mean more jobs and a stronger state.

Major events are key drivers of Victoria's tourism and are the state's second largest export, behind education. Tourism generates some 205 000 jobs and delivers more than \$19 billion to the economy annually. A lot of that is from business events, which boast the greatest yield of all tourism sectors as delegates routinely spend up to six times as much as holiday-makers.

I also make brief mention of the Victorian Visitor Economy Review. It is the first study of its kind in nearly two decades to inquire into the major events of Australian and international cities. We will use the review to map out a plan to help Victoria grow its tourism and major events potential. We all know the significance of sport to the lives of Victorians: it is about quality of life, which is why we are the world's most livable city and Australia's sporting and events capital, and we want to keep it that way.

Community sport is at the heart and soul of our suburbs and towns, and it brings families and locals together. This budget will upgrade facilities across the state to help these clubs to grow. This budget establishes a \$100 million Community Sports Infrastructure Fund to help local clubs upgrade tired grounds and build the facilities they need. Even though women are joining community sports clubs in record numbers, women's change rooms are often run down or non-existent. Every player deserves equal facilities, which is why an important part of our election policy platform was our commitment of \$10 million to build and upgrade women's change rooms at grounds and sports centres across the state.

Another very important sport to our state is netball. Netball is one of Melbourne's fastest growing sports, and the budget provides \$9.6 million to build 64 netball courts in inner city Melbourne so that clubs can keep up with the demand and can keep the sport growing. The budget also provides \$2 million for the continuation of the country football and netball program. We are also very mindful of the nightmare scenario of a player, spectator or volunteer going into cardiac arrest at a sporting field. Apparently this happens regularly, so the budget provides \$2.7 million to make 1000 lifesaving defibrillators available to sports clubs across the state to enable spectators and players to step in until paramedics arrived.

The budget provides \$31.5 million to upgrade Eureka Stadium so that it can host AFL games. There is also \$25 million allocated to develop the state cricket centre at the historic Junction Oval in St Kilda to create a new home of Victorian cricket, which will free up the MCG for the start of the AFL season. We are also contributing \$150 000 to the St Kilda Football Club so that it can undertake planning works for a move back to its spiritual home ground at Moorabbin. Not only is this a strategically important move but the club also really wants to move there, so we want to make sure that we get this right. The allocated \$150 000 will make sure that we do get it right.

An active family is a healthy family, which is why the budget provides \$14 million to encourage more people to get outdoors, take up a sport and maintain a healthy lifestyle. The active communities participation package also supports high-performance athlete development and helps people living with a disability to participate in activities.

I make mention of my very important portfolio of Veterans on the special occasion of the 100th anniversary of World War I. Our veterans protected us, and it is our job to protect them. We will

make sure that veterans and their families get the help that they need to maintain a decent standard of living. They have earned our support for the rest of their lives. The 2015–16 budget provides \$1 million to host the Vietnam veterans parade in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan and to host other associated commemorative activities. The budget also provides \$400 000 to support the wellbeing of veterans and their families by working with the RSL to safeguard the welfare of the men and women who served our country. The budget also includes \$5 million for Anzac centenary commemorations.

In this centenary anniversary year of the Gallipoli landings these initiatives will allow a generation of Victorian families to feel the spirit and hear the stories of war that are integral to our nation's history and story. The Anzac centenary education roadshow *Victoria's Journey of Remembrance* will be extended. The travelling education program uses videos, speakers and live performances to teach students and families about Australia's history of war. Anzac centenary major grants and Anzac centenary community grants programs will also continue to give communities across Victoria the opportunity to apply for funding for projects that commemorate the service of World War I veterans.

In the face of tough economic times the Andrews Labor government has certainly shown itself to be a reliable government for the people of Victoria. Unlike the budgets of the last four years, this is a budget that Victorians, especially those in Geelong and my electorate of Lara, can be excited about. I am proud to say that I totally support this budget. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran) — It is a real privilege to be able to speak in the debate on the Appropriation (2015–2016) Bill 2015 not only in order to give a budget reply but also to outline the vision of the Greens. We are not here to be just a second opposition; we are here to set a high standard and outline our clear vision for Victoria. Our vision is based on fairness, opportunity and equality, with an economy that is clean, smart and innovative and that creates meaningful jobs.

The first topic I want to touch on is TAFE. I am the Greens TAFE spokesperson, but it is also an important issue to me as a former TAFE student at good old Frankston TAFE. As the member for Frankston would know, it is a quality TAFE — and do not ever say that a liberal arts diploma will not get you anywhere, because it will get you somewhere. I know this government is committed to saving TAFE with its TAFE Rescue

Fund, because what the TAFE sector has endured recently is an absolute travesty — but it is a travesty that started in 2008 under the previous Labor government's marketisation policy. This policy forced our quality public TAFEs to compete with private providers.

It has not just been an adjusting issue; it has been an utter failure and an utter fiasco. Course fees are up, quality standards are down and there have been cost blowouts. By every measure this has been a failure. When the coalition came to office it threw fuel onto the fire with devastating TAFE cuts. I know this government wants to save TAFE, but what it really needs to do is to end this failed marketisation policy in vocational education and training. It is an utter failure. We need to back our TAFEs that have served us so well. If there are issues around meeting flexibility and skills shortages, rather than trash our TAFEs we should back them to act on those issues.

Further on education, the Prahran high school is the no. 1 issue in the Prahran electorate, and I welcome the government's commitment to that school. Yesterday we had the announcement that unfortunately it will not be going ahead at the Victorian College for the Deaf site, and obviously that is disappointing. It was clear from the assessments that it was the best site. It had a lot of advantages, but there are a lot of opportunities at the Swinburne site. The Prahran high school has a real opportunity to become a shining light in public education and an accessible, high-quality school for the students of Prahran. That is why we need to secure the site as soon as possible and for the government to start engaging with the community. That is how we will get a great school. The community wants to be involved with the school, it wants buy-in, so I ask that formal consultation begins because that is what the community wants.

Schools need infrastructure but they also need recurrent funding. We require needs-based funding for all our schools and all our students. That is why it was so disappointing and a huge mistake that the Parliament passed the bill in relation to private school funding, which allocates an arbitrary figure to private schools regardless of their needs against the needs-based principles of Gonski. Gonski was sector blind. It did not matter which type of school you went to. Now a New South Wales conservative government has moved away from these arbitrary figures and gone with a funding model that matches the national school partnership. It does not make sense. Now if we want to go back, we will have to do it through legislation. It was a terrible mistake. We also need to commit to years five and six of the Gonski funding. We cannot go to the federal

government to argue about Gonski if we are not prepared to commit to years five and six of that funding. That is what we need to make sure that not only are our schools built but that they are run effectively and students get what they need.

Education is the key to opportunity and the smart economy. We need a clean and innovative economy, and addressing climate change is the challenge of divorcing economic growth from carbon emissions. The way to do that is to plan for the future and shut down our coal-fired power plants. We must be proactive. In the last sitting week the government and the opposition ridiculed and criticised the Greens for its plan to shut down the Hazelwood and Anglesea power stations. I think the Attorney-General was disappointed that he might miss out on watching Carlton on the television, or something along those lines, although it is probably best that he does not watch Carlton on the TV. But then Anglesea was shut down. The market decided, and the government was left flat-footed and without a plan. The government has to be proactive. What will happen with Hazelwood now? Will the government be proactive and formulate a plan for Hazelwood?

The government needs to shut down the coal-fired power plants, plan for transition and plan for renewable energy. That is the key. Instead of criticising the Greens, the government should act on what we are saying for renewable energy, because that is the future for a clean, innovative economy. We need to be proactive and increase the feed-in tariff for households, assist with funding for large-scale renewables with a green bank, and fund transition packages before the inevitable closure of the power plants. That will create jobs and skilled manufacturing. Science and research in other industries will play a key role in the future of a clean economy.

Public transport infrastructure is key to creating high-skilled manufacturing jobs at a time when the car industry is shutting down. The government's order for rolling stock and its rolling stock strategy does not cut it. We need to order 50 trams and get production started now. We need to get output increased from the Bombardier factory in Dandenong. There are 500 jobs there. The current output from the factory is 10 trams a year. That output will not change with the government's order. We should up the order now so there is an output of 20 trams a year from the Dandenong factory, which will create jobs. We should not just wait until the end of the government's term in office and then push back the order for the other trams until after the next election. We need high-capacity trams.

Tram services in Prahran are already overcrowded. Tram route 8 is at over 100 per cent capacity. We need high-capacity trams on this route and not have it merged with other routes as has been suggested. A reduction in bus routes has already been scrapped due to community pressure. I urge the government not to go ahead with the route 8 merger and to order 50 new trams now.

Also missing from the budget is funding for South Yarra station, which is one of Melbourne's most overcrowded train stations. It has one entrance, which is always overcrowded; trains that are full on arrival; no bike parking; and dangerous intersections. We have 10 000 people moving into South Yarra every year and a high-rise urban renewal area right next door. We need to invest in South Yarra station and to get the north entrance up and running. Land is already set aside for it, and I urge the government to commit to that second entrance. There is also the issue of the interchange with Melbourne Metro. We heard the doomsday scenario from the government regarding the connection, but I do not buy it at the moment. I do not see why we can have underground connections at Flinders Street and at Melbourne Central, but we cannot have one at South Yarra station. I will be asking the government to go back to look at how the connection with South Yarra station can be achieved.

We have seen a fair bit of change in the views of the coalition about South Yarra station. When I was on Stonnington City Council we urged the coalition government to have the connection put in. Later in its term in government it had a second position when it proposed a connection at South Yarra station, but the line was to be rerouted somewhat west of Flinders Street. Then after the election its third position was to adopt the sensible Greens' position and have a South Yarra interchange at Melbourne Metro. I welcomed that, but if the coalition is fair dinkum about the South Yarra station connection or any public transport, it would adopt another Greens policy and ditch the east–west link, because no party can have any credibility on public transport while it still has the \$18 billion east–west link as a policy.

We need to look at how we fund our public transport infrastructure. We need a more transparent and cost-effective way of funding major infrastructure, with manageable public debt at a time of record low interest rates, and not these secretive public-private partnership deals where taxpayers pay through the nose and for years to come do not know how much they are paying on projects that are essentially too big to fail. What happens when the consortium goes belly up? We will have half a road and half a tunnel. We need to look at

value capture over cuts to services, and public asset dividends and management rather than asset sell-offs. The port of Melbourne is a vital public asset, and we will be opposing its sell-off. Of course we need that vital federal funding for public transport, which the federal Liberal government refuses to provide.

I will touch on a few local issues. I am glad to see that there is \$400 000 going to Prahran Mission. I would like to see that money used for the purpose-built drop-in centre that unfortunately had to close under the previous government due to changes to mental health funding. I welcome commitments to review Punt Road and the public acquisition overlay. That overlay is unnecessary. It is based on a 1960s freeway plan that should never happen, so I am glad to see that a review is in the budget.

I welcome the creation of the Office of Equality. Of course the Greens were the first party to have an equality spokesperson, and it is good to see that both major parties are again following the lead of the Greens. A sum of \$10 million over four years is a good start, but obviously other areas are going to need investment. Support for legislative changes in adoption, official documents for transgender people and the Equal Opportunity Act is vitally important. It is also important to fund the critical services at the Royal Children's Hospital gender dysphoria service, where there is a far too long waiting list for young people.

To conclude, this budget is of course representative of this government — a government that wants to achieve things but is not quite taking the necessary steps to do it. It wants to save TAFE but it will not abandon the failed market contestability model that is destroying it. It wants to become the education state but walks away from the principles of Gonski and needs-based funding. It wants to support clean energy but will not shut down Hazelwood, our dirtiest power plant, or have a permanent ban on coal seam gas. It wants to support public transport but not build Doncaster, Rowville or airport rail. All the major toll road projects are going to get built before any public transport projects. It wants to support equality but is still leaving in blanket exemptions for religious organisations and schools to discriminate. It wants to improve integrity but is still happy to accept donations from developers.

The Greens have a clear vision for this state — a clear vision for a more livable Prahran and a society with fairness, opportunity and equality at its heart supported by a smart, clean, innovative economy. That is the standard we will hold this government to, and that is what we will work towards in this Parliament.

Mr SCOTT (Minister for Finance) — After that intriguing speech, I want to start my contribution to the debate on the Appropriation (2015–2016) Bill 2015 by referring as Minister for Multicultural Affairs to something I hope all members in this house are strong supporters of: multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is truly the state's greatest asset. It is a fantastic aspect and traditionally has broad support across this chamber. Long may that be so. This is a fantastic budget for multiculturalism. This budget allocates \$74 million over four years to multicultural affairs, which represents the single largest investment in that area in the state's history. If you factor in what that will mean in terms of the total budget allocation over the four-year estimates period, it is \$121.6 million. In that sum all election commitments in multiculturalism have been honoured by the Labor government.

Victoria will continue to lead the way as the multicultural capital of Australia — in fact, perhaps as the multicultural capital of the world. There will be significant funding, including \$13.2 million over four years, for community capacity and participation. This is to support ethnic and multicultural organisations to respond to their community's needs, including settlement and participation of newly arrived migrants and the needs of ageing migrant communities. There is \$21 million over four years to promote social cohesion and community harmony. This is to provide support for initiatives that promote intercultural understanding and for cultural events festivals that celebrate and preserve Victoria's cultural diversity.

There is \$2 million over four years for multicultural access programs that provide a range of initiatives that continue to enhance the way government responds to and supports Victorians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD). This is particularly important in terms of those Victorians for whom English is a second language — a large number of Victorians who deserve to participate fully in society like the rest of the community. There is \$11.1 million over four years for a Community Infrastructure and Cultural Precincts Fund. This is to refurbish community facilities for improved access by multicultural groups and to enhance cultural precincts to promote local heritage, business activity and tourism. Victoria's cultural precincts are something we can really be proud of. There are a number close by, including Chinatown, the Greek precinct around Lonsdale Street and a number of other cultural precincts which I will get to in moving to the detail of the budget.

As I said earlier, the total new funding in this budget is \$74 million over four years. It is important to note that all lapsing programs which we had been left — there

were a large number of lapsing programs of the former government — have been re-funded. Not a single program has been cut in multicultural affairs. That is a very important aspect of our budget. There has been some change in terms of how the funding in grant programs has been represented in the budget, and I think it is useful to put on the record how that has been represented. In promoting social cohesion and community harmony, there is just over \$6 million in 2015–16 that rolls together the promoting community harmony grants, which include multifaith and interfaith grants, the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) festivals and events grants and the Unity Through Partnerships grants funding. Then there is the Community Infrastructure and Cultural Precincts Fund, which is \$5 million in 2015–16. That includes the Victorian Multicultural Commission building facilities and improvement grants and the Multicultural Community Infrastructure Fund.

There is also community capacity and participation funding, which includes just under \$8 million in the coming financial year. That includes settlement coordination funding, VMC organisational support and education grants and CALD senior organisational grants. Can I just say how important it is for our senior citizen community groups from a non-English-speaking background to have the often small amounts of money that allow participation in social activity. It plays a critical role in preventing social isolation, particularly as people age and lose a second language. Often English is a second language, so as people age they commonly lose their second language and can only communicate in the language of their birth. It is very important to support those senior citizen organisations that provide the wonderful outreach of a place where people can participate, socialise and gain the socialisation we all need.

The VMC community strengthening grants are also included under community capacity and participation. The refugee action program, including its rights and responsibilities seminar program, and the asylum seeker support program, are also included in the community capacity and participation funding of just under \$8 million, as are the new and emerging community leadership program, the funding to support programs related to East Timor, the peak multicultural organisations fund and the core grant to the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV).

The ECCV has been supported by governments of different persuasions and includes representatives from across the political spectrum. It is an important community organisation that plays a critical role in representing multicultural communities. The VMC has

an important representative function, but the ECCV is the most significant non-government agency and plays a role as the peak body representing the wonderful, diverse communities of Victoria.

There is also funding of \$835 000 in the upcoming financial year under the multicultural access program, which I previously alluded to, including language services support for the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters, the peak body that regulates the standards around translation and interpretation, cultural competence and cultural diversity plans. If you look at the budget, you see it funds a wonderful series of initiatives. I will be openly and specifically bipartisan by saying this builds on a long tradition in Victoria of support for multicultural affairs across governments. It has been an absolutely standout aspect of the Victorian political culture that there has been broad support for multicultural affairs, and I would say that applies to Victorian society. Across community leaders there is strong support for this in Victoria.

The Scanlon Foundation undertakes significant research in this area.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr SCOTT — It is research into social cohesion — although I should not respond to interjections — and the acceptance of diversity and the level of racism in society. It was found that Victoria has the strongest support for multiculturalism of any mainland state in Australia. It is a fantastic tradition that we should all support. We in this place should never take this for granted. It is an absolutely critical part of our community, and one that I hope will bring together members of this house across the political divide, because it is utterly critical to the future success of Victoria, including its economic success.

Part of the success of multiculturalism is the important bridging role that people of a non-English-speaking background play in facilitating trade between this community and other communities. They can play a bridging role across different business cultures and ensure that our economy grows stronger. It is not just a social benefit but a significant economic benefit. However, fundamental to it is a commitment that is reflected not only in this budget but also in former budgets — although I would say this budget makes the strongest investment in multicultural affairs — to the common dignity of all human beings.

The people of Victoria and the political system recognise that those of different backgrounds deserve

our respect and support. We accept cultural differences as the expression of fundamental human dignity and something to be celebrated. We do not just tolerate diversity in this state — it is not a stone in our shoe which we put up with; it is something we celebrate, love and embrace. This budget reflects that commitment, a commitment that has been shared across the house over a long period of time.

To return to some of the detail of the budget, obviously I also have responsibilities in finance. I will make some broad comments about the macro settings of the budget. As I am sure members are aware, it is delivering a \$1.2 billion operating surplus in 2015–16, growing to \$1.8 billion in 2018–19, with a reduction of net debt from its June 2014 peak of 6 per cent of gross state product (GSP) down to 4.4 per cent of GSP in 2019. There is some change: it should be noted that there is a commitment of an average investment over the out years of the estimates period that is greater than the average \$4.9 billion that has been delivered over the past 10 years.

I must admit I was highly entertained by the contribution of the member for Bass. It seems there is something special about the member for Bass in this place; there is a particular style that is inherent in being the member for Bass. It was an enjoyable contribution. The member noted that the budget forecasts lower operating surpluses than were forecast by the previous government. However, the previous government's projected surpluses were only achievable by restricting expenditure growth to just 2.5 per cent on average per year over the estimates period in the out years. We need to take into account population growth and inflation, and that figure is significantly below the rate of population growth. This more sustainable level of expenditure growth of 3 per cent will underpin quality services in Victoria.

While I have time left, I will make a couple of comments regarding my electorate, because this is a fantastic budget for Preston, and in particular for students at the William Ruthven Secondary College. I note that the former Minister for Education is in the chair. Members who were in the previous Parliament may recall that school putting on a fantastic show in Queen's Hall. In fact I have never seen a school put on such a fantastic performance, so to speak, of really targeted lobbying. It was an impressive effort by members of the school community, who really worked hard. They deserve the \$10 million in funding in the budget. They have shown fantastic leadership.

The school community worked really hard and significantly increased the participation of its Victorian

certificate of education (VCE) graduates in higher levels of education. In fact from memory the levels of university participation of students from that school have just about doubled, and the school has developed special relationships with both La Trobe University and RMIT. Also from memory the percentage of the school's VCE graduates who go on to university is approaching 80 per cent. We are not talking about a school from a high-income area; we are talking about a school that represents some of the lower socioeconomic groups in Melbourne.

The school has had fantastic leadership, and members of the school community have worked hard to create opportunities for those students. Those students, teachers and parents deserve to have community facilities that match the commitment they have shown. It is fabulous that in this budget we have been able to meet the commitment we made prior to the election of providing \$10 million to upgrade the school buildings. It is fantastic that this budget delivers this for my community.

There is also a commitment for a feasibility study on returning the former Preston Girls Secondary College site to public education. That site is centrally located in the heart of Preston, right near train, tram and bus services. I hope to see in the future that facility returned to public education. Prior to the election the Labor Party committed to the feasibility study, and it is fantastic that this budget delivers on that commitment.

I now turn to the finance area. Finance can be a relatively dry area of the budget — —

Mr Pesutto — Really? Not at all!

Mr SCOTT — Not at all.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr SCOTT — I have left the best part until last, yes indeed. I will ignore interjections at this point. Finance is utterly critical to the success of government. Essentially the Treasury has the macro settings, and finance is much more concerned about how successfully within government services are delivered. There are also the large public sector financial corporations. I will touch briefly on WorkSafe. The Labor Party went to the election with a commitment to not take a dividend from WorkSafe but only use funding for certain purposes, and it has honoured that commitment with this budget. I am sure many people thought that would not happen.

I note — and it is in the budget papers — that in future years the government will be utilising the surplus funds

out of WorkSafe, but it will only do so for the purposes for which it has allocated. They include things like reducing premiums. There was a strong tradition under the previous Labor government of reducing premiums, which has a benefit of reducing the cost of employment and improving benefits. The Labor Party has already given a commitment within the first 18 months of office to introduce legislation to provide for presumptive rights for firefighters, both career and volunteer, and also to improve occupational health and safety. I note that putting the 'safe' back in WorkSafe is something this government is particularly committed to.

I have been lucky enough as minister to attend the graduation of a new group of inspectors — from memory, I think there are 16 occupational health and safety inspectors and 4 return to work inspectors — and we will be working hard in that area. There has also been a commitment to expend funds for the benefit of the health of the Victorian workforce, and announcements have been made about the re-establishment of WorkHealth, which was a fabulous initiative of the previous Labor government. Todd Harper, a very distinguished Victorian, has agreed to chair a working group on that initiative.

In conclusion, I say that this is a fantastic budget. I will return to multiculturalism. This is the strongest ever budget in support of multiculturalism, Victoria's greatest asset and something I know is supported across this house.

Mr D. O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) — I stand to speak on this budget a little bit like I did last year in another place, where I stood and said, 'This is a classic coalition budget'. Then it was a budget that cut debt, reduced red tape, cut taxes and delivered services in country Victoria. Today I stand here, after a Labor budget being delivered, and say this is a classic Labor budget, but for all the wrong reasons. I have heard plenty from members on the other side saying, 'This is a great Labor budget'. It is a great Labor budget because, once again, it does what Labor does: it stuffs up the finances and completely ignores regional Victoria.

I want to give a bit of an overview of the budget generally. For a start, in its first budget Labor has halved the budget surplus it inherited. It is down from \$2.3 billion to \$1.2 billion. If it can do that in six months, heaven help us when we look over the next four years. I am not sure what will happen.

Mr Pesutto — We ain't seen nothing yet!

Mr D. O'BRIEN — I hope the member for Hawthorn is wrong when he says, 'We ain't seen nothing yet', but the portents are not good early in the government's term. In terms of strategy, we have seen the government embrace higher debt. The coalition strategy was to reduce debt as a percentage of gross state product; the Labor strategy is to maintain debt basically at the same level. We have also seen that whilst the coalition government had a commitment, and indeed the previous Labor government had a commitment, of a minimum \$100 million surplus annually, this Labor government has scrapped that proposal. We have seen infrastructure spending cut by \$6.4 billion over the forward estimates — significant and important infrastructure that this state needs. As the Leader of the Opposition has said many times, Melbourne is growing by 100 000 people a year, yet we have seen a reduction in the amount being spent on infrastructure.

We are seeing expenses growing again, at about 3.4 per cent. More particularly, employee expenses will go up 7.1 per cent this year. We are told by the Treasurer and the rest of those opposite that that is just for one year and that, 'We'll get it under control again after one year'. I can think of a couple of unions that might have something to say about that. Once again, we look to see whether employee expenses are brought back under control and come under 7.1 per cent after next year, because if they did I would be very surprised. We know that Labor has a lot of payback to make. A lot of people in the union movement supported it very strongly, and they will be looking for their pound of flesh. I am sure the Labor government will find that very difficult to resist.

We have new taxes, despite the promise that there would be no new taxes. The government has renewed the stamp duty surcharge on foreign buyers. Already we have heard this week, and we have talked about it when debating previous legislation, how in trying to raise money Labor has stuffed it up. It has managed to mess up this new tax and has found that although it probably thought with glee that it had a new tax that it could say met its election commitment because it was a tax on people not from Victoria, it found that this would in fact have severe unintended consequences and that it would be putting up prices for first home buyers from those developers who are in the majority foreign controlled. Labor has already been forced into a fairly embarrassing backdown on that. We have seen that proposal messed up already.

There are a number of commitments that are unfunded right throughout the budget. We have heard other speakers talk about the Melbourne Metro rail line.

There are plenty of other examples where Labor has made commitments but simply has not funded them in this year's budget. I refer to the Mernda rail extension, the Thompsons Road duplication, and school asbestos removal. The Minister for Education says, 'We're going to get rid of all asbestos by 2020', but he has not funded the promise. Tech schools will get \$12 million of a \$125 million promise.

While one of my Gippsland colleagues, the member for Morwell, is in the chamber, I will say that I look forward to Labor discovering where Gippsland is. Tech schools have been promised for Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong and various other towns, cities and suburbs. But Gippsland is just Gippsland; it is that spot somewhere east of Melbourne! The government says, 'We're not sure exactly what Gippsland involves. It's something down there. We've heard of it. We know there's a region there, and we're going to work out later at some stage what the actual towns and location of it will be'. There are number of promises that have not been fully funded.

We have had reviews on the never-never. In the last couple of weeks I have had the pleasure of being on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) and attending its budget estimates hearings and listening to ministers saying what they have been saying, giving us the spin and wasting time in responding to interminable Dorothy Dixers, and points of order being raised by Labor members of the committee. The thing that struck me the most was the number of times a minister said, 'We're sending that off to a review', or, 'We've set up an advisory committee that's going to advise us how to do this', or, 'We've got a consultant being brought in to design a program for this'. This is not a party that was ready for government. This is a party that has come in and developed the mirror culture: it is going to look into it all. So many of these things have been put on the never-never. We are not going to see many of these promises delivered. I hate to think what the cost of them will be in the out years, because so many of them are funded for just one year.

Just on that, a couple of times during the PAEC hearings I was quite surprised to hear ministers make comments about future budgets. An answer about the fox bounty was one. The Minister for Agriculture was asked about the fox bounty and where the funding is for that in the out years. 'Well, that will be funded next year', she said. I was a bit surprised at that. Another one was rail maintenance. We asked the Minister for Public Transport, 'Where is the funding for the major rail maintenance in the out years?'. 'Oh, that will be in next year's budget', she said. I got cat calls from across the table from Labor members, saying, 'Don't you realise?'

We have a budget every year'. I was surprised at that, because I thought we had a four-year budget cycle for a reason, which is to give people certainty and give programs certainty and stability. Yet Labor is now saying, 'Trust us, this is an ongoing program. We'll fund it next year'.

I want to turn now to my own electorate of Gippsland South. It is a mixed budget for Gippsland South. We have \$7.6 million to complete the Sale Specialist School. This project was started by the coalition. We had 11 years of Labor, and the community could not get that government to take any interest in this project. It was Peter Ryan, the former member for Gippsland South and former Deputy Premier, who stepped up to the plate. I do not mean to reflect on the Chair at all, but the Acting Speaker was the Minister for Education at the time. He delivered for the Sale Specialist School community. We purchased a site and delivered \$4 million in last year's budget to start the Sale Specialist School project.

I give credit to the current Minister for Education, because he said that he would see this one through and he has delivered on his word. I am pleased about this. I believe it is the only non-election capital expenditure commitment in the education budget, and it came to Gippsland South. That is a very good outcome. We are very pleased that it has been funded, and we look forward to the new Sale Specialist School being delivered.

I also managed to discover through the estimates process that the Sale ambulance station is one of the ambulance stations that will be upgraded. These are two good projects, but it is only two out of many. The former government put \$16 million into the Macalister Irrigation District 2030 project, an important water-saving initiative that will deliver jobs and growth. It meets the goals of our future and helps our strong agricultural exporting sector. However, I was disappointed to hear from the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee that no business case has yet been received for the project. That is a surprise to us because I am 99 per cent confident that the previous Minister for Water had a business case for the Macalister Irrigation District 2030 project, so I am not sure what is going on there. It is somewhat concerning that the government may be reviewing this project. We are still waiting for it.

Likewise, the northern towns water project for South Gippsland is a very important project to shore up water security for Korumburra, Nyora, Loch and Poowong. It will connect those towns to the Lance Creek supply and

thereby through to the Melbourne supply. This is a \$21 million project. We received the business case too late to consider it in our budget, but it was intended that we would fund it had we been returned to government. There is nothing for this project in this Labor budget.

I have just given the Minister for Education a bouquet; I will now throw a brick bat at him. The coalition government had funded an upgrade for Korumburra Secondary College. We committed a further \$9 million to a full rebuild of the school, but the minister has ignored it in this budget, along with Leongatha Secondary College, which needs another \$1.5 million to finalise its upgrade. We spent \$10 million on that upgrade when we were in government. Labor has ignored both of those schools. These are very important projects which the South Gippsland community is really behind, yet Labor has done nothing for them.

I should perhaps be happy to have avoided the experience of my neighbour, the member for Bass, with Wonthaggi Secondary College. Labor's candidate promised they would fund that project. We have heard from the member for Bass that Labor has now walked away from that commitment. I have to say that no such commitment was given to Gippsland South at the election because the Labor candidate did not actually turn up in the electorate at all — at any stage. In fact she did not speak to the media, provide any media commentary or even put out a media release throughout the entire campaign. She was running against Peter Ryan, my predecessor. I have to say that at least Peter Ryan had a candidate running against him. I ran in a by-election in Gippsland South and Labor did not even bother turning up. That shows just how much Labor cares about Gippsland South. As I said, given how the Labor candidate for Bass messed up with the Wonthaggi Secondary College commitment, perhaps I should feel lucky that Labor did not turn up to Gippsland South.

More generally, I am concerned about the dearth of projects and funding in this budget for country Victoria. Just 1.7 per cent of the health capital budget is being dedicated to rural and regional Victoria. That is something that those opposite should be ashamed of. One regional project is being funded, and that is the Ballarat hospital. Just \$10 million out of a \$560 million capital program, or 1.7 per cent, is going to regional Victoria. Just 2.9 per cent of this budget's infrastructure capital spending is going to rural and regional Victoria.

An honourable member — It is a joke.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — It is a joke. What is more of a joke is that when we put this to the Minister for Public

Transport during the estimates hearing she said, 'You've got it wrong. You should listen because there are some really good projects'. She said that the Melbourne Metro project would be really good for rural Victoria. These are the depths to which the Labor Party has been forced to sink in this budget, because it has done so little.

In education, we have heard other speakers say that very few projects have been funded. In fact 81 per cent of the capital projects funded are in Labor seats. Of most concern for my electorate of Gippsland South and for country Victoria generally is the loss of roads funding. We had a 10 per cent cut to the roads maintenance budget. We have lost the \$160 million country roads and bridges program. This was a really good program delivered by the coalition government which has been cut altogether.

Most concerning, though, is the fact that the Labor Party has been going around over the last couple of years saying, 'We will deliver a billion dollars over eight years for rural and regional roads'. Let us leave aside for the moment the fact that that billion dollars is a significant cut compared to what the coalition government was delivering for rural and regional roads. The problem now though is that the Labor Party has not actually put that billion dollars in the budget. We asked the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, 'Where is this billion dollars?'. He said, 'We can't put it all in at once'. I said, 'I'm not asking you to put it all in at once. Just show us. Show me a page. Show me a budget paper reference that tells me where the billion dollars for rural and regional roads is'. He could not do it, because it is not there; it is a charade.

I will quickly run through a few other cuts to regional Victoria. The agriculture budget has been cut by 12 per cent. The wild dog bounty and the fox bounty are not funded beyond next year. Aerial baiting is not funded. The roadside pest and weeds management program is not funded beyond two years. Riparian management is not funded beyond next year. The regional development budget has been cut by 24 per cent. There is a cut to the regional expo. The trade budget has been cut by 61.5 per cent. Where is our future in regional Victoria? It is in exporting our great quality food and fibre, yet the trade budget has been cut. Indeed we do not have a trade minister at the moment; we are not sure who it is. I have already mentioned the \$160 million cut to the roads budget.

It is very concerning that once again this Labor budget focuses on its heartland in the city and looking after its union mates. It is no surprise from a party that holds no true country seats and which made no commitments in

many of the country electorates leading up to the election last year. It did not even bother turning up in the by-election for Gippsland South. This is a left-wing Labor budget. It has a lower surplus and higher expenses than the previous budget. It is from a party that cannot manage money, and it has nothing in it for country Victoria.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Workplace bullying

Mr SCOTT (Minister for Finance) (*By leave*) — On 26 May the member for Mornington asked me a question relating to workplace bullying. I can confirm that the WorkSafe Victoria website recommends that members of the public contact Victoria Police where an allegation of workplace bullying involves an assault or a threat of an assault.

ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Membership

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — By leave, I move:

That Mr Tilley be appointed a member of the Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee.

Motion agreed to.

APPROPRIATION (2015–2016) BILL 2015

Second reading

Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Ms PALLAS (Treasurer).

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — I am so delighted to speak on the Appropriation (2015–2016) Bill 2015 and talk in the few minutes we have before the conclusion of the day at 5 o'clock about how it is such an important budget for my community of Bendigo East. Of course as the Minister for Public Transport and the Minister for Employment I have been thrilled with the portfolio initiatives the budget provides, particularly the \$20 billion investment in public transport. However, I want to particularly focus on

the initiatives in my community of Bendigo East, because this budget delivers 100 per cent of the election commitments we made to the community at the election last November.

Just last week I joined community members at Epsom Primary School, who are so thrilled to finally have the opportunity to start the process of rebuilding the school. There has been \$5.7 million allocated to rebuild the school, a growing school that was badly neglected by the Liberal government when it rejected the pleas of that community until after Labor had made an election commitment to rebuild it.

Labor's commitments in education did not stop there. We have funding of \$6 million to replace the portable classrooms at Bendigo Senior Secondary College. We have \$1 million to start the planning for the new Kalianna School building. My colleague and friend the member for Bendigo West has been a champion of this project. It is great to see that program underway as well.

In the area of roads we have also made significant commitments to the community of Bendigo East. There is the major road project of \$17 million to duplicate Napier Street. It is the busiest arterial road leading into the centre of Bendigo. Do you know what? Back in 2010 this was a commitment of the former Labor government. Nothing was done on this important project during the four long years that the failed Liberal government was in office. It is the busiest road in Bendigo. It clogs up particularly during peak hour. It has taken the election of another Labor government, the Andrews Labor government, to get on with this important road project.

Also there are the intersection works in Strathfieldsaye, at the very busy intersection of Strathfieldsaye Road, Tannery Lane and Club Court, where we made a commitment to put in place major improvements to address the critical safety issues the community has been campaigning on. Again, members of the community were pleading with the former government to do something at this site. We made an election commitment to take action. The budget has delivered on that, and that work is also going to be underway. Another road project is the pedestrian crossing at Huntly, across the very busy Midland Highway. It is another community campaign I was very pleased to support during the election, and now I am even more pleased as the local member to be delivering on it in government.

In sport and recreation, another important area for Bendigo, \$5 million has been committed to the redevelopment of the Bendigo Stadium. When Labor

was last in government we extended the Bendigo Stadium. We are back in government, and we are going to extend it again. It is a terrific venue. Every day during the week it supports hundreds and thousands of kids and adults who play basketball, netball or volleyball. It is a place where major events are also held, and this significant expansion, with the support of the Bendigo Stadium and the support of the City of Greater Bendigo, is going to take the stadium to the next level. That is a project the member for Bendigo West and I very much look forward to delivering.

As I said, this is a budget that delivers 100 per cent of the election commitments we made to the community of Bendigo. There is the \$5 million for the Aspire Foundation project, which is going to be the next big civic project for Bendigo, around the forecourt of the Sacred Heart Cathedral. We really hope that this is a project that can secure support from the federal government as well, because as I said, it is the next major civic project for the city. It would be great to see that underway. These are the sorts of things Labor always invests in: key projects that support the community, support jobs and support the growth of the wonderful city of Bendigo. I am absolutely thrilled that this budget delivers on those key election commitments and continues to work with our wonderful Bendigo community.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The time set down for the consideration of items on the government business program has expired and I am required to interrupt business.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT
2015–2016) BILL 2015**

Second reading

**Debate resumed from 27 May; motion of
Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport).**

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

**STATE TAXATION ACTS AMENDMENT
BILL 2015**

Second reading

**Debate resumed from 26 May; motion of
Mr PALLAS (Treasurer).**

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

**COURT SERVICES VICTORIA AND
OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL 2015**

Second reading

**Debate resumed from 26 May; motion of
Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).**

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

**WRONGS AMENDMENT (PRISONER
RELATED COMPENSATION) BILL 2015**

Second reading

**Debate resumed from 26 May; motion of
Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).**

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The question
is:

That this bill be now read a second time and a third time.

House divided on question:

Ayes, 78

Allan, Ms
Andrews, Mr

McGuire, Mr
McLeish, Ms

Angus, Mr
Battin, Mr
Blandthorn, Ms
Brooks, Mr
Bull, Mr J.
Bull, Mr T.
Burgess, Mr
Carbines, Mr
Carroll, Mr
Clark, Mr
Crisp, Mr
D'Ambrosio, Ms
Dimopoulos, Mr
Dixon, Mr
Donnellan, Mr
Edbrooke, Mr
Edwards, Ms
Eren, Mr
Foley, Mr
Fyffe, Mrs
Garrett, Ms
Gidley, Mr
Graley, Ms
Green, Ms
Guy, Mr
Halfpenny, Ms
Hennessy, Ms
Hodgett, Mr
Howard, Mr
Hutchins, Ms
Kairouz, Ms
Katos, Mr
Kealy, Ms
Kilkenny, Ms
Knight, Ms
Lim, Mr
McCurdy, Mr

Merlino, Mr
Morris, Mr
Neville, Ms
Noonan, Mr
Northe, Mr
O'Brien, Mr D.
O'Brien, Mr M.
Pakula, Mr
Pallas, Mr
Paynter, Mr
Pearson, Mr
Pesutto, Mr
Richardson, Mr
Richardson, Ms
Ryall, Ms
Ryan, Ms
Scott, Mr
Sheed, Ms
Smith, Mr R.
Smith, Mr T.
Southwick, Mr
Spence, Ms
Staikos, Mr
Staley, Ms
Suleyman, Ms
Thomas, Ms
Thompson, Mr
Thomson, Ms
Tilley, Mr
Victoria, Ms
Wakeling, Mr
Walsh, Mr
Ward, Ms
Watt, Mr
Wells, Mr
Williams, Ms
Wynne, Mr

Noes, 2

Sandell, Ms

Hibbins, Mr

Question 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.

Waverley Gymnastics Centre

Mr GIDLEY (Mount Waverley) — My
adjournment matter is for the Minister for Sport. The
action is seek is for the minister to reverse the

government's decision not to fund Waverley Gymnastics Centre's redevelopment.

Waverley Gymnastics Centre is well known in my local community as well as in this Parliament. In 2013 and 2014 I raised the issue of the centre's redevelopment on a number of occasions in the house. Following those extensive representations to the then government, it put in place a process where ministers came out to visit the centre and further research was done, culminating in a commitment of a \$2 million contribution towards its redevelopment.

The Waverley Gymnastics Centre was well worthy of that. It is the biggest gymnastics centre in the state, with hundreds of children and their families using the centre each week. Indeed so popular are the centre's programs that there are more than 550 people on the waiting list to utilise it.

The people at the centre have worked hard for more than a decade on redevelopment plans to be able to accommodate more children's sport. They have worked hard, done the planning, worked with local government and done a business case. The project is shovel ready, but there is something extra-special about this sporting club and this shovel-ready project, and that is that a key element of the redevelopment plans include customised space and specialised equipment for special needs children, providing enormous cognitive, physical and social benefits for such children, as well as giving them the opportunity to participate in gymnastics and sport and body movement in those early stages of their lives, when we know that body movement is so important in their ongoing development. This redevelopment will give them that capacity.

The redevelopment was costed at approximately \$5.75 million. The coalition government committed to fund \$2 million of that. The City of Monash has committed to putting funding on the table, and the commonwealth government is also looking at the proposal, and I have made extensive representations to the commonwealth on the club's behalf. It is truly tripartisan funding, with funding from the commonwealth and a promise of funding from the former state government and the City of Monash. That is why I have taken a great interest in this.

As I said, the project is shovel ready, and for more than a decade the redevelopment plans have been underway with a business case prepared. The club is more than prepared and has put up its hand to self-fund in part. The centre will allow women's, children's and girls' sport to prosper in that centre. I call on the minister to

reverse the government's decision and to fund that \$2 million.

Taskforce Alexis

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Police and concerns the scourge of family violence. The action I seek is that the minister visit my electorate to meet with the staff behind Taskforce Alexis.

Earlier in the year I represented the minister at the launch of Taskforce Alexis at Moorabbin police station. Taskforce Alexis is the first initiative of its kind in Victoria and aims to break cycles of repeat victimisation as well as respond to incidents of mental health and youth-related crime. It focuses on families who have been brought to the attention of Victoria Police on family violence-related incidents on repeated occasions and as such on recidivist family violence perpetrators.

The task force is made up of police officers, a Salvation Army family violence clinician and a mental health clinician. It also includes youth resource officers, crime prevention officers, a Neighbourhood Watch officer and a firearms officer. The officers and staff working on Taskforce Alexis are passionate about the eradication of family violence, and they are doing just that. They provide a coordinated multidisciplinary approach to family violence, where both a police officer and the Salvation Army family violence worker or a mental health worker may attend to the family after an incident is reported. The family is supported through a number of services in our electorate, and at the same time Victoria Police has a zero-tolerance approach for breaches of intervention orders.

Taskforce Alexis is located at Moorabbin police station and services the three local government areas of Glen Eira, Kingston and Bayside. Recently I met with a member of Taskforce Alexis and a representative from my office met with the Salvation Army to get an update on the progress of this program. The task force has already achieved some great results. Some of those include a more effective response to families through a monthly case management round table comprising Victoria Police, family violence and children's services, mental health organisations, housing organisations and government departments. This enables all of the stakeholders to be involved in more effective and coordinated interventions for the most at-risk families.

Zero tolerance of breaches combined with appropriate and immediate supports, particularly the Salvation Army family violence worker, has led to a noticeable

decrease in recidivism in my electorate. While we eagerly await the results of the independent evaluation which will be conducted by RMIT University, the early results are very exciting. I ask the minister to visit Taskforce Alexis and receive an update on it.

Glenthompson Bricks

Ms KEALY (Lowan) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Energy and Resources. The action I seek is that the minister investigate why Glenthompson Bricks has seen its rehabilitation bond rise from \$14 500 to \$244 000.

Glenthompson Bricks is a small family-owned business and an important local employer for the Glenthompson community. The company has been producing bricks using traditional methods for 110 years, sourcing its clay from an adjacent pit. Its bricks are highly sought after for their beautiful red colours and heritage appearance. I have met with the owner, Simon Henry, who has raised great concerns about the red tape burden throughout the work plan review process, the resultant increases to the rehabilitation bond and the impact that this is having on his business.

Due to a recent review of the site work plan, the rehabilitation bond has dramatically increased, from \$14 500 to a staggering \$244 000. This is difficult to comprehend, given there has been very little change to the size or nature of the pit since the original work plan was developed in 1992.

Simon has been working with the relevant department to try to negotiate a solution and is currently undertaking extensive rehabilitation works. He has also previously engaged a consultant to assist with updating work plans and providing a geodetic report. The cost involved in this process has had a crippling effect on this business. The business stopped manufacturing in April in order to undertake rehabilitation works to meet requirements negotiated with the relevant department.

The heavy bureaucratic burden and the increased rehabilitation bond is causing great stress for the owners, who have expressed to me the difficulties experienced in negotiations and in communications to date. They are uncertain of where they stand currently and are concerned regarding the future of their business, a very important business for the Glenthompson community.

I call on the minister to urgently investigate why Glenthompson Bricks has seen its rehabilitation bond rise from \$14 500 to \$244 000 and to assist to ensure

that this important local business with a strong history can continue to operate.

Whittlesea Showgrounds and Recreation Reserves Committee of Management

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water. I seek action from her and her department to investigate the operations of the Whittlesea Showgrounds and Recreation Reserves Committee of Management.

The Whittlesea Showgrounds site is the lifeblood of the township of Whittlesea and is home to the Whittlesea Football & Netball Club, the Whittlesea Agricultural Society, the Whittlesea Men's Shed and the pony club. I declare that I have an interest here; I am a sponsor of the Whittlesea Agricultural Society and I am also a sponsor and advertiser with the football and netball club.

The Whittlesea Country Music Festival has been one of many other community activities that are held at this venue, as well as art shows. In fact the Whittlesea Showgrounds was a place of refuge and a Country Fire Authority staging area on that terrible day, Black Saturday.

The showground and reserves include an oval, a second oval, four change rooms, five pavilions and a men's shed. The facility is on Crown land and is operated by the committee of management. It cannot be understated how important this venue and facility is to the township; it is truly the centre of some of the most significant events in the Whittlesea township. It is also home to a weekly Monday morning market that is well supported and I understand very profitable. The market is operated by the committee of management, which is required to ensure that all users are treated fairly, which is very important to the people of Whittlesea in my electorate. However, by virtue of the reserve being on Crown land, the operations are also a matter for the government.

Over many years, and again most recently, I have had concerns raised with me and received queries about the management by the committee of management of the showgrounds. I am also aware of some of the activities and decisions by the committee of management that do not seem to be in the best interests of all users but seem to prioritise the needs of one group over others, being those of the Whittlesea Agricultural Society.

I value the work of all the volunteers of all the organisations who put in great work at this facility, and

none more than the agricultural society volunteers. It is a great show which is held over two days in November, and I note in particular the support for the children's pavilion, where children from throughout the northern suburbs enter their work in competitions.

In addition, the needs of children playing sport there need to be looked after, and I am not sure that that is what is occurring at the moment. The weekly market is on the same location where children play football, and the committee of management will not play any part in remediating this surface so that children can play on it.

There is also the matter of an off-leash park for Whittlesea — after two years and \$55 000 from the council. I ask the minister and the department to act.

Hungarian Community Centre

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. The action I am seeking is for the minister to confirm the provision of \$40 000 in capital upgrade funding which was allocated in the 2014–15 budget for the Hungarian Community Centre in Wantirna. I want to ensure that this will be made available and that the organisation is advised when that will occur.

The Hungarian Community Centre has been established in Wantirna since the early 1980s and has a membership base of over 1000 people. The centre comprises of three halls of various capacities, a restaurant and a chapel. It provides a welcoming environment for the Hungarian community from all over Victoria and hosts many different programs, including scouts, a Hungarian language school, needlework classes and weekly folklore dancing, together with events such as the Hungarofest and the highly successful Knox Multicultural Harmony Festival.

While the centre is run by a team of dedicated volunteers with the upkeep and ongoing maintenance of the centre funded through the fundraising efforts of the Hungarian community, the roofing requires urgent repairs to avoid further damage to the centre. Prior to the state election, the coalition government had allocated \$40 000 in the previous year's budget for a capital upgrade for the centre. This was to ensure that members could fix the issues with the roofing and that the centre was safe and available for the thousands of community members who use it. I have visited this community centre on various occasions. Many members of this house may have attended the centre in different capacities, given that it is rented out by a number of different community organisations. It is a

very popular facility. Márta Marót and her committee have done wonderful work at the centre.

The Hungarian community has given much to the Victorian and the Australian communities. Like many communities who have established centres within Victoria, it has not sought government investment to assist it with its organisation. Facilities like the Wantirna centre have been established through the hard work of the local members of the community. Given there was a recognition of a need to upgrade the facilities, particularly to deal with problems with the roof, the organisation applied for and was successful in being allocated funding. However, it is very unclear whether or not that funding will in fact be provided. The centre has sought advice through the Parliament. To date there is no clarification as to whether or not the centre will receive it. Therefore I wish the minister to advise the organisation as a matter of urgency what will happen to the money and when it will receive it.

Level crossings

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. The action I seek is an update from the minister on the recent release of expressions of interest for works on the Cranbourne and Pakenham lines and what effect the proposed works will have on the electorate of Oakleigh. As the minister is aware, the removal of level crossings is perhaps the biggest issue for people in the electorate of Oakleigh. These level crossings are dangerous, they waste the precious time of locals and they limit the ability to increase train passenger capacity.

I have mentioned the importance of this issue a number of times in this chamber and have met with the Premier, the Minister for Public Transport and the Treasurer regularly to press the case for action. I am proud to say that not only were they across the issue of level crossing removals in my community but they were well and truly committed to resolving it. This has been evidenced by the action taken in just six months of the term of this government. The electorate of Oakleigh has some of Melbourne's worst level crossings. Murrumbeena Road has twice been recognised by the RACV in its Redspot analysis as the worst traffic area in Melbourne. Others nearby also rank high on the list. I can inform the minister that the recent announcement of the removal of nine level crossings between Caulfield and Dandenong has been very warmly received in my community and obviously by me. The station rebuilds and the purchase of 37 new trains with a 50 per cent local build content are also very welcome.

Just in the electorate of Oakleigh, the removals include level crossings at Grange Road, Koornang Road, Murrumbeena Road and Poath Road. The nearby Clayton Road and Centre Road level crossings in Clayton are also on the list. I was delighted to see the Premier and the minister at Carnegie railway station a few weeks ago to make the announcement that these nine level crossings were on the list of the first 20 level crossing removals in this term of government. I was also delighted to see the Premier and the Minister for Public Transport in the neighbouring electorate of Bentleigh last week announcing that the government has awarded contracts for the removal of crossings on the Frankston line at North Road, Ormond; McKinnon Road, McKinnon; and Centre Road, Bentleigh. These level crossings also have a significant impact on people in my community who use these roads.

I am also incredibly pleased that the government has wasted no time in getting on with the job of delivering on its commitments, particularly on the Cranbourne and Pakenham lines. I look forward to an update from the minister on the works on the Cranbourne and Pakenham lines. I will be very pleased to welcome her yet again to the electorate of Oakleigh when the contracts for the projects are awarded and ongoing until the project is completed by 2018.

Western distributor

Mr WATT (Burwood) — My adjournment matter is for the Treasurer. The action I seek is for the Treasurer to reject any proposal to increase or extend tolls on CityLink or the Monash Freeway to pay for an alternative road on the other side of town. Recently media articles have identified that the Andrews Labor government wants to extend tolls on the Monash Freeway to pay for a new road in the western suburbs. Why should motorists on the Monash pay extra tolls for at least the next 40 years for a road most will never see or use? Generally commuters pay a toll for the road they are using, but in this case the Labor government wants commuters on the Monash to pay for a road that someone else will be using on the other side of town. While I agree that the people of the western suburbs need a second crossing over the Yarra River, which is why we committed to the east–west link, I do not think the residents of the Burwood electorate should be the ones to pay for it, particularly if they never use it.

Like a Nigerian email scam, the Treasurer promised a lot at the last election, but in the end eastern suburbs motorists are simply to be fleeced of their hard-earned money for the benefit of a scam artist. Why should we have to pay extra tolls on the Monash for a road on the other side of town that no-one knew about and no-one

in Burwood will ever see? The Andrews Labor government's plan to do a deal with Transurban to build the Premier's western distributor and stitch up motorists on the Monash by making them pay for it for the next 40 years is a plan that Victorians knew nothing about at the last election and certainly did not vote for.

I was amazed at the gall of the Treasurer when in a ministers statement he blamed Canberra for a lack of funding for infrastructure in Victoria, when the Andrews Labor government has cancelled three major infrastructure projects, one of which was funded, signed and had already begun. I suggest that instead of political pointscoring to deflect the ugly truths about the *Game of Thrones*-style internal factional infighting, the Treasurer take a leaf out of the Leader of the Opposition's book and work with the federal government in a meaningful and constructive way that does not disadvantage people from Melbourne's south-eastern suburbs. The residents of Burwood and surrounds are concerned that the Andrews Labor government had its head in the sand when the Leader of the Opposition had already negotiated a settlement on the issue of funding from the federal government.

I again call on the Treasurer to reject any proposal that would see residents of my electorate pay extra tolls on the road they use so the Treasurer can build a road for the residents of his electorate to use.

Cranbourne-Pakenham rail upgrade

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. The matter relates to the plan to upgrade the Cranbourne and Pakenham train lines that service my electorate. I ask the minister whether she can provide me with some information about the benefits these works will deliver to the commuters in Dandenong who have been struggling with services on these lines for the past few years. I note that my colleague the member for Oakleigh has raised a similar matter in this adjournment, which just goes to show the level of excitement about this project along the Cranbourne and Pakenham lines.

For those who are not familiar with this part of Melbourne's rail network, the Cranbourne and Pakenham lines service the south-eastern suburbs. They converge at Dandenong railway station, making it one of the city's busiest train stations. Too often we hear of commuters in the south-east facing long delays after yet another track or equipment fault. Too often these problems could be prevented by some solid investment in the creation of a modern rail network. When a fault affects this railway line it affects the whole south-east.

The flow-on impact on the network is significant, and Dandenong, situated at the centre of the network, is affected by every problem that impacts this train line.

When out and about in Dandenong and speaking with members of my community I hear consistent feedback about the public transport challenges local residents face and the frustrations they encounter on a daily basis as they commute to and from work. People tell me that they now often drive to and from work due to the overcrowding and unreliability of public transport, which only serves to clog up our road networks and add to fuel costs for families. It is concerning that in recent years many residents have lost faith in such a crucial service.

The challenges are real and sizeable, but so too are the opportunities for a more productive and more user-friendly transport system in the south-east. I am encouraged to hear that the Andrews Labor government is getting on with the job and is delivering on its election promises to the Victorian people. I am thrilled to see that the expression of interest phase has begun for the Dandenong to Caulfield level crossing removal package, and I know many people in my electorate will be impressed by the speed with which the minister has moved on this project.

Constituents in my electorate are keen to understand how this important project will re-energise the Cranbourne and Pakenham lines and improve their daily commute, and I am eager to share this information with them. The minister's assistance on this matter would be greatly appreciated.

Victorian Institute of Sport

Mr T. SMITH (Kew) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Sport regarding funding of the Victorian Institute of Sport. The action I seek from the minister is that he increase funding for the athletes at the Victorian Institute of Sport to the same levels as those of their colleagues in Queensland and New South Wales.

The Victorian Institute of Sport was formed in 1990 and has a proud history. Every Olympic gold medal won by Australia in the sport of rowing has been won by athletes from the Victorian Institute of Sport. I was fortunate enough to receive a scholarship to attend the institute for some years, and I can attest to its excellence and the esprit de corps that exists among the athletes who train there. Victoria, however, is being left behind by athletes from around the country.

Per head, athletes in New South Wales and Queensland, particularly those at the Australian Institute of Sport, receive far greater funding than their colleagues in Victoria. Athletes based in Melbourne are being left behind, which is a great shame given the proud sporting heritage that exists in this state. The issue of the inequity of the funding received by athletes based in Canberra has to be raised across the country. As I said, Victoria is being left behind. On the journey to Rio de Janeiro it is important that athletes be able to train in their home cities — for a lot of athletes that is Melbourne — to ensure that they have a work-life balance.

The key point is that athletes in Victoria are not being funded at the same level as those in other states. This has been the case for well over a decade. It means that the proportion of Victorian athletes winning gold medals has been decreasing for almost two Olympic cycles. This is concerning for a lot of people in the elite sporting community here in Melbourne and more broadly across Victoria.

I know the Minister for Sport is interested in these issues because I have raised them with him personally. I thought it important, however, that as we approach an Olympic year I put on the record my concern about the funding of the Victorian Institute of Sport. I know the minister shares my concerns about these issues. He has indicated that he wishes to discuss them further. I would be more than keen to do so.

Family violence

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, who is with us in the house, and concerns my Say No to Family Violence campaign in my electorate of Narre Warren South. The action I seek is that the minister join me in launching the campaign at Kambrya College next month. I will be joining with the school community to launch the campaign, which aims to raise awareness about the horrifying impact family violence has on many people in the electorate of Narre Warren South. Along with students and teachers, we will place our painted hands on banners to symbolise our united stand against family violence.

My electorate is located within the city of Casey, which sadly has the highest number of reported incidents of family violence in Victoria. Even more disturbing is that these figures continue to worsen each and every year. The latest figures reveal that in 2013–14 there were 3840 reported incidents of family violence in

Casey alone. Police estimate that incidents of family violence are vastly under-reported.

Our growing local community is wonderfully diverse, with local residents coming from more than 150 nations and many faiths. Sadly, too many are faced with the cruel reality of family violence. Our Say No to Family Violence campaign will give a voice to those impacted by family violence and will provide members of the wider community with the opportunity to stand together against family violence. I have asked many community groups, schools, neighbourhood houses, local organisations and community leaders to take part. The response has already been strong, and I know members of our community will stand proudly together on this very important issue.

All who take part will be given the opportunity to prepare a banner featuring their hand print and a unique message. The banners will then be displayed for all in our community to see. I hope there will be many banners proudly displayed throughout the electorate, symbolising our united stance against family violence. Our campaign will end with a vigil in early 2016 in commemoration of the victims who have lost their lives and those who continue to face adversity each and every day.

I know the minister and all members of the Andrews Labor government are committed to putting an end to family violence. Australia's first Royal Commission into Family Violence will finally give victims a voice, and I can assure them that we are listening. I hope we find some answers. The minister is doing a wonderful job, and I hope she will join me and the Kambrya College community in launching our Say No to Family Violence campaign in the Narre Warren South electorate.

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I refer to the adjournment matters raised by the members for Oakleigh and Dandenong. I note that the member for Oakleigh asked for an update, and clearly in *Rulings from the Chair* an update is not an action. I also note that the member for Dandenong asked for the same thing about the same rail line. I ask you to rule both matters out of order because they do not ask for an action. I ask you to rule the member for Dandenong's matter out of order also because she asked for the same thing as the member for Oakleigh, and it is not allowed that two members ask the same minister for the same thing. I ask you to rule both adjournment matters out of order.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! What section of *Rulings from the Chair* is the member referring to?

Mr Watt — 'Chapter 1 — Adjournment debate', on page 1 of *Rulings from the Chair*, December 2014, gives a suggested technique of finally suggesting an action sought, but an update is not an action. If you go to page 5, you see that asking a minister to continue to do something is not an action and that asking for an explanation is not an action. Another point on page 5 says that raising the same issue as another member is not allowed. Right throughout this section of *Rulings from the Chair* there are references to what is and is not an action, and the two matters raised are clearly not actions.

Ms Williams — On the point of order, Deputy Speaker, there was a distinction. The member for Oakleigh may have asked for an update; I asked for the provision of information about the project that I can share with my constituents. There was also a slight variation in the focus. From memory, the member for Oakleigh was focused on level crossing removals; I was asking about issues with the line more generally and how delays and congestion will be improved for my commuters, who are on a different section of the line and reap some of the worst outcomes from that congestion.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I thank the member for Burwood for raising the point of order, which highlights the nature and tight requirements of the adjournment debate. Having heard the views on the point of order and having taken advice, I rule that the point of order is not upheld, and I will explain why. According to *Rulings from the Chair* it is not admissible for a member to ask for continuing action, but the member for Oakleigh sought an action by asking for an update. The member did not ask for the continuation of an action; he asked for an update. Further, I take the point raised by the member for Dandenong. I listened to the requests for action made by the members for Oakleigh and Dandenong, and the two issues were different. However, I take the point — and it was well made — that we need to be careful about the way we raise matters and ask for actions during the adjournment debate.

Responses

Mr NOONAN (Minister for Police) — I am delighted to respond to the member for Bentleigh, who raised a matter in relation to his electorate and invited me to visit the electorate and speak with local police members about Taskforce Alexis. We are all keen to understand whatever we can about the issue of family violence and the various models currently being used, particularly those involving multiple stakeholders, to respond to family violence.

Members may have seen in the most recent weekend papers some commentary around Taskforce Alexis. To that end, given the member's commentary around the early effectiveness of the task force, as the minister I am pleased to learn firsthand about it as we go forward. Obviously there is an important body of work being done by the Royal Commission into Family Violence, but wherever we can do so, as ministers and members of Parliament we need to be alive to hearing firsthand the experiences of those working on the front line. I am happy to return to the member's electorate, having been to Centre Road, Bentleigh, with him previously to visit the community policing caravan. I will make arrangements to join the member for Bentleigh and speak to his local police members and anyone else who is able to attend on that day who may be involved in the work of the task force. I thank the member for raising the matter with me.

Ms RICHARDSON (Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence) — It is a great pleasure to respond to the member for Narre Warren South. I take this opportunity to congratulate the member on her dedication to her local community. She is absolutely determined to end the harm caused by family violence, and she is showing tremendous leadership within her community once again. I congratulate her on that.

As the member outlined, there have been 3840 family violence incidents in the city of Casey since 2012, which is up from 2408 in 2010. This rapid increase in the number of incidents is sadly being replicated across the state. As the member indicated, this is a significantly under-reported crime. Across Victoria in 2014 there were 24 500 breaches of family violence intervention orders, which was an increase of over 30 per cent on 2013. Tragically in Australia this year two women a week have lost their lives as a consequence of violence, which is up from one woman a week last year. For far too long family violence has stayed in the shadows and remained hidden from our focus and attention, but we know family violence is a whole-of-community problem and will need a whole-of-community set of solutions if we are to tackle the harm.

If we are to end the harm, we know we cannot do it on our own. We need to undertake this task across the community with important initiatives like this one. Campaigns like Say No to Family Violence not only allow members of the community to talk about this important issue and express their views but also fulfil an educative role and send the message that there is simply no excuse for violence whatsoever. Sadly for some within our community that message will not resonate, but for the next generation and the one after

that it is a message that can and will resonate with measures like the Say No to Family Violence campaign led by the member for Narre Warren South.

I thank the member for the opportunity to be part of this initiative. I will be at the event at Kambrya College. I also look forward to other invitations to be part of community engagement initiatives like this one, and I have no doubt the member will lead the community in those endeavours as well.

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — The members for Oakleigh and Dandenong raised in a broad sense the issue of removing all nine level crossings on the Cranbourne and Pakenham rail lines between Dandenong and the city.

Mr Watt interjected.

Ms ALLAN — To address the issues more broadly, I will refer to their items together, notwithstanding the member for Burwood's opposition to this fantastic program of removing all nine level crossings between Dandenong and the city. Perhaps understanding that the issues of the Dandenong community might be a little bit different from the issues facing the Oakleigh community is a level of detail that is beyond those opposite.

Mr Watt interjected.

Ms ALLAN — I know it is a level of sophistication that is probably beyond the member for Burwood, but they have very different issues. What unites them, however, is their commitment to this fantastic program. Level crossings along this corridor can be down for between 80 and 90 minutes during every 2-hour morning peak period. They cause congestion, they cause frustration and they are grave safety risks. That is why our members of Parliament, whether they represent Dandenong or Oakleigh, are proud and passionate to see these level crossings removed.

We have had a great couple of weeks in relation to the level crossing removal project. We have had \$2.4 billion set aside in the budget — I will say that again: \$2.4 billion has been set aside in the budget — we have had the announcement of the first four cabs off the rank for removal, and then just yesterday we released the expression of interest for the removal of all nine level crossings between Dandenong and the city, which are the topics of interest raised by the members for Dandenong and Oakleigh today. We are getting on with it, and we are getting on with it quickly, because this project is too important to wait.

I appreciate that both members want to know what impact the works will have on their local communities, because these are vitally important works. There will be some disruption while these works are undertaken, but we are committed to working with the members and their communities to make sure that there is a lot of communication and information and that the schedule of works is well understood. What is certainly going to be well understood is that this is a project we will be delivering on. When it comes to these nine level crossings, work will start in 2016 and will be finished by 2018. I look forward to providing the members with the information that they need in order to inform and work with their constituents and traders in the areas affected. They are fantastic local members and they are proud and passionate representatives for their communities. They are working with the government on delivering the removal of these dangerous level crossings in their electorates.

The members for Mount Waverley and Kew raised matters for the Minister for Sport.

The member for Lowan raised a matter for the Minister for Energy and Resources.

The member for Yan Yean raised a matter for the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water.

The member for Ferntree Gully raised a matter for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

The member for Burwood raised a matter for the Treasurer. Those matters will be referred for the information of the ministers concerned.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The house is now adjourned.

House adjourned 5.48 p.m. until Tuesday, 9 June.