

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Tuesday, 4 August 2015

(Extract from book 10)

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FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION**

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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, Mr McGuire, Ms McLeish, Mr Pearson, Ms Ryall, Ms Thomas,
Mr Thompson, Ms Thomson, Ms Ward and Mr Watt.

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The Hon. D. M. ANDREWS

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier:

The Hon. J. A. MERLINO

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

The Hon. M. J. GUY

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

The Hon. D. J. HODGETT

Leader of The Nationals:

The Hon. P. L. WALSH

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Ms S. RYAN

Heads of parliamentary departments

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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Blandthorn, Ms Elizabeth Anne	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Neville, Ms Lisa Mary	Bellarine	ALP
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Hibbins, Mr Samuel Peter	Prahran	Greens	Thomas, Ms Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
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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 Nardella 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*): Ms Patten, Mr Somyurek.

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.

CONTENTS

TUESDAY, 4 AUGUST 2015

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS	2319	<i>Williamstown Superules football club</i>	2334
MINISTRY	2319	<i>Evelyn electorate children's programs</i>	2335
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS		<i>Warburton Highway, Wandin North, pedestrian crossing</i>	2335
<i>Deputy Premier and Minister for Education</i>	2319	<i>Wandin North tourism signage</i>	2335
2320, 2321		<i>Mernda rail extension</i>	2335
<i>Ministers statements: port of Melbourne lease</i>	2319	<i>Employment</i>	2335
2320		<i>Michael Long</i>	2336
<i>Ministers statements: Macalister irrigation district</i>	2322	<i>Morwell electorate business awards</i>	2336
<i>Commonwealth water buybacks</i>	2322, 2323	<i>Macedon electorate sporting clubs</i>	2337
<i>Ministers statements: Agriculture Infrastructure and Jobs Fund</i>	2323	<i>Hooded plover</i>	2337
<i>Melbourne Market</i>	2324	<i>Arthurs Seat sky lift</i>	2337
<i>Ministers statements: level crossings</i>	2324	<i>Eltham Redbacks Football Club</i>	2337
CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS		<i>The Addams Family</i>	2338
<i>Malvern electorate</i>	2325	<i>Ringwood RSL</i>	2338
<i>Dandenong electorate</i>	2326	<i>Antonio Park Primary School</i>	2338
<i>Euroa electorate</i>	2326	<i>Schools Tree Day</i>	2338
<i>Essendon electorate</i>	2326	<i>Laurie Larmer</i>	2338
<i>Evelyn electorate</i>	2326	<i>Melbourne Market</i>	2339
<i>Preston electorate</i>	2327	<i>National Ice Taskforce</i>	2339
<i>Shepparton electorate</i>	2327	<i>Maffra Cheese Company</i>	2339
<i>Rowville electorate</i>	2327	<i>Victorian broiler industry</i>	2339
<i>Yan Yean electorate</i>	2327	<i>Bass electorate</i>	2339
<i>Pascoe Vale electorate</i>	2327	<i>Indian Independence Day</i>	2340
RESOURCES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2015		<i>Oakleigh electorate schools</i>	2340
<i>Introduction and first reading</i>	2328	<i>Geelong education forum</i>	2340
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (CONTROL OF RESPONSE ACTIVITIES AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2015		<i>Box Hill transport interchange</i>	2341
<i>Introduction and first reading</i>	2328	INFRASTRUCTURE VICTORIA BILL 2015	
CRIMES AMENDMENT (CHILD PORNOGRAPHY AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2015		<i>Second reading</i>	2341, 2383, 2386
<i>Introduction and first reading</i>	2328	DISTINGUISHED VISITORS.....	2383, 2386
EDUCATION AND TRAINING REFORM AMENDMENT (MISCELLANEOUS) BILL 2015		ADJOURNMENT	
<i>Introduction and first reading</i>	2328	<i>Warrandyte Primary School</i>	2392
SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE		<i>Ballarat rail services</i>	2392
<i>Regulations and legislative instruments review</i>	2329	<i>Maryborough Education Centre</i>	2393
<i>Alert Digest No. 8</i>	2329	<i>Essendon Fields hotel development</i>	2394
DOCUMENTS	2329	<i>Gippsland East constituent transport accident compensation</i>	2394
ROYAL ASSENT	2330	<i>inTouch</i>	2394
APPROPRIATION MESSAGES	2330	<i>The Ice Meltdown Project</i>	2395
PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES		<i>Geelong-Portarlington and Wilsons roads, Newcomb</i>	2396
<i>Membership</i>	2331	<i>Lang Lang jetty</i>	2396
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE		<i>Frankston ambulance services</i>	2396
<i>Program</i>	2331	<i>Responses</i>	2397
MEMBERS STATEMENTS			
<i>United Firefighters Union</i>	2333		
<i>Yeshi Abrha</i>	2334		
<i>Yung Gunz</i>	2334		
<i>twistED — science at play</i>	2334		

Tuesday, 4 August 2015

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS

The SPEAKER — Order! Together with the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and all members of the house, I acknowledge the land of the tribes and nations of the Aboriginal people of Victoria. We pay our respects to them, to their culture and to their elders past and present.

MINISTRY

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I inform the house that Mr Dalidakis, a member for Southern Metropolitan Region in the Legislative Council, has been sworn in as the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade, and that the Leader of the House in this place will represent the minister and answer questions on his behalf.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Deputy Premier and Minister for Education

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — My question is to the current Deputy Premier and Minister for Education.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Government members will come to order and allow the member for Ferntree Gully to ask a substantive question and be heard in silence.

Mr Pearson interjected.

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

Mr WAKELING — Given that according to former minister Adem Somyurek, Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association chief, Michael Donovan, has more influence over the government than most cabinet ministers put together, I ask: can the minister confirm that he speaks to Mr Donovan more frequently than to any single stakeholder in his own education portfolio?

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — I thank the member — one of the wreckers of TAFE when

those opposite were in government — for his pathetic question. For the benefit of the member for Ferntree Gully, I spoke with Michael Donovan on the Friday of the national conference. I met on the same day with Jess Walsh from United Voice. I met yesterday with the Australian Education Union (AEU), because on this side of the house we respect working men and women.

We meet with the unions that represent teachers and represent principals and represent cleaners at schools. We do not lock them out, like those opposite did when they were in government. We do not declare war on teachers, nurses and firefighters, like those opposite. We treat them with respect, unlike those opposite. On the Education State consultations, we are meeting with principals organisations, we are meeting with the AEU, we are meeting with Parents Victoria and we are meeting with communities right across Victoria.

Last night I joined the member for Eltham at an Education State consultation with the local community, including principals and parents. We will not take lectures from those opposite, not for one second, when it comes to education in Victoria.

Supplementary question

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — Given that the minister has just confirmed that it is easier for Mr Donovan to talk to the minister than it is for any school council, principal or teacher in this state, will the minister provide the house with a list of all of the occasions on which he has met with or spoken to Mr Donovan since coming to office?

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — I thank the member for his supplementary question. As I said, I meet with many stakeholders, including unions. I meet every single week with schools right across the state. Not only have I spoken with Michael Donovan, but I understand that in May of this year Michael Donovan had a meeting with the Leader of The Nationals — or the Vic Nats or the National Country Alliance, I do not know. Perhaps the member for Ferntree Gully can have a chat with his coalition colleague.

Ministers statements: port of Melbourne lease

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — This morning I visited, with the Minister for Ports and the Treasurer, the port of Melbourne to celebrate a very important agreement being reached between the port authority and DP World — a long-term agreement, something that many people said would not happen and something that many people who are interested in politics rather than jobs and opportunities have had a lot to say about.

It was a great agreement, and no doubt other ministers may speak about that later on in the day.

On Sunday I was really pleased to be in Gippsland with Peter Tuohey from the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) and also the Minister for Agriculture, Minister Pulford, to make a really important announcement about additional proceeds that might be secured through the lease of the port of Melbourne being invested in infrastructure, large and small, to allow the best farmers in the world to get the best produce to port and to new markets. This infrastructure has been a long time coming — everything from some water projects to those first and last mile transport infrastructure projects that are so important for those high-productivity freight vehicles on our road network together with issues of biosecurity and training and support for those in the agribusiness sector.

These investments — \$200 million over four years — have been warmly welcomed by the VFF and other stakeholders, and for good reason. Others who cannot quite work out what their name is have been very critical, and it speaks more to them and their confusion than any legitimate criticism. This is very good policy — —

Mr Guy interjected.

Mr ANDREWS — It is only those who interjected just then who stand in the way of removing level crossings, creating jobs and supporting our farmers.

Mr Guy interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition will allow his colleague the member for South Barwon to ask a question.

Deputy Premier and Minister for Education

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — My question is to the Minister for Education and current Deputy Premier. Can the minister confirm that despite Labor's promise to build a primary school in Armstrong Creek west — a promise that remains unfunded — the minister has never been to the Armstrong Creek west community to explain this broken promise yet at the same time regularly speaks to Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association chief, Michael Donovan?

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — I thank the current member for his question. Be in no doubt, Speaker, that the Andrews Labor government will honour each and every commitment it made. We delivered in May this year the biggest single infrastructure program in the history of this state,

following four years in which the capital program was cut in half. We will deliver on our commitment to the community in Armstrong Creek.

I met recently with the school community at Oberon High School about its needs and about looking at the feasibility of both secondary provision at Armstrong Creek and what that means for the Oberon High School community as well. We will deliver on each and every one of our commitments.

Supplementary question

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — Can the minister confirm that the only way the Armstrong Creek west community can get the school it was promised will be to go through the minister's boss, the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association chief, Michael Donovan?

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — That supplementary question is a poor reflection of the representation by the local member. It is a completely irrelevant, pathetic question that does not deserve an answer.

Ministers statements: port of Melbourne lease

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I rise to update the house on new information regarding the resolution of the Port of Melbourne Corporation and DP World Australia relating to the new lease arrangements that have been struck at West Swanson Dock terminal. Both parties to the agreement have described this as a win-win, something that is mutually beneficial in terms of the interests of the state. The new lease will grant a 50-year tenure to DP World Australia to 2065 under a lease with key performance indicators. It is a modern lease with efficiency initiatives, and it also sets the pricing structure for the next 50 years.

The government welcomes the agreement and the confidence that this shows in the long-term viability of the port. It also means that in addition to the modern lease, rental increases will now effectively be regulated by the terms of the agreement over the life of the port lease. This provides certainty; it also provides confidence to producers and exporters all over the state and gives Victoria enhanced competitiveness.

Of course we have had positive comments from the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Victorian Transport Association and of course Peter Tuohey from the Victorian Farmers Federation, who stated that the Labor government had listened and delivered.

There is a growing consensus amongst key industry players that the port lease will be a positive landmark opportunity for Victoria. A press release dated August 2014 made the ludicrous assertion that the then opposition was the only threat to getting best value for money for the port of Melbourne. The member for Malvern waxed lyrically about the risk of the opposition compromising the value of money for port interests.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, the Treasurer is now engaging in debate rather than complying with sessional order 7. I ask you to bring him back to complying with that sessional order, which relates to informing the house about government initiatives.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Treasurer will come back to making a statement.

Mr PALLAS — Those opposite are putting politics before people and politics before pre-election commitments and principle.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, the Treasurer is defying your ruling. I ask you to bring him back to compliance.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Treasurer has concluded his statement.

Deputy Premier and Minister for Education

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Deputy Premier. I refer the Deputy Premier to the fact that last week he was asked in public to resign by a sitting Labor MP and former ministerial colleague and also that serious questions are being asked by his own colleagues and the public about the undue influence of Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association chief, Michael Donovan, over him and the government decisions he makes. I ask: can the Deputy Premier guarantee that he has the support of his own party and will be the Deputy Premier in 12 months time?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Government members will allow the Deputy Premier to respond to the Leader of the Opposition. The Deputy Premier will be heard in silence.

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — With questions like that, the Leader of the Opposition may not be the Leader of the Opposition in 12 months time.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr MERLINO — What my colleagues expect of me and what Victorians expect of the Andrews Labor government is that we will repair the damage to education in Victoria, that we will rebuild the schools that those opposite left to rot and that we will make Victoria the education state.

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, my question was very straightforward: has the Deputy Premier still got the confidence of his own colleagues, yes or no?

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order.

Mr MERLINO — That is absolutely what we are focused on — making Victoria the education state. The only judgement, the only opinion, that matters is that of the people of Victoria at the next election — the people of Victoria, who passed judgement on those opposite eight months ago and tossed them out for gutting TAFE — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Kew is warned.

Mr MERLINO — Tossed them out for cutting hospitals and cutting schools. That is the only opinion that matters.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I will not warn the member for Footscray again. The Leader of the Opposition will ask a supplementary question.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — I ask the Deputy Premier: apart from the member for Pascoe Vale, the Premier's chief of staff, upper house member Daniel Mulino and maybe this guy next to him, is there anyone else who wants him in the job?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the Leader of the Opposition to put the question again and be relevant. I remind the member of practices in the house.

Mr GUY — In relation to government business, I ask again: apart from the member for Pascoe Vale, the Premier's chief of staff, upper house member Daniel Mulino and I guess the Premier, is there anyone else in

this chamber who wants the member for Monbulk to remain as Deputy Premier, yes or no?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I understand that members have had a break and have come back with a lot of energy. However, so has the Chair, and I have every intention of prosecuting the standing and sessional orders.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — I think the Leader of the Opposition just got his answer.

Mr Guy interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition will allow the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water, whom I welcome back, to make a ministers statement.

Ministers statements: Macalister irrigation district

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water) — Thank you, Speaker, and it is great to be back this week. I rise today to provide information to the house about the commencement of a new and critical stage of the Macalister irrigation district project. Yesterday I was very pleased to have the opportunity to meet with community members, farmers, the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) and council members at the Denison hall. We would have wanted to be outside, but it was a bit wild and windy in Gippsland yesterday. We were there to announce the commencement of the \$5.84 million Southern Cowwarr balancing storage and to discuss with the community the Agriculture Infrastructure and Jobs Fund that the Premier announced on Sunday.

The balancing storage is a critical part of the first stage of the Macalister irrigation project, which ultimately will deliver about 12 300 megalitres of water savings once it is completed in 2017. This balancing storage will see the system move from a 35-kilometre gravity-fed system to an automated system that will enable a more precise and much quicker delivery of water, meaning irrigators will not need to wait for days to get the water they have requested. This will result in significant on-farm productivity savings.

This region generates an economic contribution of about \$500 million, which is why yesterday, when we talked about the agriculture fund, what we saw was a community that welcomed that because its members

saw Macalister stage 2 as an important part of that fund and really able to be funded out of the fund. That is why yesterday local irrigators welcomed it, the council welcomed it and the local VFF members welcomed it. That is why the local federal Nationals member welcomed it, and that is why the broader community welcomed it.

Those opposite are playing politics with this issue, and the community deserves better. Its message yesterday was that those opposite need to support the lease of the port of Melbourne in order to deliver stage 2 of the project.

Commonwealth water buybacks

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — My question is to the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water. What will the Victorian government do to protect northern Victorian irrigators from untargeted water buybacks by the federal government when the next round of basin plan negotiations commences in 2016?

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water) — I thank the member for her question. It is a very topical question and one that I know is causing a lot of debate in her local community. Over the years significant work, commitment and investment have gone into the Murray-Darling Basin plan. In fact it has been done by both sides when in government because we are aware of the very critical importance of maintaining and improving the health of the Murray River for irrigators, for local communities and for the environment.

That is why, over those years, Victorian governments and water customers have invested more than \$1.7 billion in basin water recovery and efficiency programs. It is important that we balance the shared outcomes of having a healthy Murray River whilst ensuring that our regional communities continue to thrive. At the first Murray-Darling Basin meeting I attended in May this year I reaffirmed Victoria's commitment to work cooperatively to deliver the environmental outcomes of the basin plan whilst ensuring that we continued to support and protect the basin communities and industries.

I am calling on the commonwealth government to acknowledge the heavy lifting that Victoria has already been doing. I have asked that the commonwealth provide assurances that no more water will be purchased by the commonwealth in northern Victoria.

Our strategy works to avoid the need for further commonwealth water purchases where we are investing

in the infrastructure, so the \$1.7 billion that we have been investing in infrastructure is delivering the savings. It is our view that as we go through the next stage of the management plan and the business cases, we will be able to deliver the water savings that we have committed to, but we can continue to do that through infrastructure and efficiencies and we are urging the commonwealth to take a similar approach.

On 14 August ministers are coming together again, and that will provide Victoria with an opportunity to continue to push the case that the commonwealth does not need to buy back additional water. We believe that through the system of modernisation, through efficiencies and through irrigation upgrades, we can deliver the savings that we promised and committed to under the Murray-Darling Basin plan. I re-emphasise that Victoria has done the heavy lifting in this case. We do need New South Wales to come on board, and we do need the commonwealth to come on board, and that is the message that we will be delivering when we attend the Murray-Darling Basin meeting on 14 August.

Supplementary question

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — Will the minister commit to working with stakeholders in the northern Victoria region to ensure that the future potential of the region is not adversely affected by the demands of further water savings out of Victoria?

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water) — I thank the member for her supplementary question. I think it is really important that we engage strongly with members of the local community up there who have significant concerns, whether about the constraints mechanism and potential for flooding of land or the risk of further buyback from the commonwealth.

At the first meeting that I attended Victoria raised the need for the commonwealth or the Murray-Darling Basin Authority to do further consultation, and I am pleased that it has committed to doing that, because the authority is the one that has responsibility around that. In addition to that, after our 14 August meeting I will be in a position to go and talk further with the local community about where we are heading and what the issues are. I think we will need to work very closely with the local community so we can continue to get that balance right around the healthy environment for our Murray River and also the irrigators in the area.

Ministers statements: Agriculture Infrastructure and Jobs Fund

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak about the Andrews government's \$200 million Agriculture Infrastructure and Jobs Fund that will drive economic growth, create jobs, boost exports and support Victorian farmers from paddock to port.

Yesterday I was fortunate to visit the Princes Freeway in Lara to review a freight assessment undertaken by VicRoads that seeks to improve high-productivity vehicle access between Geelong and the port of Melbourne. This new \$200 million fund, which will be established once a successful passage of the leasehold sale of the port of Melbourne has gone through, will enable key freight routes such as the Princes Freeway to be upgraded to accommodate more heavier vehicles and to boost productivity.

As this house would be aware, the Andrews government has already fast-tracked \$38.5 million to strengthen 48 country bridges across regional Victoria. Farmers, producers and transport logistics industries have been pushing for freight route assessments and improvements across various major freight routes. I note that the Victorian Transport Association is a key supporter of the government's \$200 million agriculture infrastructure fund with the CEO, Peter Anderson, stating this week that the government's announcement shows:

... they are serious about improving access and safety for HPFVs, and that they understand there is a net community benefit to be had by investing in infrastructure ...

The Victorian Farmers Federation is serious about improving productivity. The Victorian Transport Association is serious about improving productivity, as is the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry. It is very much about time that the country party and its Liberal country mates got on board and supported the big Vs, which are all supporting this great endeavour to actually improve efficiency in infrastructure across this state. By opposing the leasehold sale of the port of Melbourne, the Liberals and Nationals are not only preventing vital funding for transport infrastructure but they are restricting future economic — —

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

Melbourne Market

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — My question is to the Premier. I refer the Premier to the devastating experience of Chris Shaw, who after 22 years was forced to close his Stanhope fruit and vegetable family business due to Labor’s bungling of the opening of the new Melbourne Market, and I ask: can the Premier explain to the market community why his failure to properly manage the opening of this major project is leading to job losses right across regional Victoria?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I thank the Leader of The Nationals for his question. I think it is wrong to make the assertion the member made. It is obviously regrettable when any job is lost and it is regrettable when any business experiences difficulty, but the feedback I have received since the Melbourne Market Authority’s decision last week to extend the opening date has been only positive.

I have had conversations with numerous people in this very important sector in our Victorian economy, and they have put it to me that that was the right decision to make and that they are very pleased that the authority and the government listened to the representations of some who were simply not ready to make that move. If we are being criticised for having listened and having taken the right decision, well then so be it. But I think the characterisation that the honourable member has made is simply wrong.

We will continue to listen to this sector and work in any way we can to grow it and to make sure that it is strong for jobs and our state into the future.

Supplementary question

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — My supplementary question is to the Premier. The Premier said before the election that every job was worth fighting for. Did he fight for Chris Shaw’s job, his wife’s job and the jobs of his seven staff, or was he too busy fighting for the Deputy Premier’s job?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I thank the honourable member for his question. I stand by the comments I made prior to the election and our government’s performance since we were elected to government. I say to the honourable member that his sincerity or lack thereof is clearly shown by his trying to play cheap politics with this.

We will continue as a government to work hard in every sector in every part of the state to continue to see jobs growth in Victoria and a lower unemployment rate. That is what we committed to do and that is what

we will continue to strive towards, and those opposite, far from being critical, ought to reflect on their own appalling record.

Ministers statements: level crossings

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — I am very pleased to provide new information to the house about the substantial progress of the Andrews Labor government in getting on with removing the 50 most dangerous level crossings. The member for Bentleigh was so pleased to report that 450 people attended a public information session last week organised by the member to hear about this important program.

Members will recall that not long ago someone in the house said this about level crossings — about the ‘huge issue’ that Melbourne faces ‘with the number of level crossings on it’ and about the ‘economic advantage’ that level crossing elimination will deliver ‘in terms of logistics, safety and a range of other reasons’. Then you think, ‘Who said this, and what is their position now?’. This was what was said by the Leader of the Opposition, who is now standing in the way —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister will resume her seat. Government members will allow the manager of opposition business to raise a point of order.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, while I am sure we on this side of the house would be happy to debate the minister’s remarks, she is engaging in debate in breach of her own sessional order 7. I ask you to bring her back to complying and to informing the house about government initiatives.

Ms ALLAN — On the point of order, Speaker, in reporting on the substantial progress by the Andrews Labor government on removing our 50 most dangerous level crossings, it is important to note what we are doing on this side of the house and some of the roadblocks that some others might want to put in the way of advancing this important project.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister has provided sufficient context. The minister will come back to making a statement.

Ms ALLAN — In addition to that incredible turnout by the community in Bentleigh last week, I am also pleased to announce that construction work has begun on the removal of the first level crossing on Burke Road. As a taste of things to come, there has been a temporary closure of both the Glen Waverley train line

and the route 72 tram, and there will be future closures to come as this important program gets underway.

I also reflect on some comments that have been made, including:

... this government made an ambitious target to remove 50 level crossings ... They will owe Victorians as serious explanation in a number of years time if the vast majority of those have not begun ...

Victorians deserve an explanation from the Leader of the Opposition, who made this comment and who shows incredible double standards by getting in the way of this important program.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister's statement has concluded.

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Speaker, I refer you to sessional order 12, which says that questions on notice should be replied to within 30 days. I currently have 39 questions on notice directed to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety that have now been outstanding for 70 days. I would appreciate it if you could direct the minister to comply with the sessional orders.

The SPEAKER — Order! I take up the member's point of order and follow it through.

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Speaker, I refer to sessional order 11(2), particularly in relation to the Minister for Education's answer to the supplementary question by the member for South Barwon, where he actually said that the member for South Barwon's question was 'pathetic' and that he would not answer it. In accordance with sessional order 11(2), I ask you to have the minister provide a written answer by 2 o'clock tomorrow, given the fact that he quite clearly stated he would not answer the question in question time.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, on two matters: firstly, the time has well and truly passed for this matter to have been raised. If the member for Burwood felt so passionately about this matter and was so concerned about — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Opposition members will allow the Leader of the House to raise a point of order.

Ms Allan — A memo should go up to the member for Burwood that the winter break is over, and he needs

to wake up a bit and get on with the program. On the second matter — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the House will raise a point of order, or the Chair will ask her to resume her seat.

Ms Allan — On the second matter, the Deputy Premier in answering the question the member referred to — it was in response to the substantive question — went on to give a lengthy response about the work that he was doing both on Armstrong Creek west and on other schools in that area. He spoke about the conversations he had been having in the community in that area. It was a substantial answer that was provided by the Deputy Premier, and I suggest that the point of order be ruled out of order.

Mr Walsh — Further on the point of order raised by the member for Burwood, Speaker, on the issue that the Leader of the House raises about the lapse in time from the Deputy Premier's answer to when the point of order was raised, I support the member for Burwood and the courtesy that he showed to the Deputy Premier by waiting until the end of question time to raise his point of order. I do not believe you should rule it out of order because of the fact that the member for Burwood was courteous in raising a very good point of order.

Mr R. Smith — On the point of order, Speaker, the argument of the Leader of the House argument seems to be that the substantive question was answered but not the supplementary. Sessional order 11(2) specifically says 'an answer to an oral question without notice or a supplementary oral question', so clearly the member for Burwood is correct in saying that the supplementary did not get a substantive answer and therefore the sessional order should apply.

The SPEAKER — Order! If there are no further points of order, the Chair rules that the Deputy Premier was in order.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Malvern electorate

Mr M. O'BRIEN (Malvern) — (Question 370) My question to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety concerns the relocation of the tram terminus on Toorak Road, Toorak. There is unanimous community opinion that the status quo cannot remain or lives will be lost. The proximity of the terminus to the intersection of Toorak and Glenferrie roads means that passengers exiting the tram dice with death on a daily basis.

However, all alternative options for the relocation deserve consideration.

The proposal by Yarra Trams to construct an elevated super-stop 100 metres west along Toorak Road, if implemented, will reduce available through traffic lanes by 50 per cent during the morning and afternoon peaks. The severe grading of the proposed site and its increased distance from Glenferrie Road will make access difficult for physically impaired passengers.

I ask the minister to advise: what consideration has been given to alternative solutions, including moving the terminus to Glenferrie Road or to the east side of Toorak Road across the intersection? The current situation is unacceptable. It needs to be resolved, but my community needs to be satisfied that the best solution will be adopted, not necessarily just the cheapest.

Dandenong electorate

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) — (Question 371) My constituency question is for the Minister for Education, and I ask the minister for information regarding possible funding options for repairs and capital works at Dandenong West Primary School. Dandenong West Primary School principal Beverley Hansen wrote to me recently in relation to the condition of the school's multipurpose building. The building is currently used for its indoor physical education, school performances and other school and community programs.

The school is seeking to undertake additional works to expand the available space and make repairs to the building's roof and would like further information about funding avenues available through the government. Can the minister provide details of what Victorian government programs are available to Dandenong West Primary School for maintenance of and capital works on its multipurpose building?

Euroa electorate

Ms RYAN (Euroa) — (Question 372) The constituency question I raise is on behalf of Belinda and Jason Hagan of McIvor Farm Foods of Tooborac. Seven weeks ago, Belinda and Jason were forced to close their farm gate shop, where they sold pork smallgoods, after Mitchell Shire Council deemed they should be regulated under the Meat Industry Act 1993 and therefore registered with PrimeSafe. The council took this view after discussions with PrimeSafe.

This ruling has put Belinda and Jason under significant financial pressure, yet despite this their request to meet

with the CEO of PrimeSafe has been rejected as not appropriate. Belinda and Jason also contacted the minister's office last week to seek a meeting. I am hopeful they will soon receive a response to that request, and I would be very happy to facilitate that meeting to discuss this very pressing matter.

The information I seek is the minister's advice on what Belinda and Jason can do to obtain a registration for their farm gate business under the food act.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Euroa should refer her question to a minister. I ask the member to do so now.

Ms RYAN — My apologies, Speaker. My question is to the Minister for Agriculture.

Essendon electorate

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — (Question 373) My constituency question is to the Minister for Public Transport. The electorate of Essendon is home to six railway stations. The station car parks frequently reach capacity early in the morning peak. I understand that Sophie Ismail, Labor's federal candidate for the seat of Melbourne, recently wrote to the minister requesting an audit of surplus VicTrack land in the vicinity of local train stations be conducted in order to tackle road congestion and address greenhouse gas emissions. Can the minister advise whether an audit will be conducted and, if so, when the audit is scheduled to be completed?

Evelyn electorate

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — (Question 374) My constituency question is for the Minister for Planning. My business constituent Happy Valley Free Range Farm is facing a very uncertain future. I wrote to the minister on 2 February requesting clarification of the definition of intensive and extensive agriculture. I received a response on 1 May, advising that the matter was being considered by the department. Unfortunately, in the meantime Yarra Ranges Shire Council decided not to take the option of making a decision and instead relied on the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. The tribunal made the decision based on its interpretation of 'intensive animal husbandry', and this decision now threatens the future of this business.

Council is now considering whether to progress amendment C146, which if approved by the minister would permit intensive animal husbandry. If the council decides to progress the amendment, I ask the minister to appoint a panel. I also ask that the minister give very clear direct guidance on what conditions can and cannot be imposed. I am very concerned that once again the

right to farm is going to be taken away. The seeming lack of support by council for the right to farm is concerning.

Preston electorate

Mr SCOTT (Minister for Finance) — (Question 375) My constituency question is for the Minister for Health, who is also the Minister for Ambulance Services. It concerns the state of Preston ambulance station, which was constructed in the 1950s and is in a poor state of repair. The dedicated paramedics working out of the Preston branch are working in a facility that is over 60 years old, has asbestos in it and is of poor design. The building has only a single entry and exit point, which means paramedics have to reverse into oncoming traffic when they are called out to an emergency. The facility is long past its use-by date and poses an occupational health and safety risk to the paramedics based there. I ask the minister to advise when the much-needed upgrade to the Preston ambulance station will occur.

Shepparton electorate

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — (Question 376) My constituency question is for the Minister for Education. I have been contacted by the coordinator of the Resource, Information, Support and Education Centre in Shepparton, the RISE Centre. The service provides assistance to families of children with additional needs. The centre currently supports 210 families, of which the majority have at least one child on the autism spectrum disorder. The coordinator says that her working week involves continuous phone calls from parents saying that they have serious issues with the schools their children attend in terms of lack of services and lack of funding. This leads to children being able to attend school on only a part-time basis. What steps is the Victorian government taking to address the chronic underinvestment in services for children with autism in our schools, and particularly in regional areas?

Rowville electorate

Mr WELLS (Rowville) — (Question 377) My constituency question is for the Minister for Families and Children. My question to the minister relates to the rollout of the national disability insurance scheme (NDIS), which is due to begin on 1 July 2016. My understanding is that the NDIS will not be in place right across Victoria on 1 July 2016 but that it will be gradually rolled out across the state from that date. Illoura Early Childhood Intervention Services in the city of Knox will be affected by the rollout of NDIS, so it is important that its concerns are heard by the

minister and relayed in her discussions with her federal counterpart. If parents living in Knox are to receive NDIS funding for their children after 1 July 2016 as part of a later rollout, it is important that funding for Illoura continues until the NDIS is fully implemented.

Can the minister give an assurance, firstly, that no children's disability services funding will be cut before parents have access to sufficient NDIS funding to choose an equal or better service for their child, and secondly, that the minister has had discussions with her federal counterpart to seek this assurance?

Yan Yean electorate

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — (Question 378) My constituency question is to the Minister for Families and Children. The question I ask relates to funding for the Diamond Creek Men's Shed. This is a fabulous men's shed; one of the best in Victoria. It is bursting at the seams because it is so successful. The shed is located on Challenger Street, which is the boundary of the electorates of Yan Yean and Eltham. Regrettably the funding guidelines left to us by the previous government have been somewhat challenging for us in our attempts to ensure that this group can receive the funding it needs to expand its shed. The Premier has seen at first hand the growth of this men's shed and what it needs to grow further, and I ask the minister to review the guidelines to assist it.

Pascoe Vale electorate

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) — (Question 379) My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. My question concerns the Victorian government's Cycling into the Future 2013–23 strategy. I understand that as part of the strategy VicRoads is currently reviewing road rules and road safety legislation in order to make cycling safer and that this process will include broader community consultation. I ask the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to advise how constituents, particularly local cyclists, can participate in this community consultation.

Many Pascoe Vale constituents use cycling as their main mode of transport and have much knowledge and experience regarding local cycling that can inform this important review. Indeed it should be noted that many of the cyclists using the Upfield bike path and the Sydney Road route into the CBD are actually coming from Pascoe Vale, Coburg and even further afield. A number of local cyclists have drawn my attention to the dangers posed to cyclists while cycling along Sydney Road and when crossing key intersections along the

Upfield shared pathway, particularly the Munro Street and Railway Place intersection.

RESOURCES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Introduction and first reading

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Energy and Resources) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Act 2014, the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990 and the Resources Legislation Amendment (BTEX Prohibition and Other Matters) Act 2014 and for other purposes.

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

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Energy and Resources) — The bill will seek to implement the Hazelwood mine fire inquiry recommendations into fire risk management plans and also to implement our government's election commitment to introduce annual reporting requirements on coal mine operators concerning rehabilitation and several other matters concerning quarries.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (CONTROL OF RESPONSE ACTIVITIES AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2015

Introduction and first reading

Ms GARRETT (Minister for Emergency Services) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to make miscellaneous amendments to the Emergency Management Act 2013, the Victoria State Emergency Service Act 2005, the Country Fire Authority Act 1958, the Metropolitan Fire Brigades Act 1958 and various other acts and for other matters.

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

Ms GARRETT (Minister for Emergency Services) — It is principally related to the strengthening of roles and accountability around the development and implementation of the state emergency response plan across departments and agencies and the clarifying of roles, responsibilities and powers regarding the inspector-general for emergency management.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

CRIMES AMENDMENT (CHILD PORNOGRAPHY AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2015

Introduction and first reading

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Crimes Act 1958 in relation to child pornography offences, proceedings related to child pornography offences and warrants, to amend the Criminal Procedure Act 2009 to restrict inspection by an accused of evidence that is child pornography, to make minor amendments to certain other acts and for other purposes.

Mr PESUTTO (Hawthorn) — I seek a brief explanation of the bill.

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I am happy to advise the member for Hawthorn that the bill will strengthen child pornography laws by creating new offences relating to the operation of child pornography websites, allowing for random sample evidence to be used in child pornography trials and allowing an informant to refuse disclosure of child pornography evidence to an accused personally. The bill also empowers police to direct a person to assist them in the execution of a search warrant in relation to a computer or computer network concerning suspected child pornography offences and other offences.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING REFORM AMENDMENT (MISCELLANEOUS) BILL 2015

Introduction and first reading

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 to enhance the functions and powers of the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority and school councils in relation to schools and for other purposes.

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

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — This bill expands the powers of the Victorian Registration

and Qualifications Authority in relation to assessing the financial viability of schools, enabling it to take action if those schools are deemed to be either not financial or at risk of becoming not financial, including reporting to parents and imposing restrictions on the registration of those schools.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

**SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS
COMMITTEE**

Regulations and legislative instruments review

**Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale), by leave,
presented report, together with appendices.**

Tabled.

Ordered to be published.

Alert Digest No. 8

**Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) presented *Alert
Digest No. 8 of 2015* on:**

**Classification (Publications, Films and Computer
Games) (Enforcement) Amendment Bill 2015
Corrections Legislation Amendment Bill 2015
Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015
Local Government Legislation Amendment
(Environmental Upgrade Agreements) Bill 2015
Road Safety Amendment Bill 2015**

together with appendices.

Tabled.

Ordered to be published.

DOCUMENTS

Tabled by Clerk:

Gambling Regulation Act 2003 — Amendment of Category 1
Public Lottery Licence

Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984:

Notices under s 32(3)(a)(iii) in relation to:

Road Safety Road Rules 2009 (*Gazette S181, 29
June 2015*)

Statutory Rules 42 (*Gazette S166, 23 June 2015*),
82 (*Gazette G27, 9 July 2015*)

Melbourne Cricket Ground Trust — Report year ended
31 March 2015

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

Ballarat — C188

Baw Baw — C110, C112

Benalla — C30

Brimbank — C134

Cardinia — C185

Casey — C115, C174, C203, C214

Colac Otway — C85, GC27

East Gippsland — C123

Glen Eira — GC30

Greater Bendigo — C130

Greater Geelong — C307, C308, C312, GC27

Greater Shepparton — C176

Hume — C168

Manningham — C106, C108

Mansfield — C32

Maroondah — C103

Melbourne — C263

Mildura — C90

Moorabool — C6 Part 3, C62

Mornington Peninsula — C188 Part 1

Mount Alexander — C49

Nillumbik — C93

Stonnington — C186, GC30

Surf Coast — C104

Warmambool — C90

Wyndham — C141

Yarra — C186, C187, C193

Yarra Ranges — C129

Public Interest Monitor — Report 2014–15

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Building Act 1993 — SR 70

Court Security Act 1980 — SR 89

Domestic Animals Act 1994 — SR 64

Electricity Safety Act 1998 — SRs 67, 68

Emergency Management Act 2013 — SR 82

Guardianship and Administration Act 1986 — SR 81

Major Crime (Investigative Powers) Act 2004 — SR 65

Plant Biosecurity Act 2010 — SR 80

Port Management Act 1995 — SR 71

Regional Development Victoria Act 2002 — SR 83

Road Safety Act 1986 — SRs 78, 79, 84, 85, 86

Safe Drinking Water Act 2003 — SR 88

Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004 — SR 90

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — SRs 69, 77

Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983 — SRs 72, 73, 74, 75

Transport (Safety Schemes Compliance and Enforcement) Act 2014 — SR 76

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998 — SR 66

Wrongs Act 1958 — SR 87

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:

Documents under s 15 in relation to:

Legal Profession Uniform Regulations 2015

Rail Safety National Law National Regulations (Fees) Variation Regulations 2015

Rail Safety National Law National Regulations Variation Regulations 2015

Statutory Rules 47, 55, 59, 60, 64, 65, 66, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90

Documents under s 16B in relation to:

Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003:

Greater Metropolitan Cemetery Trust Scale of Fees and Charges

Southern Metropolitan Cemetery Trust Scale of Fees and Charges

Domestic Animals Act 1994:

Amendment of code of practice for the operation of breeding and rearing businesses 2014

Order exempting certain breeding dogs from payment of Council registration fee and de-sexing requirements

Gambling Regulation Act 2003:

Determination of Gaming Machine Entitlement Allocation and Transfer Rules

Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014 — Legal Profession (Approved Clerks Trust Account) Rules 2015

Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 — Ministerial Order under s 66AC(1)

Livestock Disease Control Act 1994 — Notice of the fixing of fees

Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983 — Determination of Fees

Wrongs Act 1958 — Notice under s 28LXA (*Gazette G25, 25 June 2015*).

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

Court Services Victoria and Other Acts Amendment Act 2015 — Whole Act — 30 June 2015 (*Gazette S183, 30 June 2015*)

Education and Training Reform Amendment (Child Safe Schools) Act 2015 — Remaining provisions (except ss 4(2), 5(1), 5(2) and 5(4)) — 1 July 2015 — (*Gazette S183, 30 June 2015*)

Limitation of Actions Amendment (Child Abuse) Act 2015 — Whole Act — 1 July 2015 (*Gazette S183, 30 June 2015*)

Regional Development Victoria Amendment (Jobs and Infrastructure) Act 2015 — Whole Act (except s 18) — 1 July 2015 (*Gazette S183, 30 June 2015*).

ROYAL ASSENT

Message read advising royal assent on 29 June to:

Appropriation (2015–2016) Bill 2015 (*Presented to the Governor by the Speaker*)

Appropriation (Parliament 2015–2016) Bill 2015 (*Presented to the Governor by the Speaker*)

Court Services Victoria and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2015

State Taxation Acts Amendment Bill 2015

APPROPRIATION MESSAGES

Messages read recommending appropriations for:

Corrections Legislation Amendment Bill 2015

Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015

Road Safety Amendment Bill 2015.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

Membership

The SPEAKER — Order! I have received the resignation of Mr Perera from the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee effective from Thursday, 25 June 2015, and the resignation of Mr Dalidakis, MLC, from the Electoral Matters Committee effective from today.

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

That Mr Nardella be appointed a member of the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee.

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Program

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

That, under standing order 94(2), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 5.00 p.m. on Thursday, 6 August 2015:

Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Amendment Bill 2015

Corrections Legislation Amendment Bill 2015

Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015

Local Government Legislation Amendment (Environmental Upgrade Agreements) Bill 2015

Road Safety Amendment Bill 2015.

As you can see, Deputy Speaker, there are five bills on the program this week, a program that includes advancements on our election commitments and important other legislative changes, and I am sure there will be a strong debate during the course of this week.

On other matters, I have not been advised whether opposition members have any issues with the government business program that was circulated, as is usual practice, at 4 o'clock last Thursday. I am optimistic that their silence means they support the program that has been put forward. I have not had an indication of whether opposition members have any issues with any particular bills or have amendments that they wish to propose, but I imagine we will learn more about that over the course of the next half-hour and over the course of the week. This is a program that demonstrates that the Andrews Labor government is

very keenly focused on getting on with delivering its election commitments and important legislation that deals with critical issues in our community. In the spirit of getting on with the program, I will conclude my comments on that point.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — The opposition does not oppose the government business program. On its face it is a relatively straightforward program. There are a number of aspects of various bills on the program that I am sure will be the subject of detailed scrutiny during the course of the debate, and I am sure that explanations from the government will be sought as to various aspects thereof. The opposition has seen in the past that what has started out as being a relatively straightforward business program at the beginning of the week can very quickly go off the rails under the current government's approach to this chamber. Let us hope that is not the case this week and that what the house is being presented with is what the house ends up getting without last-minute variations or departures by the government.

This will be an opportunity to see whether the government will finally be able to live up to its commitment to make consideration in detail the established practice of this house. It was a pre-election commitment that has been honoured in the breach rather than in the observance to date. There are a number of bills that would benefit from scrutiny of their detail. I mention in particular the Road Safety Amendment Bill 2015 and a number of the aspects of variation of the bill before the house compared with the bill on the same subject that was introduced in the previous Parliament. That is certainly one bill that would benefit from and potentially see improvement through consideration in detail. Other bills would also benefit from that consideration.

It will be interesting to see whether the government will be prepared to live up to its election commitment or whether it will continue to hide from scrutiny and accountability in this house and therefore leave it to the other place to scrutinise and hold the government to account. On its face, however, this government business program seems a reasonable one, and it is not opposed by the opposition.

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) — I am pleased to welcome the opposition's support for the government business program. Equivocation aside, and picking up on a couple of matters mentioned by the manager of opposition business, there are examples of where the government has provided opportunities for consideration in detail of bills. This has happened on several occasions in relation to several bills. In

particular I recall the consideration in detail that occurred regarding the National Parks Amendment (Prohibiting Cattle Grazing) Bill 2015. There was quite a good discussion of and debate on the merits of banning cattle from our alpine regions. That is a very good example, and there are several others in relation to opportunities for the opposition to have consideration in detail of bills. I am sure there will be many others throughout our term in government.

In particular I am pleased that there will be opportunity for discussion and debate in relation to the Local Government Legislation Amendment (Environmental Upgrade Agreements) Bill 2015, because I think it is important that we provide councils across Victoria with the opportunity to enter into environmental upgrade agreements. They should not be exclusive to the City of Melbourne. We do not want to confine it to just that council. It is important that the legislation before the house this week provide an opportunity for other councils to enter into those agreements. It does not coerce them to do so, but it certainly gives them the opportunity to do so. It is about making sure that we can improve the environmental efficiency and sustainability of buildings.

As I said, this legislation does not compel councils, but it provides a very good opportunity to broaden a program and broaden the opportunities for local government to get involved in this program. This is important given that there are, I think, some seven City of Melbourne projects where energy bill savings are some \$571 000 per annum owing to the way in which that council has been able to use those agreements. I am pleased that as part of our discussion and deliberation this week there will be an opportunity to debate the ability of other councils in Victoria to participate in and take advantage of those agreements and promote environmental sustainability across local government, particularly in the energy and water areas.

It is also important to Victorians that we debate the Road Safety Amendment Bill 2015 — a bill that was brought into this house by the previous government. It has undergone further review by the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. It seeks to close loopholes that relate to a person being forced to undergo a drug test on request from Victoria Police if that person is in charge of a vehicle that is involved in an accident where there are injuries or fatalities but where the driver is not admitted to hospital for medical treatment. There currently exists a loophole that means that people who are behind the wheel of such a vehicle are not required, under law, to undergo those drug tests. That loophole will potentially be closed if we are successful in getting that legislation through the house.

As I said, it is legislation which was brought before the house by the previous government. We are pleased to place it on the program this week, and we expect the opposition to support its swift passage through the house. The bill will protect road users and give further powers to police to ensure that those who need to be tested for drugs in their system because they were behind the wheel of a car involved in an accident where there were injuries and fatalities but where the driver was not admitted to hospital must submit to such tests.

There will also be continued opportunity to debate the budget papers in the house. Several members across the chamber have not yet had an opportunity to make that contribution. I am sure they will welcome the further opportunity for that to happen that the government has provided through the business program.

As the Leader of the House has touched on, the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015 will establish an independent expert advice and strategic planning process around infrastructure planning in Victoria. It is a policy area in which an election commitment was made by the now Andrews government and which we are bringing to this house in legislation. The Andrews government is committed to infrastructure investment and development in Victoria because that is about creating jobs, which is something we take very seriously. We made that commitment during the election campaign, it was affirmed by the people of Victoria and I am pleased that the government business program will allow discussion of the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015. There are a lot of exciting projects underway under this government, but there are many more that will come to light through the development of this legislation.

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran) — The Greens will not be opposing the government business program in this instance. I will just briefly go through the bills that are a part of the program. We welcome the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015. This establishes Infrastructure Victoria, which I am sure everyone believes has the potential to be a body that will be a real asset to this state. It is important, however, that in setting up that body we get it right, and that it has clear direction, a clear role and the right people in charge.

I welcome the Local Government Legislation Amendment (Environmental Upgrade Agreements) Bill 2015. Having been a local councillor myself, when I was chair of the sustainability committee at Stonnington council this issue was discussed as part of that committee and then as part of our discussions with other councils. It was really a critical part of local councils and local communities being able to work with

the private sector to reduce energy use, improve renewables and work on water and a range of sustainability issues. I really welcome this bill coming before the house.

The Road Safety Amendment Bill 2015, as discussed, will close a loophole that should not be there. We welcome that bill. We have some concerns over the Corrections Legislation Amendment Bill 2015, and I will be raising them during the debate. However, the Greens will not be opposing the government business program in this instance.

Mr McGuire (Broadmeadows) — I am delighted to rise to support the government business program. I am also pleased that the optimism of the Leader of the House was well advised and that the opposition will not be opposing the government business program.

Given that we have debated quite a few of these issues, I will be succinct, but I particularly want to highlight that some of these bills are urgent and important, particularly the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Amendment Bill 2015. This goes to the issue of child pornography and to a major theme of this government — that is, to put women and children first. We have a royal commission looking at how we can come up with better ways to protect families in relation to family violence. This is another issue that has been of concern to me and was something that I put in my submission in terms of how we address issues of child pornography, particularly with new technologies and the various ways that children can get access to them. This bill goes to the issue of better scrutiny, better accountability and better compliance and also how as a community we can track down perpetrators and bring them to justice in a faster way in order to stop the heinous crimes that are committed in this area. I recommend that bill to the house.

Others have spoken about environmental issues. One that is vitally important is the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015. It is aimed at taking the politics out of infrastructure, which is vital for the development of our state, and instead receiving independent expert advice. This was a major policy that Labor took to the election. I am delighted that it is being supported, and I think this is really important for how we build smarter, healthier, better connected and more sustainable communities. It is vitally important particularly for communities in the northern suburbs and the western suburbs, which have historically suffered neglect because of the politics that has been inserted instead. There is no greater case in point than the community that I represent, the people of Broadmeadows.

With those words, I commend the government business program to the house.

Mr Katos (South Barwon) — As the manager of opposition business said in his contribution, we will not be opposing the government business program. I look forward to the debate on the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015, as it will give particularly the Geelong-based members of the government an opportunity to explain their selling of deception to the Geelong community with regard to Bay West. I am sure they will be able to elucidate why they have broken their word to the people of Geelong in relation to building Bay West, seeing as we have a port proposal before us which will result in a 70-year monopoly.

The Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Amendment Bill 2015 is a bill that is going to tighten up the rules with regard to the publication of films and computer games. I believe there is a two-week grace period given to films with regard to classification.

The Local Government Legislation Amendment (Environmental Upgrade Agreements) Bill 2015 and the Road Safety Amendment Bill 2015 are bills that were largely introduced into the Parliament by the previous coalition government. Then we have the corrections legislation and the budget papers, which are still on the government business program. I would certainly like to see more vigorous debate on the five bills before we get to the budget papers. As the manager of opposition business said, we would certainly like to go into the consideration-in-detail stage on the Road Safety Amendment Bill 2015.

With those few words, the opposition will not be opposing the government business program.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

United Firefighters Union

Mr Battin (Gembrook) — The Andrews government has a lot of favours to repay from the Victorian state election, including to the United Firefighters Union (UFU) for the campaign it ran in marginal seats across the state. If the Premier expects Victoria to believe that firefighters doorknocked for 23 days in strategic seats, had 40 000 one-on-one conversations with the public and handed out 125 000 pamphlets at railway stations and that 700 firefighters stood outside 109 polling booths in nine

marginal seats asking voters to put the Liberals last all for nothing, he is either joking or misguided.

In an email to Labor MPs, Mr Marshall, the UFU Victoria secretary, said:

... internal polling conservatively estimated a 4.5 per cent swing in seats where there was a firefighter presence — and up to 7 per cent in some marginal seats.

This email was sent after Premier Andrews had reneged on secret deals. Now it is time to pay, and the victims of these secret deals will be Victorians and volunteers.

The Premier's call for a review of Victoria's fire services, part of his union-driven agenda, is offensive to all of our dedicated volunteers. Why is there just four weeks to make a submission to a review that will assess the operations and future of our volunteer service? Is he asking men and women who often work full-time, have a family and still manage to protect the community to submit? Or is he intentionally imposing a narrow timeline just so that the four unions mentioned in the reference can have a say? The appointment of a former head of United Voice, a trade union, to conduct the review shows that this government is not serious about listening to our 59 000 dedicated volunteers. I and the volunteers in Victoria will not allow the Andrews government to let the UFU take over the world's best volunteer fire organisation.

Yeshi Abrha

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing) — I rise to speak on the imminent fate of Ms Yeshi Abrha. Ms Abrha is an Ethiopian national and a political asylum seeker whose pleas to the federal Minister for Immigration and Border Protection for urgent intervention to grant her a protection visa were rejected on 28 July. Now with her bridging visa to expire this Thursday, 6 August, Ms Abrha faces imminent detention and deportation back to Ethiopia, where her life is potentially in grave danger.

Ms Abrha is an active and vocal member of the Ethiopian pro-democracy opposition group, Ginbot 7. In 2011 the Ethiopian government labelled Ginbot 7 a terrorist organisation, the only government to do so, thereby forcing many thousands to flee the country in fear of persecution. In 2011 Ms Abrha's brother, also an active member of Ginbot 7, was arrested and has not been seen since. In 2014 the group's leader was abducted by the Ethiopian forces in Yemen and forcibly taken back to Ethiopia, where he remains on death row.

Ms Abrha now fears this will be her fate should she be forced to return to Ethiopia. She has the support of

many in our community, including my local community, where she is supported by UnitingCare, the Salvation Army and the Anglican archdeacon. In these circumstances I implore the federal minister to exercise his discretion under sections 417 and 48B of the Migration Act 1958 to grant Ms Abrha a protection visa to ensure she is protected from persecution as a political asylum seeker.

Yung Gunz

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — I congratulate a group of talented young Swan Hill rock musicians, Yung Gunz, who are into the grand final of the reality television talent show *Band Wars*. The band has dominated four rounds against 43 bands from across Australia to take its place on the finalists stage. Each round has been filmed at Musicland in Melbourne and aired on the Aurora channel. Eli Keating, Jason Forster, Shannon Bishop, Callum McNab and Lachie Dunn are the youngest in the competition but already have a string of original songs, a CD under their belt and a music video underway. Their success is no doubt influenced by their highly respected local teacher and mentor Stuart Holt, and the community wishes them well in the finals on 23 August.

twistED — science at play

Mr WALSH — An exciting new family attraction in Echuca, twistED — science at play, has been designed for the curious of all ages to challenge minds and spark curiosity with science play. The centre opened just four months ago and last week won first place in the new tourism category of the 2015 Travel In Inland Tourism Awards. It is an ingenious small business which offers a fun learning experience for the whole family. Director Kathy Stubberfield and her team are to be congratulated on their vision and creativity, and particularly their passion to kindle the interests of young people in the sciences. I look forward to them having a continued presence in Echuca for many years to come.

Williamstown Superules football club

Mr NOONAN (Minister for Police) — I rise to congratulate the Williamstown Superules football club, which on 12 July celebrated its 25th anniversary at Crofts Reserve in Altona North. For over 25 years the club has been giving local footballers between the ages of 35 and 68 years the chance to play the game they love. During that time they have won two premierships and built up four different teams that compete in various divisions. Willy Superules, as it is known, is a community club in every sense. It has a strong tradition

of building networks across Melbourne's inner western suburbs. It also prides itself on its ability to provide a foundation for long-term friendships where local men, their families and friends can get to know each other in a friendly, healthy and active environment.

The club has a wonderful motto: the older you get, the better you were. But having said that, the club believes you are never too old to play football. However, superstars always know that they are only one injury away from a full-time retirement. Again, I want to congratulate the club for organising a great celebration in July. Notwithstanding the inclement weather on the day, it was terrific to see so many people turn out for the occasion and share stories of playing days both past and present. Finally, I want to congratulate club president Geoff Gamble and his committee. I wish them the very best in the future and congratulate them on a great day.

Evelyn electorate children's programs

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — I congratulate both Melba Support Services and Mount Evelyn Primary School on their One Community project which is enhancing equality among our young disabled children by promoting inclusive and welcoming communities.

I also acknowledge the admirable contribution of Yarra Ranges Special Development School, whose bike education program is building self-esteem and confidence in students with learning impairments while getting them active. Well done to you all.

Warburton Highway, Wandin North, pedestrian crossing

Mrs FYFFE — In 2006 a petition was lodged with the then Minister for Transport requesting pedestrian lights at the Warburton Rail Trail crossing of the Warburton Highway at Wandin North. In response to continued debate about the location of pedestrian lights, I ask the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to have VicRoads meet with myself and local traders to review the situation and discuss where a pedestrian crossing would be best placed to meet community needs and other traffic management issues.

Wandin North tourism signage

Mrs FYFFE — Signage has been identified as a top priority for Wandin North business owners looking to attract more business to town. Many of the tourists travelling at speed along the Warburton Highway do not realise the services on offer from local business because there is inadequate signage to give them ample

opportunity to slow down and investigate. We know from past experience that good, clear signage can make the difference between a business thriving or having to close its doors for good. If the government is serious about its jobs plan, I urge the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to direct VicRoads to install appropriate signage as a matter of priority.

Mernda rail extension

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — I rise to commend the thousands of members of my local community and the community of the member for Mill Park, in the electorate next to mine, who have been engaged so wholeheartedly in the community consultation for the rollout of the construction of the Mernda railway line. Community workshops have been held in Whittlesea, Mernda and South Morang, and there have been pop-ups at Greensborough and South Morang stations and at the shops at Mernda Villages, Laurimar Town Centre and at The Lakes Boulevard.

More than 700 surveys have been returned, with community members saying what it is they want at the Mernda station to be located at Bridge Inn Road, Mernda. They are also having a say on where the mid station will be between South Morang and Mernda — either at Marymede Catholic College or at Hawkstowe Parade. I would like to commend Public Transport Victoria staff who have been so involved and members of the community reference group who have been working with me in my role as chair of that group. I say to the community that they have until 11 August to get their surveys back online. Well done for having a great say. We are forging ahead with Mernda rail.

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

Employment

Mr WELLS (Rowville) — This statement calls on the Premier to live up to his promise to create 100 000 full-time jobs for Victorians within two years of coming to office. All we have seen from the Andrews government is full-time jobs dropping away. This jobs freeze is no surprise really, when the government axes major projects and hikes up tax on businesses and the former Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade resigns in disgrace. By June this year Victoria had 9500 fewer full-time jobs than in December 2014, according to Australian Bureau of Statistics figures.

The Premier's new public holidays — Dan's Days Off — will cost our economy an extra \$898 million

every year, with increased wage payments of up to \$286 million each year. The pressure of paying extra wages will force many businesses to shut on those public holidays and will jeopardise an estimated 350 000 casual jobs.

Business in my electorate of Rowville has been slugged with an enormous hike in the fire services levy. In suburbs like Rowville and Lysterfield commercial fire services levy rates have risen in 2015–16 from 88 cents to 99 cents for every \$1000 of capital improved value. Industrial rates have risen even higher, from \$1.32 to \$1.484 in 2015–16. All this is just to raise \$42 million to cover excessive union pay claims. With small business employing around half of Victoria's private sector jobs, the Premier must ensure that small business is focused.

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

Michael Long

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) — Indigenous activist and Norm Smith medallist Michael Long has accepted my invitation to be a keynote speaker at the forthcoming economic and cultural development summit in Broadmeadows to develop a strategy to create opportunity from adversity. He will be joining Victoria's Treasurer, whose contribution will focus on future industries and jobs for Melbourne's north, and the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education, who will speak on lifelong learning.

The recently opened Michael Long Learning and Leadership Centre in Darwin provides complementary skills to the homegrown and internationally acclaimed Global Learning Village that was first established in Broadmeadows as a model to invest in the attributes that largely determine where we all end up in life: attitude, education and opportunity. It is timely to recall Michael Long's stand against racial slurs, which changed the playing culture of the AFL 20 years ago and resonates just as strongly today.

As a journalist I asked Michael Long to set aside everyone else's commentary and put the critical question bluntly, 'What does it mean to *you* to be called a black bastard?'. His response was:

It's degrading a person for not only who they are but for their colour as well.

Then he gave an answer carrying the burden of history and the power of a universal truth:

We're just the same. We bleed the same, but people have an opinion on people they don't know. They don't care what

colour their dog is or their car, but when it comes to people, it's a different issue. Why should it be? Why can't we live together as one?

In the spirit of reconciliation I again invite the Prime Minister or any other member of the Australian government to attend the summit and help coordinate this incredibly important strategy.

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

Morwell electorate business awards

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) — Despite the negative impact created by the Andrews Labor government through its announcement of additional public holidays in Victoria, we have many businesses in the Morwell electorate which are doing some amazing work. For example, I recently had the pleasure of attending the Latrobe City Business and Tourism Association's people's choice awards, where a number of local businesses, community organisations and events received accolades for outstanding customer service, including: Zio's Pizza, Morwell; the Grand Junction Hotel, Traralgon; Vintage C'hill, Churchill; Walhalla's Star Hotel, Walhalla; the Village Lifestyle and Leisure Park, Traralgon; Walhalla Goldfields railway; Little Prince Eating House and Bar, Traralgon; Mel's Cutting and Beauty Rooms; Regal Jewellers Moe; Morwell Neighbourhood House; Creek Cottage Bed and Breakfast, Traralgon; Tyers Arts Festival; and Forever Friends Animal Rescue, Latrobe. The champion of champions award was awarded to Century Inn, Traralgon, which received the most votes for its fantastic standard of service, its high-quality accommodation and its staff.

The Bendigo Bank Gippsland business awards have also been celebrating the achievements of Gippsland businesses in the region. Finalists include Mahindra Aerospace; Bricks 4 Kidz, Gippsland; Bushies Bakery, Glengarry; Cool Aqua Springs, Morwell; Endota Spa, Traralgon; Framing Elegance; Heirloom Salon, Traralgon; Hip Pocket Workwear and Safety, Morwell; Little Prince Eating House and Bar, Traralgon; and Park Lane Holiday Park, Traralgon.

Congratulations also to Mick Nicola and the Virtue Homes team for winning the best multi-unit development up to three units and to Andrew Brady of Latrobe Valley Building Services for winning best renovation addition under \$200 000 at the Master Builders Association awards in 2015.

Macedon electorate sporting clubs

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — Community sport is at the heart of our country towns and communities. This is particularly evident in the middle of winter, when freezing temperatures, icy winds and even the odd snowfall cannot deter our sporting women and men from getting out on the netball courts and football grounds across my electorate to represent their clubs.

As we know, our sporting clubs are supported by a small army of volunteers at the gates, in the canteens and as coaches. It is my pleasure to meet regularly with the men and women who keep our clubs alive across my electorate. It has been particularly good lately, as I have been able to spread the news about the magnificent injection of \$100 million into the Community Sports Infrastructure Fund by the Andrews Labor government, spearheaded by the Minister for Sport. I have been particularly excited by the \$10 million set aside for female-friendly facilities. For the first time we are seeing women's sport get the attention it deserves.

Over the past few weeks I have had the opportunity to meet with Troy Adams, president of the Trentham District Football-Netball Club, and Georgie Patterson, secretary of the Sportsground and Reserve Committee of Management. I spoke with them about their aspirations to upgrade facilities in order to ensure in particular that the Trentham Saints, their netballers, have facilities that encourage participation and afford girls and women who play netball with some small comforts.

I have also met with the user groups at Lancefield Park Recreation Reserve, which is home to tennis, football, netball, cricket and other sports clubs. The user groups have been working together for some time now to plan for the upgrades their facilities need. Currently around 80 netballers have access only to a basic brick toilet block to change in. Frankly, that is not good enough.

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

Hooded plover

Mr DIXON (Nepean) — Once again I raise in this place the plight of the hooded plover, one of Australia's most threatened bird species. One of the main habitats of the bird is the open beaches in my electorate — ocean beaches which are part of the Mornington Peninsula National Park. There are two new facts I wish to put before the house as part of my campaign to protect the species. The first is that of the 150 eggs laid

in the area over the 2014–15 breeding season, only four chicks survived to the flying stage. The other fact is that the federal government has recently recognised the hooded plover as one of Australia's 20 most threatened bird species, and consequently it will be part of a new \$6.6 million program to protect threatened Australian species.

An independent report commissioned by Parks Victoria and BirdLife Australia found that dogs were the main cause of hooded plover deaths on the Mornington Peninsula. That is why I am calling on the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water to ban dogs from the Mornington Peninsula National Park, the only national park containing threatened species that actually allows dogs. Although over the years the rules around walking dogs in the parks have been tightened, there has been no reduction in the number of plovers that are not making it to the fledging stage. Once again I call on the minister for the environment to do her bit in protecting a threatened species that she is responsible for on land that she is responsible for.

Arthurs Seat sky lift

Mr DIXON — On a positive note, I thank the minister for signing the lease for the proposed Arthurs Seat sky lift gondola, which will hopefully be operating by the end of next year.

Eltham Redbacks Football Club

Ms WARD (Eltham) — I rise today to congratulate the Eltham Redbacks Football Club. As one of the biggest clubs in my electorate, with around 850 players and hundreds more members, this club plays an important role in my community.

Eltham Redbacks is a great family club, and its members well understand the importance of community, of inclusion and of giving back. Last Friday night I attended its annual pink ribbon event, which was a tremendous success. It was a great night, the highlights being delicious cupcakes and wonderful talent displayed on the field. I acknowledge the hard work of Janet Ovens, Ryan Adams — fittingly nicknamed Pinky — Olivia Moxon, Kirsten Gallagher and Donna Kay, who put together a fantastic night, along with many of the senior women's team, who created an amazing array of cupcakes, slices, rum balls and biscuits. The table was absolutely covered in cakes and all sorts of delicious delights, which were all donated.

I also want to acknowledge the leadership of club president Ivan Dalla Costa, who does a fantastic job.

The club raised \$700 on the night and will contribute another \$300 to bring the amount that it will donate to assist breast cancer research to \$1000. This annual event, which began in 2010 with the support of the previous member for Eltham, the very hardworking Steve Herbert, has raised more than \$10 000 over this time for both breast cancer and prostate cancer research — a wonderful effort.

I am also pleased to note that the Redbacks senior women's team beat the Bulleen Lions 4-0 — a great win. Eltham Redbacks is a fantastic family club — and of course their colours of red and black make them even better. Go Redbacks!

The Addams Family

Ms RYALL (Ringwood) — Congratulations to all involved in the production of *The Addams Family* at Aquinas College. With all four evenings sold out, our local community was able to enjoy very professional and entertaining evenings in the school's theatre. All aspects of the production were first class. It was a pleasure to join with principal Mr Atkinson to witness firsthand the talent of students, whether it be acting, stage and props and musicians. Thank you for a very entertaining evening.

Ringwood RSL

Ms RYALL — It was a pleasure to attend the opening by Senator Michael Ronaldson, federal Minister for Veterans' Affairs, of the redeveloped Ringwood RSL. Ringwood RSL has undergone a major transformation and is a strong community asset. The support for ex-service people is tremendous and the club provides an excellent venue to join with family and friends. Congratulations to president David Jamison, his executive and committee for their vision and leadership. With the dining room being booked out frequently, with a great area for kids and with a fabulous menu, it is clear that the community is very fond of its newly redeveloped Ringwood RSL.

Antonio Park Primary School

Ms RYALL — I attended Antonio Park Primary School to talk to the grade 2s about trees and plants for Schools Tree Day. The students had participated in the planting of vegetables, as well as a number of indigenous trees and shrubs that I had donated to the school. As well as meeting new resident miniature goats, Molly and Lolly, it was a pleasure to be a witness to the excitement of the children and the knowledge that they had gained about the importance of plants and trees to their environment.

Schools Tree Day

Ms RYALL — Congratulations to my local schools on their involvement and engagement in Schools Tree Day. It was wonderful to provide indigenous trees and shrubs to the schools for the children to plant, nurture and watch grow.

Laurie Larmer

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — I take this opportunity to congratulate Laurie Larmer, who was recently awarded the Legion of Honour in recognition of his distinguished war service as a pilot with Bomber Command. Laurie was called up when he was 18 years old and left Moonee Ponds to train as a pilot before graduating as a sergeant pilot at the age of 19. Laurie flew Halifax bombers on nine combat missions over Germany in the last three months of the war. Out of the 125 000 airmen in Bomber Command, 55 573 were killed in action, including 3500 out of 10 000 Australians.

After the war, Laurie worked as a publican for many years before settling in Strathmore when he retired. Earlier this year, Laurie was awarded his 40-year medallion for 40 years of continuous membership of the Victorian branch of the ALP by the Premier. I was on hand to take a photo of this occasion, and I sent a framed copy of the photo to Laurie.

Last week Laurie attended the Moonee Ponds branch meeting of the ALP and brought with him his Legion of Honour medal. It speaks volumes about a man who constantly plays down his service to our nation. Laurie said the award was not about him or what he did, but was in recognition of what they all did. For many years, Laurie did not talk about his war service, although he was recently reported in the *Moonee Valley Leader* as saying:

'People talk about being frightened or scared but you weren't really because you were busy', he said. 'Everybody had something to do. You really just didn't have the time.

'War is awful. Absolutely awful. I lost so many good friends, some that I went to school with and some that I trained with. It was just awful', he said.

'Somebody might come out a bit better than the others but there are no winners.

Laurie, thank you for your service to our nation, thank you for your efforts in defeating fascism and liberating France, and thank you for your service to the Labor Party. We were honoured to be in your presence.

Melbourne Market

Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East) — I wish to raise two of many issues in relation to the Melbourne fruit and vegetable markets relocation to the new facility at Epping. Regional businesses are reporting there are inadequate secure sleeping bay facilities for rural drivers who travel over four hours to reach the market. The market authority has requested drivers park at the nearest service station, which is a security risk. Even when the drivers get inside the facility, there is a shortage of undercover loading and unloading bays. I call on the minister to rectify these concerns in time for the official opening, which has been delayed.

National Ice Taskforce

Mr T. BULL — Last Wednesday I attended a forum in Bairnsdale, along with just on 300 community members who travelled from the towns of Heyfield, Stratford, Lakes Entrance, Orbost, Paynesville, Nicholson and Swan Reach, to hear National Ice Taskforce chairman Ken Lay speak about the taskforce's role and to hear other speakers from Victoria Police and the Ice Meltdown Project. It was great to see so many community members taking the time to educate themselves about a drug that is causing so much harm. With real people telling real stories it certainly was an eye-opening event for many in attendance, with the clear message that community must lead this fight.

Maffra Cheese Company

Mr T. BULL — I wish to pay tribute to a great Australian company from my Gippsland East electorate, Maffra Cheese Company, a family-owned business that recently expanded its operations with the help of the former coalition government's Regional Growth Fund. It is a major employer in the Tinamba, Heyfield and Maffra area and is a great example of what can be achieved through hard work and great vision. Maffra Cheese's cloth-aged cheddar was recently judged the best Australian cheese at the International Cheese Awards in the United Kingdom, the third consecutive year it has won this coveted international title.

Victorian broiler industry

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) — Forty people from 10 local government areas across Victoria registered for a community consultation on the Victorian broiler industry in Baringhup on the weekend. Representatives came from the local government areas of Baw Baw, Buloke, Central

Goldfields, City of Greater Bendigo, Golden Plains, Mount Alexander, Latrobe City, Loddon, Strathbogie and Wellington. The attendees at this forum were not nay-sayers, blow-ins, lifestyle farmers or hobby farmers. Three-quarters of the participants farmed properties greater than 100 acres and six participants farmed properties of over 1000 acres. Three-quarters of the participants have farmed their properties for more than 10 years and almost half have been farming their properties for over 25 years.

A major concern raised by the attendees through the consultation is the conflict being caused in communities by the broiler industry trying to expand using an outdated and inadequate code. Both local communities and the broiler industry are spending huge amounts of money fighting cases in Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal and the Supreme Court. This is unnecessary and could be fixed by reviewing the code and planning laws.

Some of the key problems identified by attendees of the forum include loopholes in the code that allow two or more groups of eight very large sheds to be built close together without odour modelling and an environmental risk assessment or consideration of the cumulative effect of odour on the neighbourhood; the ability of the broiler industry through the code to place restrictive buffer zones over privately owned adjoining property; and the narrow definitions of 'environment' and 'landscape' used in the code, which do not reflect community concern regarding the environment and local landscapes — —

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

Bass electorate

Mr PAYNTER (Bass) — On 7 July I was joined by the Leader of the Opposition for a tour around my electorate of Bass. It was pleasing to see so many new and familiar faces. In particular, I would like to thank the Wonthaggi Business Association for hosting the breakfast at Connell's Bakery in Wonthaggi. Breakfast was followed by a tour of the Wonthaggi Secondary College, which both parties committed to rebuilding during the last election but which was overlooked when the May budget was delivered by the Treasurer. I thank Garry Dennis for meeting us at the school, despite the visit being during school holidays, and I commend him on his passion for delivering quality education and his clear vision for the future.

I would also like to thank the Inverloch Men's Shed and the Anderson Inlet Angling Club for their

hospitality, with special thanks to Julian Sellers from the Inverloch Men's Shed for coordinating the get-together. It was wonderful to meet members of the Inverloch Cricket Club, the Inverloch Historical Society and the Inverloch Rotary Club, and I thank those clubs for their support.

Later in the day we visited the site of the old Lang Lang jetty. I am hopeful that government funding to build a new jetty in its place will be secured. Our last pitstop was at the Pakenham train station, where the coalition committed to restoring V/Line services to Pakenham after the next election. This followed the nonsensical decision by the Andrews Labor government to cut over 200 services a week from Pakenham, denying hundreds of passengers their usual mode of transport into the city for work. All in all it was a great day.

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

Indian Independence Day

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) — Last weekend I had the privilege of attending a wonderful cultural evening to celebrate Indian Independence Day in Carrum Downs. It is timely to speak about this celebration, given recent events surrounding the treatment of Adam Goodes and given the Andrews government's Embrace Diversity campaign, which is all about social inclusion and harmony. Its main message is that cultural diversity is a strength in our community, and I certainly witnessed that on Saturday evening. The event was held by the Indian Tamil Association of Victoria in the Serbian hall in Carrum Downs and was attended by more than 400 families. It was a festival of dance, song, colour and food — lots of food — and was a showcase for pride — people's pride in their culture, their history, their traditions and their stories. I am immensely proud that I live in a community which recognises and acknowledges that pride, that I live in a community which understands that its culture does not diminish our community and that I live in a community which understands that its culture enriches our community.

Recent events concerning Adam Goodes have shown us that, sadly, racism is very much alive in our communities. Now, more than ever, we need to seize the opportunity to show that collectively we embrace diversity; we understand and acknowledge that diversity enriches us all; and we believe that diversity is a strength in our community. To all the diverse communities in my community I say, thank you for your diversity and thank you for making our community a better, richer place to live.

Oakleigh electorate schools

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) — I rise to speak about the Andrew's government's genuine commitment to quality education across Victoria. The electorate of Oakleigh has some of the best schools in Melbourne, and it was a privilege to welcome the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education to our community last week. The Deputy Premier has long been an advocate for better education outcomes in Victoria and his passion is obvious, not only to me but also to the communities of the many schools he has met with in the past. Last week I was fortunate to join him at the opening of the new early years centre and dream space at Sussex Heights Primary School in Mount Waverley. The school should be very proud of these fantastic new facilities, and I congratulate the school community for its hard work.

We also visited Amsleigh Park Primary School in Oakleigh East to confirm the budget provision of \$5.7 million for the important upgrade. This was a key election commitment by Labor, and it has been delivered in this government's first budget. This was the Deputy Premier's second visit to this school, and I know he will be back again as works get underway. We also had the pleasure to meet again with the team at Oakleigh Grammar School to discuss local issues and opportunities for this very highly regarded independent school.

Information on the future needs of schools does not just come from expert reports or a top-down approach. It requires interaction on the ground, where opportunities for better outcomes can be established up front and face to face. It should be recognised that this is a government that takes a direct hands-on approach to education in Victoria and that the minister sees education as a top priority, as is evidenced by the budget.

Geelong education forum

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) — On 20 July I held an education state forum in Geelong to give students, parents and teachers the opportunity to have their say on the future of our state education system. I was pleased that the Minister for Education attended the forum not only to speak but also to help facilitate the workshops. The workshops were facilitated by the students who had already given their ideas and vision to the audience. Tess Parker and Lachie Blair from Belmont High School; Mekah Blackhall and Josh Ricketts from Geelong High School; Laura Bath and Tahlia McConecky from Matthew Flinders Girls Secondary College; and Hamish Garnham and Tom

Wood-Burgess from Oberon High School all played a significant role at the forum.

The passion and commitment of the Minister for Education to state education did not go unnoticed by the audience. The feedback was about confidence, excitement and hope, and the genuine comments from the minister. The Andrews government's commitment to education through the biggest education budget in Victoria's history has renewed confidence in our local state schools.

Box Hill transport interchange

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — The Andrews government has failed to deliver on its election commitment to establish a ministerial working group on the future of the Box Hill transport interchange. This is yet another example of how the Andrews government is treating the residents of the eastern suburbs with contempt.

INFRASTRUCTURE VICTORIA BILL 2015

Second reading

Debate resumed from 24 June; motion of Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport).

Mr M. O'BRIEN (Malvern) — I am pleased to rise to speak on the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015. The purpose of the bill includes to establish Infrastructure Victoria to provide independent and expert advice about Victoria's infrastructure needs, priorities and proposals. From some of the rhetoric coming from the government you would think that this was the first time any government had sought independent advice about major infrastructure decisions facing this state. I regret to inform the government that this is not the case and that many governments of different political complexions have done so over past decades.

I refer the house to one such piece of independent expert advice, which states:

Making the right decisions about the future of Melbourne's transport network is about much more than predicting and providing for greater travel movements over the coming decades. It is about the significant economic, social and environmental benefits that will be generated by the appropriate transport infrastructure. It is also about investing in the transport connections needed to support the development of a more innovative, competitive and sustainable city.

...

My recommendations are grounded in extensive research and modelling carried out by the study team and a group of expert consultants. They take into account the many submissions

forwarded to me by individuals, local councils, community organisations and business groups.

One of the two major infrastructure recommendations made in the report was the construction of:

A new 18-kilometre cross-city road corridor that provides a much-needed alternative to the West Gate Bridge, while also delivering substantial economic, transport and amenity benefits to Melbourne.

This was signed 'Rod Eddington, Melbourne, March 2008', and the title of this voluminous report is *Investing in Transport — East West Link Needs Assessment: A Study by Sir Rod Eddington*. Is it not extraordinary that even former Labor governments were quite happy to go out and seek independent expert advice on major infrastructure decisions when it suited them? We know that Rod Eddington, having undertaken this extensive work — having obtained independent expert advice and having consulted with the community — recommended that the major road project required to keep this city moving was the east–west link. We know that the Labor government of the day accepted that recommendation but did nothing about it. When the government changed — and it took a coalition government to fix the finances, sign the contracts and get on with building the east–west link — it took another Labor government to ignore all the advice that Labor itself had sought when in office and, at great expense to the taxpayer and at the cost of thousands of jobs, to tear up those contracts, keeping Melbourne stuck in traffic for decades to come.

Let us not allow those opposite to come in here without acknowledging that they are a bunch of hypocrites when it comes to infrastructure. Establishing Infrastructure Victoria will not lead to any guarantee of better outcomes because we know that Labor governments have been prepared to ignore — and in fact to rip up — the advice given to them by experts in the past. I know that Rod Eddington is someone who is well regarded by both sides of the house — in fact I think the government has him on some of its advisory panels — so the fact that this government now says it will establish Infrastructure Victoria as a means of providing expert advice on the infrastructure needs of this state should give the public absolutely zero confidence that this will lead to better outcomes for Victoria.

When you look at the record of this government so far, you see that establishing Infrastructure Victoria — or IV, as I am sure it will become known — will not make much of a difference. 'IV' is probably an appropriate name, because Victoria is on a drip at the moment when it comes to infrastructure. As shadow Treasurer

and as a former Treasurer, I always like referring to the budget papers because, unlike members opposite, the budget papers do not lie.

When you look at the pre-election budget update that was released by Treasury — not by me but by Treasury — during the last election campaign, on page 10 you see ‘Government infrastructure investment’. If you look at the four years from 2014–15 through to 2017–18, you see that \$26.8 billion of government infrastructure investment was committed to by the coalition government. If you go to this year’s budget, the first budget of the Andrews Labor government, and you add up the government infrastructure investment figures for the same four years, you do not get \$26.8 billion; you get \$20.4 billion. That means \$6.4 billion has been cut from Victoria’s infrastructure budget under this Labor government — that is, \$6.4 billion worth of projects not going ahead, \$6.4 billion worth of jobs not being created, \$6.4 billion worth of small businesses, large businesses and contractors out of work because this government has cut the infrastructure budget by 24 per cent.

This government has the hide to come in here with a bill — with a piece of paper — and pretend that it will make the slightest jot of difference when it comes to infrastructure. You can establish all the Infrastructure Victorias you like — you can have an Infrastructure Victoria party — but unless you put your money where your mouth is and build projects instead of scrapping them, you are not going to build any infrastructure. The budget papers tell the truth.

We heard a whole lot of claims that Infrastructure Victoria was going to be guiding this new government in its infrastructure decisions, but let us have a look at the decisions that have already been made before Infrastructure Victoria has even been established, let alone had its advice sought. Do members remember the West Gate distributor? Members opposite seem to have forgotten about the West Gate distributor. This is the one road project Labor actually had coming in the lead-up to the last election. It was going to build a little slip lane off the West Gate Freeway, but it said, ‘Let’s give it a highfalutin name; let’s make it sound like it is very clever. We will call it the West Gate distributor’. How long did that last? It did not last long at all.

What is very concerning is the fact that we found out last week when the Treasurer was interviewed on the Neil Mitchell program that in fact the West Gate distributor was always a fraud. The Treasurer admitted that before the election he had been in discussions with

Transurban about scrapping the West Gate distributor and having a western distributor instead.

Mr Nardella — Oh, der!

Mr M. O’BRIEN — ‘Oh, der!’, comes the interjection from the member for Melton, as though he is not surprised that Victorians were lied to by the Labor Party before the election. The Treasurer was very uncomfortable being put under the grill by Neil Mitchell. He did not want to admit that he had actually met with Transurban to discuss the western distributor before the election, because Victorians were sold a pup by Labor. They were lied to by the then opposition. It did not have any intention of building the West Gate distributor. It had already been in discussions with Transurban before the election. No doubt the Treasurer had a cosy meeting with his former chief of staff, who happened to be working for Transurban, and then Labor decided to pull the wool over Victorians’ eyes and claim it was going to the election with a West Gate distributor policy, which it then turned around and ditched in favour of a so-called ‘unsolicited bid’ — a so-called ‘market-led proposal’ — from Transurban.

What a fraud! I ask you, Acting Speaker: where was Infrastructure Victoria while all this dirty dealing was going on? The decision to scrap the east–west link, to rip up the contracts and to pay hundreds of millions of dollars in compensation that cost thousands of jobs against the advice of Rod Eddington, did that go to Infrastructure Victoria? No. This was not only the biggest but the worst infrastructure decision in this state’s history, and this government did it without the benefit of any advice, except possibly from the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), which hated the fact that the east–west link was not going to be a CFMEU closed shop. We all know that the CFMEU calls the shots when it comes to construction projects, just as Michael Donovan and the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association do when it comes to everything else. There was no Infrastructure Victoria advice on the east–west link.

Then there is the port of Melbourne. Before the election the government said, ‘Well, we have to have a second container port. Of course we have to have a second container port — we all know we have to have a second container port — but we think it should be in Geelong because, to quote the Premier, “Jobs, jobs and more jobs for Geelong”’. Now it has decided, ‘In fact we want to have a 70-year lease that is a private monopoly and a compensation poison pill if any future government dares to build a second container port’. Where is the advice from Infrastructure Victoria on this dodgy lease? Where is the advice from Infrastructure

Victoria on this compensation arrangement and this poison pill? Where is it? It is nowhere to be seen. What about the advice on ripping up the Melbourne rail link and the airport rail link and going ahead with Melbourne Metro? The government does not have any funding for it. It is planning to dig up and shut down Swanston Street for years. Where is the advice from Infrastructure Victoria on that? It is nowhere to be seen.

This is a government that has zero credibility when it comes to infrastructure. It has cut the budget by 24 per cent, it has ripped up contracts, it has cost thousands of jobs and it is making decisions based on politics rather than the needs of Victorians. So after the stable door has already seen the horses all run through it, the government now says, 'We want to try to lock it down'. Now it says it wants to lock the stable door after the horses have already bolted.

Mr Angus — Too little, too late.

Mr M. O'BRIEN — It is too little, too late, as the member for Forest Hill points out. Let us have a look at aspects of the bill. The government, through the bill, says:

The object of Infrastructure Victoria is to provide independent and expert advice about Victoria's current and future infrastructure needs —

amongst other things.

We come to independent advice. When you have a board on which three of the seven members are government departmental secretaries, who are by professional obligation required to follow government policy, on what planet do you call that independent? The jobs of three of the seven members of the board is to implement government policy, yet the board is supposed to be an independent body. What an absolute joke and what a fraud on Victorians this is. I have great respect for our departmental secretaries. The Victorian public service is an excellent public service. I had the pleasure as a minister in a number of portfolios to work with a number of outstanding men and women in the Victorian public service, but their job is to implement the policy of the government of the day; it is not to provide independent advice to Infrastructure Victoria.

What if, for example, Infrastructure Victoria thought, as Sir Rod Eddington did, that the most important road need for Victoria was to build the east–west link? Can you imagine the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet or the Secretary of the Department of Treasury and Finance or the Secretary of the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure shuffling through the door to see the

Premier and Treasurer, very carefully putting the report on their desk and saying, 'Look, I'm sorry, Premier and ministers, our independent advice is that you were wrong to rip up the contracts and we need the east–west link'. How long do you think this government would keep those people in their jobs? That is why it is not independent; that is why this is not an independent body, because you cannot expect government departmental secretaries, whose job it is to implement government policy, to give independent advice to Infrastructure Victoria when that advice contradicts the government's policy of the day.

This government has a policy of under no circumstances building the east west–link. We know this. So what happens if Infrastructure Victoria thinks, based on all the expert evidence — as Sir Rod Eddington did — that the east–west link is the most appropriate project? What does it do? Do you keep your job or do you act independently? That is the absolute catch 22 that this government is seeking to put Victoria's public service in through this fraud of a bill, because it is not independent.

When you go to other aspects of the bill and look at the four members of the board other than the three government departmental secretaries, the bill says they should not be currently employed in the public service, but it does not actually require them to have any substantial private sector experience. For example, they could have been a former departmental secretary who left three weeks ago, and they could be engaged again as a director of Infrastructure Victoria under this bill. That is a real concern. Again, where is the obligation for private sector experience on the board of Infrastructure Victoria? It is just not here. That is why this bill is not good in its current form and needs to be severely and seriously improved.

Coming to appointments, there are supposed to be measures in relation to conflicts of interest. The bill says that Infrastructure Victoria has to produce a code to deal with conflicts of interest. There has been speculation that somebody who was a director of a company that is currently involved in heated negotiations with the government over its western distributor could potentially be put in as a director or even a chairperson of Infrastructure Victoria. If that were the case, how could you have a body potentially led by somebody who had a direct conflict of interest because they are were negotiations with the government over a major project?

If you have a \$5.5 billion unsolicited proposal before the government, is it appropriate that somebody who is a director of that proponent be on the board of

Infrastructure Victoria? We will have to wait and see who this government actually appoints to the board, but we make it clear there has to be absolute clarity that there will not be conflicts of interest. You have a smallish board — seven people. If one or even two people are out of action because of conflicts of interest, this board will not function properly. These are basic corporate governance principles. In a board of seven people, you can have three or four people out of action. If they are all involved in business, they can all potentially have conflicts of interest, because they have matters before the government of the day. How will that be functional? The answer is: it will not be.

I note that there is no definition of ‘infrastructure’ within this bill, so infrastructure could mean pretty much anything. We know that the last time Labor was in government there was a body called Major Projects Victoria. Major Projects Victoria sounds very impressive, and you would think that a major project must mean a major project. I am not sure how many members of the public would think that renovating the kitchen here at Parliament House is a major project. But under Labor, the Parliament House catering facilities redevelopment was a major project at Major Projects Victoria.

Mr Angus — Probably over time and over budget.

Mr M. O'BRIEN — It is funny the member for Forest Hill mentions that, because it was the subject of an Auditor-General's report. In fact two major delays were experienced in relation to renovating the kitchen at Parliament House. You have to wonder, with no definition of what infrastructure is, how on earth Infrastructure Victoria is going to have any guidance on what it is supposed to be doing. We know we have a government that loves getting bogged down in trivia and loves making announcements with no follow-through. I think we can expect to see plenty more kitchen renovations, but very few major infrastructure projects. As I pointed out, the government has cut the budget by 24 per cent when it comes to infrastructure.

Despite the claimed independent status of Infrastructure Victoria, this bill prohibits the authority from publishing any advice that it provides to the minister in response to a request from the minister. It says that this is:

... to enable the minister to seek advice from Infrastructure Victoria that can be used in confidential decision-making processes.

and provide —

... the minister with the power to delete parts of the advice prior to publication ...

You have to wonder about where the government will decide that the advice it receives from Infrastructure Victoria will not be published, or can it simply censor out inconvenient parts of that advice? You have to wonder how independent Infrastructure Victoria will be and how useful it is going to be. We might just have to join the dots. If you see a project — for example, if the ‘something link’ has been recommended — you might have to guess whether that is the east–west link or maybe potentially the west–east link.

Infrastructure Victoria is also to provide a 30-year plan. I think we are all in favour of forward-looking infrastructure. The former government had a lot of major projects that it was getting started on, but of course these projects take some time to finish. The former opposition used to attack the coalition when it was in office because it had projects that were significant, and significant projects do take a bit of time. Now apparently the government thinks a 30-year time frame is okay. When Labor is in office, 30-year time frames are okay — and that is forward planning and that is being prudent. Apparently when the coalition is in office and it has time frames for major infrastructure projects, somehow that is not as good.

The coalition has a number of amendments to this bill to try and improve it. We heard a lot about transparency and accountability from the Labor Party in opposition, but unfortunately this bill just does not measure up. We are going to move some amendments that will help this bill measure up and be a lot more transparent and accountable. We are going to hold the government to that very lofty standard that it set itself in opposition. Under standing orders, I wish to advise the house of amendments to the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015 and request that they be circulated.

Opposition amendments circulated by Mr O'BRIEN (Malvern) under standing orders.

Mr M. O'BRIEN — The first amendment is in relation to the experience of the non-public servant board directors, and that is providing that their experience should be:

... gained predominantly outside the public sector.

As I say again, we have wonderful people in the Victorian public service — professional, credible, experienced people — but if the intention of Infrastructure Victoria, and of this bill, is to seek broad experience and advice and also expert opinion from outside the public sector, that should be reflected in the

qualifications of the non-public servant members who are appointed.

Again, when a recommendation is made to Governor in Council we propose that:

... the minister must have regard, as far as is practicable, to the need for the appointed directors collectively to have substantial international experience and chartered qualifications in relation to infrastructure planning, funding and delivery.

There are plenty of very experienced, very worthy people in this country — particularly in this state — and we should make sure that through setting up Infrastructure Victoria through this piece of legislation, these people are appropriately considered and selected for these roles.

In relation to the 30-year infrastructure strategy, we know that Labor governments like to talk about far-reaching things. Remember Labor's transport plan, which was decades and decades in advance? Lots and lots of money was spent on ads, but no money was spent on transport. That was a bit of glitch, but anyway. We think that if this government wants to be serious about having a 30-year plan, then let us be serious. We propose to amend this bill to provide that:

Infrastructure Victoria must publish the 30-year infrastructure strategy on or before 31 December 2016.

Mr T. Bull — Plenty of time.

Mr M. O'BRIEN — Plenty of time if you are serious about it, and plenty of time if you are dedicated to being accountable and are determined to be transparent. Let us see Infrastructure Victoria's 30-year program, and let us see it by the end of next year.

The other point that the coalition believes is very important with this bill is that there should be accountability to the Parliament. When you look at the purposes of Infrastructure Victoria, you will see that one purpose is:

... to provide independent and expert advice about Victoria's current and future infrastructure needs ...

It does not say 'to the minister', it does not say 'to the government', it says 'provide advice'. The Parliament and, through the Parliament, the people of Victoria, who send us to this place, deserve to be brought in on it as well.

We propose to amend this bill to have these reports laid before Parliament so that the Parliament of Victoria will be able to see them before they are sent anywhere else. We are the elected legislative body of this state, so it is

absolutely appropriate that the Parliament of Victoria receive these reports. We are also proposing that any strategy or updated strategy — I say 'updated' because this bill provides for the government to respond to Infrastructure Victoria's plans and set out the strategy for how they are to be implemented — must be laid before the houses of Parliament, because that is transparent, accountable and appropriate.

This is a hypocritical bill from a government which has done nothing but cancel projects and slash infrastructure budgets since coming to office and which has a past of being prepared to ignore independent expert advice. It has a record of ignoring independent advice when it does not suit its political interests at a particular moment in time. We do not have a lot of confidence that the establishment of Infrastructure Victoria will do much to make this government more accountable, more transparent or any better at delivering infrastructure than it has been in its first eight months, during which time it has only cancelled infrastructure projects. However, we are proposing amendments to improve this bill to try to hold this government to the standards of transparency and accountability Labor talked about before the election. We think anything that shines a spotlight on Labor's appalling infrastructure record is useful, so we will not oppose this bill. However, we do seek to move amendments to ensure that this bill lives up to some of what this Labor government promised.

Mr BROOKS (Bundoora) — It is a pleasure to make a contribution on this very important bill, the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015. This bill establishes a statutory authority that will provide all Victorians with expert advice on long-term infrastructure planning for the benefit of this state and sets out infrastructure planning processes. The establishment of this body is long overdue. We saw the need for this sort of careful long-term planning in the chaotic nature of infrastructure announcements just before the last election, but I will come back to that point in a moment.

Infrastructure Victoria will have seven directors, the majority of whom will be non-government directors and three of whom will be the secretaries of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Department of Treasury and Finance and the department responsible to the Minister for Planning. It is important to recognise that the advice put forward by Infrastructure Victoria will be independent and under no direction from the relevant minister and that it will provide long-term infrastructure advice to create a 30-year pipeline of infrastructure projects. Despite the running down of that concept by the previous contributor to this debate, I believe it is important. I also believe the Victorian

people would support the notion of having a very clear understanding of what its government, regardless of its political persuasion, plans to do in the future. The Victorian people would support the application of rigorous analysis, costings and prioritisation for all projects.

Rather than have governments hold things in secret, as was the case with the east–west link proposal made by those opposite, we will instead have an open process through which the Victorian people can see well in advance what infrastructure is being planned and can have input into the planning process in a number of ways. Victorians will be able to make the government aware that they are happy with its priorities or that they have different priorities. This is a great initiative that the Andrews government should be very proud of. An important facet of the legislation is its requirement that the government respond to Infrastructure Victoria's advice within 12 months. That obligation provides the Victorian people with a level of certainty and transparency around its government's position on Infrastructure Victoria's advice. This very good piece of legislation seeks to take short-term politicking out of infrastructure planning.

Victorians genuinely understand the need for this sort of body. Victorians manage their own household budgets. When they have to make large financial decisions, such as the purchasing of a home or motor vehicle, they commit to long-term planning; they budget carefully and they do their research on what they are going to buy and where they are going to buy it. Victorians would expect their government to provide a relative level of analysis and research when it is dealing with an infrastructure pipeline worth billions of dollars of taxpayer money. Victorians intuitively understand that this is the right thing to do. I believe the business community and other stakeholders definitely understand that this is the right thing to do.

The contribution we just heard from the shadow Treasurer demonstrates one thing very clearly — that is, Liberals and Nationals members have not moved on from last year and their term in government. In their minds we should still be digging the east–west tunnel despite the fact that we now know that there was to be a cost blowout of over \$2.7 billion. I wrote down a quote from the shadow Treasurer's contribution a few minutes ago. He said, 'Budget papers don't lie'. I remember the Liberal-Nationals government's budget papers that showed the east–west link at a cost of \$6 billion to \$8 billion. We know now that it would have cost \$10.7 billion. A \$2.7 billion blowout in the space of a couple of years is massive. It highlights the

importance of having a strong approach to long-term infrastructure planning.

The sham of the east–west link — its poor cost-benefit ratio of 0.45 and the dirty side deal signed by the former Treasurer — is a strong argument in favour of this body taking the opportunity to rush into these sorts of infrastructure projects out of the system. We saw the signs go up at Southern Cross station advertising a rail link to the airport — a rail link based on a 50-year or 60-year promise. It was a ridiculous and chaotic approach to rolling out infrastructure announcements. The desperation was palpable.

Those opposite knew they had a very good chance of losing the election, so they were quite happy to commit to a whole range of infrastructure projects which added up to billions or tens of billions of dollars of taxpayers money, some of which they knew would not be delivered within a generation. It was a real fraud perpetrated on the Victorian people and at worst committed Victorian taxpayers to billions of dollars of infrastructure on the basis of their political whims in the run-up to an election.

Another project that highlights the coalition government's approach is metro rail. The previous government shifted the rail alignment, and it was going to run into the sewer line in Melbourne's CBD. The members of that government were not even sure where the railway station was going to be located at Fishermans Bend. It turned out it was to be at the casino. It was a real mess in terms of infrastructure planning. Those opposite paid the price for that chaotic approach to infrastructure planning.

It is important to note that members opposite have not learnt from those lessons. They have not realised that the Victorian people kicked them out of office for a very good reason. They have not gone back to the drawing board and asked, 'What did we get wrong?'. They have not looked at those projects, including the east–west link, and said, 'We got that wrong; it didn't add up' — a benefit-cost ratio of 0.45, blowouts in costs, tolls on Victorian motorists and increasing traffic in other parts of Melbourne. They have not acknowledged that, and I suppose that is sad. From the government's point of view, it is a good thing because it means that the opposition remains politically irrelevant.

This is a good bill, and it is not just the Labor Party that is saying it is. I think the only people who are critical of the establishment of Infrastructure Victoria are those opposite. In welcoming the announcement of this legislation being introduced into this house, the

Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, one of the key stakeholders in the business and infrastructure community, said:

Victoria needs a vehicle to ensure long-term bipartisan support for the large-scale infrastructure needs of our state.

Similarly, the Property Council of Victoria said:

The development of a 30-year infrastructure strategy detailing short, medium and long-term infrastructure needs is pivotal to securing a strong economic future for Victoria.

Mr Walsh interjected.

Mr BROOKS — As the Leader of The Nationals interjects, one can only assume that those opposite do not support the property council's view that this legislation will help to secure a strong economic future for Victoria.

In welcoming this legislation, the Urban Development Institute of Australia said:

We welcome the emphasis on objective and transparent analysis and evidence that will inform Infrastructure Victoria's activities and will work to provide Infrastructure Victoria with insight and research undertaken by the institute.

In welcoming the bill, Infrastructure Partnerships Australia said:

Victoria must never repeat the east–west link experience, meaning long-term, stable and predictable planning is fundamental.

Similarly, the Committee for Melbourne said:

The establishment of an independent Infrastructure Victoria entity is a good move forward for the state, and the Andrews government should be supported in taking this important step.

In welcoming this legislation, the Master Builders Association of Victoria said:

The importance of an independent body to assess the long-term infrastructure needs of our state cannot be underestimated.

Likewise, Engineers Australia said:

The development of a 30-year long-term infrastructure plan, together with short and medium-term priorities, also gives the industry greater certainty, and allows us to plan for the future to ensure we're best able to meet the needs of projects as they are put out to market.

Just about every major business stakeholder in the state is lining up to support this legislation, and this government is getting on with the job, which was an election commitment to provide long-term strategic infrastructure planning. The only people in this state who are opposed to this legislation, who are moving

amendments to this legislation and who are running it down are those opposite.

From the contribution made by the shadow Treasurer a few moments ago, members can make only one deduction — that is, those opposite have not accepted the fact that they were booted out of office because the east–west project was a dud and the Victorian people knew it. They knew that the approach the former government took to infrastructure planning was chaotic and irresponsible and that the Victorian people and the business community support the Andrews Labor government's approach to infrastructure planning, which is long term, strategic, analysis driven and evidence based.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — I rise to speak on the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015. It was interesting to listen to the previous speaker, the member for Bundoora, and to hear how he is trying to rewrite history. I think he has a very short memory. If I remember rightly, when Labor was previously in government it proposed, in response to the Eddington report, a \$38 billion transport plan that was never funded but was talked about a hell of a lot. One of the key infrastructure projects in that \$38 billion transport plan was the east–west link. In criticising that particular project, the member for Bundoora is criticising Sir Rod Eddington and criticising the previous Labor government, because that was a key part of Sir Rod Eddington's plan.

The member for Bundoora might smile about the fact that he was not trying to rewrite history — —

Mr R. Smith — It is either a dud project or it is not. You cannot have it both ways.

Mr WALSH — It depends on what audience you are talking to. During the previous Labor government one of the key planks of Sir Rod Eddington's \$38 billion transport plan that Premier Brumby kept talking about but never put any money into was there. Now government members are bagging that plan, so I find the position that the member has taken on that issue really interesting.

I support the position put forward by the member for Malvern as far as the amendments that have been suggested to this bill. The previous speaker has implied that there is something horrible about putting amendments forward. What this house is here for and why we come to Parliament is to scrutinise legislation and to put forward the views of the people of Victoria. If the government is going to be true to the commitment it made before the election — that is, to be open, honest

and transparent and to govern for all Victoria — I would have thought that it would embrace these amendments. These amendments are about putting things into the bill that reflect what the Premier said before the election as Leader of the Opposition. He wanted to make sure that the people of Victoria understood what was going on, and he was going to be open, honest and transparent. All these amendments do is make those particular things happen.

From a country Victorian point of view, this is a new piece of legislation, and the issue is that the leopard has changed its spots. Most infrastructure projects under the previous Labor government were very poorly managed. There was always that old saying that Labor cannot manage money and cannot manage major projects, and that is just as true of this new Labor government as it was of the previous Labor government.

If we look back to the infrastructure projects that were undertaken by the previous government, we can see that the list is long, but there are some key ones from country Victoria's point of view. The north-south pipeline was an absolute disaster of a project — \$1 billion to build a pipeline to take water from a drought-affected area to an area that has more rainfall. The amount of \$1 billion is a lot of money, and that pipeline will probably rust out before it is ever used. It was so ill conceived, and it divided the country and the city. The country and the city should be working together. We should not be dividing the two situations, which the north-south pipeline did. It was incendiary to those people in northern Victoria against the Brumby government. I believe that one of the key reasons Labor lost government was that particular project.

Then there is the absolute classic of all infrastructure projects, the desalination plant, an absolute white elephant. We can talk about herds of white elephants, and we do not have to go to Africa to find them because there are a lot of them here in Victoria. The biggest white elephant of the whole lot is in South Gippsland, at Wonthaggi. It was not an argument about whether there should be a desalination plant as a supply of last resort for Melbourne, because it was Ted Baillieu in opposition who put forward the proposal that there should be a small desalination plant to make sure Melbourne had a water supply, not the monstrous 150-gigalitre plant that is down there that was originally going to cost somewhere around \$3.7 billion. It blew out to over \$5 billion, and the consortium partners lost a lot of money out of that. The only people who made money out of that particular project were members of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union members and the Electrical Trade Union, who had an exclusive deal on that particular project.

Mr R. Smith — And the red helicopter pilot.

Mr WALSH — And the red helicopter pilot — maybe one payment to the red helicopter pilot for that great ad of Premier Bracks.

That project ran over time and over budget, and it built in increased costs to all infrastructure projects in Victoria because it pushed up the cost of doing business in Victoria. There might be some new legislation coming in to establish Infrastructure Victoria, but what we want to see is a government that is prepared to do the hard work, to manage major infrastructure projects and to drive value for Victorian taxpayers dollars. We do not want government members to do sweetheart deals with their union mates so that they can cream the real money out of those projects at the expense of taxpayers in Victoria.

If members look at some of the other major projects that have affected regional Victoria, they will see the regional rail link, which was trumpeted as the solution to a lot of the transport needs of Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong. It was said that it would also help by freeing up slots in the suburban network. I do not see any example of that. All I see in press clips is the fact that people in Ballarat are even more unhappy about their train service, and people in Geelong are still unhappy about their train service. The government flip-flops between whether it is going to give priority to Geelong for new carriages or whether it is going to say to the people in Ballarat, 'We're going to bring the new carriages up here'. Which is it? You cannot put new carriages in both places; it has to be in one or the other. However, the government is just saying whatever it has to to shut the people up in those particular places.

The doozy of all projects — and I raised this in question time — is the Melbourne market relocation project. Was that not an absolutely fantastic project for the market community here in Victoria? For a range of reasons a decision was made in the early 2000s by the Labor government to move the Footscray market. There was a discussion about where it would be relocated to. Epping was finally decided on. As I understand it, the geotechnical work was not done well enough, and when they started work out there, there was a lot more rock present than they expected, and that had to be cleaned out. A project that was originally going to cost only \$300 million ended up costing more than \$600 million, and based on what I hear from everyone I talk to in the market community, it is not going to deliver what the market community wants out there.

There is a very damning Auditor-General's report about that particular project. The project has taken probably twice the length of time it was supposed to take and cost double the money it was supposed to cost, and it is not going to service the market community well. Along with other members of Parliament I am constantly getting feedback from country buyers and merchants that there is no undercover parking for them. If they have a parking spot, they are going to have to load produce out in the weather — whether it be the sun in summertime or the wind and rain in wintertime — and that will affect the quality of the produce. They do not have access to undercover parking in the market. They also do not have anywhere to sleep. At their current market they have their bays. They can come in, unload, pull into their bay and have a sleep. They are in a secure site. They know that even if they have money or valuables in their truck, they can sleep because they have a secure bay.

What is happening in the new market? Merchants are being told that they can come in and unload but that they then must vacate the market. They are being told that they can go to the BP roadhouse to sleep. I think that is a totally unsatisfactory outcome. If you are going to spend \$600 million, why not have a project that actually meets the users' expectations rather than the other way around? The market community is very unhappy with that particular site.

If members think about the new legislation and the money from the sale of the port that is supposed to go into these infrastructure projects, they can see there is a list of infrastructure projects that have not been funded in country Victoria or from which money has been taken away. We funded the Murray Basin rail project. That money has been sitting in the budget since May 2014. There has been absolute silence about what is going to happen with that. It is three months since the Minister for Regional Development, Jaala Pulford, said the business case would be released in a couple of weeks.

If members go to the budget papers, they will see something that is very personal to me and is in my own electorate. There is money in the budget for the Echuca bridge, a very necessary project for that particular part of country Victoria, particularly the roundabout at the Warren Street and Northern Highway intersection, where there have been a number of traffic accidents. That money was there to do that particular project. With the change of government and changes in VicRoads, that money has evaporated and is not there to facilitate the project.

What we need is not a piece of legislation that establishes an independent body that does something; we need a government and some ministers who will drive things to happen in Victoria. Rather than having the 80-something reviews that have been announced by this government, we need action by some ministers to make things happen on the ground, particularly in country Victoria. We hear talk of what might happen in Melbourne, but we do not hear talk of what might happen in country Victoria. We want action out there, not just a piece of legislation that is going to hand-ball the job of giving advice for the future to someone else.

Mr McGuire (Broadmeadows) — The introduction of Infrastructure Victoria provides a critical and fundamental foundation stone to re-establish a focus on historic, social and economic issues in this state. What we need is independent, expert advice on infrastructure. It has been historically critical, because in the past, given the way Melbourne was established, major funding was put into infrastructure — the tram networks and the train networks in the eastern and southern suburbs. This triggered a multiplier effect of about five or six times to get what I describe as the quality of life infrastructure. This established a whole range of new preschools and what I describe as Victoria's ivy league colleges all the way through to nursing homes and even cemeteries.

That is how Melbourne was set up and established, and that is the historic perspective that I think we have to know and understand. We are now, however, at a time where we are looking at where major growth is occurring in this state. Within the suburban interface areas the major growth is in the north and west. The cities of Hume and Whittlesea are about number four in Australia for the amount of growth.

The city of Wyndham, through the western corridor, is also right up there. We have a boom in population growth right now in the state of Victoria, so the timing of the establishment of Infrastructure Victoria with the object of analysing — with expert and independent advice to the government — where the infrastructure should be placed and of taking a long-term view, is absolutely critical. Over generations we have established the world's most livable city, but we need to be able to say, 'This is how it will grow in the future', and we cannot keep repeating the mistakes of the past.

I go back to the 1980s when the retiring head of the then Premier's department confided in me that the biggest mistake in the generation of government up until then was the way Broadmeadows was established on the fringe at the end of the train line. They did not invest in the social infrastructure that was required. This

has been a repeat pattern. If you look at how Victoria was established in the Bolte era, MO towns were built. We had Broadmeadows for Ford, and we had Dandenong for Holden. We had suburbs where the factory fodder was placed without the necessary social infrastructure to the point where just over a decade ago Broadmeadows still did not have its own public library. That says in one line how the deficits occur.

This is the politicisation of the way that infrastructure is used and abused. We saw it in the last term of the coalition government in Victoria. What did that government do? It came to Broadmeadows with a reverse Robin Hood strategy. It took away the funding for almost \$100 million of infrastructure projects — a new central activities district, the refurbishment of the Broadmeadows railway station, a government services office, all of which were vital and necessary to meeting any criteria on need and growth. Any independent assessment would have said, 'Yes, of course these should be done'. What did the government do? It took the money out. Why did it do that? To sandbag marginal seats. It was a classic example of political expediency. It was the triumph of politics over rational decision making. That is what this bill will effectively end. We will be able to put in place people whose interests are the public interests and have them make assessments. We will be able to have a thorough analysis that will stand up to scrutiny, and we will be able to build the infrastructure that Victoria needs, particularly in the suburbs.

I see this as critical to how we embrace growth. We have huge population growth occurring, and we have to stop repeating the mistakes of the past — that is, putting fringe cities where there is no infrastructure, putting young families in there and then wondering why decades later we have such social disruption. We know; we have seen it before. As Einstein said, insanity is repeating the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. Infrastructure Victoria gives us the opportunity to address this issue, so I think it is a fundamental proposition.

But we do have to address the other issues about how politics work. You cannot have changes of government that see a coalition government come into power in Victoria and take out the money that was allocated for infrastructure in seats where the need is indisputable to sandbag its politics and to try to save itself. We have to put an end to that, and likewise at a federal level because it happens there as well. That is why I have got an economic and cultural development summit that can try to address these issues. The summit model that has been created coordinates three tiers of government, business and civil society, and they are all coming.

There is only one power structure that is not coming: the Australian government. Why would you not come? I wrote to the federal Treasurer and said that this was the area that has been hardest hit by his last two budgets — not just the first one, but now the second one as well, according to an independent analysis by the University of Canberra. It is not simply just my view.

The Australian government has a duty to come to meet the people and get beyond the class war rhetoric of lifters and leaners, to come to meet the people who have been the heavy lifters over generations, who have underwritten prosperity for the state for generations. And what have we had? We have had the politics of studied neglect. This is wilful blindness. You cannot allow this to be maintained. I call it out every time because it needs to be known and understood.

You cannot have the now Leader of the Opposition in his previous role as the Minister for Planning publicly claiming to represent the people of Broadmeadows and then doing a reverse Robin Hood. This bill is a critical move to change this. I think that is a really good foundation stone on which to start to address it, but I argue that we need to take it further. I think we need to take these issues to the Council of Australian Governments so that they are addressed at the highest levels of government in the country. We need to stop these postcodes of disadvantage becoming even more complex over time. If you have a look at the people I represent — the people of Broadmeadows — you see that we now have the situation where unemployment is equal to that of Greece; youth unemployment is beyond 40 per cent on the estimates of the Australian government itself; and the impact on families in this community is that they have been the hardest hit by the last two federal government budgets.

The other complexity is that we are now in a position where we have twice as many Muslim families as any other state district living side by side with Christian refugees from Iraq and Syria. They have come out of war zones, and as each new wave of poor people comes — some are coming from an earthquake-struck Nepal — we have to take care of them. Where is the refugee centre? It is in the back of the old Broadmeadows army camp. The degree of difficulty and the degree of complexity is incredibly high, so my call is that we need at the highest level of government to take a bipartisan approach so that over a longer period — no matter who is in power — the so-called postcodes of disadvantage are not just left behind. This is a crisis, and we have to address it right now. If it were a bushfire, it would be declared a national disaster.

These are the areas we have to address now because we have come to a critical point.

In the past even though in a lot of factories, such as Yakka, Nabisco and Ericsson — where my mum used to work on the assembly lines — the jobs were tough, boring and menial, but at least the workers got a pay packet at the end of the day. As my late dad always said: Broadmeadows is your toehold into the land of opportunity. And so it has proved. But increasingly the difficulty now is that the jobs are not there. This is the crisis, and this is what has to be addressed. I want Broadmeadows to be remembered for the rise of CSL not the demise of Ford, but it cannot be done by bystanders.

That is the issue we have with the Australian government. It cannot avoid its duty and its responsibility. There is a duty to be a participant, to come and be a part of this, to get a coordinated strategy and to do it regionally, which then becomes the template that can be used in other areas. Ford closes first in October next year, then Holden and Toyota fall like dominoes, so why do we not actually just get together? We have got everybody else coming to the summit except the Australian government. I again call on the Prime Minister to turn up and be a participant and for us to do something for hope in this country.

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) — The Greens are happy to support this bill for the development of Infrastructure Victoria. I would like to congratulate the government for establishing this body to oversee infrastructure in a way that is independent and that also has a long-term view for the development of this state. I agree with a lot of the comments made by the member for Broadmeadows declaring that our city is growing very rapidly. It is putting real pressure on people all across our state, and this is largely because we have not dealt properly with planning and infrastructure. We are at real risk of losing our title as the world's most livable city and losing the character of our city. We are also significantly at risk of decreasing our quality of life if we do not have proper infrastructure and planning policies for the future.

Therefore I am pleased to note that the establishment of Infrastructure Victoria will mean that our infrastructure planning will be more independent of government, because frankly infrastructure planning is too fundamental to the lives of Victorians to be held hostage to political skirmishes. Infrastructure should never be used as a carrot to dangle around election time to get ahead in marginal seats. Neither should it be used, as we saw at the last election with the irresponsible conduct of the coalition around the

east–west toll road, as an expensive political ploy to jam the opposition in the final days of a government facing imminent electoral defeat.

With long-term planning we could make our state and city truly world class. We could have 24-hour world-class public transport systems like those in Hong Kong and Berlin, which many Victorians have experienced and wondered why our state cannot have the same. We could have a fast train between our major cities — we are the only continent apart from Antarctica that does not have high-speed rail, and we are worried that the penguins are going to beat us to it. We could have an electricity grid that is powered 100 per cent by renewable energy. These things can be a reality. Other countries, other cities and other states have managed to do these things. It is not pie in the sky thinking. They have done it because they have had a long-term independent view of infrastructure. I am hoping that Infrastructure Victoria will lead us down that path as well.

I am also really pleased to see that the agency will consider the triple bottom line, putting environmental and social impacts on an equal footing with economic objectives, because we know that infrastructure is not just to create jobs and economic prosperity but is also here to improve people's lives, to get people to work, to get people home and to make sure we all have a very good quality of life — and that is what it should be here for. Social and environmental objectives are absolutely critical. However, I doubt that Infrastructure Victoria will fully take the politics out of infrastructure planning.

I doubt it would have stopped the north–south pipeline or the desalination plant. It still relies on the government to accept the recommendations of the experts, which we know the government in Victoria has not been too good at doing of late. We do not think it will look into whether we need the western distributor or whether it is a good idea to sell our port. Hopefully it will do these things in the way the government claims it will, but I doubt it will fully take the politics out of it.

I doubt that we will ever have a truly independent infrastructure planning system in this state while we have governments that still take donations from and are beholden to toll road companies, property developers and fossil fuel companies, or until the federal government stops playing politics with infrastructure funding for the states. However, we can hope that Infrastructure Victoria will at least increase the transparency of infrastructure planning, by increasing the transparency of what expert advice has been given to ministers and by requiring ministers to explain why they have disregarded that advice if they have done so.

The opposition has put forward some amendments, and we will look at those. The Greens may move some amendments in the upper house. For example, we would like to see a requirement for public consultation in the development of the statement of objects for the 30-year infrastructure strategy. We would also like to see increased transparency in the methodology used to develop the strategy. We think the bill should provide for the information and resources used in developing the strategy to be publicly available so that the strategy can be scrutinised and understood by the public. It is important to bring the public with us and to increase transparency.

It would be no surprise to members in this place that we would like to see the bill embed reducing CO₂ and other greenhouse gas emissions in the core purpose of Infrastructure Victoria. The reality of climate change is that it will have a profound impact on our existing and future infrastructure and will contribute to defining our future infrastructure needs. Reducing emissions should be embedded in Infrastructure Victoria and be taken into account as a matter of course.

Ultimately, reducing emissions and protecting us from the ravages of climate change should be front and centre of all planning decisions in Victoria. It is not only important for the environment but is also crucial to maintaining our way of life. Infrastructure built from now on, and really infrastructure that was built in the past, should be sustainable and have zero emissions. In the past many opportunities to do this have been lost, and we cannot lose any more opportunities in the future. We think this could be done by requiring Infrastructure Victoria to consider emissions intensity in the options under subclause 33(2)(d), but we are happy to look at other options.

If the government is serious about tackling climate change, as it purports to be, climate change and carbon emissions need to be integrated into every aspect of policy, especially infrastructure policy. The Greens are also concerned about the potential conflict of interests on the board and hope the government will appoint truly independent directors and not those with, for example, vested interests in toll road companies.

In conclusion the Greens think this is a good bill. We think having an independent and long-term view of infrastructure in this state is long overdue. Some of the amendments we may move in the upper house could make the bill even better in terms of transparency and dealing with climate change, but we welcome this opportunity to make infrastructure planning in Victoria more effective, more future-focused and more about the quality of life and long-term needs of all Victorians.

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — It is a great pleasure to rise today to speak on the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015. While I am on my feet I will give a word of advice to opposition members, who might like to take a leaf out of the book of the government after the disgraceful display today in question time. Today we saw opposition members rubbing their hands with glee and attacking the Deputy Premier. This is a person — —

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member may well have a point on her mind, but this is not the debate to have this particular discussion in. The debate before us is about the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015, and under the forms of the house the member on their feet should confine their remarks to that bill.

Mr Noonan — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, I have not heard the member complete her point, which might be highly relevant to this debate, which has been a very broad one to this point. I think the member ought to be given an opportunity to at least complete her point.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Pearson) — Order! I will let the member continue with her point. I will give her some latitude but I would like her to come back to the bill.

Ms THOMAS — The point I would like to make is that it is the Deputy Premier who is leading the single largest investment in education infrastructure in this state, and he is doing a fine job. More than \$20 million is being spent in the Macedon electorate, an electorate that was completely ignored by the coalition government. This investment will not only provide first-class education facilities in my electorate but will also create jobs. That is what the Infrastructure Victoria Bill is about — ensuring that here in Victoria we have a steady pipeline of jobs. We are not just about building for the sake of it; we are about building the infrastructure that Victorians need and ensuring that wherever we can we are creating quality job opportunities associated with those infrastructure projects.

Again I advise opposition members. I hope they have a long time in opposition, and I expect they will. However, if they want to give themselves any chance of returning to the government benches sometime soon, then rather than playing cheap politics with people's livelihoods — as we saw today, when the Leader of The Nationals used job losses in his electorate to make a cheap political point — they would do much better by

spending their time doing the hard work that the people on this side did when they were in opposition.

The people of Victoria need and deserve much better than the way the opposition used question time today. It was pathetic and a disgrace. Opposition members should look at what Labor did in opposition. It is clear that two full years out from the election Labor released its plan for jobs and growth. Two full years out from the election it announced that if elected, it would establish Infrastructure Victoria. Perhaps it is a coincidence, but from that time on as we continued toward the 2014 election it could be seen that Labor was very much ahead in the polls. That was because the people of Victoria understood it is a party that even in opposition will do the hard work — the policy work — and will take the time to get the policy settings right so that when we have the ‘great gift of government’ bestowed on us, as the Premier calls it, we are ready to take action. That is what we are on about, and that is what we are doing with this bill.

If we cast our minds back to November 2012, when the Premier as the then Leader of the Opposition was busy announcing Labor’s plan for jobs and growth, what was the then government doing? What was Premier Napthine doing?

An honourable member interjected.

Ms THOMAS — Sorry, Premier Baillieu — remember Premier Baillieu? His infrastructure project, as far as we could tell, was a drawing competition at Flinders Street station. It was a competition that after a lot of hype resulted in nothing.

An honourable member — What happened?

Ms THOMAS — What happened? Absolutely nothing. That is in stark contrast to the Andrews Labor government. I am so proud to be an elected representative in the Andrews Labor government on this side of the house. We are working assiduously every day to ensure that we have, as I said, a pipeline of jobs here in Victoria, and what better way to do that than through the creation of Infrastructure Victoria?

As we know — indeed as the opposition well knows — governments come and go. Let us hope that this government stays for quite some time. We have a lot to achieve, so it is important that we continue to get our message out. However, our long-term infrastructure priorities always remain, and our infrastructure priority should never be determined by short-term politics at the expense of proper planning and value for money. Infrastructure priorities should never again be developed behind closed doors to meet political needs.

Secrecy in infrastructure planning only results in rushed and botched decision-making without proper regard to the costs and benefits of what taxpayers money is being spent on.

If we want an illustration of this, we need look no further than the debacle that was the east–west link. Governments should be open and transparent. Projects should be determined and delivered based on need, not on the political imperatives of the government of the day. But what did we see with the east–west link? We saw the absolute opposite of that. All Victorians know the consequences of poor infrastructure planning. The previous coalition was determined to sign Victorians up to the dud east–west link project, a project that no Victorian voted for and which even Infrastructure Australia said was not a priority. This project would have cost \$10.7 billion and lost 55 cents for every wasted dollar of investment.

The Victorian people were not going to let that happen. We saw that on election day when they voted in an Andrews Labor government because they wanted good government and they wanted to see that infrastructure in this state was well planned and delivered above and beyond the politics of the day. The east–west link was a disaster from start to finish, and it took the election of a Labor government to stop it.

Infrastructure Victoria will take the short-term politics out of the planning of infrastructure, and of course this is vitally important as our wonderful state continues to grow. Here in Victoria we are victims of our own success; we are an extremely popular destination for people who are migrating from other states, who want to live in the world’s most livable city and indeed who come and join with me and others who are tree changing in some of the beautiful peri-urban communities that we have here in Victoria.

As I said, Infrastructure Victoria will put evidence and transparency front and centre of the infrastructure debate. It will consult widely and consider the needs of the whole state, not just metropolitan Melbourne. It will prioritise the projects that deliver results. It will drive new jobs. Most importantly, it will help governments plan for our future and make better decisions. Infrastructure Victoria will be the most independent, transparent, widely scoped and broadly engaging infrastructure advisory body in Australia.

Members have already heard about the composition of Infrastructure Victoria. I have no doubt whatsoever that this is going to be a game changer here in Victoria in terms of ensuring that we have the future infrastructure needs of our great state mapped out, subject to

community consultation. We will be able to get all of Victoria on board and make sure that these projects are well financed. On that note, I commend the bill to the house.

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — I rise to join the debate on the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015. At the outset we should probably go for a little trip down memory lane to talk about what the government is actually putting Infrastructure Victoria together for. The Minister for Roads and Road Safety in his most recent Public Accounts and Estimates Committee appearance said:

We will allow Infrastructure Victoria to put together a team to look at Bay West but also continue the work in relation to the Port of Hastings ... we will continue to have an assessment process undertaken by Infrastructure Victoria of both options.

... I think we really need a thorough and rigorous analysis by Infrastructure Victoria ... to actually get it right.

That was followed up by the Special Minister of State, Gavin Jennings, who said in June:

... there is an undertaking by the incoming government that any evaluation of the container port needs of Melbourne into the future would be independently assessed by Infrastructure Victoria ...

The Delivering Victorian Infrastructure (Port of Melbourne Lease Transaction) Bill 2015 came into this house before the Infrastructure Victoria Bill did and has certainly come here before Infrastructure Victoria has been put together. Having really ditched any thought of a second container port in this state, I do not know how we are going to get Infrastructure Victoria looking at something that has been comprehensively ruled out by the government, as per the terms of the contract the government is proposing for the lease of the port of Melbourne.

Cesar Melhem, a member for Western Metropolitan Region in the Council, said in February this year:

The business case for the West Gate distributor, for the whole project, is currently being developed ... Infrastructure Victoria will be established to do exactly that.

We were told in question time right here that the business case for the West Gate distributor is being done as we speak and will be ready at some stage. I do not know how Infrastructure Victoria is going to do that.

May I go further? The Minister for Agriculture, Jaala Pulford, said in June this year:

... we indicated that we would establish Projects Victoria and Infrastructure Victoria. Victorians are well and truly sick and tired of politicking on infrastructure projects ...

Let me talk about the 50 level crossing removals that the government told us were going to be prioritised by — guess who? — Infrastructure Victoria. But of course in the last state budget the government put out 17 level crossing removals that were going to be done. It is all out on the table already; the government has already said which ones it is going to do first without the need for Infrastructure Victoria. This bill, far from being the Infrastructure Victoria Bill, really should be called the Infrastructure Victoria (Why Bother?) Bill, because the decisions around every major piece of infrastructure — any piece of infrastructure — this government is planning for this term have already been set. There is no point in having Infrastructure Victoria.

The government might say Infrastructure Victoria is going to put a 30-year plan together for infrastructure. That is laudable; I do not have a problem with that. I do have a problem with the member for Bundoora on the one hand saying, 'A 30-year infrastructure plan is a fantastic thing for Victoria' but on the other hand saying, 'The former coalition government put up infrastructure projects that were not going to be ready for a generation. That is a bad thing'. How long is a generation? It is about 25 to 30 years. I think we are pretty much on the same page as far as putting an infrastructure plan together and putting it up to the Victorian people goes.

As has been said by members on this side, we are not opposing the bill per se. We are not opposing the need for an independent body to talk about infrastructure projects. In fact the previous Bracks and Brumby governments did exactly that with Sir Rod Eddington. Again I will reiterate what the member for Malvern said. I have members on the opposite side saying, 'The east-west link is a dud project', but it is the same project that was recommended by Sir Rod Eddington and that Brumby embraced as part of his \$38 billion plan. So how can it be a dud project a couple of years ago but not a dud project a couple of years before that? It is the same project.

I will also highlight some of the things the member for Malvern said with regard to the appointment of the directors. It makes no sense at all to have three members who are departmental secretaries. I reiterate what he said about being a minister, in that he was extremely well served by the Victorian public service. Victorian public servants are good, smart people. I think you have to be a minister before you understand the level of expertise there is in government departments and certainly in the Victorian public service. However, the public service is beholden to the government of the day. Public servants are not going to walk into the Premier's office or the Treasurer's office

and say, 'Hey, the east–west link is a great idea', just like Sir Rod Eddington and former Premier Brumby said. They are not going to do that, because they are duty bound to uphold the policy direction of the government of the day.

Much has also been made of the anticipated appointment of Infrastructure Victoria's inaugural chair, Elana Rubin. I quote from an article published in the *Australian Financial Review* of 11 June:

The establishment of Infrastructure Victoria will be rubberstamped by Daniel Andrews' cabinet ... Nothing remarkable about that ...

But what has Tim Pallas' Treasury and senior figures in the sector gobsmacked is the Premier's intention to appoint company director Elana Rubin as IV's inaugural chair.

Rubin is also a director of Transurban Queensland. And it was Transurban that saved Andrews from his own east–west link mess by suddenly and selflessly proposing an alternative project ...

The article goes on to say:

How breathtakingly amateur of the Premier's office, then, to think a senior Transurban figure could helm the state's 'independent body' on planning and development! Next the CFMEU will be blockading the CBD. Oh, hang on ...

This shows that the so-called independent appointments to Infrastructure Victoria are going to be of either people who are wedded to the government's direction on infrastructure policy or people who have a vested interest in making sure that certain projects get up.

Regarding those certain projects that Transurban is proposing, I turn my attention to the one roads project that the government came to office on: the half-billion-dollar off-ramp, the western distributor. Last term it was a really bad thing not to have business cases for infrastructure; now it is apparently not such a bad thing not to have a business case. Apparently this business case is ongoing in conjunction with another project that will have a financial cost for Victorians who do not even travel on the western distributor. The contract will be extended for another 10 or 15 years and be in operation long after the proposed western distributor is redundant. In fact Transurban told us itself that in very short order — 10 to 15 years time — the western distributor will be clogged and will need to have something very similar to the east–west link effectively bolted around it to make it operate properly.

Of course all these projects, whether it be the prioritisation of the level crossing removals, the Metro rail project, the West Gate distributor-western distributor — we are not really sure which one we are doing, but we are just going to continue to expend a lot

of departmental time and money for another year working out which one we want — were slated to be looked at by Infrastructure Victoria, but the decisions by the government as to what it is going to do with those projects have already been made.

I also think we need some sort of reassurance that the government departments and agencies — which, as I said, are staffed with excellent people — are not going to be duplicating work done by Infrastructure Victoria. I wonder whether we already had a government agency to talk about linking Melbourne with regard to transportation needs! The Linking Melbourne Authority was a fantastic agency. The current Treasurer said it was a great organisation when he was Minister for Roads and Ports. The Minister for Roads and Road Safety said last December that the government would be keeping the body. The Treasurer came out shortly afterwards and said the government was scrapping the body but that everyone would get a job. Shortly after that we were told that many were not getting a job.

We are now debating a new organisation — a new body, a new bureaucracy — in Infrastructure Victoria, which should probably have the very people who worked in the Linking Melbourne Authority, people who have experience. We have now lost that corporate expertise because the government has not planned properly and also because the Premier had an agenda to get rid of anyone who had the slightest positive thing to say about east–west link. Those people were scrapped immediately. The body was scrapped and anyone who wanted to say a positive thing about east–west link was kicked out. That reiterates the point that anyone in Infrastructure Victoria who thinks that Sir Rod Eddington's idea of an east–west link is good will be given very short shrift, because they will be turfed out of their position as quickly as can be.

With that, I have to say that I support the concept of the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015 and the concept of independent advice in setting an infrastructure agenda. Those opposite will talk about taking the politicking out of infrastructure. The fact is that many of the level crossing removal projects are in marginal seats and are not prioritised by VicRoads in the same manner as the government is prioritising them. Scrapping the east–west link was nothing but politics. A West Gate distributor that is now on, maybe off, now on, now not really sure is also very much a piece of infrastructure driven by politics. I have some faith that Infrastructure Victoria will give good advice, but I have no faith at all that a Labor government will be true to the recommendations being put to it by Infrastructure Victoria. I very much support the amendments put forward by the member for Malvern. They are good

amendments that put transparency around a government that came to office proclaiming it would be transparent. Those amendments will improve a fairly facile bill.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — I am delighted to join this debate on the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015. I took exception to a comment made by the member for Melbourne early in her contribution when she said that we could become a world-class city. Those on this side of the house, and I would hazard a guess those opposite, would say we already are a world-class city. We are a great city, and we are a great state. One of our great strengths has been population growth. Melbourne's population has grown by between 1000 and 1500 people a week for the best part of 15 years. That level of population growth has been one of the key economic drivers of our prosperity.

Recently Rob Tyson from PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) produced a report called *Understanding the Economy from the Ground Up*. PwC found that one in three locations in Australia has contracted economically over the last 14 years. In terms of Victoria, one in four has contracted. I made a point of sitting down and speaking with Rob to try to understand why Melbourne has gone so well.

He was saying that there have only been three areas of growth in Australia in the last 14 years — that is, the Melbourne CBD, the Sydney CBD and the Pilbara. I sat down with Rob and said, 'Explain to me why Melbourne has grown'. Part of it has been a displacement of economic activity from the fringes of Melbourne and from regional centres to Melbourne, so we have had a degree of clustering, and some of it has been as a consequence of organic growth. For example, if you have 1000 people in a workplace, they will be far more efficient than if you have 100 people in 10 different locations. The clustering, the population growth, creates an enormous degree of economic activity.

Why is that relevant to the bill? If you look at a postcode as a nation, and if we say that postcodes 3000, 3004 and 3006 are individual sovereign nations, what you would see in Victoria would be two or three mega-wealthy nations and everyone else living in poverty and destitution. Therefore you need to make sure that you have people in the suburbs and in the regions who are able to come into the CBD quickly and easily to participate in the economic growth and then repatriate the funds back to their communities. The member for Broadmeadows talked earlier about creating jobs in Broadmeadows. I am not sure that is likely to occur longer term because increasingly the

global trend is for levels of concentration around very small areas. We need to make sure we have good transport linkages so that people can participate in the economic growth story.

One of the great success stories of the previous Labor government is the regional rail link. At the moment a train travels from Geelong to Melbourne every 10 minutes in the peak hours. People are commuting from Geelong to Melbourne, participating in the economic growth story, working hard and then exporting that wealth back to their communities. That is really important, and it is why we must make sure we continue to have very good transport infrastructure projects. If we do not, Melbourne will grow at a greater and greater rate but people will be excluded from participating. PwC talked about what is called a travel budget, which is about 45 minutes. If people can travel to work within 45 minutes, they will do so. Once you extend that beyond 45 minutes, it starts to get harder. This bill is important because we need the right projects to ensure that people can participate in the economic growth story.

Another benefit of the bill is that it will create a pipeline of projects and a deal flow. This is important because we will be able to attract our best and brightest to bid on new projects. You want good people working on bids to find ways to come up with innovative solutions.

The bill refers to funding options being considered as part of the process. In a recently published book by Dag Detter and Stefan Fölster, *The Public Wealth of Nations — How Management of Public Assets Can Boost or Bust Economic Growth*, the authors talk about the fact that much government wealth is not being effectively harnessed and utilised. On page 51 they refer to the fact that Australia has non-financial assets worth about 150 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). I checked with the parliamentary library, and the most up-to-date GDP figure for Victoria for the 2013–14 financial year is \$350 billion. At 150 per cent of \$350 billion, Victoria has about \$475 billion worth of public non-financial assets. Of course some belong to the federal government, like the land at Point Nepean or defence land, and some belong to local government, but for argument's sake let us say that there is an even split between federal, state and local governments. I estimate that the state government is sitting on about \$158 billion worth of non-financial assets, which are not being properly managed and utilised.

Why is that important? If we could start harnessing and utilising these assets more effectively — let us say we only got a 1 per cent return — that would be \$1.58 billion per year being returned to the taxpayers of

Victoria. What Messrs Detter and Fölster talk about is, in the case of Victoria, the creation of a regional wealth fund. You would strip out a whole range of assets that are owned by the state government, and they would be effectively harnessed, utilised and managed by professional external advisers. This happens in a number of Nordic countries, and it might be that the fund could be listed on the stock exchange.

We do not necessarily have a clear understanding of the assets we own. I have recently been at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings, and I am pleased to see that the deputy chair of that committee is in the chamber. Sometimes you have a blue and you fight over \$100 000 here and \$100 000 there; meanwhile, back at the ranch, we could be sitting on \$150 billion worth of assets that we do not know about. We do not know whether they are being properly utilised or whether we are getting proper returns. We need to have some transparency about what we own. We need to focus on a single objective, which is wealth maximisation, and we need to have political independence. We need an independent board with external advisers appointed to manage the assets effectively, which would return to the state government of Victoria a dividend probably every six months or every year. If we could do that, we would be far more efficient.

I am reminded of a quote from Deng Xiaoping, who said that it does not matter if a cat is black or white as long as it catches the mice. Frankly, it does not really matter whether the assets are owned by the public, whether they are managed by external advisers or whether they are privatised. What matters is that they are effectively managed and properly utilised so we are in a position to maximise them and run our public services more efficiently. That is what we should be focusing on. We can have the argument about raising the GST, but I am quite attracted to what the Grattan Institute said recently in terms of property taxes. It said that if you had a broad-based property tax levied on properties on an annual basis, then for a \$556 000 home you could raise \$556 per residence, meaning you could look at raising \$7 billion a year in taxation receipts nationally. That is good and worthy of discussion. It is important that we look at what we have currently and how we can use it more effectively.

I want to take up a couple of points that were raised earlier. The Leader of The Nationals raised some concerns about the desalination plant. That is interesting, because not one dollar of public money was wasted on that, although the private sector investors took a bath on it — and that is well known. Sometimes I look at the desalination plant and it reminds me of

Federation Square. At the time it was built, the square was a bit of a joke. Michael Malouf told me that one of his proudest achievements as the CEO of the City of Melbourne was extracting from the then premier, Jeff Kennett, a promise that the City of Melbourne would put in only a very small amount of money and that the state government would have to foot the extra amount. Federation Square was over budget and it was late, but look at it now. It is a fantastic asset. In time that is the way the desalination plant will be looked at.

We have to keep growing the state. We have to embrace diversity, and we need to increase our population to compensate for the fact that the baby boomers are leaving the workforce and we are going to have a large hospital and aged-care bill. We need to recognise that projects like the desalination plant are important and will be recognised as being important because they will ensure that we can sustain population growth. This is an important bill that is worthy of our support.

Mr DIXON (Nepean) — Before I begin my contribution on the bill I would like to comment on a point made by the member for Essendon, when he compared the desalination plant to Federation Square. I think the desalination plant cost 100 times more than Federation Square, which is probably the no. 1 tourist attraction in Victoria. I do not think there are very many people wandering down to look at the desalination plant, and I do not think it is adding any dollars to the Victorian economy. Perhaps when the member makes those sorts of comparisons he should pick his mark a bit better.

The opposition has put forward amendments to the bill, which I agree with. We do not have any major problem with the concept of Infrastructure Victoria. We hear members opposite talk about what it is going to do, how it is going to work and the grand vision, but when we read the legislation there is not a lot that fills in the minutiae or answers the sorts of very basic questions that people are asking about when, how and what rather than just giving some vague statements.

This is a major body and a very important piece of legislation; it is the most important piece of legislation this week and one of the biggest things the government and this Parliament is tackling. When you have something of such importance and such far-reaching consequences for Victoria, it is important that the detail be there so that we can have an informed debate. It is very important that the processes of Infrastructure Victoria are transparent, truly independent and truly skills based. If the body being implemented has those three attributes, it will be very worthwhile for the future

of Victoria — its economy, jobs and social structure. That independence, expertise and transparency are very important. Our amendments go a long way towards helping to address the issues that have been found wanting in this bill.

I was expecting this bill to be the first bill before this Parliament and to have been introduced before Christmas, because so many of the major decisions on infrastructure projects that the new government was going to implement were going to be reliant on the independent, expert information from this body. But most of the major built infrastructure projects have already been announced by this government, and some money for them is in this year's budget, so it is sort of the other way around.

There are a range of projects that are not going to go through the filter of Infrastructure Victoria. The major one is the port of Melbourne. That project represents one of the positions of the current government when it was in opposition. There were a number of positions on the future of the ports in Victoria. Many members opposite, now ministers, were very much in favour of Hastings. Then they all jumped off the Hastings bandwagon because when the coalition was in government it was pushing for it and starting to fund it. The then opposition had to go the opposite way and thought of Bay West, so that is what was being pushed by government members when they were in opposition. Then they realised that perhaps they had overreached with that proposal in terms of the cost and the practicality of Bay West, so they said, 'No, no, this is a very important thing that Infrastructure Victoria will look at. It will look at whether Bay West or Hastings should be the site of the next port'.

When Labor came into government, Bay West and Hastings were gone. Members opposite have come in and made the decision of another 70 years in the current port of Melbourne, and then Infrastructure Victoria has come along. It is all over the place. It raises the question, 'Why?'. I think there are some pretty obvious reasons why the government did not want Infrastructure Victoria to look at the future of port facilities here in Victoria.

The government has realised it needs a fair bit of money because it has grossly underestimated the cost of its level crossing removal program and it needs it quickly because it wants to start these projects. Therefore the lease of the port of Melbourne has been brought forward and has not been subject to the sort of scrutiny that Infrastructure Victoria should have carried out, not only in terms of the current port but also future

port facilities in Victoria. Where is the best place for the next port? That has not gone through that filter at all.

There are a lot of basic and important issues a body such as Infrastructure Victoria would have looked at in considering the future of port facilities in Victoria. For example, it would have had to look at the projections for when the port of Melbourne will reach capacity. Most of the ministers opposite have put forward dates in previous debates — whether it was about the port of Hastings, Bay West or the early thoughts about Infrastructure Victoria — ranging from 2025 to 2045, the latest figure, for when the port of Melbourne would reach capacity and would have to be replaced, or another port would have to be established.

That is a basic and complex question. What do we mean by 'at capacity'? How could we eke some further years out of the capacity of the current port? What is the cost of and what are the time estimates for establishing another port? You need experts to work that out. As I said, estimates ranged from 2025 to 2045. But all of a sudden — boom! — we find out that the port of Melbourne is going to be leased and that it will be fine for another 70 years, until 2085. That is another 40 years from the worst estimate in terms of when the port of Melbourne would reach capacity. It is a basic question that I would have thought Infrastructure Victoria should be working on.

That is just one aspect: how long has the current port got? Then we need to look at questions like: what is the true cost of Bay West? What are the advantages of it? What sort of maintenance needs to be carried out on it? What sort of dredging needs to be done? How long will the breakwater and the wharf be? What will be that cost? Then there would need to be a business analysis and a cost comparison with another site such as Hastings. None of that work has been done by this government. I would have thought that Infrastructure Victoria could do that work, but it will not.

As I said, the main reason for this lease is that the money is needed. The projected money from the proceeds of the lease of the port of Melbourne are sorely needed to fund the level crossing removal projects, and it has therefore escaped the filter of Infrastructure Victoria. That is a major disappointment. If you want to establish a body like this and you want it to have real credibility, it should be given the big jobs that are going to make a massive difference to the future of this state.

As I said earlier, most of the major infrastructure projects for the foreseeable future, those that are going to take up the bulk of the state's budget for years to

come, have already been decided and by the end of this term of government they will be well underway structurally or in planning and there will be no turning back. There is no way known that Infrastructure Victoria is going to say, 'Hang on, you'd better stop the western distributor. Hang on, you'd better stop the Melbourne Metro. Hang on, you'd better stop the sale of the port'. It is going to be too late because the project is going to be underway.

I think this is a golden opportunity missed, and I am rather cynical about the timing of this bill. As I said, I would have thought it would have been one of the first things the government would have brought in, even before Christmas. Hopefully the amendments will be adopted by the government. I think they make a better case for the transparency, expertise and independence of Infrastructure Victoria so that the work it does in the future will make a real difference to the economic and social lives of all Victorians.

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) — After hearing some of the contributions from those opposite I find it so sad that the opposition continues to flog the dead horse of the east–west link. After eight months in opposition, those opposite are still carrying on as if they had not lost the election. They continue to disbelieve what the Victorian people clearly articulated in November. Surely by now they would recognise that sound infrastructure investment requires the following of due process, including transparent cost benefit analyses, the weighing up of alternative investment proposals and choosing projects that provide the greatest net benefit to taxpayers. Obviously the former Liberal government, helped along by the federal Liberal Abbott government, failed on all counts with the east–west link and was rightly held to account by the electorate.

The Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015 again fulfils another election promise of the Andrews Labor government. We announced that we would introduce Infrastructure Victoria and Projects Victoria well and truly prior to the state election, and we are fulfilling that promise. I think there is a clear indication from the people of my electorate that they do not and have not wanted the Liberals and The Nationals to be in charge of Victoria and especially not to be in charge of future infrastructure in this state. It has got to the point where The Nationals are just a laughing stock across regional Victoria; they are so engrossed in navel-gazing and debating their name. Should they be the Country Nationals or the National Country Party? Nothing about changing their name is going to make a difference to the regard in which they are held, which is very little, in my electorate.

The reality is that they have no credibility because without missing a beat they have fallen in behind their Liberal bosses. Like them they have not supported a pipeline of infrastructure in regional Victoria, and neither have they supported what the Andrews Labor government is clearly getting on with — that is, putting in place not just Infrastructure Victoria but what goes behind that, which is a pipeline of infrastructure in regional Victoria that will grow jobs and investment in our state and benefit the people in my regional community.

This bill fulfils an election commitment. Infrastructure Victoria will identify Victoria's current and future needs and priorities relating to state and nationally significant infrastructure. This is not just about any infrastructure; it also includes social infrastructure. The importance of this in regional Victoria cannot be emphasised enough. We know there is a shortage of housing and we know that schools need investment. That is what we are getting on with. We are investing in schools in regional Victoria. But there is a great deal of investment in regional social infrastructure that could happen to benefit those most in need in regional Victoria. I think that the establishment of Infrastructure Victoria alone will say that it does not matter what postcode you come from, that if you have a need and it is an identified need, then that is where the investment will be made. That is an important point to make.

Infrastructure Victoria will also develop infrastructure priority lists that prioritise Victoria's infrastructure needs. It will evaluate proposals for enhancements to state significant infrastructure, provide advice to government on impediments to infrastructure delivery, develop and publish research on the economic and social benefits of particular projects, provide advice to government on appropriate funding and financing models for infrastructure investment or any impediments to infrastructure delivery, and coordinate infrastructure funding submissions from the state and its agencies to the Australian government and other bodies.

What we know is that other jurisdictions have already gone down the path of putting in place bodies such as Infrastructure Victoria, so this is already a well-established process in other states. Victoria is now just getting on board by having an independent body that will be transparent and have oversight over these projects.

On a separate note, which is kind of related to this bill but is a little bit separate, I was very pleased to note yesterday that the Premier met for the first time with his jobs and investment panel. It is not part of

Infrastructure Victoria but it is still an important panel. I was very pleased to see that Margot Spalding, who is the director of Jimmy Possum in Bendigo, will be part of the Premier's jobs and investment panel. I am really pleased that the editorial in today's *Bendigo Advertiser* also acknowledges that. It says:

News that a Bendigo business leader has been chosen to help drive a statewide program to build jobs and encourage innovation is good news for the region.

For more than 20 years Margot Spalding has been a leader in business, designing and manufacturing furniture here in Bendigo that is now sold globally.

...

They started with minimal capital but had a plan and a vision to build a furniture-making business that would sustain their family of seven children and their community.

The editorial also goes on to say that Margot will be joining 11 other business leaders on the Premier's Jobs and Investment Panel. That it is not only good for Margot Spalding, her family and her business but also for regional businesses in general. This is an opportunity for people like Margot to provide strategic advice to the Premier on driving economic growth and creating high-skill, high-wage jobs in Victoria. I am sure it is not a task that will be undertaken lightly by Margot, and I wish her well in that endeavour.

On another note, one which is actually not about Infrastructure Victoria either but which goes to the point of infrastructure, I refer to the announcement over the weekend by the Premier and the Minister for Agriculture about the Labor government's \$200 million Agriculture Infrastructure and Jobs Fund to drive economic growth, create jobs, boost exports and support Victorian farmers from paddock to port. That is about vision; that is about making sure that our regional communities, our regional farmers and those who are out there doing it tough in the community have the support of a government that cares about agriculture and country Victoria, unlike The Nationals.

Obviously the principal benefits of this fund include improvements to things like water security, more efficient movement of agriculture output to market, building innovation, enhanced business capability to manage volatility and risk, and improved connectivity within the supply chains and within markets. I am very excited about this fund, and I hope the opposition does not put any further impediments in front of the sale of the port of Melbourne so that this can go ahead and the people who will benefit from this fund are not disadvantaged simply because of the political motivation of those opposite.

On a final note, I would like to point out that in my electorate of Bendigo West we are getting on with a program of infrastructure. Most notably, I would like to point to the Bendigo metro rail. I have had the pleasure of being the chair of the task force for that project. We are about to give our recommendations to the minister. This is about improving public transport across Bendigo and interconnecting outlying areas like Epsom, Eaglehawk and Kangaroo Flat with Bendigo. This is an exciting project and one that the Bendigo community has taken on board. It is also about giving people an opportunity to have a say on what their infrastructure needs are, and that is exactly what the task force has been doing.

I would also like to point to the very large investment that the Andrews Labor government has made in education across regional Victoria. In my electorate, that includes investment to make sure that Castlemaine Secondary College is built in full as soon as possible along with investment for a new school at Kalianna, which I am extremely excited about.

There has been a lot of talk today from those opposite about how Infrastructure Victoria will not take the politics out of planning infrastructure. In response, I would like to say this: when you think about the east-west link and the way the former Liberal government proceeded with that despite the overwhelming objections of the people, that was politics pure and simple. Infrastructure Victoria will be an independent body, it will be transparent and it will provide a future direction for Victoria and its infrastructure needs. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr D. O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) — It is a pleasure to speak on the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015 and what I think is a noble attempt by the government to lay out a plan for infrastructure over the next 30 years. I will go into more detail in a moment as to why I am sceptical of its ability to do that, but this is nonetheless a noble attempt to plan infrastructure over a 30-year time frame. A criticism often made of politicians is that we only are interested in the next political cycle. The intention to set out the state's needs for the long term and have a plan to follow is, in principle, a good one, and that is why the opposition is not opposing this bill.

As the member for Nepean said a moment ago, it is good to have experts involved in planning — people who understand the needs of a growing community and the needs of business and the economy. We need those experts to plan for what we will need in the future. Those experts need to have a wide variety of experience, and there needs to be at least one person on

the board of Infrastructure Victoria who has wide private sector experience in the planning of infrastructure. Whether it is hard, soft or social infrastructure, it is important that the private sector is there and that this does not become another bureaucratic quango that chews up state resources without delivering what we need for the next 30 or 40 years.

As I said, I am sceptical as to whether Labor can deliver on a long-term plan, given its form. It has only taken eight months for Labor to demonstrate that form. The member for Nepean highlighted that the long-term plan eight months ago was that the second port would be at Bay West. Labor was going to develop Bay West. It made a promise to the people of Geelong: jobs, jobs and more jobs. That was what the Premier said when he was opposition leader: 'We are going to build Bay West'. He held out the carrot to the people of Geelong and the western parts of Melbourne and said, 'This is going to be great for you'. What do we find? 'We are in government now. Our political priorities have changed. We need to raise money from the port of Melbourne lease. Sorry, but Bay West is off the agenda now. We are going to create a monopoly'. So Bay West has gone.

The port lease itself is a fundamental change from what the government said it would do while in opposition. It was all about Bay West, and it was all about how the port of Melbourne would be full in a number of decades. We have seen with the legislation that is in the other place at the moment that that has changed dramatically, because Labor is looking for the billions of dollars to fund its otherwise unfunded promises, particularly in relation to level crossings. As a result, we have ended up with an absolute dud deal that will not be good for Victoria, and it certainly will not be good for country Victoria. Labor knows that, and we have seen that.

This is where the form comes in again. Labor understands it is a dud deal. That is why — and again with no strategy in place and no long-term vision — it has come out in the last few days with this alleged \$200 million agriculture infrastructure fund. This was made up along the way. The member for Bendigo West talked about it being a visionary project. It is a visionary project that was concocted in some ministerial office in the last couple of weeks to try to get the Victorian Farmers Federation on board. That is what it is.

It is frightening that the Labor Party thinks it can create a fund and say, 'We are going to deliver all this stuff. It is really important. We have this great vision for

agriculture and regional Victoria. We are going to deliver this fund for you, provided the legislation passes the Parliament'. The government already knows it cannot get the legislation through the upper house, so this is a false promise. This is a carrot, this is 30 pieces of silver to try to get some of its biggest stakeholders across the line. The bad news for the Labor Party is that it might get some of it but it will not get all of it. Most people understand that this is a dud deal. The \$200 million agriculture fund would be wonderful if the Labor Party were actually committed to it and if the Labor Party actually said, 'We think this is important, and we are going to do it', but it has got form.

The Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water was in my electorate yesterday, turning the sod on phase 1A of the Macalister irrigation district (MID). She gladly spoke about it during question time today, describing it as a wonderful project. However, this is money that was delivered by the member for Murray Plains when he was the Minister for Water. It is money that the former coalition government delivered on this project. The minister failed to deliver on phase 1B of the project in the 2015–16 budget, but the government is saying, 'It's all right. We're going to have this \$200 million fund. We could probably fund the MID out of this fund, but you have got to let the port sale go through'. I am sorry, but the people of Gippsland are not that silly. If Labor were serious about these projects, it would acknowledge that the MID 2030 project is a good project and should be funded, irrespective of the port sale, which is totally irrelevant.

I will continue talking about the con job the Labor Party is perpetrating with this infrastructure fund. On Sunday it was announced that the \$200 million would be a wonderful thing for regional Victoria, but then on Monday the Minister for Roads and Road Safety was in Lara saying that this fund could be used to upgrade the freeway between Geelong and Melbourne. So we have \$200 million for agriculture and country Victoria, but we are going to spend it in Melbourne on a freeway. This agriculture money will be funding roads — it is going to be funding a freeway.

This is not the first time we have seen this from the government; the Labor Party has form on this. We have seen it with the Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund, which is funding a whole lot of projects across the state that should be funded by other portfolios. There is a dental centre in the Latrobe Valley that should be funded by the health portfolio, there are sports facilities that should be funded from the sports budget and there are tourism attractions that should be funded from the tourism budget. Now Labor is trying to pull a con on the people of country Victoria by saying that it is doing

all these wonderful things, but all these things will come at the expense of departmental funds that should be paying for them in the first place.

The infrastructure needs of my electorate of Gippsland South are all about roads. Roads are the no. 1 issue, and probably the no. 2 and no. 3 issues as well. The Labor Party might understand this if it had bothered to turn up for the Gippsland South by-election, but it did not even put up a candidate. Roads are the important thing. We know the Minister for Roads and Road Safety understands this, because when he was in opposition he said that if we did not provide more funding for the roads in South Gippsland, it would kill the economy. But what has he done in government now that he is in charge and has hold of the purse strings? He has cut the roads budget by 10 per cent and he has cut the \$160 million country roads and bridges program, which was giving the South Gippsland and Wellington shires \$1 million per annum to upgrade roads and bridges. That money has gone completely.

The Minister for Roads and Road Safety made another big promise when he said that too little funding for roads would kill the economy: he said that Labor would deliver \$1 billion over eight years for rural and regional roads and bridges — though his \$1 billion over eight years was in itself a cut of about \$300 million compared to the coalition government's funding, depending on which way you cut it.

When the budget came out this year we looked for the \$1 billion that was supposed to be there and for the money for roads in the suburbs represented by members opposite as well, but we could not find it. Luckily I am on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, so I was able to ask the minister himself if he could point me to the page on which the \$1 billion for country roads was, but he could not do it. I asked him once, and he said that the money was in the budget and that the government would be spending it. I asked him a second time if he could point me to the page detailing the \$1 billion, but it was not there.

It is a phantom, another infrastructure con job perpetrated by the Labor Party and yet another example of it failing the most important test. The most crucial infrastructure for my electorate of Gippsland South is roads. Roads are crucial links for our economy, for residents and for tourism. My electorate's two biggest industries are agriculture and tourism, but Labor is failing on its commitments to deliver the necessary roads funding to support either of them.

I have a lot of scepticism when it comes to this piece of legislation. I think it is noble that the Labor Party is

putting up a plan, but it has form over the last eight months that shows that it is incapable of sticking to a plan, so I look forward to seeing how it goes in setting out and sticking to a 30-year plan. The coalition will not be opposing this bill, but the bill needs to be amended to improve it, and I look forward to that debate happening later. I am sceptical about whether Labor can deliver the long-term infrastructure needs of this state and particularly the long-term needs of country Victoria.

Ms KNIGHT (Wendouree) — I am very pleased to have the opportunity to stand and speak in the debate on the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015. This bill shows the importance the Andrews government places on delivering all of its election commitments, including the establishment of Infrastructure Victoria. The bill also shows the Andrews government's resolve to make transparency, rigour and expert advice central to Victoria's infrastructure planning.

We on this side of the house recognise that the long-term interests of Victoria cannot be delivered by short-term thinking. We need to make sure that we are planning in the long term for Victoria's education, transport, health and other important infrastructure needs. As our population grows, our demand for new infrastructure will also grow. Plans for this infrastructure will need to be based on expert advice and include the opportunity for community input, which is what this bill reflects.

Infrastructure Victoria is about long-term planning. It is about getting the planning right for Victoria and keeping a constant pipeline of infrastructure work flowing, which is good for our economy and good for jobs. Wherever I go in my electorate, people always talk to me about the importance of a pipeline of work. They tell me how important the flow of work is at Alstom and at SEM, where we have made great commitments to build train carriages and fire trucks. Both of those commitments are critically important because both are about jobs in my electorate and about what we need to keep our communities safe and keep people moving.

Also in my electorate is the development of the railway precinct. That is not only about jobs, it is also about social infrastructure. It is about opening up a central part of our city to allow people to move freely and safely through it. It is also about providing incentives to and the confidence for businesses to invest in my town. All of those things are really important.

The Eureka precinct is not just about bringing AFL to Ballarat, although that is important and will be a great

thing that brings money into the economy. It is also about supporting local community sporting groups, like the Lakers, the netball, the cricket, the athletics and the basketball. It is about all of the things that bring our community together and get them outside participating, communicating and living their lives in a very healthy way. This is very important social infrastructure.

Everyone in this house knows that the Andrews government is committed to building infrastructure and that we are getting on with the job. What we do not want to see is any future government put on the brakes, as previous Liberal governments have done. This bill provides a structure for Victoria's future infrastructure planning through the establishment of Infrastructure Victoria, and it will be rigorous. In determining those priorities it will rely upon evidence and will help governments by providing independent advice on our state's infrastructure needs.

It is of particular importance that Infrastructure Victoria will look to the needs of the whole of Victoria. This Andrews Labor government knows that regional Victoria matters, that regional Victoria is important and that regional Victoria is valued. Labor has never considered regional Victoria to be the toenails of the state. Victoria's infrastructure needs are not just limited to transport; we also need to be building schools, building hospitals and all those other important infrastructure needs for our population. I am sure that all members are relieved, after years of cuts by the former Liberal government, that the Andrews government is investing in school infrastructure. In my own electorate I can point to \$2 million of funding for Delacombe Primary School, a great school, and \$6 million for Ballarat Secondary College, \$3 million of which is to be spent on the Wendouree campus as the school transitions to becoming a school that will go from years 7 to 12, not just to year 10. I wish the school the best success in doing that, and I am sure it will be successful because the teachers, the students and the parents are so committed to that process.

It is important that this government is getting to work building schools after a time during which school capital budgets were slashed; however, we also need to be looking forward not just to repair the damage that has been done by the former government's decisions but also to the infrastructure that we will need for the future. This is as true in education as it is in transport, health and all sectors of our economic and social life in this state. This is exactly what Infrastructure Victoria will do. Infrastructure Victoria will produce 30-year strategies for Victoria's infrastructure needs, and those strategies will be periodically updated. We have to recognise that our infrastructure needs and priorities

will change. We have to be flexible about that, and the updating of the strategy will occur every three to five years. Draft strategies will be put out for public comment, because it is particularly important that Victorians have a say and that public comment should happen before the strategy is released.

That strategy will be released by Infrastructure Victoria and will not require the government's okay. This will ensure a kind of long-term planning that is blind to electoral cycles, and it is the sort of long-term planning that Victoria needs. Governments will need to respond to Infrastructure Victoria's strategy with a five-year infrastructure plan that will outline commitments and funding. The infrastructure plan will be audited by Infrastructure Victoria and reported to the Victorian public, providing a further level of transparency and openness to the development of infrastructure in our state. When governments are making decisions, Infrastructure Victoria will assess business cases so the best possible decisions are made for our state's future.

Victoria's infrastructure projects are too important to plan in secret and too important to plan without input from all Victorians. It is critical that our priorities for major investments look not only to our needs for tomorrow but also to our medium-term needs. The former government provided limited information to the federal government for fear that if the federal government had all the details, it would not back the project. Infrastructure Victoria will take this kind of short-term politics out of planning Victoria's infrastructure needs.

In conclusion, I absolutely support the passage of this bill through the house. It does a number of things: it delivers on an election commitment; it takes the politics out of planning infrastructure; and it takes a whole-of-Victoria approach, as I said, to major infrastructure planning, including in the regions that are so important to the strength of this state, to our skills and to our expertise. It also brings transparency and takes an evidence-based approach to infrastructure planning. Of course I am talking about infrastructure in its broad sense, including social infrastructure. For these and a whole lot of other reasons I absolutely and fully support this legislation, as I am sure do most Victorians.

Ms ASHER (Brighton) — I wish to say a few words in relation to the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015. As has already been indicated, although opposition members do not oppose this bill, we are making a number of suggestions that may well improve it. The question for the Andrews government is: what do you do when you had a budget that did not fund very much

infrastructure at all? The answer is that you pop up an Infrastructure Victoria bill and you set up a structure that may at varying speeds — perhaps slowly — address the possibility for infrastructure in the future.

I do not think anybody would dispute that we need a pipeline of investment projects and an infrastructure plan. One of the great problems in both New South Wales and Victoria is that infrastructure spending has not kept up with population growth. Hence, broadly speaking, governments of the current day have got to try to deal with this huge problem. Rather than funding infrastructure and getting on with the job, if I can use a slogan, what we have in front of us is a bill that sets up a structure which may or may not be valuable depending on how it will operate.

Clause 7 of the bill sets out Infrastructure Victoria's objective, which is:

... to provide independent and expert advice about Victoria's current and future infrastructure needs and priorities to support improved social, economic and environmental outcomes for the State.

The functions are clearly set out in clause 8, and the appointment of the board itself is set out in clause 12. Opposition members have made a number of comments in relation to three heads of department being mandated to that board. Whilst I respect the public sector in Victoria — I have worked with it twice in my two stints as a minister — I am not so sure that is reflective of an independent board. These people report to the Premier, so I do not know how that is independent, but perhaps someone in the government might be able to explain that to those of us on this side of the house.

Clause 22 is a disingenuous clause headed 'Infrastructure Victoria not subject to direction or control' of the minister. Some members of Parliament will be familiar with the structure surrounding statutory authorities. Generally there is a clause in the bill saying they are subject to the direction and control of the minister to give some reporting structure around statutory authorities. Obviously some bright spark who has probably watched a lot of television has come up with an idea about putting a clause in the bill to say it is not subject to direction or control in a veiled attempt to indicate that this authority will be independent from government.

Part 3 of the bill is the crux of what the government is trying to do with this piece of legislation. Clause 32 tasks Infrastructure Victoria with preparing a 30-year infrastructure strategy. Again, in itself that is a good idea, but it is not necessarily supported by other clauses that will make this happen. The content of the strategy

is spelt out under the act, consultation is required, and clearly that is a good thing, and the government is required to respond to this plan — at clause 37 — within 12 months.

Clause 38 provides that the government will prepare a plan. It strikes me that if you were in government, you could bring in a bill late. It is not specified as to how long Infrastructure Victoria would have to prepare an infrastructure plan, so a bill could be introduced late in a government's term. Perhaps you could allow eight or nine months of your term to go by before bringing in a bill to establish Infrastructure Victoria — if the bill passes the Parliament, the bill provides no time requirement for Infrastructure Victoria to prepare its 30-year plan — and then the government could have a year to respond and come up with a five-year plan.

I know I am old and cynical, but it strikes me that absolutely no activity will occur prior to the November 2018 election if the bill is not amended. The opposition wishes to assist the government in coming up with a plan prior to the next election. Clauses 44, 45 and 46 of the bill indicate that this body will not be as independent as the government would like us to think.

We have a number of concerns, and our amendments, which have been circulated by the member for Malvern, address our concerns. The first concern, in essence — and I have touched on it before — is that of this board of seven, there will be three departmental heads. Departmental heads, no matter what their competence, are not independent. They report to the Premier, they are contracted by the Premier and the lead minister in every department has to sign off on their key performance indicators and their performance. Whatever they are, and whatever knowledge they may have, they are not independent. We want to see genuine private-sector involvement in infrastructure on this board. We are not going to trust the government with these appointments by just allowing this bill to proceed. It will obviously be up to the Legislative Council, but our amendments will seek to ensure that good quality, genuine knowledge of infrastructure development will be possessed by any potential appointee to this board.

The second concern we have is that the government claims that this board is incredibly transparent. Indeed in the second-reading speech the government makes mention of the fact that these decisions — that is, the government's prioritisations and selections of infrastructure — are not easy but should always be based on evidence and robust, transparent analysis. The problem is that there are a number of clauses in the bill, particularly clauses 45 and 46, that actually prevent transparency and disclosure of advice the minister may

have sought from Infrastructure Victoria. So on the one hand you have this claim of independence in the second-reading speech, and on the other hand you have a legislative proposal to block disclosure of certain material produced by Infrastructure Victoria.

The third item that is of enormous concern to the opposition and certainly of significant concern to me is that there is absolutely no time requirement for Infrastructure Victoria to produce this 30-year plan. A 30-year plan is, on the face of it, a good idea. It is good to have a pipeline of infrastructure investment, and it is good to have a plan. In the face of our increasing population we need such things. There is nothing in the bill, however, that requires Infrastructure Victoria to do its work. We are suggesting that Infrastructure Victoria be required to publish its first 30-year plan by 31 December 2016.

Part of the motivation for these amendments which impose a time line is the previous Labor government's record on infrastructure. A whole lot of infrastructure that needed to be built was not, particularly in relation to road and rail in the metropolitan area, and a whole lot of infrastructure that was not needed and is not used was built — for example, the north-south pipeline and the desalination plant. The Labor Party has form on infrastructure — big form. Indeed one of the great failures of the entire Labor regime was that so many major projects were either not built, built late or built massively over budget. With our amendments we want to assist the government to have a more transparent Infrastructure Victoria, to have a board that is suitably qualified with experience in building infrastructure —

Mr Nardella — Are you putting your hand up, Louise?

Ms ASHER — I am happy to help the Labor Party by supporting amendments, but I will not be helping the Labor Party by providing any brainpower for it. We also want to ensure that Infrastructure Victoria produces the 30-year plan that Victorians and potential investors want to see — not that I think potential investors will have much faith in this Labor government to deliver on much at all. We do not oppose the bill. We have suggested some amendments that will improve the bill, and I urge the Labor Party to consider them.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — It gives me great pleasure to join the debate on the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015. I am pleased, as are those in my electorate, that this is one of the bills that we are introducing within the first quarter — the first year — of our term, because it is something that was distinctly lacking in

the last Parliament. It is something that has been called for by large investors, small investors, the business community and ordinary members of the community. They are saying, 'We want certainty. When we buy into a new estate in a growth corridor or when we look at investing, setting up our business and establishing local jobs in an area, we want to know whether future governments will be supporting the development of necessary infrastructure, such as roads and rail'.

The bill proposes a 30-year infrastructure strategy. Along with that strategy it has a 5-year infrastructure plan. Within the bill there is a requirement for an annual assessment of this plan so that we can ensure that what is proposed does, in fact, occur. I note that the member for Brighton and a number of other opposition spokespeople before me have questioned the independence of the proposed board for Infrastructure Victoria. I think this type of questioning by those opposite answers some of the questions they might have about why the coalition was only a one-term government and also why a government like the Kennett government which, at the time, seemed it might be in office for a decade or more only lasted seven years. The coalition has a fundamental mistrust and a lack of ability to energise, harness and work with the public sector. I experienced this myself in the early 1990s as a public servant and saw the gutting of many senior and skilled people, which resulted in the deskilling of people in the public sector. Part of the reason we saw such inertia under Premier Baillieu in the beginning of the previous government's tenure is that those opposite simply had no idea how to utilise the energy and the skills of the public sector.

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

Quorum formed.

Ms GREEN — I thank the member for South Barwon for that little tea-break and for bringing a larger audience to the chamber for my contribution to the debate on the Infrastructure Victoria Bill. I was saying before that interruption that those opposite have been questioning the composition of the Infrastructure Victoria board and have asked why we would have three heads of department on the Infrastructure Victoria board. I advise opposition members that on a similar body established in New South Wales, Infrastructure New South Wales, there is a similar proportion of departmental heads and private sector members. In that state there are five private sector appointments and four departmental heads, compared to three department heads and four other appointments on the board of Infrastructure Victoria.

I think that probably shows why over the last four years there was a complete decline in investment in infrastructure in Victoria. It was all heading to New South Wales because the New South Wales coalition government had a bit of nous about it and was attracting investment. Unlike Victoria, which had gone from having the lowest unemployment rate in the country to be then dragging along at the bottom of the table, ahead of only Tasmania.

A particular case in point is the Yan Yean electorate, which I have the privilege of representing. It is an absolute case in point of what you do not do as a government in terms of forward planning for investment in infrastructure. You do not determine your investment in infrastructure across the great state you are charged with leading by the position it has on the pendulum and whether or not you hold the electorate. If you are elected to govern this state, you should be there to govern for every part of the state. And so we saw in 2010, because Yan Yean was not a targeted electorate by those opposite, that they made zero capital commitments and they delivered zero in spades. In addition they delivered some cuts. It was only in the final year that they went, 'Whoops! We have had a redistribution and now Yan Yean is notionally a Liberal seat'. They ignored the pleas of the community that had doubled under their watch.

Whenever I raised the concerns of the community in this place they said, 'It is not your turn now. You were in government. It is our turn now'. It did not matter about the people who lived in that community, a population that had doubled. Despite the population growing, the TAFE college at Greensborough was closed, the Northern Metropolitan Institute of TAFE was gutted and the resources were drawn into the Prahran electorate to try to buttress that electorate and use the funds from the sale of the Greensborough campus to uphold that great hyphen, Clem Newton-Brown, the former member for Prahran, who has now departed the stage. Those opposite ripped off the students of the north, who are not only subjected to population growth, they are also subjected to a downturn in manufacturing and the demise of the vehicle industry, led by their federal coalition counterparts in Canberra.

With O'Herns Road you could not have had a greater level of unanimity between numerous local governments, the corporate sector and those who are investing in the north, that great jobs engine. They were all saying, 'Let's fund O'Herns Road'. After I raised the issue in the adjournment debate, I got a letter back from the member for Polwarth, the then Minister for Roads, saying we would get the O'Herns Road

interchange in 2024 — 2024, when most of the people of working age living in that area would be in a retirement village. There was no concern about how those people were going to get to work. They still did not match Labor's commitment and they are still not advocating to their mates in Canberra by saying, 'Why are you delivering only half of the roads budget that Victoria is entitled to?'. So we still do not have a matching commitment from the federal government.

It is hugely important to keep up with education, roads infrastructure, public transport for freight and the Mernda rail project. The plan of those on other side was for it to happen in 2032 and nothing before that, despite the population of Doreen and Mernda being around the size of Shepparton. There was no plan for that. There is a plan now, and there has to be an overall plan that has community input into it with representation on an independent board so that the community will see what our objectives are. We have removed the politics from this. It is about need; it is about the generation of jobs and the generation of economic activity, not political whim — such as, when they finally decided they were in political trouble, they threw some dollars at a ridiculously underdone project like the east-west tunnel, which would have soaked up infrastructure dollars for every other part of the state and the outer suburbs for decades to come.

We are nailing our colours to the mast with the establishment of Infrastructure Victoria, with a common-sense 30-year strategy, with a 5-year plan, with annual reviews and with independent input. I urge those opposite to stop their navel-gazing, to commit to some policy and to support the bill before the house. I urge its speedy passage.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) — I rise to speak in the debate on the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015. The opposition will not be opposing this bill; the Liberal Party and The Nationals are very supportive when it comes to infrastructure and major projects. If you look around Victoria, you will see some of the great projects we have — some of the great roads, some of the great buildings — that have come from the great vision that many on this side of the house have that infrastructure is crucial to provide jobs, opportunity and growth in this great state. A bill like the one we have in front of us is typical of this government. At the outset it sounds like a good idea, but at implementation the questions start to flow. Labor governments have been full of great ideas but these ideas have been very poorly executed.

The desalination plant is a great example of that — Victoria's great white elephant that sits idle. It is absolutely not something that the Labor Party can hang

its hat on. The north–south pipeline and many of the major projects that looked at delivering things with more so-called efficiency, such as HealthSMART, myki and the smart meters, were the sorts of projects that tried to make things better but unfortunately failed.

There is no doubt that the Premier came to government without any plan at all. He fell into government. We are now eight months into the government's term and all we are seeing is a whole range of ideas with no traction on the road — there is nothing that enables Labor to say, 'We are doing something'. In fact the only thing the government is doing is slashing jobs, and we have seen 14 500 full-time jobs lost in regional Victoria since Labor came to office. We have seen the east–west link contracts ripped up and \$800 million given in compensation to not build a road — a major visionary project that would have created jobs and opportunities and been a good signal to those who wanted to invest in Victoria that we are open for business, we want to encourage people to come and invest in Victoria and we want to do something. That is really disappointing. When there is a piece of paper that talks about infrastructure but there are no examples of anything being done about it, those considering investing in countries and states do not believe what is being said. They think to themselves, 'If we do the due diligence and put up the dough only to find out in 12 or 18 months time that the government will not honour its commitment, then we'll look for other states that are willing to go forward on these sorts of very important projects'. That is not what we are seeing.

The creation of two new public holidays, Easter Sunday and Grand Final Friday, will cost Victoria \$1 billion, as has been confirmed by a recent regulatory impact statement. The economic cost of these holidays will be up to \$898 million each year plus there will be increased wage payments of up to \$286 million each year. Clearly these are costs. This is not about creating opportunities or showing that Victoria is open for business; it is quite the opposite. This bill talks about an infrastructure panel, a plan, a 30-year vision, creating an infrastructure strategy and an organisation that can look at physical infrastructure and major projects, which is great.

But there are some questions about the detail, such as who is managing the organisation and the fact that the board will include three departmental secretaries as ex officio members. There are some questions in terms of the non-physical social infrastructure that is included with the physical infrastructure and the organisation getting bogged down with areas that are not in accord with what an infrastructure body should be looking at.

That is a concern. The independence is a real concern here.

We have seen some interesting things from this government, and there has not been much in terms of traction on the ground. We have seen some movement on level crossings. The government when in opposition went to the election saying it would remove 50 level crossings, and now it is questioning whether it will be able to deliver that, whether it has the dough and which ones are in and which ones are out. But there are some that are guaranteed as being in. The ones that are in and are part of the infrastructure are at North Road, Ormond; Blackburn Road, Blackburn; and Burke Road, Glen Iris. These are commitments by the current government as projects that will be built. The issue with this is that the funds have come from the previous government. They have come from the coalition. They have come not from a budgetary announcement or additional dough, but from dough that was put up by the coalition to ensure the projects get built.

With the talk about independence — and this is a real kicker — from the current government, one needs to be concerned. I will give an example right now in here of one of its first projects: the Ormond level crossing, which is in my electorate. Again that illustrates that this government is far from independent and transparent in its dealings. When the coalition ran audits on these sorts of things and held public meetings, it allowed the department to go out there and talk to the community and ask them what they wanted with the projects. We ran independent consultations.

The first consultation by this government was by advertising in the *Leader* newspaper with the member for Bentleigh's phone number on an RSVP for people wanting to go along to an independent consultation. Here is what is supposed to be an independent consultation run by the government, where the member for Bentleigh is running the consultation. It is saying, 'If you have a problem with it, tell the member for Bentleigh; he will have a look at it and will fix it for you — not Public Transport Victoria, not the independent body, but the member for Bentleigh'. If that is indicative of how this government is going to run projects — consultations will be run by its members, they will not be transparent and people will be unable to express their views freely — then one needs to be concerned. One needs to be really concerned when it comes to this sort of thing.

It is all very well to have an infrastructure bill that talks about independence, transparency and getting on with things. However, I suggest that the government needs to show some transparency by allowing organisations

that have the knowledge to do these things to run the consultations. They are the ones that are building the grade separations, not the member for Bentleigh. He is not building them. I am not sure what building construction expertise he has in the area, but I suggest it is not a lot. Let us get on with it and ensure there can be a fair consultation process.

The member for Bentleigh is quite happily coming over to my electorate of Caulfield, and I welcome him over there. Obviously he does not have a lot to do in his electorate, and I welcome him to the Caulfield electorate. But when he is over there running his own little consultations on the Ormond level crossing, I suggest that he talk to a number of the sporting clubs, because they have not been consulted on the first bit of infrastructure that the government is going to get on with and so-called build, which the coalition funded. The coalition funded it, and this government is now building it, but it has not consulted any of the sporting clubs.

The other two level crossings around there, which happen to be in the electorate of the member for Bentleigh, will dump soil on E. E. Gunn Reserve and potentially put those sporting clubs out of action for a couple of years. I would have thought that if you were going to have an effect on a football club, a cricket club and a baseball club, juniors and seniors — affecting probably about 4000 people — you would at least pick up the phone as some form of consultation and say, ‘Guess what? We’ve got an idea and we’re going to put you out of action for a couple of years. What do you think? Maybe you’ll look at another ground. Maybe you’ll look at an alternative’. That is what I think you would do if you were a government of consultation, a government of the people and a government of transparency.

This government has no transparency. This bill is a great idea on paper. We need infrastructure in Victoria. We need to get on and do stuff. We need to send a signal to industry that it is important to invest here and that the lights are on and we are open for business. Unfortunately under Labor we are closed. The two public holidays are indicative of how this state is being run. It is being run on autopilot. Until such time as the government gets out of the way and shows some leadership, unfortunately we are in serious trouble here in Victoria.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms McLeish) — Order! The member for Sunbury.

Mr J. BULL (Sunbury) — Thank you, Acting Speaker; it is good to be back. I am extremely pleased

to rise to contribute to the debate on the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015. This is an exciting bill. It is a bill that fulfils our election commitment to establishing an independent statutory authority to make recommendations to government on the most important infrastructure needs of our state.

I want to pick up on a comment by the member for Warrandyte. He said, ‘Why bother?’. This government bothers because its members care and because they know that key infrastructure must be free from political deadlock. I have listened intently to this debate and to the contributions of many members in the house. Members have articulated well how much community support that infrastructure separated from political deadlock has had. We know that Victorians want infrastructure that should not hinge on political cycles. We know that Victorians want infrastructure that is long term, that is visionary and that is good for the state. We know that Victorians want infrastructure — in transport, roads and health — long-term projects that generate jobs, get them from A to B more quickly and look after their families. That is what this government and those on this side of the house know. We are getting on with it; we are getting on with the job. We are a government that is doing what we said we would do.

Victoria is growing — with new towns, new developments and new communities — and with this comes new demands on services and infrastructure and new needs for planning. Victoria needs a system of prioritising, planning and developing infrastructure that is free from politics, is transparent, is objective and takes into account cost-benefit ratios. Victorians are sick and tired of these key infrastructure projects being politicised, and there is no greater example of this than the east–west link, a dud project that the former government signed at the 11th hour, a project that would have cost \$10.7 billion and lost 55 cents for every dollar wasted in investment. The east–west link was a disaster from start to finish. It took the election of a Labor government to stop it. It was such a financial disaster that the Liberals were secretly planning to toll every freeway in Melbourne just to cover up their \$2.1 million black hole.

Victoria needs an independent organisation that can objectively look at projects and make decisions that are in the best interests of all Victorians over the short, medium and long terms. I am proud of this government and the fact that this bill will establish Infrastructure Victoria, which will use evidence and be transparent. Infrastructure Victoria will consult widely and consider the needs of the whole state. It will prioritise projects that deliver results and drive new jobs — jobs that are

so important for families. Most importantly, it will help governments plan for the future and make better decisions.

When you are out talking to members of the community, it is very clear that they are sick and tired of the two-dogs-barking political approach to infrastructure. They want to know that their hard-earned tax dollars are going to be put to good use. They want to know that these projects are what the state needs, and they want to know that the government taking on board these independent recommendations means it is listening.

Let us look at what Infrastructure Victoria will do. Infrastructure Victoria will have the key responsibility for strategic planning. It will be the responsibility of Infrastructure Victoria to establish an ongoing 30-year infrastructure strategy that outlines the state's needs and priorities. This will include a pipeline of recommended projects that respond to the emerging needs and pressures across our economy, environment and community. From the 30-year long-term visionary planning process, the government will be required to establish a 5-year plan and a response outlining the government's plans, using the long-term plan as a guide to help shape the response.

These projects will not just come out of thin air; they will come from research. Infrastructure Victoria will be a powerhouse of research in the strategic planning area, adding an independent voice to the community-wide debate on these issues. This will take into account modelling. This will take into account community consultation, and, as has always been said, you must take the community with you on such projects.

Key aspects of Infrastructure Victoria include independence and transparency. Infrastructure Victoria will publicly release and regularly update the 30-year strategy. We know that the independence and transparency of Infrastructure Victoria's planning, advice and publications will be paramount. Its establishment is a key step in removing the backroom, closed-door style of planning that has gone on before now, putting our state's needs first and out in the open, free from political interference. This organisation will be truly independent and transparent, ensuring only the best outcomes for Victoria.

The analytical work of Infrastructure Victoria will focus on three key areas, providing a broad cross-sectoral analysis of social, economic and environmental needs and concerns. Through this analysis and using its expertise, Infrastructure Victoria's recommendations will cover not only new

developments and infrastructure but also options to better use existing infrastructure through operational improvements and changes, including advances in technology. It is things like extensive engagement, and it is things like looking at social, economic and environmental needs.

What Victorians do not want is a government and a Parliament that simply argues its way through year after year and ends up with a situation like we had last year. All members of the house would be in agreement that we do not want to see that for our state. We need to be better than that. We need to plan long term, because the reality is that if we do not, we will not be able to keep up with demand. I heard the member for Macedon talk about population growth, and that is certainly something I am going to see in my electorate over many years from hereon in. We know that Victoria is a great place to live, and we want to ensure that it remains a great place to live. We know that Melbourne is an incredibly populous city — one of the fastest growing cities in the nation — and we need to ensure that we continue to provide infrastructure that supports that growth.

I am proud of this bill, and I believe in Infrastructure Victoria. I am certainly hopeful that we will be standing here in 10, 20 or 30 years time, saying, 'Wasn't it fantastic to have a government with a vision for the future, a government that created Infrastructure Victoria? We have projects that are a result of recommendations from Infrastructure Victoria'. I certainly believe this bill will do that, and I commend the Premier on his vision in this bill.

It must be noted that when we look across the nation — and I have spoken briefly about other states and jurisdictions — we see that this bill is groundbreaking, although we know that there are similar bodies to Infrastructure Victoria elsewhere, such as Infrastructure New South Wales, the proposed Building Queensland statutory body or Infrastructure Australia. None of these, however, I would argue, have the transparency, depth of analysis, independence from political interference or wideranging engagement that Infrastructure Victoria will have.

I have heard honourable members mention the composition of the board. We know that it will have four appointed directors, including the chair and deputy chair, from private and non-government sectors, who will be appointed based on their knowledge or experience of policy and strategy or infrastructure planning, funding and delivery. On top of that, there will be three statutory directors from the public sector — the Secretary of the Department of Premier

and Cabinet, the Secretary of the Department of Treasury and Finance and the secretary responsible to the Minister for Planning.

Infrastructure Victoria is a body that will be a respected guide for our state and for our communities with their growing needs. Its recommendations will be evidence based. It will be fully transparent and fully open. It will make recommendations around projects that will ensure that our state remains the best place to live, work, visit and do business. I look forward to the creation of Infrastructure Victoria, and I am excited by the prospect of having such a body to make recommendations to the state. I very happily commend the bill to the house.

Dr NAPTHINE (South-West Coast) — I rise to speak in the debate on the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015. This bill is about establishing Infrastructure Victoria, a statutory authority that will provide allegedly independent and expert advice to government about Victoria's infrastructure needs and priorities, which most people would agree would be a laudable aim and objective. I wish to outline in my contribution today the concerns that I have and the concerns that many Victorians would have about Labor's track record, which shows it cannot be trusted to properly and efficiently deliver or manage a truly independent, effective Infrastructure Victoria body and to listen and respond appropriately to reports and recommendations from independent infrastructure bodies such as Infrastructure Victoria.

I premise that on an adage that I have heard all my life: that you judge people and organisations on what they actually do, not on what they say. You judge them on their performance, not on what they speak about. Labor's track record with respect to major projects and infrastructure unfortunately speaks volumes for Labor's inability to manage major projects and infrastructure. We only have to look at the north-south pipeline — \$750 million wasted on that enormous white elephant, and that is only a very small white elephant compared to the desalination plant — to see that. The member for Essendon said that the desalination plant has not cost taxpayers any money. What absolute and utter nonsense. That plant is costing Melbourne and Victorian water users \$2 million a day. It was too big, too costly and too poorly managed, and it has not delivered a drop of water to Victoria.

When we look at myki we see the mess it was for Victoria. The Melbourne Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Market and fresh flower markets relocation was to have been a 10-year project. If it had not been for the coalition government's efforts to get that project

back on track, we would be waiting another 10 years for that project to be anywhere near completion.

In contrast, the coalition government got on with the job. It built the Webb Dock development and the Box Hill Hospital. Indeed, the Box Hill Hospital was supposed to be 9 storeys in height but we built it with 10 storeys, extra beds, extra services, on time and under budget. There was the Bendigo Hospital. The member for Sunbury would be pleased with the Tullamarine widening project, a project of the coalition government. As for the Murray Basin rail project, we hope that this government delivers on that project. There was the development of the Princes Highway east and west; the Western Highway; the Calder Highway interchange at Ravenswood, the most dangerous intersection in Victoria, which was being fixed by the previous coalition government; the Dingley bypass; and the Koo Wee Rup bypass.

It was interesting to read the headline in this morning's *Age*, 'Welcome to wonderful Werribee', and to read on pages 2 and 3 about the development of the Werribee East employment zone. I had a sense of *deja vu* because I remember being there as Premier with the then Minister for Planning, now Leader of the Opposition, to announce the Werribee East employment zone and to announce that the coalition government would provide over \$70 million for the full Sneydes Road intersection. When I drive along the Princes Highway I can see that work being done on the Sneydes Road intersection. Yes, welcome to wonderful Werribee East — another project of the previous coalition government, similar to the development of the major Fishermans Bend project, which will really drive Victoria into the future.

The other issue I wanted to raise is the concept of how we manage our infrastructure. The member for Sunbury kept talking about the need to depoliticise our infrastructure projects, to have a proper independent body, to listen to that independent body and to implement its recommendations without a political overlay or political influence. I remember that the previous Labor government under Premier John Brumby undertook just such a process. It appointed Sir Rod Eddington and a committee of experts and public servants. I can see some smiles among the advisers in the box, to whom I am not supposed to refer, because they were involved in that process. They provided that independent expert advice, just the same as Infrastructure Victoria will do.

What did Sir Rod Eddington recommend to the previous Labor government? As an independent infrastructure expert he said in his overview report:

I have made two major infrastructure recommendations:

A new 17-kilometre rail tunnel linking Melbourne's fast-growing western and south-eastern suburbs — a generational 'step-up' in the city's rail capacity and Melbourne's first 'metro' style passenger line.

Ms Graley — Exactly!

Dr NAPHTHINE — Exactly, as the member over there says! The second thing he recommended as his major infrastructure project was:

A new 18-kilometre cross-city road corridor that provides a much-needed alternative to the West Gate Bridge, while also delivering substantial economic, transport and amenity benefits to Melbourne.

What else did he recommend? His key recommendation 2 stated:

The Victorian government should bring forward the construction of a new rail connection from Werribee to Sunshine (the Tarnet link) to significantly improve the frequency and reliability of services from Werribee, Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo.

He gave independent expert advice, just the same as Infrastructure Victoria will be required to do. But which government listened to that independent expert advice and delivered on that independent expert advice? It was not the Labor government who listened to the expert advice of the Infrastructure Victoria Sir Rod Eddington committee; it was the coalition government, because the coalition got on with the job of building the regional rail link.

When we inherited the regional rail link, it was a dog of a project. It was underscoped and overpriced, and it was going to put in another 13 to 15 level crossings across the suburbs of western Victoria. Under the coalition government they were all removed. The project was better managed and it turned from being a dog into the national infrastructure project of the year — and congratulations to all involved. It is now open, but it is open because of the work of the coalition government following in a non-partisan way the recommendations of the Eddington committee that was set up by the previous Labor government.

In just the same way, the coalition government was getting on with the recommendation of building the east–west link. We were not alone in supporting the east–west link. When he was state secretary of the Australian Workers Union (AWU), Cesar Melhem, a member for Western Metropolitan Region in the other place, said:

The Eastern Freeway is the last of the 'unconnected' freeways leading towards the city ... Linking the Eastern Freeway completes the northern and eastern access to the network.

The EastLink project could not be considered fully completed until the east–west tunnel had been built.

That is what Cesar Melhem and the AWU said. The independent experts led by Sir Rod Eddington said, 'Build the east–west link. Build the regional rail link. Build a metropolitan rail link'. The coalition government adopted the recommendations and proceeded to build them. We built the regional rail link and we were building the east–west link, including the western section.

Let me talk briefly about the western section of the link. The Labor Party came into office saying it would build the West Gate distributor and it put money into the budget for it. But the West Gate distributor was a dog, is a dog and will always be a dog. Fortunately the Labor government has now put that dog down, because it knows it would not work. It is now talking about a new project called the western distributor. It is a slightly better-bred dog, but it is still a dog. What is really needed in the western suburbs is the western section of the east–west link. That will give us the solution for traffic in the western suburbs and the much-needed second river crossing.

We need to build the western section of the east–west link, we need to build a major metropolitan rail link and we need to build the airport rail link. I hope Infrastructure Victoria does its job without fear or favour and makes these recommendations along with the recommendations for a new container port so that we have a container port where ships can go in deep water at Hastings rather than at the wrong place at Bay West.

Infrastructure Victoria is a good idea, but I fear the Labor government simply will not be able to manage it, and when it does make recommendations the government will not deliver on them.

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — It is a pleasure to follow the former Premier of that lazy, crazy government, which talked a lot and did nothing. I have been sitting here this afternoon listening to the contributions — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms McLeish) — Order! Members of the government and members of the opposition should cease yelling out and let the member continue.

Ms GRALEY — I will provide a reasoned and historically correct contribution on the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015. Even after all the delusional

outbursts from those opposite I am pleased that they are not opposing the bill. I implore them to get on board with the team that will make sure that Victoria remains a livable and prosperous place for Victorians. That is essentially what the bill is about. It is about making sure not only that Melbourne is the world's most livable city but that Victoria is a place that thrives well into the future. It is about building infrastructure, a lot of which could have been built some time ago had previous governments had an organisation like Infrastructure Victoria providing them with advice in a transparent way.

What we witnessed with the previous government was a lot of people trying to think up ideas that were not their own. They did not want to continue with projects put forward by the previous Labor government, so they came up with crazy versions of major projects. Frankly, had they followed the Melbourne Metro rail project, which was the no. 1 one project that Sir Rod Eddington supported — —

Mr Carroll — And Infrastructure Australia.

Ms GRALEY — Infrastructure Australia also supported it. It was a fantastic project, and we would now have been four years into the building of the Melbourne Metro rail link. It would have been an extraordinary achievement, but instead the former Liberal government botched it. It did not want the project going down Swanston Street. It wanted a station built at Fishermans Bend, where nobody lives at the moment. It would have had stops that were closer to the casino than to a world-class medical precinct. People from Narre Warren South could have caught the train to have treatment at the Peter McCallum Cancer Centre. Instead there would have been stops at the casino where people could get a dim sim before they went to lose their money.

It is extraordinary that governments have behaved so badly, and the last one worse than most, and let us face it, it was a one-term government. Let me remind members of the Liberal Party that their federal leader, the Prime Minister, said that the last election was a referendum on the east–west tunnel — the east–east link — and yet they are still telling us what a fantastic project it was. The Victorian electors comprehensively sent us all a message that they did not want the tunnel built. During the election campaign Labor said that it was not going to build it. In fact we committed to the establishment of Infrastructure Victoria, and that is exactly why we have the bill before the house. It is an excellent bill for lots of reasons. It is not just because the previous government botched the projects and we need to do something to rectify all the mistakes, all the

thought bubbles that went haywire, and virtually nothing happened. Infrastructure Victoria is something Victorian electors want.

People say to me that not many people went into the election and decided to tick a box that said, 'I want Infrastructure Victoria', but in my experience standing on booths and talking to lots of people in my electorate, especially people a little older than me, they said over and again that they are sick of the political games being played with infrastructure. They are sick of the fact that not enough planning is done. They are sick of the fact that governments do not get on with the job and that they play ping-pong. They waste time and they waste money.

Many people hark back to what they perceive to have been the good old days when we had the Metropolitan Board of Works. We had a planning authority that went out to size up what the community needed. It was not a perfect organisation; we can certainly have arguments about that. I am sure we can all recall the Mornington Peninsula scandals that Liberal members were involved with at the board of works, but let us not go there. But it is an example of how people are crying out loudly for governments to look beyond the political cycle, beyond what is best for those in certain electorates and beyond what is cheap in order to think about the long-term viability of projects and to get on with the job of delivering for all Victorians.

In the last four years of the former lazy, crazy government not one new road was funded and completed by the previous government in my electorate, which is one of the fastest growing electorates in Victoria. Not one new school was opened and not one extra bed was provided at Casey Hospital. It was shameful. Now the Labor government has to play catch-up with these projects. Thankfully good shadow ministers took good advice from backbenchers and from other authorities about what was needed. Now Thompsons Road in my electorate is being revamped; we are getting over \$106 million worth of funding for Casey Hospital; and we are getting new schools built. That is exactly what people expect of state governments. They expect them to get on with the job of providing good quality public services that they can access. They also expect projects to be responsibly handled and delivered on time and within budget.

One of the best features of this bill is that not only do we get a planning authority that will look at where we need our schools, roads, hospital expansions and big projects — and what a fantastic project Melbourne Metro is; it will revolutionise Melbourne and continue to ensure that it is a world-class city — but it will be an

independent body. I am a bit concerned when I hear members opposite suggesting that certain public servants and other people who might want to be involved in Infrastructure Victoria may not fit certain criteria, may not be up to the task or may not be trusted. It is a scary situation when you find politicians making those sorts of remarks and judging people before they even take up these sorts of positions. It reflects poorly on the manners of those opposite.

We can do better than that with this bill. The Minister for Public Transport has it absolutely correct: Infrastructure Victoria's board will have a nice balance of government and non-government representatives. The mechanisms that she has put in place — the 30-year strategy and the 5-year time frame for looking at it as it goes along — will mean that this body is accountable to government and the public as it looks ahead, planning a vision for the future and ensuring the delivery of the projects that Victoria needs, not only to catch up but also to continue to grow and expand to be a prosperous, healthy and interesting place for all Victorians to live in.

I commend the minister for bringing this bill to the house so rapidly. The government is committed to delivering on its election promises, this being one of them. We are getting on with it. We are going to make sure that Victorians continue to live in a world-class city. The community knows we need good infrastructure. Infrastructure Victoria will be the most independent, transparent, widely scoped and broadly engaging with industry of any infrastructure advisory body in Australia. I commend the bill to the house. I suggest to those opposite that rather than not opposing it, they get fully on board and support it.

Mr ANGUS — I am pleased to make a contribution to the debate on the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015. It was interesting to hear the various contributions, in particular from those opposite. As a general observation, Labor members have been saying one thing and doing another. We have seen many examples of that, and I will highlight some of them in my contribution.

It is worth looking at some background. The budget papers clearly show what the current government has done with the infrastructure budget that the previous coalition government had committed to for the four years from 2014–15 up to and including 2017–18. The coalition had an infrastructure program of some \$26.8 billion, whereas the Labor government has an infrastructure budget of \$20.4 billion, which is a decrease of some \$6.4 billion — or basically a 26 per cent cut. That is not really a great start in terms of

infrastructure for the state of Victoria, which is important to address the incredible growth the state has seen in terms of population and so on.

Interestingly — and I have said it in this place before — I note that the Treasurer said in budget paper 2, page 43:

The government is committed to delivering high quality services and infrastructure for all Victorians in a fiscally responsible manner.

It is interesting that as a follow-on from that, the government outlined \$22 billion worth of projects announced but a mere \$6 billion of funding budgeted for. In the first budget of this government we can see that only just over one-quarter of that funding has been provided — 27 per cent of the funding for the infrastructure projects that Labor is going ahead with has been included in that budget. It is not a sensational start. There are a few little buckets of money being thrown here and there, but nothing to deliver on any of the key infrastructure projects that are so necessary in Victoria. It reminds us all of the well-known adage that Labor simply cannot manage money. We can see in the infrastructure area that that has well and truly been documented and highlighted through recent history.

I like what the member for Malvern said in his contribution: that the budget papers tell the truth, unlike those opposite. The budget papers show in unequivocal terms what actually has been done in contrast to the loose words that have been said. As I said, Labor's history of economic mismanagement and infrastructure disaster has been well recorded by both the Ombudsman and the Auditor-General over the last four or five years, but some of the key ones include the desalination plant — what a millstone that is for all Victorians at \$1.8 million a day for 27 years — and the myki overrun of \$500 million. The Melbourne wholesale fruit and vegetable market project has an overrun of more than \$300 million, and it is still not finished — and even the initial timetable for its completion has been put out yet again by the Labor government. And HealthSMART is \$243 million over budget.

Without any shadow of a doubt, time and again under those opposite projects have run completely out of control in terms of both cost and time — they are over budget and over time. It is interesting too that much was said by the then opposition leader, now Premier, before the election about all the shovel-ready projects. What an absolute joke that was. All Victorians are now able to see that they have been totally deceived in relation to that. In terms of shovel-ready projects, I do not think the now Premier has even bought the shovel,

let alone got the projects going. Think of projects the coalition government had fully funded and scheduled. Out my way — not in my electorate but just north of it — the Blackburn Road level crossing removal was fully funded in the last coalition budget and was ready to go. All the initial background work had been done, and it was ready for works to be undertaken, and now it has been pushed back more than a year. What a disgraceful situation that is. We had a project that was indeed shovel ready in a genuine sense, and that has now been ditched or pushed right back.

Before the election Labor was talking about the West Gate distributor — that was the pre-election situation, but of course it did not last long — and after the election it became the western distributor. We had a massive slap in the face with the previous advice received in relation to the Eddington report. The member for South-West Coast spoke extensively on the Eddington report and some of its recommendations. One of its major recommendations was for the connection at the end of the Eastern Freeway and the east–west link, which was going to solve that terrible traffic congestion problem for all Victorians and certainly for those in the eastern suburbs.

The other stand-out to me is the fact that before the election the Labor Party came out and said not only that it was going to have the port of Melbourne — we said the port of Hastings; that was a coalition policy — but also that Bay West was the great white hope.

Mr Katos — A mirage.

Mr ANGUS — Exactly; it was a mirage. Labor said that was how it was going to deal with that issue. Subsequent to the election, that has all disappeared. Now Labor wants to foist upon the Victorian people a 70-year monopoly for the port of Melbourne. It is just trying to fatten the cow and flog it off as quickly as it can. This is going to be another potential millstone around the necks of all Victorians that will come back to haunt them for many generations to come. Seventy years is an unprecedented length of time, and this will be a financial disaster for all Victorians.

It is interesting to hear the Premier go on and on saying, ‘We’ll keep all our promises. We won’t backflip on any of our promises’, yet straightaway see the government backflip on the promise — particularly for those people in the Geelong region — to build a port at Bay West. I do not know how the Premier can continue making statements like that.

There are a number of areas of concern in relation to the bill. Infrastructure is not even defined in the bill,

and Infrastructure Victoria is able to consider infrastructure very broadly, including non-physical social infrastructure. That is an interesting concept. Before I continue listing the areas of concern, I should say that the genesis for this structure comes from the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee report of December 2012 — the 112th — entitled *Inquiry into Effective Decision Making for the Successful Delivery of Significant Infrastructure Projects*. In that report the committee, of which I was very privileged to be a member and participant, made some very substantial recommendations. The concept of Infrastructure Victoria had its genesis in that inquiry.

Chapter 2.1, which is on page 7 of the report, lists the committee’s recommendations. The major changes recommended by the committee include:

a new advisory body to recommend priorities for infrastructure investment in Victoria, subject to confirmation by the government, including its ‘pipeline’ of projects into the future;

a new body to be a centre of excellence for project development and delivery and have overall responsibility for ensuring that Victoria has the capability to deliver projects successfully; and

strengthened oversight and accountability mechanisms, especially around initial project analysis and delivery.

They continue in that chapter and the other chapters of the report.

It is a shame that the current government has not more fully adopted the recommendations of the report, as the concept that the Labor government has come up with in this bill has a number of areas of concern. One thing the coalition sees as absolutely vital to the success of any such body is the experience of those who are sitting around the board table. The Infrastructure Victoria board includes three departmental secretaries as ex officio members, which provides no guarantee of private sector experience or participation. That lack of experience is going to be a fundamental problem down the track. Inevitably there will be problems under a Labor government; we know that. History will repeat itself, as it always does. We can see that that lack of experience will be one of the key factors.

There is a whole range of areas of concern. Time is against me now, but I think it is important to look at the proposed coalition amendments. They will address a number of those key deficiencies in this bill. One of those is the fact that there is going to be a tight time frame as to when the 30-year infrastructure strategy is published. We say it has to be before 31 December 2016. Similarly, there has to be transparency and clear accountability back to this house.

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) — It gives me pleasure to rise to speak in support of the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015. Whichever way you look at it, this bill demonstrates leadership in action. It is a bill that is entirely worthy of support to the point where the opposition does not oppose it. That is a halfway measure, but nonetheless it also accepts that this is a good quality bill.

The bill provides long-term leadership on the infrastructure needs of Victoria, which includes taxpayer dollars, private investment and a whole range of the variables that go into large infrastructure projects. In the budget \$40 million has been provided over four years to establish Infrastructure Victoria. Probably the biggest thing this bill does is deliver long-term vision. The bill will require Infrastructure Victoria to provide a 30-year strategy for Victoria's needs and priorities. This strategy will be updated every three to five years. It will also require the Victorian government to provide a five-year plan of its infrastructure priorities. The process will be entirely transparent, and I will talk about that further down the track.

Infrastructure Victoria will cover a number of things, ranging from roads, schools and hospitals to water and community and cultural facilities. Quite on purpose the terminology is not defined in the bill to allow Infrastructure Victoria to have as broad a reference as it possibly can and one that is relevant to the time in which it operates. At some future point I would like to see a bit of consideration around IT infrastructure. These strategies will be open for public consultation. The community which is being consulted and which will have input will not necessarily enjoy the benefits of these projects. These projects are, as the Premier often says, oak tree projects: the people who plant the trees are not necessarily the people who will sit under and in the shade of the oak trees. That is real leadership; the fact that you do not succumb to a four-year electoral cycle is real leadership. I am really proud to be part of a government that supports such projects.

If you think back to another leadership project that fitted the oak tree description, it would have to be the development of Southbank or the Southgate precinct in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The people who showed leadership in creating that precinct are not necessarily the ones who cut the red ribbon. It will be the same for the Melbourne Metro project. I doubt very much it will be this Premier and members of this government who cut the ribbon on it. Hopefully it will be a future Labor government, but it is unlikely to be the same people. This is similar to the introduction by the Hawke and Keating governments of superannuation and the comprehensive pension system.

Paul Keating never got to enjoy the benefits of saying while he was in office that Australia now has the fourth-largest savings pool in the entire world and that our saving pool exceeds Australia's gross domestic product. That is pretty astounding. When superannuation was established in the early 1990s, I do not think anyone would have imagined that outcome. This is an example of long-term vision, and that is why I am proud to support this bill.

Infrastructure Victoria will also have the capacity to provide an independent business case analysis. Quite apart from its own remit, strategy and plans, Infrastructure Victoria will also be able to provide a consultancy or independent assessment service to Victorian government projects. I think that is really vital, particularly the reference to consideration of social and environmental as well as economic impacts. I think they are vital.

The other thing I admire about this bill and which I strongly support is its transparency. It is quite extraordinary. A government tying itself to such transparency, which frankly speaking sometimes may not be politically convenient, is the right thing to do. An example of that is that the government will be required to prepare a five-year infrastructure plan, as I said, which responds to the strategy prepared by Infrastructure Victoria, which project is identified as a priority, including any funding commitments. To provide further rigour to the process, Infrastructure Victoria will publish an annual assessment of the government's progress against the five-year infrastructure plan. This is a body that has been established by the government to, in a sense, critique government. That is bold, and that is leadership.

The other element of this transparency is that Infrastructure Victoria will be required to publish in its annual report the details of each request for advice that it receives. As others have said, a large number of people and organisations are lined up to support this bill. I have press releases here from the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Urban Development Institute of Australia, the Property Council of Australia, the Master Builders Association of Victoria and the Committee for Melbourne — all glowing in their support for the establishment of this body. Not all these bodies would normally support Labor government decisions, but in this case they are thrilled.

As the member for Narre Warren South said, the community is relieved, and it is also thrilled. I have had door-to-door conversations that have been similar to those the member for Narre Warren South has had.

People have said to me, ‘Why is it that one government comes in, throws out a project and tries to start its own projects, then the next government comes in and throws out those projects?’. This will put a brake on the force of that political cycle. This will provide a long-term vision for the people who matter — not governments but the taxpayers of Victoria.

I cannot avoid responding to some of the inane contributions by members on the other side. I do not mean all of their contributions, but I will pick out some. The member for South-West Coast said that people should be judged on what they do, not on what they say. That is a very strange thing to say when we are introducing a bill to establish Infrastructure Victoria. That is the kind of thing you would say in an election campaign, which is when people make a whole range of commitments. The member for South-West Coast said, ‘Judge people on what they do’, and that is exactly what we are doing. We said we would establish Infrastructure Victoria, and that is what we are doing.

We said we would commence and complete work on level crossings in Koornang Road, Murrumbeena Road, Poath Road and Grange Road in my electorate, and that is exactly what we are doing. The early works have started, the tenders have gone out and we have appointed two bidders for the final leg of the journey before the contract is awarded.

In my electorate, we are doing exactly what we said we would do. We have also funded the Amsleigh Park Primary School redevelopment. I was there last week with the Deputy Premier, who is the Minister for Education. There is money in the budget for the completion of that project over the next two years. We are also building the Huntingdale bus interchange. Again there is money in the budget for the development of that interchange.

I also want to pick up on the contribution by the member for Caulfield. I cannot believe somebody would stand up in this chamber and suggest that it is a sin for a local member to get too involved. The fact that the member for Bentleigh is attending consultations and offering his energy and enthusiasm to address constituent problems, whether they be about level crossings or a dog stuck in a tree, should not be grounds for criticism. I found it absolutely astounding that the member for Caulfield stood up and criticised the member for Bentleigh’s energy, drive and enthusiasm. Maybe that is a mould of local representation that those opposite do not know or do not understand, but I would have thought that that is exactly what you look for not only in your government but also in your local members of Parliament. The member for Caulfield tried

to draw a long bow about that contribution by the local member and what he claimed to be a perceived lack of independence. That is absolute nonsense.

The other thing that I think is nonsense is that the member for Malvern was frothing at the mouth at the beginning of this debate because he believes he had a bigger infrastructure agenda when he was in government. It reminds me of those pub conversations during which people try to prove who is braver and bigger. In the end, as the Treasurer said, we do not talk about forward budgets that are in the never-never, and that is what the member for Malvern was doing. His apparent plan and comments, which were repeated by the member for Ferntree Gully, were in the never-never. It is almost like going to a restaurant and the proprietor saying, ‘We have 10 items on our specials board, and the restaurant next door only has 5’. That means nothing if five of these are not available. Political parties can put items in their forward budgets and still not deliver them. The coalition government had a history of not delivering on items it promised, including Rowville rail, airport rail, Avalon rail and Doncaster rail. None of those was delivered, yet the coalition took all of those projects to two elections.

This bill is a fantastic watershed moment for the Victorian taxpayer and for the future leadership of this state, and I support it.

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — I rise this afternoon to make a contribution to the debate on the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015. The purpose of this bill is to set up an independent body called Infrastructure Victoria to give expert advice on infrastructure needs, priorities and proposals. I will start with one of the things that the Labor Party said it would recommend to Infrastructure Victoria if it were elected, which was Bay West. I have a copy of the issue brief to the Committee for Geelong, which was produced by the now Treasurer and released on 20 June 2014. It says:

Victorian Labor has a view that Bay West is a superior location to Hastings for a future container port.

However, we also believe that such a state-shaping infrastructure decision should be made on the basis of transparent, independent advice.

It goes on to say that Labor will introduce Infrastructure Victoria, ask it to investigate the issue of the port siting — whether it be Hastings or Bay West — make a submission to Infrastructure Victoria in favour of Bay West and then, once Infrastructure Victoria has reported, make a decision cognisant of that advice. The only problem is that we have a proposed sale of the port of Melbourne lease which prevents a second port for

70 years. What Infrastructure Victoria recommends regarding Bay West is completely irrelevant, because a second container port is proposed to be locked out by the port of Melbourne being in a private monopoly for 70 years.

As I said in an earlier contribution, the people of Geelong were in effect lied to with regard to this. The Premier said that Bay West would create 'jobs, jobs and more jobs'. That is what he said to the people of Geelong. Where are those jobs now? My oldest boy will be 82 in 70 years. He might be able to get a job on the docks at Bay West when he turns 82 years of age. That is a real job for Geelong! That is real good stuff by Infrastructure Victoria!

We have had independent reports done before. As other speakers have already said, Sir Rod Eddington was commissioned to look into the infrastructure needs of Melbourne. The key road project he recommended was the east-west link. That was independent advice commissioned by the Brumby Labor government in response to Victoria's infrastructure needs. The coalition government recognised that the east-west link was Melbourne's biggest road need, so we supported it. The western section of east-west link was also going to be good for Geelong.

We got the independent advice and we acted on it, but what was the first action of this government? It canned the east-west link, which was recommended to it on the independent advice of Sir Rod Eddington. Labor already has form in not accepting the advice of independent boards, and in this case it has not even accepted the findings of an independent study it had commissioned. Is there any guarantee that it will accept anything that Infrastructure Victoria recommends?

What is interesting is the composition of the Infrastructure Victoria board. To start, it will include three departmental secretaries. As some of the former ministers have noted in their contributions, in their experience of working with them, all the secretaries do a good job. The fact is that they are all answerable to the government, so they will be three votes for what the government wants. The proposed chair is a lady by the name of Elana Rubin, who is on the board of Transurban Queensland.

How can the chair of the independent Infrastructure Victoria be on the board of Transurban Queensland? What a conflict of interest that would be. That is amazing to me. The final three members of the Infrastructure Victoria board will be appointed by the government. Maybe the government will throw some crumbs and put a token Liberal or Nationals supporter

on the board to make out that it is not all Labor cronies, but all that will mean is that decisions will be by six against one.

I was a councillor in Geelong at that time, but I want to talk about the development assessment committees implemented in the 56th Parliament. The Brumby government used these committees to take planning powers away from key councils around the state, Geelong being one of them. The board was made up of two bureaucrats appointed by the government, an independent chair appointed by the government and just two representatives of the local government. It was three versus two, so the government was going to win an argument every time. It is going to be the same situation in Infrastructure Victoria.

I think there is another reason for the establishment of Infrastructure Victoria. When an infrastructure project is popular, the Andrews Labor government will not go to Infrastructure Victoria; it will just support it outright. Only when a necessary piece of infrastructure comes up that might be controversial in a certain area will the government go to Infrastructure Victoria. The Labor-stacked independent board will approve it, noting that it might be controversial in certain areas but that it is overall necessary, and the Labor government will hide behind the decision by saying that Infrastructure Victoria is at arm's length and has made an independent assessment that a tunnel, bridge or road should be built. That is what this is about: it is about hiding from controversial decisions. Anything that is vaguely popular will not go anywhere near Infrastructure Victoria.

The other side of this is that the last time I looked we were elected to this place to make decisions and to govern, not to send matters to boards to make decisions for us. We are here to make decisions, not to absolve ourselves of the responsibility. That is what this is about. It is about Labor absolving itself of controversial but necessary infrastructure projects. In my view, that is what this is really about.

The member for Malvern has circulated amendments. We are not opposing the bill, but the member for Malvern has circulated very reasonable amendments to increase the transparency of the Infrastructure Victoria process by ensuring that the advice it gives is reported to the Parliament. These are sensible amendments. As far as this bill goes, I have my real doubts about the motives behind Infrastructure Victoria because there is no way that with its structure, it can possibly give independent advice. You only have to look at the state's water boards to see the government's form in this area — all of the water boards have been sacked, and in

September board members will have to reapply for their jobs. You can also look at the people the government is putting on hospital boards. They are being stacked with Labor sympathisers, and I have the same fears for Infrastructure Victoria. While the opposition is not opposing the bill, I certainly have my doubts about it. I look forward to seeing how this bill does in the upper house.

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) — I appreciate the opportunity to make a contribution to debate on the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015. This is a significant bill in Victoria's economic history and indeed in its social history. The bill establishes Infrastructure Victoria to provide strategic and independent advice on Victoria's infrastructure needs and priorities, which is something we have long been missing. The bill will elevate and preserve the role of independent infrastructure advice. Most importantly, it fulfils an election commitment, which is something this government is committed to doing.

By the time the Liberal government's term had ended we had seen three years of procrastination followed by six months of panic in the lead-up to the election. Victorians were denied vital information and industry was deprived of any certainty. At the time we said:

The decisions we make today will determine our prosperity in the future. They must be informed, calm and responsible. That's why an Andrews Labor government will also:

establish Infrastructure Victoria, an independent body to advise on our long-term priorities;

establish Projects Victoria so those priorities are delivered on time and on budget.

Infrastructure Victoria will mean future governments will not be distracted by politics or able to hide vital information from voters. This expert body will keep the pipeline a major projects full and steady.

That is what we are doing here today.

The purpose of this bill is to create an independent institutional framework that will promote the development, design and implementation of that significant infrastructure and those programs for Victoria. The independent statutory body will be known as Infrastructure Victoria, and it will be a body that will provide expert and independent advice to the government of the day regarding Victoria's ongoing infrastructure needs.

The creation of Infrastructure Victoria comes at a critical juncture in this state's history. History will not only remember the Baillieu-Napthine-Shaw government as one of the most dysfunctional

governments to preside over this great state but also judge the coalition government harshly for its failure to deliver any significant infrastructure. We saw four long wasted years.

Infrastructure Victoria will reduce the ability of governments to consider projects like the coalition's east-west project, a project that was not only economically unviable but also devoid of rigorous analysis and scrutiny. A landmark reform, Infrastructure Victoria will remove the short-term politics from the delivery of critical infrastructure projects. Labor has a long tradition of building independent policy bodies. The construction of independent bodies such as Infrastructure Victoria follows a long Labor tradition of Labor government's laying the institutional framework necessary to underpin our society's progress and prosperity. Across the country there are numerous examples of this. In this great Labor tradition we saw the Reserve Bank of Australia become independent in the 1980s.

The Hawke government granted the Reserve Bank of Australia independence. Prior to this decision the Reserve Bank of Australia was an additional arm to the commonwealth government of the day and subordinate to the government of the day's monetary policy preferences. This decision was important as it provided the Reserve Bank of Australia with the autonomy and the power to make independent judgements regarding the future direction of monetary policy in this country.

Again in this great Labor tradition we saw the establishment of the Industry Commission in 1989 by the Hawke Labor government, which was another example of an independent body designed for the purpose of conducting public inquiries on the future policy directions of the commonwealth government. The Industry Commission, which subsequently was replaced by the Productivity Commission in 1998, ensures that we have independent and rigorous advice. Governments of both persuasions have adopted Productivity Commission recommendations, and governments of both persuasions have acknowledged that this is important in planning for our economy and our society.

Again in this great Labor tradition in 2008 the Rudd government established Infrastructure Australia, a statutory body created to provide advice to the Australian government — advice on significant infrastructure projects to design rolling 15-year infrastructure strategies. The creation of Infrastructure Victoria is a logical and welcome addition to the current suite of independent institutions that have been established in a great Labor tradition that exist to

provide advice to governments over the strategic direction of our country and of our state. As many in this house are now aware, the governance structures and organisation of Infrastructure Victoria will provide this same independent advice.

The composition of the board is important. Clause 12 of the bill provides for the membership of the board of directors. There will be seven members: a chairperson; a deputy chairperson; two additional directors and three department heads. The inclusion of the three department secretaries on the board will allow for public sector perspectives on the future direction, design and implementation of infrastructure to be included. However, the board will predominantly consist of non-government members and will not be subject to the direction of the minister. Further, the independence of the board and the independence of this statutory body will be protected and preserved. The composition of the board safeguards Infrastructure Victoria's independence.

Industry bodies have welcomed the establishment of Infrastructure Victoria. The decision by the Andrews government to create Infrastructure Victoria has been publicly lauded by many of the key bodies in this policy space. In a media release Consult Australia's chief executive, Megan Motto, said:

This is an important milestone, in bringing that policy idea to reality so the Victorian public can enjoy the benefits of better infrastructure, and business can plan for the future with greater certainty.

By establishing Infrastructure Victoria, the government is setting the groundwork to ensure that important decisions around infrastructure are based on expert advice rather than political considerations.

That means we can avoid repeating the mistakes of the East-West Link motorway project, and that taxpayer dollars will go to developing infrastructure rather than paying out contracts.

While we're never going to completely take the politics out of decision making around infrastructure project selection, we can at least increase transparency as to what the expert advice is, and force the relevant ministers to explain why they might have disregarded that ...

Engineers Australia has also publicly applauded this project and said:

Engineers Australia has long advocated for an independent body to oversee major infrastructure projects in Victoria.

Independent bodies can also help to build consensus. This is a very important point. Over the last 12 months we have experienced what happens when governments seek to introduce infrastructure projects that do not come with community consensus, and we certainly saw

that with east-west link. However, independent bodies can help us build community consensus about the types of infrastructure projects we need in this state.

An honourable member — We held a referendum on it.

Ms BLANDTHORN — We did have a referendum on it.

An honourable member — How did it go?

Ms BLANDTHORN — It did not go well for the government of the day. The establishment of Infrastructure Victoria will also address what Ross Garnaut in his recent book *Dog Days — Australia After the Boom* laments as the decline of independent public policy bodies across Australia. Garnaut says that the existence of independent bodies is central to the reform program that was undertaken by the Hawke and Keating governments, the Labor governments between 1983 and 1996.

Infrastructure Victoria can play a central role in assisting governments to build community consensus about the state's long-term infrastructure needs. Public consensus can be built for major infrastructure projects by educating the public on the infrastructure needs and priorities of Victoria. This can be achieved through the publication of independent research that contains rigorous cost-benefit analysis of individual infrastructure projects.

Infrastructure Victoria will result in higher levels of accountability. The bill clearly outlines the increased accountability and long-term strategy that we require of the government of the day. It will include a requirement for the government to formally respond to the 30-year infrastructure strategy for our state that Infrastructure Victoria will develop, and it will include a requirement for the government to prepare and release a 5-year infrastructure plan, as well as an annual assessment of the government's priorities and progress against that 5-year infrastructure plan.

In conclusion, after four long years — four wasted years — Victoria requires investment in infrastructure now. The establishment of Infrastructure Victoria has come at a time when Victoria desperately needs significant investment in infrastructure and independent strategic advice as to what that infrastructure should be. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms RYAN (Euroa) — I am pleased to rise to contribute to the debate on the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015. Earlier speakers for the opposition have already made it clear that the coalition will not be

opposing this bill, but we do believe the bill requires substantial improvements, so we will be moving a number of amendments to that end.

Clause 7 of the bill provides that:

The object of Infrastructure Victoria —

the new statutory authority to be created under this bill —

is to provide independent and expert advice —

That is somewhat contradictory to clause 12, which sets up a board that includes three departmental secretaries. As we have already heard from the member for Malvern and others from the opposition, who have already contributed to the debate on this bill, departmental secretaries are unlikely to provide an independent form of advice when they are beholden to the government of the day.

The bill also fails to provide a guarantee of private sector experience or participation, and it includes no time frame for the release of Infrastructure Victoria's first 30-year plan. Members of the opposition are suggesting that Infrastructure Victoria should be required to publish its 30-year plan by 31 December 2016, and that that report should be made available in Parliament.

If, as it claims, this government is committed to transparency, it would agree to those very sensible amendments moved by the coalition, but the reality is that those opposite build infrastructure on politics not on need. We have seen that already in the first eight months of this government.

Those opposite have already cut the infrastructure budget by 24 per cent, and let me tell you, that is being felt in regional Victoria. Setting up a new statutory authority is not going to make a whole lot of difference to that if those opposite are not investing in infrastructure. This government has already demonstrated that it does not give two hoots about expert advice. Members need only look as far as its proposal to set up a 70-year monopoly lease of the port of Melbourne. That flies in the face of advice from Infrastructure Australia. Shall we hear that advice again? Infrastructure Australia said:

... demand for container facilities at the port of Melbourne is projected to exceed capacity before 2031.

Yet here we are setting up a monopoly lease for 70 years. Why should Victorians believe that this government is suddenly going to change its ways?

I turn now to the announcement made by the government on Sunday: just 3 per cent of the revenue — just \$200 million of the \$7 billion that the government plans to raise from the sale of the port of Melbourne — is proposed to be invested back into regional Victoria. That is less than the value of one level crossing removal that those opposite plan to fund in Melbourne, yet they are out there crowing that regional Victoria should be grateful for their largesse. I am sure that in coming days we will see that \$200 million reannounced many times. Those opposite will do their best to get maximum value out of an absolutely paltry sum. They will try to make that \$200 million all things to all people. It will be \$20 here and \$20 there.

Country Victorians would like to know what they have done to be treated so abysmally by this government. What have they done to be treated so poorly? It has been interesting to listen to this debate. It has been disappointing to see the few country members of the Labor Party fail to stand up for their constituents. They have fallen straight in with the party line. I would have hoped that they would have stood up in their party room when this legislation was proposed. Perhaps it did not go to the party room, but I would have at least hoped that the member for Bendigo East would have stood up around the cabinet table to protest against this government's shoddy treatment of country Victoria and to argue for a greater share than just 3 per cent of the \$7 billion that the government proposes to invest in regional Victoria. It is an absolute insult.

What about the member for Bendigo West? I was listening to her contribution earlier today. She says that allocating \$200 million of \$7 billion is visionary of this government. She has sold out her constituents. Country Labor Party members have sold their constituents for two pieces of silver, like Judas. The truth is that those opposite do not have a good track record when it comes to major projects. Look at them all going silent now. During their last term of office they wasted billions of dollars on major projects, many of which were delivered over budget and well past the due date. The Leader of The Nationals has already spoken in the house about the desalination plant. Water customers will be paying \$1.8 million a day for the next 28 years. Myki was promised at a cost of \$741 million in 2004. By 2008 the cost had blown out to \$1.35 billion.

The north-south pipeline is another project that demonstrates just how little those opposite care about country Victoria. It was a \$750 million project designed to take water from drought-stricken communities to Melbourne. Not only that; those opposite could not get the engineering right. They built a \$750 million white

elephant and connected it to storage that is at the lowest point on the Yarra River and that 9 years out of 10 is full. What kind of madness was that?

I move now to the Melbourne wholesale market relocation. If you will indulge me here, Acting Speaker, I will dwell on this for a moment because Labor's failure on this project is now being felt across my electorate. The market was announced in 2004 at a cost of \$300 million, with a promised delivery date of 2010. Here we are in 2015 facing a cost somewhere in the vicinity of \$600 million, and the market is still not ready. It was botched from day one by those opposite. Labor designed and signed contracts to build a trading floor almost half the size of that of the current market. It failed to properly consult on the design of the market, and it made sure that its inherently flawed design was signed and sealed by the time we came to government.

On Saturday one of my constituents, Chris Shaw, closed his fruit and vegetable store having supplied the Campaspe shire with fresh fruit and vegetables for 50 years. After 50 years he gave it up because the market designed by those opposite had forced him out of business. The country hours that were proposed meant that he could not possibly get down to the market, buy his fresh fruit and vegetables, turn around and get home in time to deliver on his contracts. That is an absolute shame for my electorate, and it is a shame for the seven people, including Chris and his wife, who are now out of work as a result.

In conclusion, infrastructure is desperately needed in regional Victoria. However, the record of those opposite on major projects is not one they should be proud of. The bill as it stands is not going to improve independence or transparency, and we on this side of the house have very real concerns about that. I support the amendments that have been moved by the member for Malvern, and I would urge those opposite to do the same.

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) — It is an honour to speak on the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015 because yet again we see a demonstration of this government keeping every single one of the promises it made to the Victorian people before the last election. We believe in keeping our promises. We believe in following through on the commitments we made to the people of Victoria.

The most important thing this bill does is take the politics out of infrastructure planning. After the last four long, dark years, the experience with the east-west link and the ongoing infrastructure issues with the so-called infrastructure Prime Minister in Canberra, taking the politics out of infrastructure is desperately

needed. Infrastructure Victoria will provide long-term infrastructure planning and it will be an independent body, despite what we have heard from those opposite. Four of its seven members will be drawn from the private sector. Infrastructure Victoria will prepare a 30-year infrastructure strategy and provide advice to the government on infrastructure matters as requested.

The government will publicly respond to the 30-year strategy and prepare a 5-year plan to identify and detail major infrastructure projects that it intends to prioritise. It will be an independent body that will release its advice publicly, unlike the New South Wales model. It will be the most independent and transparent infrastructure advisory body in Australia.

Last November we held an infrastructure election. A couple of months before the election I addressed a transport forum in my electorate. Unfortunately the then member for Bentleigh refused to turn up to that transport forum to defend her government's dismal transport infrastructure — —

Mr Burgess — Who organised the transport forum?

Mr STAIKOS — Who organised the transport forum? It was organised by Leader newspapers — the Murdoch press. That is who organised the transport forum. Thank you for that free kick.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr McCurdy) — Order! I ask the member for Bentleigh to direct his comments through the Chair.

Mr STAIKOS — Thank you for the advice, Acting Speaker, and while you are at it, I believe the member for Hastings interjected. What I absolutely did say in my opening remarks at that transport forum was that we were talking in that election about providing transport infrastructure to take us through to the next century. We operate a train system in particular that is being choked by 180 level crossings — Sydney by contrast has 3. If we are to provide an international metro-style train system, we need to begin removing those level crossings. What has been very well received in my electorate is the Andrews Labor government's strong commitment — opposed by those opposite — to remove 50 level crossings over two terms, 20 of which will be removed in the first term. Three of those 20 are in my electorate.

I was not in the house for his contribution, but I understand that the member for Caulfield spoke earlier and criticised me for consulting with my community about these level crossing removals. Last week I had 500 local residents attend a meeting at McKinnon Secondary College to talk about the level crossing

removals because it is something they value. They desperately want these level crossings removed. I know the adjunct professor does not believe in community consultation, but we absolutely do, and work begins on the removal of these three level crossings in my electorate before the end of the year. After four years of the former government doing nothing, in just eight months we have established the Level Crossing Removal Authority, we have signed the contracts, we have made the budget allocation, we have completed the early works, we have completed the testing, and come September we will see major construction beginning along the Frankston line to remove these level crossings.

Of course the other thing we took to the election was the Metro rail tunnel, something that is supported by the experts. You will not find an expert that will put their name to that dog of a project called the Melbourne rail link.

Ms Ryall interjected.

Mr STAIKOS — I do not think that Rod Eddington supported the Melbourne rail link. In response to the interjection of the member for Ringwood, I do not think it was conceived at that time.

The Melbourne rail link was an absolute dog of a project. It was no alternative to the Metro rail tunnel because alarmingly it would have taken people to where they do not want to go. Nobody in Bentleigh wants to go to Fishermans Bend. It would have ripped out Flinders Street and Richmond from the Frankston line. I am proud that we have abandoned that proposal, which was designed on the back of a beer coaster, and are pursuing the Metro rail tunnel. It is something that was recommended for commonwealth funding by Infrastructure Australia, but the infrastructure Prime Minister in his wisdom instead chose to fund the east–west link. I will come back to the east–west link shortly.

The other important thing that Infrastructure Victoria will do is assess business cases for major projects. If we are going to talk about business cases, you cannot go past the east–west link. The business case for the east–west link was absolutely more protected than Lord Voldemort's horcruxes. And just as in the Harry Potter films, politically speaking that horcrux led to the demise of several of those opposite. But let us just talk about exactly what was in that business case. It was a dud tunnel that was going to cost \$10.7 billion — that was the true cost. No wonder members of the former government did not want the Victorian people to see it and no wonder they did not want to take it to an

election. It would have lost 55 cents for every wasted dollar of investment. To add insult to injury, they were going to toll every single freeway in Melbourne in order to pay for it.

Ms Ryall interjected.

Mr STAIKOS — It was in your business case, member for Ringwood. It was in your business case.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr McCurdy) — Order! I ask the member for Bentleigh to direct his comments through the Chair and to cease responding to interjections.

Mr STAIKOS — It is absolutely true that Victoria is being short-changed by the federal government when it comes to infrastructure. And if ever there was an example of why we need to take the politics out of infrastructure planning, it is the situation in Canberra, where a recent analysis of federal infrastructure funding has shown that Victoria has been allocated just \$83 per person over the five years to 2018–19. That is clearly a political move given that Tony Abbott quite clearly has pinned his re-election hopes on Queensland and New South Wales. It is absolutely no coincidence that in New South Wales the figure is \$271 per person and in Queensland \$342 per person.

We are taking the politics out of infrastructure planning. Those opposite are saying they do not oppose this bill, but what they have said during their contributions suggests otherwise. They are very alone on this. Let us hear what the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry had to say:

Strategic infrastructure planning must go beyond the short-term political cycle. We therefore welcome this legislation to establish Infrastructure Victoria and look forward to ongoing engagement to define, prioritise and progress the long-term infrastructure needs of all Victorians.

Infrastructure Partnerships Australia said:

Victoria must never repeat the east–west link experience, meaning long-term, stable and predictable planning is fundamental.

The Urban Development Institute of Australia said:

The introduction of this legislation and the early delivery of such a vital election commitment marks a vital a new era for the integrated planning and delivery of urban development.

Infrastructure planning in Victoria is too important to leave to the political cycle. That is why we brought this bill to the house. It is supported by the stakeholders and by the experts. I commend it to the house.

Debate interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr McCurdy) — Order! Before I call the next speaker, I would like to acknowledge a former minister, Rob Maclellan, who is in the gallery this afternoon. Welcome.

INFRASTRUCTURE VICTORIA BILL 2015

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) — I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015. Whilst the creation of Infrastructure Victoria is admirable, I think it will bring forward a lot of concerns and challenges in the future. This is a statutory authority and it will provide independent and expert advice around infrastructure needs and priorities. That is a good thing. Having a pipeline of infrastructure in place is a good thing because when there are changes of government and in different areas, there is an ongoing plan that people can all look to. It also helps those in business and investment to know that a pipeline is in place. That is not a bad thing.

The functions of Infrastructure Victoria are around strategic planning and advice. I note in particular that there will be a 30-year infrastructure strategy following consultation on a draft strategy. I am always interested when the Labor government moves anything that refers to consultation, because it has form with consultation. I will go into that a little later.

I also note that the government must formally respond to the strategy, and there is also a requirement for the government to prepare and release a five-year infrastructure plan. This is admirable, but as with a lot of what Labor puts up, there are limitations. Earlier the member for Malvern circulated foreshadowed amendments containing the opposition's suggestions for how the plan could be made better and a lot tighter and be given the greater credibility it needs.

I note that members have said that there is general agreement on the need for a body like this, and that is fine. However, I wonder what some of those people who have committed to thinking this is a great idea actually know and understand about the level of detail. If we look at the context, there is always a need for good infrastructure. That infrastructure needs to be supported by government, but also there is a strong role for private investment. We know that the state, and in particular Melbourne, has grown. Over the last 20 years or so for the majority of time there have been Labor

governments, and they have not kept up with infrastructure. It is important that we keep up with infrastructure not just in this city but also in regional Victoria.

Today I have heard a number of people say that Infrastructure Victoria will be looking after regional Victoria. The government has already cut more than \$6 billion, or 24 per cent, of the infrastructure budget and it is ripping people off in country Victoria. It has cut the Regional Growth Fund in half, yet it espouses that it is trying to look after regional Victoria. A lot of it is just talk; it is certainly not matched by its actions.

What concerns me is the implementation — the delivery, and getting the job done. Labor governments have form. As I have said, the \$6.4 billion cut from the infrastructure budget is 24 per cent of that budget. These are projects that were already in the pipeline — the airport rail link, the Melbourne rail project and the east-west link. This has big impacts on jobs, which have been walking out the door from Victoria since the Premier and his government took over. There are also implications for businesses — large businesses, national and international, as well as small businesses — so there are implications everywhere. It is sad to think that the message that has been delivered to Victoria, to Australia and internationally is that Victoria is now closed for business.

The Labor Party has form on ignoring good advice. The Eddington report, which was commissioned by a Labor government, was ignored and not even remotely implemented by the Labor government that commissioned it. It took the coalition government to start getting that up and running again.

The Labor Party in opposition opposed CityLink. I look at the members opposite and think: how many people on that side of the house in government use the Bolte Bridge and CityLink? I could not imagine what it would be like without them. That is representative of the limited scope of the brainpower over there.

In opposition Labor members referenced Infrastructure Australia quite a bit, particularly when it suited them, and it did suit them at times in opposition. In April this year the Australian Infrastructure Audit was released. It told us about the port of Melbourne that:

... demand for container facilities at the port of Melbourne is projected to exceed capacity before 2031.

That is 16 years away — but, no; the advice from Infrastructure Australia was ignored. Labor wants to lock up the port of Melbourne for 70 years. Why should we place our trust in and have confidence that with the

expertise and advice that Infrastructure Victoria puts forward, the Labor government will actually take it on board? Typically it ignores good advice. Its ability to manage projects is fairly appalling. Its background is that there have been some disastrous projects.

I look at the talent involved then and at the talent on the other side of the chamber now, and I cannot see that they are in a better position to manage major projects than they have been in the past. While Liberals and the coalition have economic management in their DNA, those guys have it for absolute lack of project management. We have had the dud projects of the desalination plant — and it horrified me to hear that the member for Essendon thinks that people are not paying for it, other than the \$1.8 million each day for 27 years — and the north–south pipeline, the \$750 million white elephant that I am reminded of every time I drive over it as I travel to my house. I drive over either side of the north–south pipeline virtually every day. There is also the Melbourne Market, another infrastructure project which was a dog. The former Premier gave an excellent rundown of the number of dog projects that we had to turn around. This does not of course include the IT projects, the ultranet and myki. As I said, the talent over there does not inspire me or give me confidence.

I also want to mention other concerns about the governance and independence of Infrastructure Victoria, because the structure works against independence. The chair, the deputy chair and two other board members will be from the private or non-government sectors — fine. But there are three secretaries — from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Department of Treasury and Finance and, I like this one, the secretary responsible to the Minister for Planning. Because it changes so often it has had to be called the secretary responsible to the Minister for Planning. At the minute that is in the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning — I believe the ‘w’ is silent because they are particularly silent on water. The secretaries run the departments and implement the government policy. The performance reviews and appointments are done by the government.

The government is being very unfair to the secretaries by having them in this role, where they will be required to put forward independent advice. If they know the government has a particular desire to move in one direction, and the advice from Infrastructure Victoria is the opposite, they have to weigh up, ‘Gosh, what decision am I going to put forward? This is about my credibility and my job’. It is particularly unfair to put the secretaries in the role of delivering independent

advice when the nature of their jobs is that they are not independent through their appointments.

Transparency in this area is also questioned. Clause 45 is headed ‘Restrictions on publication of advice by Infrastructure Victoria’, and clause 46 is headed ‘Minister may publish advice from Infrastructure Victoria’. They are about blocking the transparency. In the second-reading speech the minister said:

Transparency must underpin infrastructure decision-making because the community cannot, and should not, accept such decisions without being properly informed and involved.

Some of the changes that will be proposed through the amendment process address these and need to be looked at closely.

As I mentioned, Labor has an appalling record on consultation. There was the sham consultation with the Windsor Hotel development. Consultation is mentioned in the objectives here. It is interesting that there was no consultation on the desalination plant or the north–south pipeline —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Ward) — Order!
The member’s time has expired.

Mr HOWARD (Buninyong) — Dear, oh, dear! The member for Eildon started off very well. She recognised that Infrastructure Victoria was a very good idea. She recognised that there is a need to plan ahead. But then how she faded off so dismally as she progressed — very sad.

I am pleased to rise to add some positive comments about a very sound government that is responding to the people of Victoria. Why is this bill necessary? We know that this bill is necessary because the people of Victoria have said that they want a government that shows a sense of planning forward. They want a government that is prepared to listen to people in the community, that can provide knowledgeable advice and that is prepared to put forward plans to people so they can discuss them and so we can have a sense of where things are going in the future.

Why is this necessary? Because the last four years were a great disappointment to the people of Victoria. The people of Victoria woke up in the year 2010 and found that the government had surprisingly, perhaps, changed. What is more, Ted Baillieu and crew were even more surprised and suddenly thought, ‘What do we do now? We’ve been negative for the last four years, and suddenly we’ve found ourselves in government. What do we do?’. They did not do anything for two years.

In the last few weeks the people of Ballarat have found that their passenger rail services have suffered because although under the regional rail link — now that it is open — there was the opportunity for more services, unfortunately the former government forgot to order any rolling stock. It is a long-term thing to order rolling stock so that you can have sufficient rolling stock on the line. Fortunately we now have rolling stock coming from the Victorian business Bombardier, in Dandenong. It is coming onto the line now so that Ballarat passengers will see more rolling stock and will be able to travel on the line and know that there will be a seat for them in the future.

What people want is a government that can see ahead, plan ahead, listen to expert advice and present it in a sensible way. Getting back to the last government, after it had been in government for a little while it eventually realised that there was another election coming up and it had better show it had done something before the election. That was going to be a worry in 2014. Suddenly, with a change in leader, the then new leader of the Liberal Party determined that the government had better take some action. The member for South-West Coast has spoken strongly on this bill already, trying to say, ‘Why didn’t they listen to me?’. The fact was that those opposite came up with a plan.

I have noticed that a number of members of the opposition have talked about the Eddington report, but they have obviously never read it. They like to pick out a few bits of the Eddington report and say that the report was what they were all about, but if they had actually read the Eddington report, they would have seen that the key issues related to the central area of Melbourne — hence the Melbourne Metro tunnel was proposed — and to a link across the Yarra or a crossing point so that you could get from the western side of Melbourne towards the Tullamarine Freeway. Suddenly a project that was somewhere down the priority list, the east–west link, was noticed by the former government. Money was committed with no business plan. Finally, only a month before the election, the contract had to be signed because they had to get on with it. They could not wait for the people of Victoria to look at it one month later and actually vote on whether they wanted it or not.

I see that the member for Malvern has just left the house. I would have loved to have made more comments about the side letter, which I know said, ‘What we need to do is make it so that even if the people of Victoria say they don’t want it, they’ll pay for it. Let’s make them pay over \$1 billion with this side letter’. The miserable member for Malvern has now left the house, and that is a good thing. It is a pity that he

will come back into the house, because he is shamed forever on that issue.

What the people of Victoria want is not these half-baked ideas that have supposedly been taken from the Eddington report or somewhere else. They want a plan that will show them how it all fits together and that will be verified by people from the business community and broadly across Victoria as an appropriate plan. They do not want to hear ideas about alternatives to a Metro rail loop that do not do what needs to be done. They do not want to hear about an airport link which we saw so much government money going into advertising ahead of the election, telling them about the airport link but not telling them that the former government did not actually have any designs — it just thought it was a good idea that should happen sometime. There were no plans and there was no real action on a whole range of those projects; they were just thoughts thrown on paper. What people want is a serious plan that will lead them forward.

This legislation sets up Infrastructure Victoria as an established independent body. It asks that body to prepare a 30-year plan. What are the key things we need for Victoria in the next 30 years? We know we are a rapidly growing state. We know Melbourne is growing remarkably rapidly. There are 4.5 million people now, there will be 5 million by 2020 and we will be on to 8 million by 2050. We know we need to plan for Melbourne’s growth. We know that a lot of people are seeing that the regions are great places to live, so they are moving to places like Ballarat and Geelong and other regional cities further out from Melbourne. We know they want connectedness across the state, so we clearly need to plan for all that — not just with transport infrastructure but also with social infrastructure, which is so important in our communities.

That is what we are looking at Infrastructure Victoria to help us with — providing a 30-year plan that can then be put up for discussion across the state of Victoria. The government will develop a 5-year plan initially so that people have a sense of what the direction is for the next five years and then what it can be beyond that. Obviously you need to review these things as you go along. Although the Eddington report does present some great ideas about things we need to look at in terms of our transport infrastructure, it needs to be reviewed and we need to take on board new ideas.

I am very pleased that the Andrews Labor government has developed what the people of Victoria have asked for and that we are committing to our promises, as we are determined to do in the years ahead. But not only

that, because it is about providing good and sound leadership for the people of Victoria. We are looking not just to the next election but to benefit the people of Victoria so that they will look upon our legacy for many years to come. Not only do we want to see Victoria as the education state, a state where we provide great education, but we also want to ensure that we have great health services to provide to the people of Victoria, and we want to know that the infrastructure that we plan to put in place over the next 5 years, 10 years and beyond will meet our needs so we can plan accordingly. The people of Victoria will know there is a plan in place and understand how they will relate to it in the future. Hopefully future governments will continue to adopt that plan, review it appropriately and build on it into the future.

Good governments leave legacies for the people they are elected to represent. The Andrews government is determined to be a good government. I am very pleased that we are showing that we are responsive to what people are saying, which is that they do not want governments that might after a period of four years or whatever change their priorities completely. People want a sense that priorities will flow on and meet their needs into the future. They want to know that when governments are elected, even if by accident, as we saw the Baillieu government being elected unexpectedly — I have to acknowledge that even the Bracks government before that was elected perhaps unexpectedly — good governments, like the Bracks government, have a plan ahead of them that they are able to deliver on. Good governments work on delivering on their plans. We do not want to see any more governments elected that then sit and think, ‘What do we do now? Oh, I don’t know. We’ll do nothing for the next few years and then hopefully we’ll get some ideas before the next election’.

Debate interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Ward) — Order! Before I call on the next speaker, I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of Ken Coghill, a former Speaker of this place. I would like to acknowledge his academic work, which contributed towards my own academic career.

INFRASTRUCTURE VICTORIA BILL 2015

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — I rise to make a contribution on the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015 on behalf of the electorate of Mildura. The purpose of the bill is to establish Infrastructure Victoria to provide independent expert advice about Victoria’s infrastructure needs, priorities and proposals. I note that we have had Infrastructure Australia committees working in that area, so already a great deal of work has been done on that. The purpose of the bill is also to establish a new strategic infrastructure planning process for Victoria which requires Infrastructure Victoria to release a 30-year plan and government to respond and to prepare and release a 5-year infrastructure plan based on that.

The main provisions, buried mostly in part 2 of the bill, establish the functions, powers and board of Infrastructure Victoria. In part 3 the bill outlines the high-level role and responsibility for Infrastructure Victoria in creating that 30-year plan and providing advice to government on responses to identified infrastructure needs. Part 3 also contains the 5-year plan requirement. We in the opposition have a number of areas of concern regarding this. Infrastructure is undefined, as is how the government intends Infrastructure Victoria to go about separating the non-physical social infrastructure. This creates a risk that Infrastructure Victoria will get bogged down in trivia along the way, as is so easily done. In preparing budgets it is very important to separate capital and recurrent expenditure. There is a really big challenge in dealing with social infrastructure, as you can start to be distracted by things that will not deliver tangible dividends.

The Infrastructure Victoria board will consist of seven members, including three departmental secretaries. During this debate other members have pointed out the possible conflicts of interest that can occur when you have public servants who are meant to provide frank and fearless advice but who many times have to temper that because of the political environment they find themselves in. The bill is also pretty silent on the time line for release of the 30-year plan. If you delay such a long-term plan, you will have to keep amending it because things change. Infrastructure Victoria is also expensive. It has received funding of \$10 million in the budget update for 2014–15 and \$10 million a year on an ongoing basis. This is an expensive exercise in getting these things right.

Let us look at the track record of The Nationals in getting the infrastructure requirements right in the long term for Victoria. Priorities for the current term of this government should be established. I am pleased to say that one of those priorities is the Mildura rail line, something that was a priority for the previous government. The Premier has been to Mildura and has committed the current government to doing the job for Mildura. We know that option 5 of the options developed by The Nationals, particularly by the member for Murray Plains and me in consultation with all the rail users, is the right option for the Mildura rail line.

When it comes to funding the additional investment required for option 5, which will satisfy the needs of the three major users of the railway line — our mineral sands interests, our grain industry and our high-value horticulture exports from the Merbein intermodal terminal — there is still \$200 million left from the sale of the Rural Finance Corporation. The previous government made the decision to sell that asset, which had been developed for and was serving the people of country Victoria.

The cost of the rail line had been estimated by GHD Pty Ltd a couple of years earlier to be around \$220 million. When the report was put out it was found that a number of aspects needed further development, and the project was referred by the previous government for a business case. That business case is yet to see the light of day. I think it will reveal, as it should from the consultation we have done, that some or all of the money left from the Rural Finance Corporation sale will be required to do this once-in-a-century project.

In looking at those sorts of projects and times we know that priorities change, and this is where Infrastructure Victoria will struggle with a 30-year mandate. When you are looking at a 5-year plan, then at the end of that 5-year period you may have to re-form it with the 30-year outlook, so it will not be without its difficulties. We have had good advice in the past from a number of organisations that have done that. In this debate Sir Rod Eddington has been mentioned at some length in relation to the advice he has given on future infrastructure requirements. We have also looked at the partnerships that have occurred between Infrastructure Australia and Regional Development Victoria in developing regional plans. One wonders whether this is a genuine attempt to look at the future or just a delaying tactic in order to allow the budget — or for other financial reasons — to recover or to buy some time to find the funds to do the level crossings in Melbourne.

This is where we move into this complex mix of projects that are needed, including the port lease, which is a dud deal for regional Victoria for many reasons. One of the issues the government will face is what if Infrastructure Victoria recommends a second port, as it should? When you look at the various reports that suggest the demand will exceed the possibilities for the port by the 2030s, Infrastructure Victoria's credibility will be damaged almost immediately if it does not support a second port for Victoria. That is extremely important for country areas and country exporters, because they will pay.

No-one in country Victoria thinks for a moment that the lack of a second port will not impact on them. The lack of a second port will mean there will be a smaller wheat cheque because your wheat will have to be carted further. It will mean a smaller dairy cheque and a smaller horticultural cheque for your grapes or for your oranges because they have to be carted further to a port that is not as efficient as ours in Victoria or what we could build into the future. We will be locked out of the future without compensation for over 70 years. It will be back to the farmers and the exporters to pay, and that will affect our rural communities and our city communities as well. The \$200 million being laid on the table is a mere pittance compared to what exporters and communities will pay over time. Is the \$200 million just a smoke-and-mirrors trick with the \$200 million left over from the Rural Finance Corporation sale?

I am left with a bit of a conundrum with some of this work. At the very least we should support the amendments proposed by the member for Malvern. But I wonder whether this plan had its genesis in the ABC's *Utopia* program, or are we providing grist for the mill and scripts for a third series of *Utopia* from our efforts to get this infrastructure right and, to quote from *Utopia*, 'to build the infrastructure nation'. I think we have all heard the words, and I recommend anyone review the first series, watch the second series and watch us here in Victoria creating scripts for the third series. I will leave people to ponder that.

Mr LIM (Clarinda) — I am pleased to join the debate on the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015. I am bemused by the contributions from members on the other side, and I have been listening to a fair number of them. I am tempted to answer some of the points they have raised. We tend to forget how far we have come as a state. Members will recall that during the 1980s a lot of Victorians left the state to flock to the so-called Sunshine State, Queensland, with all its attractions. But during the past 10 to 15 years, particularly during the Labor years of the Bracks and Brumby governments

and now even more significantly, people have been flocking back in significant numbers. It is getting to the stage where we are alarmed that the state is becoming an attraction for people moving within the country.

On top of that, something like 100 000 newly registered cars are going onto our roads every year, and there is demand for infrastructure to respond to that. Victoria comprises about 25 per cent of the population of the country, and over 30 per cent of that population comes from overseas. Migrants are flocking to Victoria. Of course Melbourne, being the most livable city in the world, with its vibrant, multicultural society, attracts more and more migrants to the country. The sheer numbers are such that this government knows that it has to get the infrastructure right.

Many members, particularly the new members, may not be aware that once we found ourselves in opposition our team came up with a plan for how we would grow the state in terms of employment, infrastructure, housing, education and particularly employment once we got back into government. I recall attending a big public meeting targeting the business community where the then Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Treasurer spelt out their plans. They got a very good response, admiration and enormous respect. The business community admired the fact that within one year in opposition we had come up with a tremendous plan for what we would do when we got back into government.

You can see the contrast with members on the other side when they were in government. They were not prepared. Members on this side have mentioned many times that the coalition was not prepared to be in government. That is why we had four dark years and a one-term government. More importantly, when it comes to infrastructure we should remember the history because it is significant. We know that this side of the house is not going to repeat the mistakes; we are not going to fall into that trap. We will be very decisive. We have long-term plans, and that is why this bill is before the house.

Just reflect on what happened during the years the coalition was unprepared to be in government. The former Premier decided that he would be a small target Premier. He decided he was not going to do anything in a hurry or anything too big, because that might cause trouble. He ended up doing nothing. During his first year in government we were amazed that nothing happened. By the second year the media had started to take notice and it was having a go at the government almost every day. By the third year the business community was for screaming for help. Business

operators said, 'What is happening? How come nothing is happening?'

By that time the Premier had gone and we had a new Premier who concocted the east-west link in a panic because the public had to be shown that the government was doing something. Other members on this side of the house have previously touched on that, so I will not repeat what they said. We know that we have to get back to the days when this state was leading the pack on the mainland. We have always been the no. 1 state. We will maintain momentum and retain that title or position.

It is interesting that the not-so-new New South Wales coalition government has been very conscious that Victoria was the state that was leading in the mainland, and it has now taken that title from us. I have to admit that it has been working very hard and drawing attention not just in Australia but also overseas.

New South Wales is now working in coalition with a range of Chinese provincial governments and also its central government to build infrastructure in New South Wales and attract investment in a big way, something which New South Wales has never experienced. We know that we have competition; we know we have a lot of work to do. This bill will provide a launching pad for us to look 30 years ahead at how this state could be progressing and should be conducting itself insofar as infrastructure is concerned. Having said all that, I believe this government is very much on track to again make Victoria the leading state in the mainland.

To come back to the bill, the bill establishes that Infrastructure Victoria will act as a statutory authority providing independent and expert advice about Victoria's infrastructure needs and priorities. By implementing this bill we will introduce a new strategic infrastructure planning process for Victoria for many years to come. As an advisory body, Infrastructure Victoria's core function will be strategic planning and advice. It will prepare a 30-year infrastructure strategy to identify long-term infrastructure needs. It will also advise the government on infrastructure matters, including major project assessments and intergovernmental submissions, which will be in written form and provided to the responsible minister and government upon request. The bill also establishes that Infrastructure Victoria will be able to undertake research on its own volition and support departments and agencies in the development of sectoral infrastructure plans.

The 30-year infrastructure strategy will cover a time frame to meet the objective of providing a long-term

holistic approach to strategic planning, with a pipeline of priority projects to be aligned to other economic, social and environmental objectives, with options to use existing infrastructure more efficiently.

The bill also requires the government to develop a response to the 30-year strategy and, as part of that, to deliver a 5-year infrastructure plan. It will be required that the response include a detailed rationale for the major projects, policies or reforms the government intends to pursue through the plan. The government will also be required to respond to any recommendation made in the strategy by Infrastructure Victoria. The government's response must be released within a year of the strategy's release. It is also envisaged that the government's response will form part of the suite of annual budget documents to link with existing processes. I have nothing but compliments for the bill, and I wish it a speedy passage through the house.

Mr PAYNTER (Bass) — It is my pleasure to speak on the Infrastructure Victoria Bill 2015. I note that the coalition will not be opposing the bill, but that would come as no surprise to those opposite. Over many years coalition governments have been steeped in infrastructure projects, delivering quality projects across the entire state, not just the metropolitan areas. In fact one of the major bridges in Victoria is named after the great Sir Henry Bolte, one of the outstanding premiers in the history of the coalition government and the state of Victoria and a key driver of infrastructure throughout Victoria. So it is absolutely no surprise that the coalition government is not opposing a bill which establishes an infrastructure body.

This is in stark contrast to those opposite and the Labor government's history. We know full well that Labor governments have a history of delivering dud projects to the state of Victoria. It is almost superfluous for me to say that they run over time and over budget. It is blatantly obvious to anybody in the house and to the general public. It has been mentioned in this house many times, so I almost hesitate to mention the greatest dud project of all, which just happens to be in my seat of Bass — the desalination plant. It costs the Victorian people not \$500 000, not \$1 million, not \$1.5 million, but close to \$2 million a day for not one drop of water delivered to date and probably not ever likely to be delivered to anybody living in the state of Victoria.

It is the greatest waste of money and probably the greatest dud project ever delivered to Victoria. Time does not permit me to go through the other dud projects, but it would be remiss of me not to mention myki and the north–south pipeline, which has already been mentioned by others today. It is blatantly obvious

to the Victorian public that this Labor government will follow former Labor governments. If the government does not continue to deliver very little, the projects it does deliver will be duds.

If anybody needed assistance with deciding what to build and where to build it, it is this Labor government. Of course Infrastructure Victoria would be of great assistance to the Labor government, on behalf of the state of Victoria and the people living here, in helping it with its decisions, which in the past it has not been able to do of its own accord.

Unsurprisingly the peak industry bodies in Victoria also support the establishment of Infrastructure Victoria because they acknowledge that this Labor government will follow other Labor governments and not be able to make decisions in the best interests of the Victorian people.

But of course, as with most legislation introduced into this house in this Parliament, this Labor government cannot seem to get it quite right. Therefore the coalition will assist this process by recommending some amendments. Firstly, as with all Labor initiatives, there is a lack of independence and transparency. Some of the coalition's amendments will assist in that process. The board will consist of three departmental secretaries and four members of the private sector, but there do not seem to be any criteria for how they are to be selected nor the level of experience they might have had in the private sector. This needs to be addressed.

Further, and probably more concerning, is the fact that the minister is able to seek advice from Infrastructure Victoria but can then use that advice in a confidential decision-making process. It will not be a public process at all nor will it be a process that will be brought to this Parliament.

The bill also states quite clearly that Infrastructure Victoria can provide the minister with the power to delete parts of the advice prior to publication. Again, transparency in this process appears to be sadly lacking. That is certainly one of the key deficiencies of this bill, but that is not surprising from either this government or from former Labor governments.

A further amendment that we are suggesting is that the 30-year infrastructure strategy be completed in a timely manner and released directly to this Parliament, preferably prior to December 2016. We do not need this report delayed any further. If Infrastructure Victoria is to be established, then we want it to get on the front foot and deliver an infrastructure strategy directly to this Parliament prior to December 2016. That would be

followed up by the government's five-year infrastructure plan. Again, it is vitally important that if Infrastructure Victoria is going to be established, it gets on with the job it is intended to do. This would be implementing the investment strategy followed by the government's five-year infrastructure plan. The coalition has suggested an amendment which recommends that a time frame be inserted into the legislation so that we see that report introduced directly to this Parliament by December 2017, giving the Labor government a further 12 months after the release of the infrastructure strategy to introduce its plan into this chamber.

As mentioned, the government seems to need assistance in drafting legislation because there is an obvious omission from the bill. There is no definition of 'infrastructure'. This is a major concern because we have seen in the past that Labor seems to struggle with projects and where they fit. A key definition of 'infrastructure' should be inserted into the legislation so that there are absolutely crystal clear guidelines for not only this Parliament but also the state of Victoria as to what will be included under it. We do not need minor projects; we do not need projects that are chosen simply by this government. We want Infrastructure Victoria to have very clear guidelines as to what types of projects would be included under the definition of 'infrastructure'.

In summary, the coalition is calling for improved transparency and independence, and for Infrastructure Victoria and the government to report to this chamber in a timely manner.

Ms WARD (Eltham) — It is with great enthusiasm that I stand here tonight to talk about Infrastructure Victoria, the fantastic initiative that we are putting forward. What a great thing for this government to do. What a proactive, positive thing this government is creating to help this state move forward and build the future that it needs. We are getting on with the job and we are going to get things built, for we are true to our word; we honour our commitments in this party. My own electorate is a very good example of how the Andrews government and the Labor Party are delivering on our commitments.

We have Montmorency Secondary College where we are delivering on our promise to put \$14 million towards rebuilding that school. Coincidentally this is the school that the current Leader of the Opposition went to, but only happened to turn up to around the time of the election. What a surprise! We are also getting on with the upgrade to Bolton Street. This is a fantastic, much-needed development in this state. We

are getting on with delivering a new fire truck for Research. We are getting on with delivering funding for St Francis Xavier Primary School in Montmorency. This is a gorgeous school; I was there earlier this week. It has fantastic kids, a great community and a really gorgeous local priest, one of the kindest men you could ever meet.

We are getting on with delivering for the St Helena sporting precinct, which the Minister for Education came to visit only a few weeks ago. That was fantastic; he has been a great supporter of my community and my schools. We have committed to delivering on our promise to deliver \$2 million to the Eltham North Reserve that will benefit the Eltham Redbacks Football Club, the North Eltham Wanderers Cricket Club, and the 1st Eltham North Scouts. These are the kinds of fantastic things that we planned and on which we are delivering.

We have also committed to delivering new club rooms for Research Football Club and Research Cricket Club, and we are getting on with reopening Greensborough TAFE and creating a new tech school for my community. We stand by our amendments and we deliver for our communities; we deliver for our state.

I note that the member for Mildura threw the TV show *Utopia* into the mix today. It is funny that he brought that in because his way of looking at it is — funnily enough — a bit different from mine. When I look at a TV show like *Utopia*, I see the previous government. In fact I think it is a historical enactment of the inactivity of the previous government. Here we are watching our TV screens and what do we see? We see inertia; we see incompetence. Of course it was the previous government! It talked about the National Building Authority. That was the previous government! It did nothing. It talked about it, it thought about it, but it did bugger all. This clever and very funny TV series chronicles the trials and tribulations — —

Ms McLeish — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I believe the member for Eltham used unparliamentary language, and I ask you to ask her to withdraw.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the honourable member to withdraw and to be careful with her language.

Ms WARD — I withdraw. Funnily enough the ABC described the series as a group of people charged with building this nation, one white elephant at a time. The previous government was charged with building Victoria. What did it build? It built crickets — —

Ms Thomson — Nothing.

Ms WARD — The member for Footscray is exactly right. But it did try; it tried really hard. It came up with an idea at the last minute. It pulled it out of the bottom drawer. It pulled out the sheets. It folded and smoothed the sheets down. It tried to rub out the coffee stains. It tried to shield the yellowing of the pages. And what was it? It was a dud tunnel that took no-one anywhere. It was a dud tunnel that was going to cost this state so much money, and that was going to cost this state so much time and effort. It was going to be a complete waste. It was something that was not going to deliver this state the future that it needs.

What are we creating? We are creating Infrastructure Victoria. We are creating something that will be independent, that will look through and thoroughly plan things, not rely on stale ideas from the bottom drawer. This is going to be an organisation which will look to the future and which will be separate from politics. It will not look at what the short-term gains are; it will look at what is for the benefit of all Victorians. That is exactly what this state needs. This state needs something that will help it create the vibrancy, the development, the investment and the infrastructure that we know this state needs and we know this state deserves.

We have a 5-year infrastructure plan and we have a 30-year infrastructure strategy. We will receive independent and expert advice about what our infrastructure needs are. This is exactly what is needed and exactly what we will do, because we are thinking, we are planning and we are doing — most importantly we are doing.

Mr Pearson — We are getting on with it.

Ms WARD — The member for Essendon is correct, we are getting on with it.

What did we see under the Baillieu and Napthine governments? We saw unemployment climb to 6.6 per cent. How does that happen? It happens when you do not invest, it happens when you do not plan, it happens when you do not put things in place — when you do not know what you are doing. When you do not know what you are doing you end up with rising unemployment, and you end up with a state that is rudderless and directionless and does not know where it is going.

I also note that the member for Mildura expressed concern regarding social infrastructure. Why does that not surprise me? I am sure it surprises nobody on this side of the house that those opposite would be

concerned about social infrastructure. Why would they care about hospitals and schools? When have we ever seen them care about hospitals and schools? What they like to do is close hospitals and schools, just like they did under the Kennett government when they worked very hard to close the Austin Hospital. What saved the Austin Hospital? The hard work of Labor Party people, the hard work of the community of Heidelberg and surrounds — the hard work of people who got together and saved the hospital.

An honourable member — Asleep at the wheel.

Ms WARD — In fact Jeff Kennett was driving so fast he almost crashed this state into oblivion. He was not asleep at the wheel — he crashed and burnt. Thankfully Labor got into government, got rid of the blind ideologies of the Kennett government that almost drove this state into the ground and created and built things, and that is exactly what this government is going to do. We are going to keep building, we are going to keep growing — we are going to keep moving forward. We are going to invest in our economy and jobs, and we are going to invest in a decent living wage, because that is how you get your economy stimulated. That is how you drive investment and growth in your community. You invest, you build things and you make sure that people are paid properly.

In October 2012 the International Monetary Fund chief economist, Olivier Blanchard, explained that the recent efforts among wealthy countries to shrink their deficits — that is, through spending cuts — have been causing far more economic damage than experts had anticipated and more than they had assumed. Of course it did, because when you dry up your economy, when you dry up your investment, when you cut things, the economy does not grow. A plant that does not receive water shrivels up and dies. It does not grow, and that is exactly what happens with economies. That is why it is so important that we have infrastructure planning and development, that we have deep thinking, that we have planning, that we have people who have ideas and can plan how to put them into place, who can plan and execute those plans — who can get things going. That is what we are doing. We are not sitting back; we are not waiting for the next few years to wander by. We are getting into it. We are getting it happening.

Mr Pearson — We are getting on with it.

Ms WARD — We are getting on with it. The member for Essendon is exactly right — we are getting on with it.

Another economist, Paul Krugman, who is an American, said:

Since the global turn to austerity in 2010, every country that introduced significant austerity has seen its economy suffer, with the depth of the suffering closely related to the harshness of the austerity ... the IMF now believes that it massively understated the damage that spending cuts inflict on a weak economy.

He is exactly right. This is what we have seen throughout Europe, — that when you cut, when you do not invest, when you punish people, especially working people, your economy and your society suffers.

Mr Pearson — Shame.

Ms WARD — It is absolutely an issue of shame, as the member for Essendon says. All that drives it is blind ideology. It is not reality, it is not empirical data, it is blind ideology. That is exactly what drives this.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Warrandyte Primary School

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Education, and my request is that he separately fund the removal of asbestos at Warrandyte Primary School. The government clearly has a policy around removing asbestos from our schools. There is apparently a program to do so. I think broadly speaking we support the program, but we question the funding arrangements. The funding arrangements have been raised with the Minister for Education in the past. A report in the *Age* of 12 May states:

When asked by Kew MP Tim Smith how much it would cost to remove asbestos from schools, Mr Merlino refused to provide an exact figure.

In fact, to quote from the Minister for Education at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing, he said:

... if you look at the \$100 million allocation, that alone will not remove asbestos.

The question is: where is the money coming from to remove the asbestos? I can tell members where some of it is coming from for Warrandyte Primary School, and that is from money that has already been allocated by the previous government for the school to undertake

works. This school received just over \$800 000 from the coalition government. This is a school that had not received funding from the government at all during the Bracks and Brumby years, but did receive money from the former government.

The school has put together a fantastic design to make significant changes to its buildings. If I quote a letter from the school council president to parents, members will see that there is certainly an injustice being done here. The letter states:

As you would be aware, in the May 2014 budget, Warrandyte Primary School was allocated \$807 000 for maintenance costs and an upgrade of buildings. This was wonderful news as it would enable the school to improve learning areas ...

During the last design and development meeting, the removal of asbestos in the external eave lining was raised.

The school was told:

... asbestos in the main building is in the eaves and will not be disturbed during the works. The school was then informed that, due to the government's policy to remove asbestos from schools, the cost of removal, replacement and painting the eaves (estimated cost \$27 000) would need to happen and as well, the cost would be taken out of the school's allocated capital works budget.

How is it fair in any way, shape or form that money allocated by the previous government for improvements to the school is now having a sizeable chunk redirected to the Labor Party's policy of asbestos removal?

Money has been allocated in a broad sense but none of that \$100 million that has been allocated for the asbestos removal program is being offered to Warrandyte Primary School. Instead the government is now taking money out of funds allocated to improvements to the school to conform with a government policy for which there is no funding. That is not what the money was given to the school for; the money was given to it for improvements, but because of this injustice it is now going to have to cut back on classroom fittings, paintings and carpet or on the upgrade of the library. It is unfair, and the minister should allocate a separate \$27 000 to remove the asbestos as per government policy.

Ballarat rail services

Mr HOWARD (Buninyong) — I raise a matter for the attention for the Minister for Public Transport. I ask the minister to take action to ensure that rail travellers on the Ballarat rail line will regain their confidence in their rail service travelling on time and will be able to expect to find a seat when travelling. I have been

disappointed, as have so many travellers on the Ballarat rail line over recent weeks, that the service has not run well after new timetables were introduced to align with regional rail link services. I spent the past six weeks hopping on and off the trains at Ballarat and Ballan to seek feedback from travellers on their experiences and their concerns. In fact I travelled again just yesterday on the train to Melbourne and back to Ballarat. Concerns expressed by many peak service travellers are that there are too many delays and that many peak services have been overcrowded.

However, I am pleased to see that the Ballarat line is a priority, with new carriages off the Bombardier production line coming on line to meet local demand, which is already significantly reducing overcrowding. I would also like to acknowledge the hard work of members of the V/Line staff, who have been working around the clock to improve the performance of the network. Like all frontline workers, they often have to bear the brunt of people's frustration, so I commend them for assisting commuters on the rail network. Clearly there is much to do, and while Labor's regional rail link has delivered extra peak services for Ballan, Ballarat and Bacchus Marsh, more needs to be done to address capacity and punctuality to ensure that Ballarat line passengers are able to appreciate the reliable rail services offered by regional rail link.

The legacy of the Liberal government is one of failure and of neglect of regional Victorians. The former government initially delayed the regional rail link, which was planned and commenced under the former Labor government with the securing of \$3.2 million from the former Labor federal government. After a year or so of review, the Liberal government got underway with the project, but it failed to order new rail carriages to meet the demand for services for the opening of the rail line. Victorians elected Labor, which has provided great rail services in the past, including in the initial update of regional fast rail, following which people started to use rail services more often. Patronage has almost tripled over the last 15 years. It is good to see that we are consulting for the future, but I look forward to the minister providing more advice about action that can be taken to assure Ballarat line travellers that services will be sound again.

Maryborough Education Centre

Ms STALEY (Ripon) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education. The specific action I seek is the provision of \$2.7 million to upgrade and complete the outdoor areas of the Maryborough Education Centre (MEC).

Last Thursday the Premier came to Maryborough in my electorate of Ripon to make a reannouncement of an amount of just under \$4 million a year for school uniforms and materials for needy children. I note that the Liberal-Nationals government committed \$42 million in 2014, which is significant support for children from disadvantaged families. It is disappointing that highly disadvantaged communities get so little in comparison. It is particularly disappointing to my constituents because the Ripon electorate has a number of communities, including Maryborough, Ararat, Stawell and Saint Arnaud, in which many families need a bit of extra help with these things.

The Premier came to Maryborough to make this announcement, surrounded by the enthusiastic children of the centre. MEC has an index of community socio-educational advantage ranking of 934, with 57 per cent of its students in the bottom quartile of disadvantage and only 3 per cent in the most advantaged quartile. Despite this, MEC is delivering. In last year's national assessment program — literacy and numeracy results, year 9 MEC students placed close to the national average in reading. It is showing strong gains in many areas. There is still a way to go for MEC to overcome the disadvantage embedded in Maryborough, but it is on to it.

Prior to the last election I visited MEC on a number of occasions. During these visits I learnt of the great need for two things. The first is to finish building the outdoor areas. At the moment MEC is a mud slick in winter and a dustbowl in summer, and as such is a dangerous and unsuitable environment for children. The second is to build change rooms and facilities for its all-weather oval for use by the whole community. As a candidate on behalf of the coalition, I committed to funding MEC to the tune of \$2.7 million. This is a worthy project. This is a project that will make a real difference to the students and community of Maryborough, and it should be supported in the next budget. I call upon the Minister for Education to make this important project a reality.

In my remaining 45 seconds I note that Maryborough has been in the news again recently, with yet another report showing just how disadvantaged many of the people in Maryborough are. I continue to stand up for those people so that they can get a better start in life and so that their children get the advantages of the Go Goldfields program and other programs. I hope this government sees the need to put more resources into the disadvantaged people of Maryborough, including by funding this very important school upgrade at the MEC of \$2.7 million.

Essendon Fields hotel development

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Tourism and Major Events. The action I seek is for the minister to come on a site tour of the new Hyatt Place hotel at Essendon Fields. Recently Essendon Fields announced that a new \$60 million 160-room Hyatt Place hotel with an adjoining 1700 square metre conference centre will be built at Essendon Fields. This is the first Hyatt Place hotel to be built in Australia and represents a more affordable option in the Hyatt house of brands. As the member for Essendon I am delighted that this investment will provide a major injection into the local economy and will create 330 construction jobs and approximately 70 effective full-time ongoing jobs at the hotel once it is operational in 2017.

Essendon Fields now boasts more than 5000 employees, up from some 500, 14 years ago. Providing opportunities for people to work near where they live is a vital strategy for addressing traffic congestion. The decision by Essendon Fields and Hyatt to commit to this investment is great news not only for my electorate but for the state of Victoria. I would welcome the minister seeing for himself the significance of this investment.

Gippsland East constituent transport accident compensation

Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Finance. The action I seek is that he review the handling of Mr Robert Overend's compensation payments by the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) and the commission's intention to cease all payments. Robert, who is from Bairnsdale in my electorate of Gippsland East, suffered severe injuries as a result of a car accident in 1987. He was in a coma for three months after the accident and spent many more months in rehabilitation before being well enough to return home. He remains wheelchair bound with very limited movement among other issues as a result of that accident.

The Transport Accident Commission accepted responsibility for Robert's care and has been paying compensation payments since his accident, some 28 years ago. In December 2002 a TAC-appointed occupational therapist conducted a review of Robert's support needs and, amongst other issues, noted:

The injuries sustained by Robert in the motor vehicle accident were:

...

secondary development of severe rheumatoid arthritis and sleep apnoea.

It is clear that at that point the TAC recognised the onset of Robert's severe rheumatoid arthritis as being a result of the car accident in 1987.

Robert is severely restricted in his ability to perform everyday tasks, like showering and cooking meals, and he relies on just under 50 hours of care services, which is made up of 6½ hours of personal care a day and 4 hours per week of in-home services. He can only move around with the assistance of his motorised wheelchair. However, the TAC has recently notified Robert of its intention to cease all home help and personal care payments. I am advised that one of the reasons for this is that the TAC is no longer of the belief that Robert's severe rheumatoid arthritis is as a result of his car accident, which is in stark contrast to the occupational therapist's view in 2002. I am advised that a TAC-appointed occupational therapist now believes this condition is not a result of the car accident. This will severely impact on Robert's quality of life.

The TAC was introduced to ensure all Victorians who are injured in car accidents would receive the most reasonable and appropriate care for their accident-related injuries. I request the minister to order a review of this case and this decision. I suggest the appointment of independent specialists to assess Robert's condition before ceasing payments is undertaken as this action will remove his quality of life.

inTouch

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Women, who is also the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, and concerns inTouch, the multicultural centre against family violence. The action I seek is that the minister join me in visiting inTouch to see firsthand its outstanding work which benefits many people in my diverse electorate. inTouch is a fantastic organisation that provides much-needed services, programs and responses to family violence incidents in culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Over the past 30 years inTouch has worked tirelessly to provide support and assistance to women and children who have been through unimaginable ordeals, and it does so in a manner that is culturally appropriate and accessible to those who may find themselves isolated or unable to speak English or who are simply too scared to speak up. The chief executive officer of inTouch, Maya Avdibegovic, said:

My vision for the next 30 years is to completely eliminate violence to a point where our sector is no longer needed. In the meantime, for those who are abused and living in fear and pain, we will be there to help them take back their lives, we will continue making families happier and our communities stronger.

Those are very worthwhile words. inTouch has done its work through innovative programs, such as the immigration support program; the first culturally and linguistically diverse men's behaviour change program; an in-house legal centre, which is the first of its kind in Australia; and the children's therapeutic book *The Empty Jar*, which sits on my desk at work. inTouch also puts significant emphasis on education and provides community education sessions for migrant women. Sadly many migrant women are unaware of their legal rights in Australia, and many have come to my office asking for assistance or advice. inTouch provides the support and assistance that those women need to reclaim their lives and begin building new ones.

The Andrews Labor government and indeed our outstanding minister are doing a fantastic job in addressing this very serious issue of family violence. Australia's very first Royal Commission into Family Violence is now well underway and giving everyone the voice and the avenues that for so long have been denied.

The minister also joined with me recently in launching our community's Say No to Family Violence awareness campaign at Kambrya College in my electorate. It was a wonderful event, and many people have taken great heart from that program. I know that the minister is well aware of the many issues facing women and children from our diverse community. They face many unique and challenging issues that organisations like inTouch are working so very hard to address. I hope the minister will join with me in visiting inTouch in the near future.

The Ice Meltdown Project

Mr BLACKWOOD (Narracan) — The matter I raise is for the Minister for Mental Health. The action I seek is for funding to be provided to the Ice Meltdown Project in West Gippsland. The Ice Meltdown Project is a community-based group that consists of ordinary people who volunteer to support addicts and their families as they battle the debilitating effects of ice. Methamphetamine has shown us the cruel reality of its addiction as it has consumed families and caused nothing but harm.

The Ice Meltdown Project has been registered as a business to support our community by raising

awareness, providing education and offering support to potential clients and their families. The committee is made up of six people and a professional counsellor, and since July 2014 they have held community meetings fortnightly, giving people the opportunity to educate themselves on this drug and the destruction it causes. They have presented to community forums and community groups, and recently were invited to speak at Bairnsdale, where Ken Lay gave a keynote address.

The project offers a 10-day detox program that supports the addict and their support persons or family in their own environment. Staff from the project are in daily communication with clients and their support persons or family, and clients are required to sign a contract which ensures they attend doctors appointments and therapy sessions. The project also has a counsellor and the strong support of a local doctor who has expertise in drug and alcohol treatment.

The Ice Meltdown Project provides an environment for families to speak of their angst about circumstances that have devastated their families while obtaining as much information and assistance as can be given. Recently, due to the demand and the need, the project has started a weekly family and client therapy night. Families and clients gather in separate rooms. This gives both parties the chance to communicate their frustrations and fears and to learn strategies that may assist the client's recovery. Many family members and clients are at a loss in knowing how to deal with debts, convictions and breakdown of family units, all resulting from drug taking.

Currently this community group is being funded by local donations and enormous support from local Rotary and Lions clubs. The most immediate need is to get a rehabilitation house that has been provided to the group up and running. It will be run by professional counsellors and supported by volunteers. The group has detoxed 150 clients and at present is dealing with 35 families. The group's simple approach is seen as welcoming, and the positive outcomes of reuniting families have been fantastic and embraced and strongly supported by the broader community.

Ken Lay is on the record as saying that the community must take ownership of this problem with appropriate support from government. Thanks to the tireless leadership, commitment and energy of Janice Ablett and Megan Waddell the Ice Meltdown Project is very well advanced in assisting our community to deal with this problem. I call on the minister to provide much-needed financial support to this grassroots volunteer community group that is having enormous

success in the fight against the impact of ice in our community.

Geelong-Portarlington and Wilsons roads, Newcomb

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Residents living around the intersection of Geelong-Portarlington Road and Wilsons Road in Newcomb have requested that the minister come and look at that intersection and listen to their concerns. Residents have been complaining about this intersection for quite a long time. There have been many accidents and near misses at the intersection. It requires traffic lights. It is a dangerous and busy road that heads out from Geelong to Portarlington, and in the summer months the traffic is even greater. It is difficult not only for vehicles to access each direction but also for pedestrians who need to get across four lanes to get to the bus stop.

Along with residents I have spoken to VicRoads about this issue, and VicRoads has agreed that it is a problem. We have a growing community, future housing developments are planned and there is a lot of new development already. Residents are pretty much demanding that we do something about this intersection, so I ask the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to take that into account. Hopefully he can come and visit the intersection.

Lang Lang jetty

Mr PAYNTER (Bass) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Ports. On 7 July this year I visited the former site of the Lang Lang jetty with the Leader of the Opposition. The jetty was knocked down eight years ago following a major storm. As this Parliament is aware, I have mentioned this iconic jetty on a number of occasions, but I have yet to receive a clear indication that funding will be made available for it to be rebuilt.

Residents of the town of Lang Lang and many other towns located in the shire of Cardinia are in support of the jetty's reconstruction. It provides an access point for local fishermen and is a place where families can congregate. There is no other place in the shire of Cardinia where parents can take their children to enjoy the simple pleasure of fishing off a jetty in Western Port Bay.

The action I seek is for the Minister for Ports to respond to community demands for the Lang Lang jetty to be rebuilt and to provide the funding for this to take place without further delay. In fact I would even go so far as

to invite him to take a stroll along the foreshore with me at any point in time. I take this opportunity to thank Michael Delmarco, who has been instrumental in driving this campaign. I urge the minister to support this important project.

Frankston ambulance services

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Ambulance Services. The matter I seek to raise is that of ambulance response times in Frankston and the need for an ambulance branch at Karingal. The Karingal community is currently serviced by the Langwarrin ambulance branch. Karingal is a growing community full of young families who need a local ambulance branch that can respond quickly in an emergency situation. An ambulance branch in Karingal would improve response times in the immediate Karingal area and would also provide more resources for the broader Frankston region. Our local paramedics do a fantastic job servicing the needs of people in the Frankston region. It is a hard job, and we need to do everything we can to support them.

We have ended the war on paramedics, and now it is time to build their capacity. Paramedics have told me how disingenuous and how much of a slap in the face it would have been to have a paramedic branch built whilst the previous government was at war with them. I am encouraged by the work of the Ambulance Performance and Policy Consultative Committee and Minister Hennessy, who held a community consultation in Frankston earlier this year. The paramedics and community members who attended were clear in identifying the needs of the Frankston community. We need to better support our paramedics, and we need to improve paramedics' ability to respond to code 1 emergencies. A new ambulance branch in Karingal would provide more resources to Karingal residents and provide more resources to the broader Frankston community. I call on the minister to commit funding to a new ambulance branch in Karingal.

Mr Katos — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, sessional order 14 states:

If the minister responsible is not present in the house to respond to issues raised by members under SO 33, the minister will provide a written response to the member who raised the matter within 30 days.

I have an outstanding adjournment matter I directed to the Minister for Police on 11 June in regard to the lack of police numbers in the South Barwon electorate. I would like you to action the response.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I will refer that to the Minister for Police. I remind honourable members that if they are to raise a point of order like this, they should raise it at the start of the adjournment debate, as per the rulings. However, raising that matter now is not a problem, and I have received advice on that.

Responses

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Ambulance Services) — I thank the member for Frankston for his advocacy in respect of emergency services in the Frankston area. I will certainly be announcing the allocation of the election commitment of \$20 million in terms of ambulance capital in the not-too-distant future. The points that the member for Frankston has raised are all important in terms of improving ambulance response times. His community is to be congratulated for its advocacy and care in terms of healthcare outcomes and emergency services. The member for Frankston continues to make persuasive cases on behalf of his local community. I will certainly bear those in mind as we make capital allocations.

Ms RICHARDSON (Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence) — It is my great pleasure to respond to the member for Narre Warren South. I take this opportunity to thank her once again for her dedication to her local community and also for her commitment to tackling family violence on behalf of her constituency. I had the opportunity earlier this year to attend an event organised by the member for Narre Warren South at Kambrya College. As she referenced in her contribution this evening, it was a fantastic event. It was as a consequence of her leadership that we saw this event take place at the school. She is a fabulous member, and her commitment to this issue knows no bounds.

Everyone knows, understands and feels the impact family violence has on our community. It is our most serious harm, and it challenges the very fabric of our society. Sadly, we know that some cohorts are more vulnerable to this harm than others. As the member for Narre Warren South has identified, women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities not only experience higher rates of family violence but also face significant barriers as they seek help to address the violence they are enduring. Some of the challenges they face include difficulty accessing legal services because of, at times, difficulties around language. Some also fear reporting because they feel it might have an adverse impact on their future residence in Australia. In truth, as we highlighted in our whole-of-government submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence, our

services are not sophisticated enough to respond to their needs.

Earlier this year I met with staff from the inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence to discuss the resources that they provide to support women from CALD communities experiencing the harm of family violence. I take this opportunity to congratulate them on the many innovative programs they provide for the CALD community. The Royal Commission into Family Violence, which is now into its third week of public hearings, has been tasked with providing practical recommendations to help members of the CALD community and other high-risk groups, because we appreciate that a one-size-fits-all model is not going to tackle family violence.

I thank the member for Narre Warren South for the opportunity to visit inTouch with her to see firsthand the work that the organisation is undertaking. I very much look forward to this visit and to continuing to work with the member, whose commitment to her local community and to this particular issue is unwavering.

Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Local Government) — The member for Warrandyte raised a matter for the Minister for Education regarding schools, in particular Warrandyte Primary School.

The member for Buninyong raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport in relation to the Ballarat rail line.

The member for Ripon raised a matter for the Minister for Education in regard to education in Maryborough, in particular the Maryborough Education Centre.

The member for Essendon raised a matter for the Minister for Tourism and Major Events regarding the Hyatt Place hotel development in Essendon Fields.

The member for Gippsland East raised a matter for the Minister for Finance in regard to a constituent issue with the Transport Accident Commission.

The member for Narracan raised a matter for the Minister for Mental Health in regard to drug rehabilitation programs.

The member for Geelong raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety regarding a ministerial visit to the intersection of Geelong-Portarlington Road and Wilsons Road in Newcomb.

The member for Bass raised a matter for the Minister for Ports and invited him for a 'stroll along the foreshore' among other matters.

Finally, there was an outstanding matter raised by the member for South Barwon which you, Deputy Speaker, have said you will refer to the Minister for Police. Those matters will all be referred to the appropriate ministers for their attention and response as soon as possible.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The house is now adjourned.

House adjourned 7.29 p.m.